



# Social Justice In Early Childhood

## Response to the *Draft - Guide to the Standards*



Social Justice In Early Childhood (SJIEC) is a not for profit politically activist group that seeks to promote and address social justice issues pertaining to the lives of children. Its members consist of early childhood teachers and educators, consultants, academics, researchers, managers, representatives of community organisations and anyone interested in the rights of children. The group is Sydney based and has local, national and international members. SJIEC runs an annual conference - "Throwing the Baby out With the Bathwater", affordable professional development, and political campaigns. SJIEC is an independent group and is not aligned with any political party.

This document outlines the SJIEC response to the *Draft – Guide to the Standards*.



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## INTRODUCTION

This paper offers a critical appraisal of the *Draft - Guide to the Standards*. We begin this appraisal by stating our support for a National Quality Improvement and Accreditation System. It is our view that such a system is necessary to raise quality standards beyond minimum standards established by the states and territories.

We preface our submission by expressing concerns about the parameters within which we have been able to provide feedback. We reiterate our opposition to the proposed integration of the three current early childhood accreditation systems, before moving on to critiquing the *Draft - Guide to the Standards*. First, we critique the content of the *Draft - Guide to the Standards* and the processes by which this Draft is to be administered. Second, we raise questions about the proposed *Draft - Guide to the Standards* which we believe warrant further consideration and clarification. Third, we propose a model for Accreditation *and* Quality Improvement that we have built into the existing model provided by FaCSIA, which supports minimum satisfactory standards as well as innovation and excellence in children’s services. Lastly, we provide a series of recommendations for a more critical, meaningful and contextual *Guide to the Standards* that we believe will have a greater capacity to support and promote quality in children’s services.

## **CONCERNS OVER CONSULTATION PROCESS**

While this paper offers a critical appraisal of the *Draft - Guide to the Standards*, we consider that we have been left to do so with only a few of the available puzzle pieces that the Government has chosen to release. For example, while we have been invited to comment on the *Draft - Guide to the Standards*, we are obliged to do so without the *Draft - Assessors Report* or the *Draft - Service Report*. We are concerned that FaCSIA has chosen a fragmented delivery of information to the sector, which has had the effect of disempowering children's services staff and professionals in the consultation process. Such a process seems contrary to NCAC's commitment to integrity, probity, accountability, respect and professionalism.

SJIEC understands that FaCSIA intended to hold only one focus group of 20 participants for the entire Sydney region. We now understand that there were 15 focus groups held across Australia, yet this still seems a limited approach to gathering meaningful feedback. Such an approach would never constitute 'quality' practice of collaborative feedback for children's services staff and professionals.

We note with interest that the *Draft - Guide to the Standards* document has been co-authored by FaCSIA and NCAC. We are concerned that what we perceive as a 'watered down' version of previous Quality Improvement and Accreditation Systems may be the result of administrative intervention. We consider it incumbent that Quality Improvement and Accreditation Systems are reformed in ways that engender high quality education and care services.

## **OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED INTEGRATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS**

The SJIEC group maintains that FaCSIA's proposed integration of the three quality assurance systems is to the detriment of children attending Long Day Care, Family Day Care, and Out of School Hours Services. Given our shared concerns we urge FaCSIA to reconsider integrating the three systems and work towards developing three separate systems that address and support the uniqueness of each service type.

We reiterate our statements made to FaCSIA and NCAC in April 2007:

*"We strongly oppose an Integrated Quality Assurance System for children's services. We are concerned that an Integrated System will compromise the quality of all children's services, and we urge FaCSIA to reassess the*

*viability of integrating the three separate systems beyond the economic bottom line, and in the interest of early childhood education. We do not believe FaCSIA has provided any rationale as to how this integration will lead to improved quality standards and practices’.*

Recent research into state and territory child care regulations and the national childcare system of quality assurance (Fenech, Robertson, Sumsion, & Goodfellow, 2007; Tayler, Wills, Hayden, & Wilson, 2006) highlight a number of key concerns that collectively suggest that current regulatory accountabilities do not effectively promote or support high quality standards and practices in early childhood services. Both studies pointed to the need for state regulations and the system of quality assurance to:

- Target **high** quality education and care, and not minimum standards or ‘lowest common denominator’ practices;
- Encompass structural standards – staff to child ratios, group sizes and teacher qualifications in particular – that current research identifies as being conducive to high quality education and care;
- Be streamlined, but not watered down, so as to minimise the current regulatory burden;
- Monitor the standards of all centres whilst acknowledging the excellence of high quality centres and giving greater professional autonomy to teachers in these centres; and
- Be embedded in a more integrated policy approach to quality early childhood education and care. Such an approach would, for example, actively address the shortage of early childhood teachers and high staff attrition rates which impede high quality.

