

ECA/NACBCS/SJIEC Joint Forum

A national quality framework for early education and care discussion paper

Common Ground

- Pay equity (starting point) with same qualification (and to account for shift work and lack of school holidays and programming time, and professional support and mentoring);
- A national professional registration body to assess levels of qualifications;
- Government funded to allow universal access –federal and state;
- Recruiting local people and training them is ideal. Also, may have to have a rural loading in pay or other incentive, or professional development;
- Indigenous workforce;
- We have lost the plot and instead of looking at what makes a difference for children we look at what makes a system;
- Focus is taken away from quality service delivery to children to provision of evidence to meet a system;
- Built on knowledge about child development and children’s learning while acknowledging diverse learning styles in different families and communities;
- Outcomes based not content based – all children to be provided with curriculum that enables them to meet outcomes around literacy for example – content to be different in response to different cultural contexts

Blue Skies – Vision for Children

- Consistency across the nation, contextually reflexive
- Free high quality care, universal
- Qualified teachers with all groups of children in every setting
- Relationships are valued and supported
- All staff have some training (i.e. no untrained staff)
- Pay equity to other teachers
- Break down barriers between service types
- No corporatisation
- Integrated services child at centre – families accessing all types of services, run by early childhood teachers
- Schools are ready for children
- Tertiary places for ECEC students
- Australian funded research
- Centres for children, not just working parents
- Parental leave
- Ratios and group size
- Funding linked to qualifications
- Equity is the centre of everything
- High quality that everyone can afford
- National funding system that funds services on the basis of needs
- Funding of centres, not parents
- Outcomes, not outputs
- Break down difference between VET and academic work - ways of integrating both to ensure highly skilled people coming out of the VET system
- Discussion paper is not a coherent policy framework for ECEC – still a 'grab bag'

- All early childhood teachers
- National regulation better than any of the current state regs
- Universal citizen entitlement – not target services but universal
- Responds to individual needs of the community
- Critically assess ECEC programs
- Teachers recognised by the Institute of Teachers
- Planning controls for services
- Agenda that's not productivity driven, but rather:
 - Community focussed
 - Innovation driven
 - Children's Rights are fundamental (that is, children to vote)
- Overcome family/mother's guilt – role of community in upbringing of children
- Choice for families
- Greater investment
- Free provision
- Unified approach to provision
- Child Care Act? Early Childhood Education and Care Act?

Early Years Learning Framework

What should be in the EYLF?

- To guide, not be prescriptive
- Concrete – not motherhood statements
- Built on knowledge about child development and children's learning while acknowledging diverse learning styles in different families and communities
- Recognition of family diversity – not be middle-class, culturally bound – and strengths based, not deficit
- Inclusive of range of additional needs
- Integrated learning across developmental areas and curriculum areas
- Includes assessment
- Focus on parental involvement
- Play-based and interest-based
- Based in relationships
- Include philosophy and approaches to curriculum – needs to include range of approaches that educators can draw on in different contexts
- Outcomes based not content based – all children to be provided with curriculum that enables them to meet outcomes around literacy for example – content to be different in response to different cultural contexts
- Research based

What shouldn't be in the EYLF?

- Not a push down school curriculum
- Not prescriptive
- Not content based
- Not too broad

What should the focus be?

- Quality for children
- All children 0-5 not just 4 year olds

Assessment?

- Some yes; some no
- We are being assessed – AEDI, Best Start etc
- Only if it takes a broad view of literacy and numeracy
- Needs to be holistic and strengths based
- Not assessment as in school context
- Don't want to assess – relationships
- Don't like the word
- Needs to be room for creativity
- Assessment of children? Educators? Environments?

Who should it be for?

