



Stakeholder Reference Group

Communique 21 – December 2022

ECU SRG membership:

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	Helen Ransom, Aboriginal Program Officer – Vocational Learning
Australian Childcare Alliance	Mel Reid-Prewer
Catholic Education Tasmania	Donna Bucher, Assistant Director Education Projects
Centre based care - long day care	Chris Symons, Centre Director, Rainbow Childcare and Early Learning Centre
Centre based care - OSHC	Kellie Lohrey, Director, Groovy Kidz Childcare Centre & OSHC
Local Government provider representative	Kate Whitbread, Glenorchy City Council
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	Tracey Roberts, 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 December 2022. The information below reflects the discussion and outcomes from the meeting:

1 ECU Staffing – Update

Vanessa Morris, Acting Manager - Policy and Engagement, is on secondment to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC). Bryan Cheong has recently left the ECU. Elli Liddell has been appointed as Policy and Communication Officer on a permanent basis. Recruitment is currently underway for a Project and Administration Officer.

We look forward to Trish Hamilton, Regulatory Officer and Estelle Clerk, Manager – Policy and Engagement returning to the ECU in the coming months after undertaking extended leave in 2022.

2 Universal access to early learning for 3-year-olds – Update

Tim Denby, the Assistant Director, for Strategic Policy and Projects, Department for Education, Children and Young People provided an update on the early learning for 3-year-olds initiative.

In August 2022, the Premier of Tasmania announced the intention to provide universal access to early learning, in the year before kindergarten, for every 3-year-old child.

The Government's approach to designing and implementing universal access will be co-designed with the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, families and other stakeholders. More detail on this approach will be provided early in 2023.

Please note, the Premier's announcement to expand access to early learning for 3-year-olds is different to the planned expansion of *Working Together*, although they are related and complementary initiatives. *Working Together* is a very targeted program to improve access and equity for children and families requiring additional support to engage with early learning. Access for 3-year-olds is a broad universal policy relating to all children in the cohort.

It is important to note expansion of early learning for 3-year-olds is not a 'back door' way to introduce a lower school starting age. It is about providing voluntary access to early learning for children to support children's learning and development. The approach will:

- Be designed collaboratively with the ECEC sector and other stakeholders
- Not be a one size fits all and will be responsive to the needs of local communities
- Not legislate changes to school starting ages
- Expand access through ECEC settings as the preferred provider wherever possible.

If you have any queries do not hesitate to email spp.admin@decyp.tas.gov.au

As we hear more, we will keep SRG members updated.

3 Changes to COVID-19 Notification Requirements from 1 January 2023

To balance our aim of reducing regulatory burden of notifications regarding positive COVID-19 cases to the ECU, and meeting regulatory requirements, from 1 January 2023 new guidelines will be applied.

Please see [ECU Newsletter - 14 December 2022](#) for updated guidelines.

4 Changes to Assessment and Rating in 2023

The ECU are implementing several changes to our Assessment and Rating (A&R) processes in 2023 in line with a revised national approach.

Please see the overview provided within the [ECU Newsletter - 14 December 2022](#) and the ACECQA [information sheet](#) for detail of upcoming changes.

The ECU will share additional information about what these changes will look like in Tasmania, in early 2023.

5 2023 meetings

Next meeting is scheduled for 7 March 2023. 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](#).

Vidhya Chelliah
Manager, Education and Care Unit
Department for Education, Children and Young People