The proposed integrated system of Child Care Quality Assurance is not in keeping with any of these recommendations. Further, the proposed integrated system does not address the concerns Press (2006) raises about the QIAS as an effective measurer and promoter of quality. More substantial reform to the current system of quality assurance than is proposed is required in order to instil greater confidence in the system and more effectively promote quality in children’s services. The standards incorporated in the proposed system are not high enough to ensure that the lives of children are respected and that they receive the education and care they deserve to participate in society. Rather, they appear geared to minimums that untrained staff can meet.

Analysis of the 45 indicators by age groups and service types (Appendix 1) highlights the distinctiveness of Long Day Care, Family Day Care and Out of School Hours Care. For example:

- 62% of indicators make reference to a specific age group (28 of 45 indicators);
- 22% of indicators specify Family Day Care separately as a service type including two indicators specifically for Family Day Care alone (10 of 45 indicators);

- 24% mention specific service types (11 of 45 indicators); and
- 47% specifically mention infants and toddlers (21 of 45 indicators).

Given this distinctiveness, it seems nonsensical to pool together three very different service types into the one accreditation document. We anticipate confusion and anxiety for both staff and validators as they sift through each indicator to identify what is applicable to their particular service. Moreover, a consequence of this proposed integration is that indicators are so broad that they provide little guidance or support on how these indicators might be implemented by specific service types.

## **CRITIQUE OF THE CONTENT OF THE *DRAFT – GUIDE TO THE STANDARDS***

### Intent:

The proposed Guide is “designed to support services to meet the CCAS ... [and] inform service practice” (p.5). The proposed standards and indicators, however, are directed towards services providing quality education and care at a base level only. This means that services will be accredited if they are providing quality at a minimal level. This approach detracts from previous forms of accreditation that differentiated between those services providing quality at a high, good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory level. Consequently, the guide appears tailored to providers requiring support at this base level, but has little, if any, relevance or utility for services already operating at a good or high level. This shift to minimum standards can only counter the Minister’s objective of developing an accreditation system that will “help parents feel confident their children are receiving high quality care” (Brough, 2007, p.1).

For example, there is little difference between Standard 1 and clauses 64, 65, 66 of the NSW Children’s Services regulation 2004 in the standard required. This is a significant concern considering that the state based regulation is minimum standards, whilst the CCQA is intended to support quality, as has been the purpose of the national quality improvement system since its inception in 1994. As stated in Standard 17, “children’s services regulations and national standards set out minimum standards for the operation of children’s services ... the child care accreditation system builds on the foundation provided by licensing and national standards by addressing the components of quality child care”.

### Content

The questions for reflective practice are a strength in terms of structure. The preambles, however, are ambiguous, repetitive and give no clear indication of what quality standards are. This latter point is particularly significant as staff and professionals have yet to be advised what will be ‘measured’ and what will comprise the *Assessors Report*. The



discursive nature of the preambles and guides to practice could be better outlined using dot points that pertain to quality rather than minimum standards.

The content is outdated in terms of approaches to education, care and leisure and the language used to describe them. It is certainly not reflective of current early and middle childhood thinking in content, practice or pedagogy. For example, in Standard 2 Behaviour Guidance, the document states “...*Toddlers, for example, are establishing their sense of self and lack the willpower to always do what is asked of them.*” (p.18). The deficit model used to establish the Standards, Indicators and subsequent examples does not reflect contemporary approaches to early childhood education and care. This deficit approach detracts from children’s services staff and professionals’ existing knowledge and expertise.

Further, a number of standards clearly project an age defined education and care divide. For example, Standard 7.1, in its discussion of the environment supporting positive interactions, cites examples of practice such as providing quiet spaces for bottle feeding infants and toddlers and leaving space for ongoing projects that preschoolers and school age children can return to. Similarly, Standard 11.2 defines simplistic activities for infants and toddlers and creative interests for school aged children.

Vision for high quality:

This document lacks any inspiration for, or recognition of, children’s services staff and professionals who ‘go the extra mile’. It is flat, ordinary and boring. Standard 5 exemplifies this view. Moreover, there is no incentive for staff and professionals to try, to learn, or to be innovative. For example, Standard 1.4 refers to “practices that support continuity of care for children”, yet for LDC, there is no recognition of services that implement above regulation staff to child ratios, a factor that facilitates job satisfaction and reduces staff turnover. We reiterate our position that the CCQA ought to maintain high, good or satisfactory levels of quality.