- Educators primarily
- Is it possible to write for everyone – family day care carers, untrained – or will there be a requirement for all staff to have some level of training
- Also for families and for educating the community – maybe pull out sections

Streamlining or Integration

- Integration:
 - Should not reduce standards – Should not go down to lowest common denominator?
 - Decisions should be made at appropriate levels of government (not just all Federal)
 - Research based? Based on the best available data
 - Strong research agenda
 - 5 year review period?
 - Reject the Brough Integrated model
 - Standards are flexible enough to allow for local, cultural and other forms of diversity (business is **not a** culture?)
- Commitment to getting an integrated system off the ground
- But States cannot weasel out of things
- National regs and quality system with separate systems for each care type
- National _ federal systems. Must be legislated and each state sign off on them.
- One govt responsible –Feds!
- Integration and subsidiarity ...what needs to be described federally decide federally and what should be decided locally gets decided locally. (Hand over responsibility to feds and devolve some responsibilities to the states

Issues with the current system?

- No consistency with ratios/ group sizes
- No state should go less
- Take out prescriptive stuff of accreditation – let it be covered by regs
- Licensing should be straight compliance, Accreditation should be relationships and pedagogy
- Quality system that does not judge ratios etc - madness
- OOSH not licensed – inconsistency across states
- Is it possible to have one system that covers accreditation and regulation?
- Inequity between state funded preschools and LDCS
- Preschools not accredited – all need to be under one system – children need same quality of care
- Subjectivity of validation visits
- Duplication of systems such as SCAN/ISP
- Lowest common denominator and inconsistent approach
- Duplication of requirement in QA and regs
- Lack of regs in some sectors and states
- Time taken to meet accountabilities takes children away from children and forming relationships
- Inequity of funding between state and federal funded services plus state to state
- Minefield for families to understand the system
- Different regs across each state
- Prevents us being one voice for system

- Different children get different care based on what state they are in
- Focus on systems rather than children
- In different states services sit in welfare or childcare
- Confusing for everyone – parents/centres etc because of duplication
- Hugely unnecessary amount of paperwork – takes away from relationships
- Simplify reporting
- Confusing for staff
- Reporting should help reflect on practice and inform future practice
- Internal/local/national reporting – less needed by National
- Paucity of good info at national level

Transition issues?

- Getting agreement across the states
- Need to train and reward workforce
- Give centres money to do this
- Ongoing support training and resourcing
- Grandfather clauses
- Give a timetable to get staff confident in change
- NOT lowest common denominator – we all need teachers – based on research
- Be staggered – can happen over time
- Planned and staged
- Staff over learning a new accreditation system each time
- Need some stability – staff sick of being knocked down by governments...
- Slower transition – get rid of some reporting requirements - simplify
- Upskilling for services not yet covered by accreditation
- Impact on small services that are geographically and professionally isolated
- Simple reporting that goes into national database
- Who is this data being used by, what is it being used for and how useful was it and if limited purpose dump it! (And if it is not being used to improve anyone's practice!)
- Don't ask services for things that cannot be achieved (e.g. training by allied health services – which is not possible)

Strong Quality Standards

Content – what should be in the standards?

- Overlying principles / philosophy that guides the system / practice
- Including the strength of relationships – marked by addressing equity and social justice. Actively working with relationships.
- Strong and robust
- Some aspects needs to sit in regulation.
- Specific
- A system that keeps improving that is basic and simple
- Funding should be attached to qualifications and then qualifications attached to quality.
- A combination of experience and qualifications.
- An employer / professional system that sets standards for teachers. An employers group – not government funded.
- Two compulsory levels and then improvement / opportunity to focus on areas.
- Leadership and management as essential / critical– mentoring & critical reflection.
- Attention to children from CALD backgrounds – not enough attention to this.
- Strong necessary outcomes and not outputs – social / emotional notion of children.
- National recognized qualifications – consistency between the standards and the training / tertiary courses.
- Experience – is a strong quality indicator.
- Adult work environment - above pay parity, programming time, resourced mentor.
- Stronger investment to achieve these areas.
- Principles that apply across all services types – then application that drop out of this to support different service types – discounting duplication.
- System that adapts to current/contemporary pedagogy / practices – is flexible.
- A system that enables people to function in different ways that is – evidence / theory based.
- Connects to EYLF.
- The standards should allow for 'daily' practice to be.
- Support and resourcing – the transitioning across to the new standards.
- Ratios /quals / group size
- Qualified ECT for every group – and then a ACCWQ

