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INSIDE:

Developing A Quality Improvement Plan

Support from the PSCA for the NQF

The Art of Teaching for Relationships

A Pathway to Sustainability

The Potential of Partnerships

The ACECQA and the NQF



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The opinions expressed in *Reflections* are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of Gowrie Australia. By publishing diverse opinions we aim to encourage critical reflection and motivate practitioners in Children's Services to respond. Gowrie Australia's privacy policy precludes the use of children's names. Fictitious names are substituted.

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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first edition of *Reflections* for 2012. With the commencement of the National Quality Framework, this year is the beginning of an era that promises so much for education and care services in Australia. For many in the early childhood education and care sector, the National Reform Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care, of which the NQF is one part, is the fruition of a long held vision for Australia's young children. Early childhood education and care often slips under the radar in public debate, but it has been identified by all major educated nations as critical to support the aspirations of improved outcomes for our youngest citizens. The lifelong benefits of quality education and care are well documented, so such reforms, as agreed to through the Council of Australian Governments, should be embraced by families, educators and indeed the broader community.

Over the holiday period there has been much written and spoken about the Reform Agenda and initiatives therein. Unfortunately, much of this has focused on the negativity associated with the cost of the reforms and the impact on families. Despite the reports regarding the cost of education and care, it is more affordable now than ever, with the Federal Government providing means tested child care benefit and child care rebate for 50% of out-of-pocket expenses.

Evidence based research tells us that the early years of a child's development, that is, that period prior to formal school, is the most critical in terms of learning and development. Positive experiences, in stimulating and nurturing environments, play an integral role on a child's future intellectual and social potential and contribute to better outcomes throughout the child's life.

Therefore, we have an obligation to ensure children are given the best possible start through access to quality education and care services. The two key determinants of quality have been researched and are identified as the qualifications of those providing the education and care curriculum, and the adult to child ratios. So, the reform initiatives of improved qualifications of educators, and better ratios, are a move in the right direction. If we are to fulfil this obligation, these reforms should be seen as positive strategies. Quality does cost and there will be challenges in the implementation of the reforms.....but what price do we place on our most valuable asset?

Education and care is complex – an essential component in the lives of many families as they balance work and family responsibilities – and crucial to supporting the economy of this country. There are many issues yet to be faced, including improved wages and conditions for educators in the sector. But we have to start somewhere, and the reforms will bring some of these complexities to the forefront and raise the status and standing of a sector, which has been the poor relation of the education system for too long.

In this edition of *Reflections*, contributors share their own journey of the NQF and Learning Frameworks, provide information on resources to support the implementation and, importantly, provide wonderful examples of practice and continuous improvement. On behalf of my Gowrie colleagues, I hope these articles support each of you in your own professional journey as we, together, embark on this quality agenda.

Until next time....

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CEO Lady Gowrie Tasmania

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- Sue Hart – *Gowrie Victoria*
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4 Developing A Quality Improvement Plan



6 The role of the Professional Support Coordinator Alliance (PSCA)



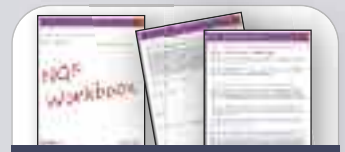
9 The Art of Teaching for Relationships



12 A Pathway to Sustainability



14 Better Outcomes Together: The Potential of Partnerships



17 Introducing the NQF Workbook



18 The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority and the NQF

20 Back Cover - National & International Conference Updates

Dear Children's Service Provider,

For the last 11 years Gowrie Australia's *Reflections* has been circulating in a magazine format to children's services across the country. As with any printed material, we have been aware of the difficulties for our readership of sharing within a large team, and costs of printing and distribution have increased over the years.

It is therefore with great pleasure that we announce that *Reflections* is now available to download for free, as an e-magazine from Gowrie websites. This has been made possible via funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

The e-magazine format will allow individuals to access content at their convenience. We hope that this will mean that specific articles can be selected and circulated for distribution to staff and families - to stimulate professional conversations and learning within staff teams and to support understanding and partnerships within centre communities.