Use of the term “child care professionals”:

We are concerned with the definition of children’s services “professionals”, and the claims made about these “professionals” in this document i.e., “anybody working with children whose work is guided by the Guide to the standards” (p. 7). Academic literature (for example see Sachs, 2002) confine the use of the term ‘professionals’ to those who have expert knowledge, have undertaken specialist training to gain the knowledge and skills required to work in a specialist field, engage in ongoing ethical decision-making and practices, undertake professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills base, and work with a high degree of autonomy. To label all staff in children’s services as “professionals” merely because they may use this document to guide their practice is highly problematic. Firstly, such a label effectively portrays early childhood teachers as technicians and negates the complexities working as a teacher professional involves. Secondly, such usage of the term ‘professional’ devalues the unique contribution



university qualified early childhood teachers make to quality ECEC and is contrary to research that demonstrates a correlation between qualified staff and higher quality (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2003).

#### Children's' learning:

- Once again we reiterate our opposition to an integrated system. It is imperative that the learning opportunity specifications in each service type be supported and facilitated in the name of quality. We believe that this is best facilitated in separate documents, so for example, to enable OOSH to focus in leisure. The way the document is structured assumes that learning and curriculum in LDC are two different entities. This is contrary to current approaches to the education and care of children (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006). If the government wishes to 'improve' educational outcomes for children a greater balancing of the responsibilities of 'care' and 'education' is required.
- Separating language and literacy from problem solving and curiosity is nonsensical. The *Draft – Guide to the Standards* makes it very easy for tokenistic approaches to be used in implementation of the specific learning areas. It is imperative that children's services staff and professionals undertake this work meaningfully and thus necessary that FaCSIA and NCAC present the standards with these expectations.
- The term curriculum does not appear in the document. This term is fundamental to the study of children's services professionals in TAFE and University and should therefore be reflected in all professional documents.
- Curriculum areas (eg., language, the arts, physical activity) are specified separately, yet early childhood professional literature stresses the importance of integrated learning (see Fleet, Patterson, & Robertson, 2006; MacNaughton, 2003; MacNaughton & Williams, 2004).
- The document has a heavy focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) - one perspective of teaching and learning. Whilst we acknowledge that children do 'develop', DAP has been a focus of international criticism in early and middle childhood as a limiting method of teaching and learning for at least 16 years (Kessler & Swadner, 1994; MacNaughton, 1995; New & Mallory, 1994). There are methods that are far more beneficial to children's learning that are not evident in this document (for examples see Fleet et al., 2006; MacNaughton, 2003; MacNaughton & Williams, 2004; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006). Child development should be used within a current understanding of contemporary images of children, their rights and capabilities.
- The ways in which FDC, OSHC and LDC talk about their practice varies significantly because each service type is so specific and requires its own guide to quality improvement. For example, terms like documentation and reflection have different meanings across service types because of context, qualifications and service provision.

#### Diversity and equity:

- Only indicators 8.3 and 8.4 of the *Draft – Guide to the Standards* address diversity and equity. This seems minimal given that research shows that equity and diversity should be central to children’s learning (Fleet et al., 2006; MacNaughton, 2003; MacNaughton & Williams, 2004; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006).
- That there is not greater reference to inclusion and diversity perpetuates a white middle class underpinning of the Standards, which is a great risk to Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander, CALD and Children with Special Rights and their families. Diversity and difference is an add-on, rather than an integral, fluid part of the document. We need to acknowledge the diversity of *all* people rather than singling out people other than white, Anglo English speaking people. In this document, white, Anglo English speaking is the ‘norm’ against which ‘diversity’ is judged. This problem could be addressed by having preambles to establish the broad philosophical and theoretical underpinning of the document, rather than relegating diversity and difference to add-on statements.
- Standard 8 Children’s Life Skills Indicator 8.4 reads that “*They help children to appreciate the importance of fairness and equity through role modelling*” (p.55). However, 50 years of research shows that this is not enough to make a difference to how children learn about what is fair and what is unfair. In addition, children have great knowledge of what is powerful and desirable and what is not which requires skilled intervention when injustice occurs where ‘role modelling’ will not suffice (MacNaughton, 2003).
- Please clarify what ‘reduction of bias’ means.

