

Education and Care Unit Stakeholder Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose:

The Education and Care Unit Stakeholder Reference Group (ECU SRG) is a reference group that provides advice to inform the work of the Education and Care Unit (ECU) of the Department of Education, as the regulatory authority for Tasmanian education and care (child care) services.

The ECU SRG's members provide expert advice to the ECU about the operation and context of education and care and child care services across Tasmania on matters that are affecting educators, services, and communities in Tasmania. This also includes providing advice and feedback on how to support outcomes for children through early and middle childhood. Members assist in identifying issues and opportunities that have the potential to affect the sector or outcomes for children.

The ECU and ECU SRG members work collaboratively with the purpose of achieving positive outcomes for children.

The role of the ECU SRG:

The ECU SRG members will provide information, data, feedback and advice to the ECU to:

- inform decisions regarding the administration of the National Quality Framework (NQF) in Tasmania
- identify opportunities and strategies to assist services to comply with national and state legislation and requirements
- identify emerging issues related to the education and care sector
- support quality education and care, health and wellbeing outcomes for children in education and care settings
- engage with key issues and matters impacting the sector and the community
- identify or provide feedback on these and any other matters related to state and national policy, the education and care sector, children's needs in early and middle childhood, and in education settings and schools as required, and
- identify opportunities to connect with other organisations, schools, education providers and agencies to ensure every child gets a great start.

Membership:

Organisation Members

The ECU has invited a number of organisations to be members of the ECU SRG. Current organisational members are:

- Early Childhood Australia (Tasmania Branch)
- Australian Childcare Alliance (Tasmania Branch)
- Family Day Care Council of Tasmania
- Department of Education Tasmania

- Catholic Education Tasmania
- Independent Schools Tasmania
- Early Childhood Educators of Tasmania
- United Workers Union

Organisation membership is not limited by terms but is subject to review by the ECU. One representative (or their nominated proxy) is invited to attend each ECU SRG meeting. Organisations determine who will represent them and for what period. The ECU encourages organisations to consider appointing a representative based on their position with the organisation or by selecting a representative for a period of time to assist with continuity of membership and retention of knowledge within the ECU SRG and to support the representative to effectively represent the organisations views.

Representatives of organisation members responsibilities include to:

- actively engage with members of the organisation they represent to determine the organisations position on matters on the agenda and emerging issues,
- accurately share with the SRG, the views of the group they represent, and
- arrange a proxy if they are unable to attend an ECU SRG meeting.

Individual Members

The ECU has identified several community or sector cohorts where individuals are able to provide advice and input into ECU SRG discussions based on their individual expertise and lived experience. Members from the following cohorts are appointed through an expression of interest process conducted by the ECU:

- parent / family
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- out-of-scope (licensed) services
- outside school hours care sector
- long day care sector
- local government provider representative

The cohorts represented are subject to review by the ECU. Expressions of interest will be sought for individuals belonging to each cohort for appointment to vacant positions. Individual members are appointed to provide additional or alternate perspectives to organisation members based on their expertise and lived experience and to identify matters or issues that may impact their cohort but may not impact other cohorts or organisation members. Individual members do not represent their own business, their employer or any organisations they are a member of. The ECU will determine the expressions of interest and selection processes for individual members. Individual members will be appointed for an initial term of up to three years. Individual members may be appointed to serve a second consecutive term of up to three years. Membership term end dates will be staggered to ensure an appropriate level of historical knowledge and continuity is retained when changes to membership occur.

Individual members responsibilities include:

- to consider their position on matters and emerging issues given their expertise and lived experience as a member of the cohort they belong to,
- to consider how their views represent other individuals or organisations who belong to the same cohort they belong to, and
- if possible, to connect with others who belong to their cohort to gain additional views and perspectives on matters.

Individual members may consider arranging a proxy if they are unable to attend an ECU SRG meeting. Individual members must contact the ECU to discuss proxy arrangements.

The ECU may consult with members from time-to-time to determine whether there should be any changes to the membership of the ECU SRG.

The ECU may invite guest speakers, experts or other participants with specialist knowledge to meetings to provide information to members or add to discussions about particular matters or issues to be discussed. Members may suggest agenda items and guest speakers or experts to be invited to meetings to the secretariat for consideration.

All members are expected to:

- share ideas and issues of significance related to education and care for discussion
- provide expert advice on matters relating to education and care
- nominate a proxy
 - If a member is unable to attend a meeting they may be represented by a proxy. If attendance by a proxy is required, the member is able to provide background on agenda items to the proxy in order to ensure a clear understanding of issues and the ability of the proxy to represent their group in the absence of the member, as long as the sharing of information does not breach an individual's or organisation's privacy or information that is commercial in confidence.
- uphold the following principles:
 - **Respect** – conduct business in an atmosphere of mutual respect at all times.
 - **Trust** – build trustful relationships amongst members of the group and the organisations they represent.
 - **Inclusivity** – ensure all members have the opportunity to participate and express the views of their stakeholder group.
 - **Transparency** – ensure open and honest communications at all times.
 - **Confidentiality** – to uphold confidentiality unless agreed by all members.

Meetings:

The Manager ECU, or their nominated proxy, will chair ECU SRG meetings.

Meeting schedule:

- Biannual face-to-face meetings will be held in mid-year and at the end of the year. If face-to-face attendance is not possible, members will have the option to attend virtually.
- Virtual meetings will be held in each quarter in addition to face-to-face meetings.
- Additional extraordinary meetings may be held if required. Members may request an extraordinary meeting. The Chair will determine if an extraordinary meeting is required and the secretariat will liaise with members to schedule the meeting.

Secretariat:

The ECU will provide secretariat support to the ECU SRG. The secretariat will call for agenda items before a meeting and an agenda and meeting papers (if required) will be prepared and circulated in advance of each meeting. Minutes of the meeting and action items will be recorded and distributed to members by the Secretariat.

Following each meeting a Communique will be provided to the education and care sector. The Chair will identify items for inclusion in the Communique during each meeting. As members may be asked by the sector to expand on information in the Communique, the level of information that can be shared outside the ECU SRG will be agreed upon during each meeting. Representatives of organisation members may share information about matters raised at the meetings with their members as agreed by SRG members. The Chair may, as appropriate, identify certain information that may not be discussed beyond the SRG meetings

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