Follow any of the links below to start downloading your very own e-copy of *Reflections*:

www.gowrie-brisbane.com.au

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www.gowrie-tas.com.au

www.gowrievictoria.org.au

www.gowrie-wa.com.au



Developing A Quality Improvement Plan

Author:
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Il Nido Children's Centre

Il Nido Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting was one of the twenty-one sites that participated in the initial national trial of the new National Quality Standards (NQS) in 2010. While the process had very short timelines, including ten days for us to become familiar with the new NQS, we were able to review our current practices, policies and procedures against the then draft NQS and create a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Since 2010 we have spent the past eighteen months looking at how to best improve our practices while further developing our QIP.

It is vital for sites to demonstrate that their centre or scheme has gone through a critical self-review process. Within this process, centres compare their current practices with the National Quality Standards and identify both strengths and areas for improvement. In 2011 we had the ideal opportunity to do this when our centre went through DIAF (DECS Improvement and Accountability Framework) implemented by the now SA Department of Education and Child Development. This process of self-reflection made us realise that we didn't want the self-review and improvement agenda to lie with just one person. Subsequently, we formed a Site Improvement Team (SIT) consisting of our Director, Assistant Director, one of our Preschool Teachers and our Community Development Coordinator and gave this team the responsibility of establishing a timeline for the process of the self-review and the writing of the QIP.



We established training on the Early Years Learning Framework and the new National Quality Standards in 2011 and 2012. We spent staff meetings focusing on 1 or 2 of the quality areas using the questions found in each of the quality areas to guide reflection. In addition, recognising that people within our staff team have different learning styles, we have used different ways of sharing our knowledge of the new standards - team-building activities, scavenger hunts, a quiz and brainstorming sessions have been incorporated into the sessions. Through this training process, staff have commenced identifying strengths and areas for improvement and these insights have formed the foundation for the writing of the QIP.

In our case we decided to use the QIP template provided by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). While it is a large document (41 pages), this latest version is user friendly, allowing us scope to input a lot more information about our centre than had been allowed for previously. It is now a requirement that all services develop a QIP that addresses all 7 Quality Areas, including those areas where services feel they are meeting or exceeding the standard. Centres bear the responsibility for documenting how they will maintain or improve current practices. In our site we have identified some areas where we would like to pursue further professional development, or self-funded action research project, even though this isn't part of the standards.

In writing our QIP we have struggled, surprisingly, with writing about our strengths! We discovered that we didn't want to appear too self assured, and it has taken time to realise that this is our opportunity to

advocate for what we think we are doing well, and to demonstrate the ways we feel that we already meet the standards. We have a large team of 30 educators and there has needed to be some compromise in writing the QIP, particularly in terms of what would remain in it. Like most sites, we are probably over critical of ourselves, and we have had to spend time identifying those key standards/elements that we all agree need to be improved.

As our Site Improvement Team continue down the journey of finalising our QIP we have worked at engaging our parents and community. We have gained their input by displaying the different drafts, as well as an explanation of the process we have undertaken to come to each stage. We have displayed the drafts both before, and after, our two previously mentioned reviews, and parents have been encouraged to give input through the use of open ended questions displayed around the draft QIP, for example, *"How would you like to see our forms of communication change or do they meet your needs?"* Our Governing Council have also been able to provide input by reviewing the documents and providing valuable input from parents' perspective of what they value and what they would like to see changed.

All existing services have to have their QIP developed by 30th April 2012 and the plan has to be reviewed on an annual basis. It is our intention that our QIP will continue to be a living document, as it has been for the past two years, and that it will evolve to reflect the changes that we make as a team, to improve the quality of service we provide to the children and families in our site.



The Role of the Professional Support Coordinator in Supporting **YOU** with the National

All children's services will be attending closely to the requirements of the National Quality Framework (NQF) now that the system has commenced (from 1st January 2012). Education and Care services should by now have implemented the new ratios of one staff to four babies under two years of age. For all services measures should now be well underway to develop a service Quality Improvement Plan due to be completed by 30th April 2012.

While many services have been in the process of preparing for these changes some may need additional support to implement the new requirements. Two key areas have been identified where services will potentially need additional information. These include leadership, and managing change. As with any significant change process it can be anticipated that there will be a variety of responses from people within services, and site leaders have a significant role in achieving a positive approach to the changes.

It helps to ensure that all people within a site have an accurate understanding of the rationale for the changes. Simply put, the changes are designed to improve the quality of services so that there are better outcomes for children and families. The NQF sets a new National Quality Standard for all children's services which, depending on the state, may include preschool education, child care services and family day care. In addition to better outcomes for children, the NQF is designed to achieve:

- national consistency
- better integration of education and care and
- a raising of the status and professionalism of children's services staff.