Professional practice:

- The current *Draft* fails to acknowledge critical reflection as fundamental to the process of working with children and families.
- The term ‘development’ appears frequently throughout the document. Albeit one perspective of working with children, ‘development’ nonetheless is not always the focus of the work that children’s services staff and professionals. For example, Indicator 2.1 espouses that “[c]hildren’s behaviour challenges are accepted as a normal part of development...behaviour guidance is ultimately about children’s development of self-control”. In a number of research studies, child care text books (see Fleet et al., 2006; MacNaughton, 2003; MacNaughton & Williams, 2004; Porter, 2003) and the previous Quality Practices Guide (2005), there was recognition that behaviour is not necessarily an individual issue but rather the result of relationships, diversity and difference. The shift backwards in statements like this is unacceptable for children’s services staff and professionals.
- Questions promote one way of thinking about children for example “*What do child care professionals want to record about children’s play, thinking, relationships, suggestions and learning?*” (p.38). This view assumes that recording information is the norm. It privileges written culture above oral, spiritual and non verbal. It assumes a particular kind of philosophy of learning.



- Standards pertaining to the management of the day to day running of a children's centre are weak and need to effectively include, address and support the rights and needs of children, families and educators
- The term leadership appears only 6 times in this document, yet leadership is a fundamental and necessary part of quality management and the professional practice of early childhood teachers (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). We suggest that there be a standard developed entitled 'Leadership and Management'. It is necessary to give clear definitions of leadership and management in order show their distinct differences.

#### Reflective Questions:

The inclusion of open ended questions in the *Draft Guide to the Standards* is a positive step, which contributes to improving early childhood practitioners' efforts in reflective practice. It is refreshing to see the Standards written in the form of questions rather than closed statements. In their current form, however the questions will only illicit descriptive information from children's services staff and professionals. This is because all the questions begin with 'how' or 'what', which will result in 'answers' rather than reflections. The easiest way to improve the reflective questions is to add a 'why' question on the end of each 'how' question. For example, on page 12:

*How do child care professionals share information to encourage continuity of care? **Why have these communication strategies been chosen over others?***

How do the questions relate to specific service types? What is the focus?

## **CRITIQUE OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE *DRAFT - GUIDE TO THE STANDARDS***

Whilst we are able to comment on the content of the *Draft – Guide to the Standards*, questions regarding the elephant in the room – the Assessors/validation report – remain.

- How will this report be structured?
- How will the *Draft – Guide to the Standards* be self studied and 'assessed'?
- Whilst the term 'quality' has been reinstated into the system's title, how will services be encouraged to work on 'continual improvement'?
- How will the Moderator component be structured and will NCAC retain external moderators for this process? In previous feedback, we have advocated for the role of the moderator. We implore FaCSIA to ensure that the external moderator



remains an integral component of the Quality Assurance System. External moderation is a necessary part of any quality improvement and accreditation process. If all accreditation decision making operates in house, the vision for children's services will be limited. We support ant efforts on the part of NCAC to make use of the expertise of community mentors who have many years of experience and knowledge to share in the early and middle childhood communities.

## **Outstanding Questions Regarding *Draft - Guide to the Standards***

- When will the complete set of documentation be available for consultation?
- What is the relationship between the Service Report and the *Draft – Guide to the Standards*? When will we receive this information?
- How will this new *Draft - Guide to the Standards* inspire, excite and encourage children's services staff professionals to strive for quality in their everyday work?

## **RATIONALE FOR A NEW MODEL FOR ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

What follows is a rationale for an alternative model of Quality Improvement and Accreditation. The framework (detailed in appendix 2) illustrates a streamlined method of working with minimum satisfactory standards as well as innovation and excellence. All too often the lowest common denominator dictates what 'quality' means. We believe that this model enables centres to reach compulsory standards whilst having the opportunity, voluntarily, to work towards innovation and excellence and to be recognised as such.

In this part of our submission we reiterate our position that an integrated child care system is neither workable nor desirable. What follows pertains to Long Day Care and accordingly includes content regarding education, curriculum and pedagogy. Whilst this content cannot be transferred across or into FDC or OSHC, we envisage that the structure and methodology can be implemented for both service types in the context of three separate systems.

Findings from a recent doctoral study (Fenech, 2006) which, in part, investigated how early childhood teachers perceive QIAS to impact on quality in LDC in NSW, support the inclusion of an *Innovative Practice* strand. Participants in the study highlighted the potential detrimental impact on quality QIAS was perceived to have on centres where staff were committed to providing high quality care. With its perceived technical,

prescriptive, and ‘one-size-fits’ all’ approach to quality, these teachers did not consider that QIAS supported or recognised innovative quality practices. Moreover, QIAS was perceived to constrain teachers’ professional autonomy and decision-making. Interviews with experienced teachers regarded as leaders in the field by their peers, revealed a deep sense of grief, dissatisfaction, and frustration with the current system of accreditation. These teachers perceived that QIAS today targets the “lowest common denominator”. As such, their initial hopes that the system would facilitate and acknowledge centres demonstrating quality standards of excellence have been eroded.

