

Stakeholder Reference Group

Communique 16 – August 2021

ECU SRG membership:

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	Helen Ransom, Aboriginal Program Officer – Vocational Learning
Australian Childcare Alliance	Mel Reid-Prewer
Catholic Education Tasmania	Kate Turner, Education Officer, Early Years
Centre based care - long day care	Position vacant
Centre based care - OSHC	Position vacant
Local Government provider representative	Kate Whitbread
Early Childhood Australia, Tasmania Branch	Annette Barwick
Early Childhood Educators of Tasmania	Sandra Mazengarb
Family Day Care Council Tasmania	Angela Stanley-Gasparin
Independent Schools Tasmania	Mark Seager, Early Years Consultant
Out of Scope services	Lyn Long, Playcentre Co-ordinator, Possums Playcentre
United Workers Union	Gwen Alcock, National Strategic Coordinator – Early Childhood, United Workers Union
Parent/family representative	Position vacant

The ECU SRG met in August 2021. The information below reflects the discussion and outcomes from the meeting:

1 ECU Update

1.1 How we regulate:

The ECU is considering how we regulate as we continue to review and improve our processes. We're considering ways we can support our team to actively engage with services through physical and virtual visits, phone calls, grants and information sharing, so we can work with you to support you to improve quality, identify and manage risks and to comply with legislative requirements. We welcome your feedback and suggestions and thank those services who have supported us to pilot or trial different ways of working.

1.2 Compliance

Cautions

Liz outlined the process the ECU use to offer cautions and shared the [ECU Information Sheet - Cautions](#) with ECU SRG members. The ECU gives cautions to providers as an opportunity to address any compliance matters that are easily identified and fixed. The ECU do note a non-compliance when a caution given but as it's an administrative action we record the caution but without formal regulatory actions or processes. This approach reduces regulatory burden for both the sector and the ECU allowing low risk matters to be identified and addressed quickly and efficiently while not impacting on quality or the safety and wellbeing of children.

How we manage notifications

From 1 July 2021, we streamlined our approach to managing notifications of incidents. Notifications are now reviewed and triaged by an ECU Regulatory Officer. If a notification is assessed as low risk and no ongoing risk to the health and safety of children attending the service or non compliance is identified, the notification will be closed. The ECU Regulatory Officer will email advice the notification is closed to the approved provider, the nominated supervisor, director of the service or primary contact for the notification and the ECU point of contact.

This approach will enable the ECU to allocate resources to higher risk matters and connections to both monitor quality and support services. It will also decrease administrative and regulatory burden and the timeframe to notify approved providers that low risk notifications have been reviewed and closed.

1.3 Assessment and Rating

A&R approach

Charlotte shared that the revised A&R approach implemented in late 2020 has continued received positive feedback. For detailed information about the A&R approach please see [Assessment and Rating - Education and Care](#), the [Assessment and Rating Information Sheet 2020](#) and the A&R information sheets on our [Resource Documents - Education and Care](#) page.

A&R reports

Over the next several months the A&R team will pilot an alternative approach to writing and formatting reports. We're considering changes that incorporate principles of accessibility and readability to ensure the A&R reports are clear and can assist services with their continuous improvement journey. Changes are likely to include adding bullet points to improve the readability of the document and including more specific but brief examples of practice in the report to enhance the service's awareness and understanding of the breath of evidence considered to inform the rating. As we conduct the pilot we will check with providers if they are happy to participate and ECU will seek feedback on the new approach and any improvements we can consider.

Quality Support Program

The ECU is in the early stages of developing and piloting a quality support program for services who have received a Working Towards NQS rating. The quality support program is conducted over a three month period with a service and involves a number of visits to support the service to do a self-assessment to identify areas that need improvement. Through this process ECU officers will provide information and guidance to empower the service to identify and growth their knowledge and understanding to support quality and outcomes for children.

1.4 COVID-19 update

The Tasmanian Government is planning for a lockdown in case it is needed as a circuit breaker to COVID-19 being detected in the community. Public Health advice is available on [Lockdown plan | Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) page and in the [Planning for a lockdown in Tasmania \(coronavirus.tas.gov.au\)](#) overview. We note this is initial information.

In the event of a lockdown the advice that we have been given is that its highly likely that education and care and child care services will remain open as essential services. Of course, Public Health will consider the circumstances around any lockdown and we'll share and follow their advice.

The Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment (AGDESE) is providing advice on <https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare> on the ways the Australian Government is working with the early childhood education and care sector to minimise the impact of COVID-19 and regularly update their website with information on restrictions, Australian Government support, and what this means for child care in affected states and territories. In the event of a lockdown, we recommend service monitor <https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare> and emails from AGDESE. Where possible the ECU will share information too.

The ECU have been advised the intention is that Department of Education corporate offices across the state will close in the event of a lockdown. Our team are resourced and able to work from home so we will implement our planned COVID response, and go back to the initial response detailed in our [ECU-COVID-19-Recovery-](#)

[Plan.pdf \(education.tas.gov.au\)](#). We understand that a lockdown will present challenges and we will be available to answer questions and support services virtually to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and children.

Public Health are reminding Tasmanians to keep yourself safe and have advice such as [What you can do | Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) and an [Everyday Essentials \(coronavirus.tas.gov.au\)](#) infosheet. They have also advised families on when children should not be sent to education and care or child care too, see [Education and Care Services | Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) for details. There are a number of other resources, infosheets and posters available on [Resources | Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) and [Information for organisations and businesses | Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) that you may find useful too.

2 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) Update

Jeannine Otto, the Tasmanian State Coordinator for the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), spoke with ECU SRG members about the AEDC.



The [Australian Early Development Census \(AEDC\)](#) is a population based measure of how children have developed by the time they start school. It looks at five areas of early childhood development: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge.

The AEDC provides educators across sectors with a common language to understand and discuss what is working well in their community and where families may need support to ensure that their children are on-track during the early years. Evidence from the AEDC can be used to support policy and practice in early childhood education.

The AEDC aligned to the National Quality Standards and Early Years Learning Framework (link <https://www.aedc.gov.au/early-childhood/quality-improvement-and-policy>)

Jeannine shared links to:

<https://www.aedc.gov.au/early-childhood>

<https://www.aedc.gov.au/communities/states-and-territories/tas>

If you have any questions about the AEDC and how you could use it, please get in touch with Jeannine.

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3 2021 meetings

Next meeting is scheduled for 19 October 2021. We encourage providers, services, educators, families, and communities to contact their SRG representatives, should they wish to raise any issues for consultation or provide information to the ECU. Details of [SRG members](#) can be found on the [ECU website](#).

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