It is important to remember that since July 2009, many educators, parents and community members have contributed to the process of developing the national regulations and the new quality system with extensive consultation, opportunities to make submissions, and to respond to discussion papers, and with regular information also made available.



ator Alliance (PSCA) Quality Framework (NQF)

Authors:
Kaye Colmer
Christine Burgess
PSC Alliance

A significant aspect of the NQF is that the changes acknowledge the significance of the early years for children's development and the important role that educators play in the lives of children and families. Under the NQF a key requirement is for improved qualification requirements, making linkages between formal qualifications for educators and outcomes for children. This requirement will mean that many existing educators will need to participate in programs to achieve the Certificate III or Diploma qualification.

Service leaders can use this requirement as an opportunity for renewal, encouraging experienced educators to undertake formal education which will recognise their practical on-the-job knowledge and experience but provide an opportunity to understand theoretical underpinnings of practice. In the longer term, it is expected that improving the qualifications of children's services educators may contribute to improved career structures and retention rates, as well as quality outcomes.

Although the National Quality Standards involves new requirements, it is expected that staff that have participated in the previous accreditation system will identify with the processes involved,

so that NQF will build on the experience and knowledge of children's services and the ability of services to participate in continuous improvement processes. In the new system, educators will be expected to be able to talk about and explain their practice to Authorised Officers (Assessors), further acknowledging the professionalism of educators.

In leading these changes a key consideration for site leaders will be to ensure that educators in their service are fully informed and supported to explore the impact of changes. It is recommended that collaborative leadership approaches, where conversations and discussions shape the implementation of the changes, is likely to ensure that changes made within services are sustained and that all stakeholders (educators, children, families and communities) are engaged and committed to the improvements.

Children's services are able to access a range of materials and information that will support them to implement the NQF through the Professional Support Coordinators (PSC) in each state and territory. PSCs are contracted by the Australian Government under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) to provide support for

services to understand the national initiatives, and provide professional development and support for practical assistance in making the necessary changes. The purpose of the National Professional Support Coordinator Alliance (PSCA) is to ensure that the state and territory PSCs work together, so that support materials and workshops that are produced are nationally consistent, and accurately reflect the Government's changes.

As Gowrie Australia is now receiving support from DEEWR to ensure that *Reflections* magazine also supports the implementation of the National Quality Agenda, the PSCA has been invited to provide information about the national resources currently available. The PSCA website provides an easy point of access for all materials – including workshops, online resources, e-tips, factsheets and newsletters – to familiarise services with the requirements of the National Quality Framework, including the National Quality Standards, the National Regulations, the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care. It is recommended that services check the PSCA website www.pscalliance.org.au for support and current information, as it is regularly updated.

What NQF support is available in 2012?

A range of new professional development activities and resources have been developed to support leaders and educators with the specific requirements of the NQF. In response to sector feedback, a variety of delivery modes will also be offered. These will include workshops, in-service training, professional conversation sessions, network hubs, and mentoring, with some online options available. Each of these packages includes e-tips and factsheets to support ongoing learning and reflection within staff teams.

New NQF packages include:

- 1. Financial viability and budgeting for implementing the National Quality Framework.** This package explores the critical aspects of preparing a budget for the transition to the NQF.
- 2. Change management: Working with families and educators to implement NQF changes.** This package explores strategies for engaging the whole community in the process of change and for mapping out consultation possibilities with families, children and a staff team.
- 3. Articulation of current curriculum.** This package supports educators to build skills and confidence to talk about their practice with assessors including the what, how and why behind their programs and practices.
- 4. Leadership for implementing Learning Frameworks.** This package explores creating a positive team culture where educators are motivated and understand how the NQF and Learning Frameworks complement each other. It explores the role of the Educational Leader and builds on existing team leadership to work through the NQF changes.
- 5. Connecting with families and communities: Engaging with the NQF.** This package explores partnerships with families, educators and the wider community and how this supports children's wellbeing and learning.
- 6. Quality: Evaluation and Assessing Practice for the NQF.** Research shows that ongoing learning and reflection influences practice and the outcomes for children and families. This package explores assessment, evaluation and reflection strategies to support the requirements of the NQF.
- 7. Policies for the NQF.** This package takes you through the NQF policy requirements and will help identify what other policies would be useful for your service. It covers the necessities for creating, sourcing and referencing policies and where to go for further information.