The Innovative Strand provides incentives for Centres to be Centres of Excellence in the standards of care and education they provide, rather than merely having to meet the lowest common denominator. We concur with the authors of the Review of National Standards (Tayler et al., 2006), commissioned by FaCSIA, when they state "[w]e argue for a consideration of a shift in thinking away from common minimum standards to aspirational standards in order to drive the field (in an on-going way) towards higher levels of quality" (p. 156). The Innovative Strand would therefore encompass the following initiatives:

- a) A Certificate that states whether a centre is accredited as either Standard or Innovative Practice;
- b) A List of Centres of Excellence would be made publicly available, e.g., on NCAC's website.

## **Outline of ‘Standard Practice’ Required for Accreditation**

As part of the Accreditation process, all children’s centres will be required to keep a compulsory journal or e-journal. Children’s centres with computer and internet access will be able to log-on to the NCAC website, enter a user-name and password, and submit quarterly reflections on their ongoing improvement and progress plan. Children’s Centres without internet access will not have to wait far beyond July 2008 when the new CCMS is rolled out. Until this time they can type or write their quarterly reflections and post to NCAC. *NCAC Assessors* are provided with these reflections when undertaking a Spot-Check or Re-Assessment. Children’s centres are encouraged to ensure their quarterly reflections are a result of input from all staff members. A minimum of four (4) journal entries per year is required, while additional entries are encouraged. These reflections then should form the basis of the service report, or what was previously known as the *Self Study*. This encourages centres to write as they go, rather than write their Service Report/Self Study just before they are due for Accreditation. It helps centres to pace their improvement, and makes reflective practice part of the everyday. We envisage it will help the centre to become more efficient at being continually critically reflective, and will

actually decrease the 'reporting' burden closer to Accreditation times. This approach is far better suited to the concept of ongoing improvement rather than '*Accreditation and/or Assessment*'.

In addition to journal entries, children's centres, as part of successful attainment of 'Standard Practice' in the Accreditation process, will be required to engage with contemporary professional literature to inform their planning, practice and evaluation. Evidence of the use of contemporary literature should be found in the children's centre's documentation. Children's centres should also show how contemporary literature has been used as basis for discussion and planning in staff meetings. Please refer to Appendix 3 for examples of references to contemporary professional literature.

### **Rationale for Guide to Critically Reflective Quality Practice in Children's Services as 'Standard Practice'**

Children's services staff and professionals have been exploring ways to reflect on daily practice for many years. Simultaneously, they have been seeking ways to think, change and reinvent daily practice using processes of critical thinking. An examination of the literature shows that this has occurred across early and middle childhood (for examples see MacNaughton, 2005; Sumsion, 2006).

By engaging in a process of critically reflective practice children's services staff and professionals are empowered to take the time to consider the legal, moral and ethical implications of working with children and their families. Contemporary thinking promotes reflective practice as a 'hallmark of quality' (MacNaughton, 2005, p.5). This means that children's services staff and professionals can and should be expected to be reflective about their daily work with children and families and with each other. Moreover, children's services staff and professionals operate within numerous legal, statutory and regulatory frameworks at the on state/territory and federal levels to be 'inclusive' and unbiased in their daily work. Research also shows that children's numeracy and literacy outcomes are higher when children feel a sense of justice, self esteem and belonging in children's services. Thus, a practice of *Critical Reflection* is necessary in order for this to occur. The following sample questions would be supportive of children's services staff and professionals engaging in critical reflection:

- Who is advantaged in this situation and who is disadvantaged?
- Who is given a voice in this situation and who is silenced?
- What power relations are operating in this situation?
- How can I work towards more equitable practice in this situation?
- How do these issues impact the child's learning? What could you do differently?
-

These questions are an example MacNaughtons (2005) definition of critical reflection. In the context of teaching and learning she explains:

inserting the ‘critical’ into critical reflection directs attention away from the individual and towards...the operation and effects of the power relationships *between* people. In all... relationships, critically reflective (child care professionals) seek to...work against that oppression and inequity (p.7).

Whilst the *Draft - Guide to the Standards* are not appropriate to or reflective of the history of the child care profession in Australia, or internationally for that matter, they do allude to a deployment of diversity and equity in the context of learning. This means that a practice of critical reflection can and should be a required as standard practice.

In order for services to provide any kind of quality, they must have a deep knowledge of the legislation and discourses that affect them. *Critical Reflection* enables child care professionals a space to consider why they engage in the practices they do; which children benefit and which children ‘miss out’ as a result of these practices, and how might practices be undertaken in ways that lead to greater equity and social justice. In other words, critical reflection is essential to the provision of quality education and care.

