

Stakeholder Reference Group

Communique 15 – June 2021

ECU SRG membership:

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	Nerissa Waterfield, Child and Family Centre New Norfolk
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	Jannette Armstrong, Secretary, United Workers Union
Parent/family representative	Position vacant

The ECU SRG met in June 2021. An expression of interest process will be undertaken to fill the Centre based care - long day care and Centre based care - OSHC representative positions on the SRG.

The information below reflects the discussion and outcomes from the meeting:

1. ECU Update

As a result of recent recruitment processes Estelle Clerk has been appointed as the Operations Manager Strategy and Policy, Jann Williams, have been appointed as Authorised Officer's.

Compliance

In January 2021, the ECU recommenced unannounced monitoring visits to services. Monitoring visits are one of our proactive compliance monitoring tools which provide authorised officers with an opportunity to observe quality education and care in practice at services. These monitoring visits are intentionally conducted without prior notification to enable services to showcase their everyday practice and to protect the integrity of the information gathered during the visit. This approach to monitoring visits not only supports achieving the objectives of the National Quality Framework, but also plays a part in improving outcomes for our Tasmanian children.

The ECU conducts Targeted Campaigns as part of our proactive monitoring of service's compliance with the requirements of the National Quality Framework. Part of our Targeted Campaign for the first half of 2021 is focusing on public liability insurance. Towards the end of 2020 ACECQA published information in [ACECQA Newsletter Issue 9 2020 | ACECQA](#) regarding an update to the Guide to the National Quality Framework (Page

475) which included information regarding the intent of public liability insurance as required by regulation 29 and 30 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations. ECU will be in contact with Providers to gather information to ensure services are meeting the requirements of the National Regulations.

The ECU have recommenced Provider meetings with a focus on building collaborative relationships and allowing the opportunity to identify issues and trends and to support quality in compliance. These meetings provide the ECU and Providers a forum to discuss issues that are specific to their services. For further information, please contact your point of contact officers.

Assessment and Rating

Assessment and Rating visits were recommenced in late 2020 with a revised approach which reduces the time our officers are in a service. Information on this approach can be found on the [ECU website](#). Once a visit is completed the service will be sent an online survey for completion.

The ECU are completing a pilot for a Quality Support Program. The program focuses on working with services that have 5 or more [Working Towards the National Quality Standard](#) (NQS). The Program offers professional development, support, and other resources to support quality improvement and practice, leading to improved outcomes for children and their families.

NQF Review

The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national approach to the regulation of the quality of education and care services across Australia. The ECU would like to thank members from the sector and families for the feedback and written submissions provided throughout the NQF Review consultation period in May this year. Governments are now reviewing this information and progressing the development of the Decision Regulation Impact Statement (DRIS) which will assist Education Minister in their decision making on the options for change.

National Workforce Strategy

Throughout May 2021, ACECQA consulted with the children's education and care sector about possible actions and initiatives to improve the supply, retention, and quality of the sector workforce. The feedback will be used to inform further discussions with national sector stakeholders and governments. The final strategy is due to be considered by Education Ministers in the second half of this year.

Approved Learning Frameworks Review

A national consortium led by a partnership between Macquarie University, Queensland University of Technology and Edith Cowan University has been engaged by all governments to deliver the 2021 National Quality Framework (NQF) Approved Learning Frameworks (ALFs) Update project.

Please visit The [Approved Learning Frameworks Update website](#) for more information.

ECU Grants Program

There had been a delay in the Minor Infrastructure Grants program due to the recent Caretaker Conventions. We are now progressing the work in this space.

The ECU welcomes feedback on areas of interest that services would benefit from professional learning. We would like to hear from you. Please send your suggestions to Grants.ECU@education.tas.gov.au



2. Early Years Partnership and Projects (EYPP) Update

Family and Children Centres will have a name change to Child and Family Learning Centres. Several new centres are being built. There will be a total of 18 Child and Family Learning Centres by the end of the year.

The Department of Education (DoE) Working Together program continues to be successful from parents' point of view with parents feeling that their children have gained skills which will significantly contribute to enhance outcomes for their children.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) Connected Beginnings program will provide early childhood education, maternal and child health, and family support services to the Bridgewater and Gagebrook community. The program will provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Tasmania to be supported to improve their health and wellbeing to help them make a positive transition to school.

EYPP are continuing to work on the co-location policy and process with several leases due to be renewed. EYPP is committed to build strong relationships between schools, outside hours school care and family day care providers.

3. National Quality Standard in Kindergarten (NQS)

Tasmania's approach to the NQS is based on information obtained from early childhood experts, ACECQA and other jurisdictions, particularly systems successfully implemented in Western Australia. The approach includes ongoing reflection, self-assessment, independent validation, and reporting. Noting that continuous improvement is a key focus and aligns with school's improvement processes and builds on quality assurance processes

Work is progressing in the NQS test and trial stage. Schools were invited to participate in the NQS for 2021. This stage of the trial is about building educators knowledge and understanding of the NQS and the Guide and self-assessment tool and the validating and reporting stage. There are 18 test and trial schools. The process ensures that the National Quality Standard (NQS) is suitable for schools.

A review and evaluation will be completed upon cessation of the trial which will examine schools' experience of the implementation of the NQS in Kindergartens and the suitability of the approach, tools, and resources.

4. 2021 meetings

Next meeting is scheduled for 24 August 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](#).

Vidhya Chelliah
Manager, Education and Care Unit
Strategy and Performance
Department of Education