For more information on professional development and support available in your state or territory, contact your local Professional Support Coordinator:

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Communities@Work
www.actpsc.com.au
actpsc@commstatwork.org
Phone 1800 228 772

NORTHERN TERRITORY

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Phone 1800 138 662

NEW SOUTH WALES

Children's Services Central
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info@cscentral.org.au
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QUEENSLAND

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The Art of Teaching for Relationships

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With the introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework comes acknowledgement of early childhood educators' long held belief in the importance of social emotional development for success in school and life. The importance of relationships to a child's development and learning is evident in the fact that at least 10 of the 19 EYLF key components of learning emphasise the role of relationships in learning. These components are drawn from each of the 5 learning outcomes. The National Quality Framework also brings a need for educators to clearly articulate why, and how, they support and enhance children's emotional wellbeing, and their relationships with others on a daily basis.



Increasingly we see programs and interventions, many of which have grown out of behaviour management tools, promoted as developing social and emotional skills. While such programs offer support to educators, their focus on behaviour management and behaviour issues is fundamentally different from the goal of developing *positive relationships*. The true “art of teaching” involves planning based on professional knowledge, together with listening to, talking with, and playing alongside children.

If relationships are a foundation of learning in the early years, then it is imperative that educators maintain responsibility for curriculum decision making and planning, designing programs that address the needs of each unique child and group of children that they teach. Given the range of issues we all face in our varied settings, it is tempting to look for easier options, but... *“Competence in building and maintaining relationships with others involves a complex interplay of feelings, thoughts, and skills. While these components take a long time to learn, their foundations are laid in early childhood by responsive, patient, and supportive parents, teachers, and other adults, and in the context of a variety of opportunities to interact with peers.”* (Katz and McClelland, 1997:1).

By knowing and planning for our children as individuals, rather than fitting them into a pre-planned program, we provide them with the opportunity for

learning from authentic, experiences. Relationships are changeable at this age, as children grapple with the intricacies of social interactions and their own emotions. Taking the time to use everyday interactions as learning experiences will add depth to children’s learning. Authentic experiences which are normalised, rather than staged, are more likely to result in developing skills being transferred to different contexts, outside of the planned session.

As early childhood educators we know that teaching for relationships should include:

- A sense of order, including clearly organised space and time, and reassurance from calm, empathetic adults that support is available to children, even at the most challenging times. A sense of order provides security for young children, allowing them the freedom to begin to consider the needs of others, an important aspect of relationships.
- An attitude of respect toward each member of a setting, adults and children alike. Genuine respect creates a sense of positiveness where members know that their ideas and efforts are valued and that regardless of the situation, individuals will be treated empathetically. This respect builds an atmosphere of trust that adults and children will care for one another.
- Clear expectations, important for young children’s developing self-regulation, and reinforced in a caring and respectful manner.
- A strong sense of self-worth and competence for ALL children. The curriculum needs to value children, regardless of background, behaviour, abilities or interests and help them to experience satisfaction and success in activities, and to see themselves as capable, competent and appreciated.
- Good communication focussed on “caring talking” and “caring listening”. Adults who support children to communicate in a caring way model such communication.

- The use of problem solving in a range of situations including social dilemmas. Teaching a problem solving strategy - *define the problem, brainstorm possible solutions, select a solution, implement and evaluate* - empowers young children and provides them with the skills to feel confident and capable. Embracing challenging situations and engaging children in problem solving gives a powerful message of our trust in children to handle real problems.

Reflection on specialised programs for social emotional development, and on strategies used by colleagues, provides opportunities for educators to enhance their own teaching style while maintaining responsibility for curriculum decisions. Strategies that could be incorporated for developing positive relationships may include:

- Meeting for “circle times” which allows for acknowledgment of everyone in the group, sharing experiences and addressing issues together. A circle permits everyone to see the person speaking, identifying group members and assisting communication - first steps in building relationships. Transition and routine times provide opportunities for structured experiences that encourage interaction with different children. These experiences may include challenging children to sit beside someone who they don't normally play with, role play at transition times to practise speaking to others, or “Surprise Names” at lunch tables, where children broaden their social connections, and skills, in a supportive environment. Partner relaxation sessions – stroking a partner's hand/forehead/cheek as soft music plays – can also bring children together and develop an environment of trust.
- Encouraging play that provides authentic reasons, and intrinsic motivation, for children to generate ideas, and to engage in exploration, interaction, communication and problem solving. Games of pretend, or fantasy play, such as fire-fighters, doctors and mermaids are an example of such play and provide a social context for children's activities. Relationships cannot be avoided as children “visit” one another's games, interweaving games to build increasingly complex scripts of social play. Such integration of games requires children to acknowledge one another's ideas and needs, utilising social, communication, and problem solving skills.
- Ensuring clear expectations are in place to assist in developing positive relationships. Establishing expectations should involve negotiation and discussion with children. Often expectations can be met through problem solving with children (“How can we help everyone to play together in the mud-patch?”), valuing their ability to consider different perspectives and to resolve situations. At other times, it is important for educators to recognise that adults need to actively assist children to regulate their emotions and behaviour. This should be handled respectfully, acknowledging the child's thoughts and feelings (“I can see that you are feeling frustrated, disappointed, angry...”), stating calmly what needs to happen and supporting the child to resolve the situation.

- Adopting a respectful approach that supports bringing children “in close” at challenging times rather than sending them away – “I can see it is hard to listen when you sit beside Tim. Here's a space by me. I'll help you to join in the group.” By maintaining a calm and in-control presence, children feel secure that adults will help even when the child's emotions and self-regulation are out of control. Likewise, when altercations occur, children can be supported to maintain their self-esteem while taking responsibility for their actions, “Bill, I want you to ask Tim if he is ok and come and get a drink of water for him. Then we can solve the problem.”
- And “catching” children demonstrating appropriate relationship skills – a much more effective strategy than responding to inappropriate skills. Giving descriptive praise reinforces relationship behaviour - “Suzie, that made Josh smile when you complimented his painting. I think he really appreciated that.” Pre-empting positive interactions - “Chris, thanks for helping Matt with that heavy box.” (even as Chris is about to walk away) is a positive way to influence relationships and self-esteem.

Relationships are complex and, as with all areas of development, some children require more or less support in learning how to relate to others. As EYLF and the NQS demonstrate, however, this is an area of learning and developing that is crucial for young children. Teaching for relationships can form the basis of an early years curriculum. The depth of thinking involved in relationships means that such a focus can enhance skills required for success in school and life. These skills include problem solving, language use, perspective taking, recognising and responding to a range of feelings, emotional regulation, depth of thought, empathy and assertiveness, and action and reaction.

Teaching for relationships is not easy. It does require time, patience, energy, and commitment on the part of educators, together with collaboration with co-workers and parents, and the setting of realistic goals. But this is part of the “art of teaching”, a specialised skill and knowledge base that early childhood educators bring to education and to society.

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A Pathway to Sustainability

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In May 2009 Mission Australia (MA) purchased 29 of the non-viable ABC centres across 5 states: 13 in New South Wales, 8 in Victoria, 3 in South Australia, 3 in Western Australia and 2 in the Northern Territory. Mission Australia did this with a view of investing in the early years of children's lives and providing better pathways to health and well being for children in disadvantaged areas.

We inherited centres with occupancy in some centres as low as 16%, run down buildings, yards that had been stripped bare and, worst of all, disillusioned and disempowered staff. What was this contributing to outcomes for the children in those centres? Where would we begin to turn these centres around on a limited budget? An impossible task?

I commenced at MA as National Director of Early Learning Services in September 2010 after the centres had been in operation as MA for 16 months. The first year of operation had not been successful at all, with huge losses at each centre. What's more, we had all 29 centres due for their self-studies for Accreditation in October.

We started by assembling our state operational managers and support staff, National Program Advisor and National Quality Advisor, identifying our major challenges for the next three years and developing a plan of how we were going to overcome these challenges. We developed a vision and a plan. We identified our three major challenges as: the staff, the environments and financial sustainability.

The past 12 months have seen massive change within our early learning services: we have rebranded, developed a positioning statement, set ourselves long and short term goals and approached the turn around of our business in a strategic manner.

We have focused on a point of difference in promoting the benefits of the natural environment for children's development and learning. Seven of the centres have had major renovations to their outdoor spaces and all centres are adhering to our de-cluttering policy.

In terms of the staff our goal has been to put the right people in place and this has meant some attrition, but also new blood, new people who share our vision and believe that it can be achieved. An Enterprise Agreement was negotiated with staff giving them some above award conditions. Our National Program and Curriculum Advisor, Cathy Tighe, provides training across the services and has developed a resource list including both books and equipment and focuses on using recycled and natural materials in the programs.