Leading Australian early childhood researchers have demonstrated repeatedly that critical reflection is a driving force in early childhood education (see MacNaughton, 2003, 2005; MacNaughton & Williams, 2004; Robinson and Jones Díaz, 2006, Arthur et al. 2004). *Critical Reflection* can become a framework for careful and deliberate decision making in the everyday work children’s services staff and professionals undertake with children. It is enabling in ways that benefit children, their learning, staff their teaching and as a knock on effect the community as well as educational institutions in which children will continue their education.

## **Outline of ‘Innovative Practice’ Required for Accreditation**

Although debated and discussed by many in the early childhood field, what constitutes high quality practice is difficult to define (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Moss, 2001; Moss & Petrie, 2002). So, by deliberately creating opportunities for Centres who are operating in innovative ways to ‘self nominate’ practices for ‘Assessment’, this makes possible recognition of the work that many children’s services staff and professionals do that sits outside a ‘one size fits all’ Accreditation status. The *Innovative Practice* Strand involves children’s centres meeting compulsory aspects in combination with at least three (3) optional aspects of innovation. These aspects are detailed below.

## Determining/Compulsory Practice

Following the requirements of the *Standard Accreditation Strand*, children's centres participating in the *Innovative Practice Strand* are firstly required to maintain a Journal or e-Journal, the frequency of entries required on a monthly basis. As previously explained, journal entries are sent to NCAC either by internet or post, and are compiled by NCAC and given to the *NCAC Assessor* for the next Spot Check or Re-Assessment. In the *Innovative Practice Strand*, children's centres are able to nominate points of assessment in the journal or e-journal, which the *NCAC Assessor* is obliged to review on their next visitation to the children's centre.

The second compulsory aspect involves children's centres building relationships with *Critical Friends*. This requires the children's centre to establish links with universities, TAFE or professional people from peak organisations, to engage their expertise to evaluate, and/or give advice and support, and to listen and learn from the ideas and concerns of early childhood educators at the centre, on a regular basis. The notion of 'critical' friend is vital to this aspect, where the centre and critical friend engage in professional critical reflection around practice and work towards goals for improvement in an ongoing fashion. Centres should be able to show evidence of communicating with their Critical Friend/s on a bi-monthly basis. Documentation of involvement with Critical Friend/s can be incorporated into the e-journal. Contemporary professional literature should be used to form the basis for discussions and communication.

The third and final compulsory component requires all staff within the centre to participate in regular (minimum 3 times per year) professional development training or workshops, at least one of which is curriculum related.

## Contributing/Optional Aspects of Innovation

The following aspects are Optional Aspects of Innovation. The children's centre will be required to show evidence of at least three (3) of these aspects, in combination with the three Compulsory Aspects, in order to be considered for the *Innovative Practice Strand*. These are detailed below:

- Reconciliation with and learning from Indigenous Australians (mainstream/non indigenous centres): Centres show the methods by which learning between indigenous and non indigenous ideas about teaching and learning are being sought and implemented in the daily living in a children's centre
- Reconciliation with and learning from Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal Centres): Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centres should have the scope



to identify and practice teaching and learning that is culturally relevant and where possible be mentoring the non indigenous community.

- Research participation: Where possible, the centre is able to prove participation in research conducted by a recognised university, college or research institute that seeks to investigate curriculum; quality; cultural practices; teacher research; or educator research.
- Post Graduate Study/Research: At least one (1) staff member is involved in postgraduate study or postgraduate research, and uses this expertise to inform practice within the centre.
- Qualifications: 70% of staff have attained qualifications above and beyond regulatory requirements and/or are not otherwise recognised by Australian regulatory departments (e.g.: overseas qualifications in postgraduate certificate, Masters or PhD).
- Low turn over of staff: The centre is able to prove at least 20% of staff have worked at the children's centre for at least 5 years and 70% of staff have worked at the children's centre for at least 2 ½ yrs. Centres demonstrate strategies utilised to actively enhance staff retention.
- Use of theories and theorists: The centre is able to show how staff use theories and theorists to rationalise and question educational thinking and contribute to early and middle childhood education and care. Please refer to Appendix 4 for examples of theories and theorists.
- Innovative leadership and management techniques: the centre clearly demonstrates that innovation in leadership and management is reflected in a range of ways including, but not limited to, strength based practice, evidence based leadership, mentoring and coaching and democratic principles of leadership; and the centre utilizes professional literature and contemporary theory to extend and reflect approaches to leadership and management.