Application

- Embodied into legislation
- No integration - devalues
- It has to be integrated – to support the 'common ground'
- Coverage – does not apply across service types
- A guiding ethos for application
- Looking for commonalities - and then supporting differences

Workforce Issues

Qualifications

- Everyone as highly qualified as possible ✓
- Teacher in all rooms/group for children and one in charge ✓
- Lowest qualification TAFE-2 years, 3 years and 4 years ✓✓
- Minimum of Cert 3
- Nurturing predisposition
- System to acknowledge prior learning and development
- Ongoing professional recognition and expectation, so that you don't finish training 25 years ago and don't do anything else
- Mix –bringing different skill and view of child ✓✓
- Question-would we have a mix of skills in the primary system?
- Concern about primary school model
- Unified curriculum that goes from all levels, in professionally approved auspices
- Need to take control over the content and implementation, not under Community Services
- Has to reflect the different groups in the community, e.g. indigenous

Status and standing

- Pay equity with same qualification (and to account for shift work and lack of school holidays and programming time, and professional support and mentoring) ✓✓✓
- Form an Institute of Early Childhood-Standards-mutual recognition across the country but Issue of EC only is that we don't have professional standing across the education sector, so primary
- Psychology and Medical profession have one, and doesn't differentiate between specialties
- Want it to be a career of choice
- Unified approach-ELYF could help with this, and professional accountability

Retention

- Would be a good thing
- Wages and conditions for work with children not moving up the ladder as only wages increase option, not 9 hours on the floor(time with the children, not administration), adult child ratios and minimum core number of teachers for collaboration ✓✓✓
- Take pressure away re things like fee collection
- Isolation because the teams are not as large as a primary school
- Mental health worker
- Valued within community
- Pay parity with other teachers ✓✓✓✓
- Access to relevant professionals to support them in their job

Cost-who should pay?

- Government funded to allow universal access –federal and state ✓✓✓✓✓
- A strong Employer Association

Equity across locations-rural/city

- Not specifically linked just to vulnerable communities,
- May have to have a rural loading in pay or other incentive, or professional development ✓
- Salaries and conditions will help with this equity
- Want the best staff in these isolated communities

Quality Rating System

What should be in a National Standards Framework

- Ratios
- Qualifications
- Safety
- Business accountability / management
- All other laws that relate to operation of children's services
- Turnover of staff
- Change to Child Care Act to include requirement of Uni Teacher for eligibility for funding.

Coverage

- All service types but big questions about the place of FDC – forces the lowest common denominator. All centre based care
- OSHC - recreation quality rating system - not education based system.
- All service types- one document with core principles across all service types with specific details for different service types
- Difficulty of making 1:3 ration for babies – should this be applied to FDC? If we take it from the child's perspective
- If we want an integrated system with licensing and quality standards together – the current time lines suggested could not be implemented in a workable way – in our professional opinion!
- Its about the child and what they deserve – FDC should have the same ratios etc as other service types.
- OSHC – need to have an educator present to assist children with homework.
- Ideal world there should be a teacher in OSHC.

Who should administer?

- National body or co-ordinated by national body but administered by States. Dangers of State based administration becoming localized interpretation loosing the national focus
- Needs to be a national body
- Distinct Quality rating system for each service type

What is a rating system supposed to do?

- What research is there on rating systems?
- A rating system needs to be supported by greater investment and incentives to enable all services to reach A.
- Rating system has to be meaningful.
- Attached to duration – years between accreditation visits

Objectives

- Continuous improvement and to reward services that are achieving continuous improvement
- Make things better for children
- We have lost the plot and instead of looking at what makes a difference for children we look at what makes a system.
- Focus is taken away from quality service delivery to children to provision of evidence to meet a system.

Design

- Like current banding – profile
- Minimal changes at this point to counter the constant pressure on staff to change and adapt