The environmental transformations have been a huge task but, with assistance from a private donor, we have been able to totally transform seven of the gardens as shown in the photos on this page. Other grants have helped establish vegetable gardens, chook pens and other smaller additions to the outdoor areas.

For the inside of the centres many staff have given of their own time to come in and paint on weekends. We developed our own colour palette of neutral shades that centres can choose from.

A competition for the most attractive foyer saw some amazing results and healthy rivalry between the staff teams with vouchers for equipment as the reward. Our e-newsletter is the vehicle for information sharing and 'showing off' what can be done on a limited budget.

As for our Accreditation, 25 of the 29 centres received High Quality, 2 Good Quality and 2 of the centres are working towards Accreditation. Our National Quality Advisor, Karen Moore, was instrumental in this great achievement, providing training and guidance for staff during the process.

All of this has been achieved with the fantastic support of the Board of Mission Australia and the whole of the MA team. To have the weight of such an iconic organisation and the financial backing of the Board inspires the early learning team every day. We are well on the way to financial sustainability and the provision of high quality education and care for all of the children in Mission Australia Early Learning Services.



Spring harvest August 2011 at Mission Australia Early Learning Service Springvale South



Children at Mission Australia Early Learning Service Elizabeth Vale explore their new log

Better Outcomes Together: The Potential of Partnerships

Author:
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SNAICC

Recently the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) undertook a project to learn about genuine and respectful partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and mainstream service providers. The services that participated revealed that successful partnerships can increase families' access to vital supports and contribute to improved outcomes for children and families. SNAICC found that partnerships can build mutual capacity for service delivery, empower local communities and increase culturally appropriate service provision. Key to this research for SNAICC was unpacking the important aspects in the set up and management of the partnerships that assisted organisations to achieve such success. Based on this research, SNAICC has identified key policy priorities and practical ideas to support and advocate for the future development of good practice partnerships.

In the remote community of Wyndham, in Western Australia's East Kimberley region, Save the Children partnered with Joorak Ngarni Aboriginal corporation to foster the development of a community initiative supporting mothers, babies and young children. Since 2005 the Wyndham Early Learning Activity (WELA) has evolved from a playgroup to an incorporated and independent broader service with activities including focused learning for children with their mums, health and nutrition support, transition to school support, a breakfast club, a women's centre and more recently men's groups.

WELA Coordinator, Jane Parker, explained to SNAICC that WELA's growth has been made possible through the partnership. Anthea Whan, of Save the Children, stressed that working in partnership with WELA is about helping WELA to meet their objectives and not about the prominence of Save the Children. She described Save the Children's approach of strengthening local Aboriginal and community based organisations to be responsive to their own community. In Wyndham this entails taking WELA's lead to build on the strengths of the Mum's group and ensuring WELA has access to Save the Children's local and national support, training and development opportunities. In the partnership, WELA asserts that all programs and services should be relevant to the community, the programs must be flexible and that WELA needs to grow to provide holistic services and local leadership.

Building a relationship based on trust has been the most important ingredient to make the partnership work. Save the Children has established a strong presence in the community, fostering the relationship through listening to community needs and has been patient in supporting the community to express these needs. WELA recognised that Save the Children value their perspective and what they contribute to the partnership. They can raise concerns without fear that funding will be withdrawn because of what is said.

There has been a focus in the partnership on local employment and building the skills of local staff. Jane explains that the empowerment of community members has been a key success: "I have only Aboriginal staff at the moment and that is because they are good. They are part of the success of WELA, their personal growth as community women. The building of their skills and confidence is enormous."

WELA Chairperson, Estelle Hunter, describes the success of WELA for the children: "The kids in WELA are a step ahead of the rest. School becomes easy for them, their reading levels are high, their behaviour is good, they know what to do and they do it. They interact well with other kids. They are more independent. The kids share. They are more confident."

In Bairnsdale, in the East Gippsland region of Victoria, the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEGAC) also partner closely with Uniting Care Gippsland (UCG) in the development and delivery of early years services. The partnership includes the shared role of the Indigenous Early Years Coordinator who works across both organisations, the development of the Bairnsdale Aboriginal Children and Family Centre, a community kindergarten and an Indigenous Parenting Support Service delivered through the Boorai Supported Playgroup.