## THE WAY FORWARD

1. Reverse the decision to integrate the three systems:



- i. Each service type (LDC, FDC & OOSHC) should have unique Quality Assurance Systems that support quality practices and use more contemporary philosophical and theoretical underpinnings;
  - ii. Accredited status should include three levels of quality: satisfactory, good and high;
  - iii. Moderation should continue to be part of the Accreditation process;
  - iv. A new quality strand should be introduced to support centres that are innovative;
  - v. The innovative strand is to be awarded only to centres that meet high quality in the Accreditation System and that show evidence of practice in the requirements for Innovative Practice;
2. Conduct comprehensive and authentic consultation and collaboration with the early childhood field, paying particular attention to early childhood professionals working directly with children in children's services.
3. Reinstate the goal for services to *improve quality* on an ongoing basis by reinserting levels of quality, as well as considering possibilities for a strand of practice that is recognised as innovative or best practice. Consider funding incentives for services that achieve this higher recognition. Please refer to our Submission *Proposed Model for Accreditation System for Long Day Care Centres*, submitted to FaCSIA this year and reinserted in this current response to the *Draft – Guide to the Standards*.

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## APPENDIX 1: ANALYSIS OF INDICATORS IN *DRAFT* BY AGE GROUPS/SERVICE TYPES

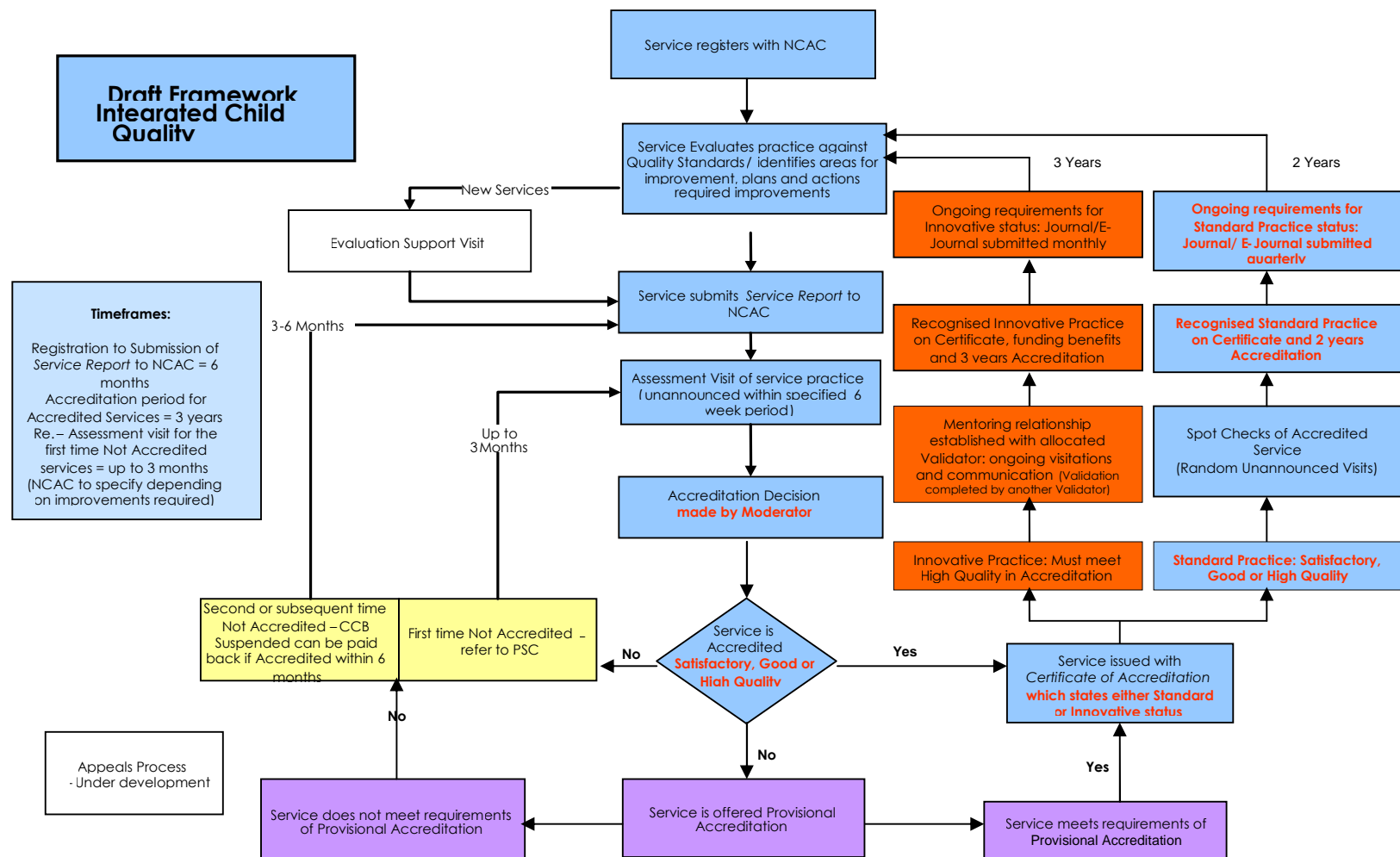
Indicator	Age groups distinguished	How <i>Draft – Guide to the Standards</i> distinguishes age group or service type
1.1	YES	Infants & Toddlers
1.2	YES	Infants
1.3		OSHC
1.4		Family Day Care Service Type
2.1	YES	Infants & Toddlers; School Aged Children
2.2	YES	Infants & Toddlers
2.3		
3.1		
3.2	YES	Infants & Toddlers; Preschoolers
3.3		
3.4		
4.1		
4.2		
4.3	YES	School Aged Children
4.4		Family Day Care Service Type Indicator
5.1		
5.2		
6.1		
6.2	YES	“Older Children”
6.3		
6.4		
7.1	YES	Infants; Toddlers; Preschoolers; School Aged Children
7.2	YES	School Aged Children
7.3	YES	Infants & Toddlers
7.4	YES	Infants & Toddlers
7.5	YES	Infants & Toddlers
7.6		Family Day Care Service Type
8.1	YES	Infants & Toddlers
8.2	YES	School Aged Children
8.3		
8.4		