Alyson Ferguson of GEGAC explains that a key objective of working in partnership is to ensure programs are rolled out to meet community needs. Support provided by UCG through the partnership is also necessary to ensure GEGAC can deliver services under the pressure to carry out government-funded programs. Kim McAlister of UCG described that a key objective for UCG is to build capacity for GEGAC and the Aboriginal community. A focus on self-determination underpins the partnership, and Kim explains that ultimately the goal is to remove barriers so that Aboriginal children and families can actively participate and have improved choices that lead to good health, education and well-being.

Kim explains that the commitment to self-determination in partnership is about providing space for Aboriginal leadership, while ensuring that any transfer of program resources and responsibility is strongly supported:

"We use the words 'walk alongside' and we choose to walk alongside whenever and wherever we can, to support their capacity to do what they need to do...the ideal for us at the end of the day is that the whole program area moves to GEGAC when they're ready for that."

Kim and Alyson explain that through the partnership, the two organisations seek to develop shared capacity to respond to community needs and to ensure that government funding is delivered in the most effective way, so as to improve outcomes for children and families.

A key practice that has made the partnership successful has been the employment of a shared staff member who works fluidly between both organisations in the role of Indigenous Early Years Coordinator. The shared staff member has been highly effective in building early years service capacity for GEGAC, as well as integrating knowledge about culture and ways of working with Aboriginal families at UCG. This cross-learning filters through at the staff level and improves everyone's practice with Aboriginal families. The shared staff member has become an effective advocate for families with both organisations, helping to ensure that services are delivered that respond to their needs.

Alyson describes the community kindergarten as a classic example, where service integration between UCG and GEGAC supports access for families. Families are comfortable accessing the kindergarten because, while it is owned and operated by UCG, what the community sees is the two organisations working together, and this builds trust that the service reflects the strengths and values of GEGAC as well. Alyson explains: *"Now we've got nearly 100 per cent attendance at kindy. Three or four years ago that wasn't the case. We now have a waiting list."*

The same will apply to the new Children and Family Centre being developed in Bairnsdale. While it is vital for the community to view this as a GEGAC project, Alyson believes that it is a lot of the groundwork from UCG which will make quality service provision possible.

From these and other partnerships, SNAICC has identified some core principles that are underpinning the approach to successful partnership. These include:

1. Commitment to developing long-term sustainable relationships based on trust.
2. Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, history, lived experience and connection to community and country.
3. Commitment to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
4. Aiming to improve long-term well-being outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.
5. Sharing responsibility and accountability for shared objectives and activities.
6. Valuing process elements as integral to support and enable partnerships.
7. Commitment to redressing structures, relationships and outcomes that are unequal and/or discriminatory.
8. Openness to working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising that the mainstream approaches are frequently not the most appropriate or effective.

The SNAICC research reveals policy priorities and practical ideas for supporting and developing partnerships that align with these principles and promote better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. To learn more about how these principles are being put into practice in these and other partnerships, visit the SNAICC website at www.snaicc.asn.au

Introducing the NQF Workbook:

A Practical Tool for Education and Care Services Transitioning to the National Quality Framework

Gowrie SA and Gowrie Tasmania are pleased to announce the release of a new **National Quality Framework (NQF) Workbook** developed to support Australian education and care services as they transition to the NQF.

This new *NQF Workbook* presents the requirements of NQF as building on existing practice, rather than as a new set of requirements. It is a practical guide for education and care services, including Preschool, Child Care, Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care and uses an action plan approach to lead the transition to the NQF.

The *NQF Workbook* is a 103 page spiral bound workbook that:

- enables services to plan for, lead and work through the implementation of changes
- includes activities to involve educators in implementing changes
- includes spaces to record notes, actions and follow up required
- includes a comprehensive Action Plan template
- supports development of the Quality Improvement Plan.

This resource explores:

- the requirements of the NQF
- the process of understanding and leading educational change
- the process of building a professional learning community
- the documentation for quality assurance
- risk analysis and
- continuous improvement.

The *NQF Workbook* has been endorsed by leaders from each service type, including an early childhood service that was a pilot site undergoing assessment against the new quality system. Feedback noted the value of an easy to use resource that supports leaders and educators to build on existing practice and supports service leaders to develop a plan of action that engages educators, families and the community.

Child care services in Tasmania will not need to purchase this resource as the Workbook will be provided to them, free of charge, as 'A Change Management Tool' through a project sponsored by the Tasmanian Government, Department of Education.