Indicator	Age groups distinguished	<b>How Draft – Guide to the Standards distinguishes age group or service type</b>
9.1	YES	Infants & Toddlers
9.2	YES	Infants & Toddlers; Preschoolers; School Aged Children
9.3	YES	Infants & Toddlers; School Aged Children
10.1	YES	Infants & Toddlers; Preschoolers; School Aged Children
10.2	YES	Infants & Toddlers; Preschoolers; School Aged Children
11.1	YES	Infants & Toddlers
11.2	YES	Infants & Toddlers; School Aged Children
12.1	YES	Preschoolers; School Aged Children
12.2	YES	Infants & Toddlers
13.1		
13.2	YES	Infants & Toddlers
13.3	YES	Infants & Toddlers; School Aged Children
13.4	YES	“Younger children”; “Older Children”
13.5	YES	Infants; “Children”
14.1		Family Day Care Service Type specified
14.2		Family Day Care Service Type specified
14.3		Family Day Care Service Type specified
14.4		Family Day Care Service Type specified
15.1		
15.2		
15.3		Family Day Care Service Type specified
15.4		
15.5		
15.6		
16.1		Family Day Care Service Type specified
16.2		
17.1		Family Day Care Service Type specified



## APPENDIX 2: ADAPTED FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARD AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICE



Draft CCQA Framework for Discussion – prepared by FaCSIA and NCAC 2007 Australian Government 2007, Adapted by Miriam Giugni, Kathryn Bown & Marianne Fenech 25<sup>th</sup> February 2007

## APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLES OF CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

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## APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLES OF THEORIES AND THEORISTS

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## GLOSSARY

Term	Instead of	Rationale
Early Childhood Education/ Early Childhood Centres	Childcare or Children's Services	Our work is not related to minding children. Feminist principles – women are not providing a service but are participating in a centre with families, children and the community. Consistent with language used in current research and contemporary literature, for example, the recent OECD (2006) Starting Strong II report
Early Childhood Profession	Childcare Sector	Early childhood teachers (having equal qualifications to those of primary school teachers) are constantly struggling to justify and promote their work with children as requiring a professional approach and capacity
Early Childhood Staff (Unqualified or Diploma) Early Childhood Teacher (University Qualified) Early Childhood Educators (encompassing all staff)	Childcare Workers <i>or</i> Childcarers	Using the term 'childcare' or 'childcarers' to describe the people who work in this field (i) does not appropriately or sufficiently describe the roles and responsibilities required for working with children (ii) perpetuates societal perceptions that early childhood staff are merely carers of children
Family Day Care provisions	Family day care businesses	The notion of 'business', for many in early childhood, is problematic because of its potential to lead to compromises in quality standards of education and care
Early Childhood Profession	Childcare Industry	As above
Interactions, Relationships, Experiences, Challenges	Child Development/ Age Appropriate Play	Further consultation about contemporary theories and approaches in early childhood education will clarify this request.