For all other services across Australia, the *NQF Workbook* has been developed to cover national requirements for child care, preschool, family day care and outside school hours care services.

Price \$44.00 (inc GST) per copy plus postage.

To order copies of the *NQF Workbook*, download an order form from the Gowrie SA website www.gowriesa.org.au or contact Gowrie SA on 08 8234 5219 or email train@gowriesa.org.au



The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority and the National Quality Framework

Author:
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ACECQA

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) started operations on 1 January 2012. Under the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, ACECQA will guide the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF), bringing about a nationally integrated and consistent approach in the sector. We have a 13 member governing Board led by Chair, Rachel Hunter, a former director-general of education and justice and Public Service Commissioner in Queensland. The Board brings together members with considerable experience and knowledge of children's services all over Australia. Eight Board members are appointed from state and territory nominations and four are appointed from Australian Government nominations. Although Board members are nominated by different jurisdictions they act as a collective, and not in a representative capacity.

ACECQA's vision is for all children to have the best possible start in life for themselves and for the nation. In working towards our vision, we will take a strong leadership role in educating and informing families and the sector about the implementation of the NQF and its outcomes for children. We will recognise, support and promote quality in early childhood education and care services through high quality research and reliable data to inform policy development.





ACECQA's responsibilities are outlined in the National Law. We report to the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood on tasks including the collection of information on assessment, rating and regulation of education and care services; the publication of information on education and care services; setting the Excellent rating and assessing services applying for an Excellent rating; as well as qualifications for educators and authorised officers.

We will work collaboratively with regulatory authorities, service providers, educators, families and across the education and care sector. In doing so, we have started seeking feedback on the assessment criteria for the Excellent rating. This feedback will help us to develop the final criteria against which services will be assessed. Our website (www.acecqa.gov.au) is the primary source of information about the NQF where you will find resources about the National Law and Regulations, guides, qualifications, application forms and information about your state or territory regulatory authority.

For regular updates you can also subscribe to our e-newsletter, join us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. We will bring you even more ways to participate in online and face to face discussions about the implementation of the NQF and relevant topics.

These are exciting times for the early childhood education and care sector with the NQF implementation well under way nationally. Having a consistent quality agenda that covers long day care, family day care, outside school hours care, kindergartens and preschools across Australia for the first time, will lead to better education and developmental outcomes for children.

If you have any questions, or would like to provide feedback regarding ACECQA or the NQF, please email us at enquiries@acecqa.gov.au



National and International CONFERENCE UPDATE



Winter 2011



Spring 2011



Summer 2011

Gowrie Victoria presents Dr Louise Porter

Young Children's Behaviour – A Guidance Approach

23 March 2012

Rydges on Swanston, Carlton, Melbourne VIC

W: www.gowrievictoria.org.au/bookings

Victorian Early Years Foundation 2012 K-2 Conference

Connected learning - United in Play

24 March 2012

Hilton on the Park, East Melbourne, VIC

W: www.earlyyearsfoundation.org.au

Playgroup Victoria State Conference 2012

Playgroups: laying the foundations. Connecting, supporting, learning

3-4 May 2012

Rydges Bell City, Preston, Melbourne, VIC

W: www.playgroup.org.au/

2012 Children's Book Council of Australia Conference

Multi Storied

17-19 May 2012

Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide, SA

W: www.plevin.com.au/cbca2012/index.html

Early Childhood Council National 2012 Conference

25-27 May 2012

Auckland Sky City Convention Centre, Auckland, NZ

W: www.ecc.org.nz/MainMenu

ECIA Conference 2012

Pathways to Participations: Engagement and choice for children and families

8-10 August 2012

Burswood Entertainment complex, Perth, WA

W: www.eciaconference2012.com.au/

The Gowrie (QLD) Inc presents Dr Ferre Laevers

Are We There Yet? Reflecting on Practice and the National Quality Framework

28-29 September 2012

Brisbane Venue TBA, Qld

E: info@ladygowrie.com.au

W: www.gowrieqld.com.au

Early Childhood Australia's 2012 National Conference

Consulting the Compass - defining directions

3-6 October 2012

Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, WA

W: www.econference.com.au/

Gowrie Australia

Promoting and supporting quality
services for all children.

Our Mission

A national collaborative approach to
better practices which benefit children,
families and the children's services sector.