



Broadside



Season's Greetings

2010 has been a huge year for children's services. As we approach the holiday season, Community Child Care Co-operative wants to acknowledge the hard work that everyone has done this year.

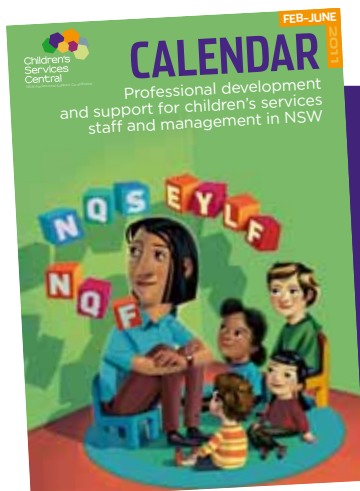
If you are a childcare worker, a preschool teacher, a director, a co-ordinator, a centre cook, an employee of a peak organisation or a large employer, a trainer, a consultant, a preschool assistant, a room leader, a manager, a SCAN support worker, an ISF, a bicultural pool worker, a centre cleaner, a bus driver, an admin assistant, a teacher, a director, an activist, an academic, an organiser, an industrial officer, a bureaucrat, lecturer at

university, teacher at TAFE, a politician, a CSO, an NCAC employee, a support worker or have any other role in children's services... we think you deserve a huge pat on the back. 2010 has been a year of rapid change in children's services and 2011 will be too.

Community Child Care salutes each and every one of you and wishes you the best over the next few weeks. Whatever your faith, your cultural traditions, and the way you spend time with family and friends, enjoy the next few weeks.

You have deserved it!

The Community Child Care Staff and Board



Keep an eye out for the new Children's Services Central Calendar for the February to June 2011 period. All services will receive a copy of this in the mail early in 2011.

With hundreds of interesting courses and a range of professional support opportunities on offer, Community Child Care advises that services book in early!

15 HOURS RAISES SERVICES' ANGST

Community Child Care Co-operative ran a survey about the 15 hours issue during October and November 2010.

The aim of the survey was to determine issues that children's services in NSW perceived they would have with the implementation of the 15 hours component of the Universal Access to a preschool program, as committed to by Commonwealth, state and territory governments under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

The Universal Access commitment is that 'every child, 12 months prior to full time schooling, has access to a preschool program delivered: by a four-year university qualified early childhood teacher in accordance with a national early years learning framework; for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year; across a diversity of settings; in a form that meets the needs of parents; and at a cost that does not present a barrier to participation'.

This commitment is echoed in the National Partnership Agreement on the Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care which says: 'In order to achieve a rating of high quality in the educational program and practice quality area a service must provide access to a preschool program as defined in Annexure 1 to this Schedule, either directly or through a nearby provider that can offer satisfactory arrangements to manage the transfer of children'.

530 respondents had completed the survey by the closing date of 17 November. The large number of respondents suggests that this issue is of intense interest to NSW services, which backs up anecdotal evidence coming in from services. The composition of survey respondents was 58 per cent from preschools, 37 per cent from long day care services, 2 per cent from family day care services, 2 per cent from other service types.

The main findings of the survey were as follows:

- 75 per cent of survey respondents had considered how to implement the 15 hour requirement within their service.
- 38 per cent of survey respondents considered that their service was already offering 15 hours of access to children in the year before school but only 24 per cent of preschools respondents did.
- 20 per cent of respondents will offer the 15 hours requirement from 2013 as 2 x 7.5 hour days. 30 per cent of all services and 50 per cent of all preschools will offer the requirement by offering a three-day program for four year olds and a two-

day program for three year olds.

- 4 per cent of respondents will offer the 15 hours through a rotating 'three days one week, two days the next week' system. 8 per cent of all services will offer it on a sessional (half-day) system, with only 2 per cent of preschools choosing to offer sessional care.
- Most importantly, over 64 per cent of services overall and 67 per cent of preschools said it would be difficult for their service to implement the 15 hours requirement, with 38 per cent of all respondents and 47 per cent of preschools stating that it would be extremely difficult for their service to offer. Only 13 per cent of respondents and 7 per cent of preschools said it would not be an issue at all for their service to offer 15 hours of preschool to families at their centre.

The most common concern raised by preschools was the prohibitive cost to parents on low incomes for 15 hours of access. In 2008, according to the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services, the average weekly cost of preschool after subsidies in NSW was \$69 per week, compared to \$35 per week in Victoria, \$9 per week in WA and \$20 per week in Tasmania. The average fee per day in preschool across NSW in 2009 was \$38.50 in metropolitan areas and \$27.70 in non-metropolitan areas according to the study, *Drowning, Not Waving: Community-based preschools after years of funding neglect*, conducted by the NSW Children's Services Forum in 2009. This study also found that 60 per cent of children attended preschool for two days per week (12 hours).

Community Child Care is in the process of distributing the survey results to bureaucrats and politicians and this will remain a major area of advocacy for the organisation in 2011.

SPOT CHECKS

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) has advised that new services as well as Not Accredited services may now be eligible for a Spot Check as well as Accredited services.

This change to NCAC's policy reflects the importance of services maintaining quality childcare during the transition to the National Quality Framework.

For further information, please refer to the Child Care Quality Assurance Spot Checks page at www.ncac.gov.au/about_ncac/spot_checks.asp or call NCAC on 1300 136 554.

HOLIDAY READING

By the time this *Broadside* is in your hands, Santa (or in this case the Productivity Commission) will have released yet another fascinating piece of holiday reading for those in children's services.

The Productivity Commission has been asked to consider and provide advice (prepare a report) on the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Workforce. Specifically, they will examine:

- current and future demand for ECD workers, and the mix of knowledge and skills required within the workforce to meet quality objectives;
- the current and future supply of the ECD workforce, and the impact of quality objectives on that supply;
- the structure of the ECD workforce, and its efficiency and effectiveness;
- ECD workforce planning and development in the short, medium and long-term; and
- institutional arrangements impacting on the ECD workforce.

So far, the Productivity Commission has met with key stakeholders, including Community Child Care. They have prepared an issues paper which was released in mid-November.

It is important that children's services respond to this review because this, along with the workforce strategy being prepared by DEEWR for the next COAG meeting, will have a major impact on government planning for the workforce needs of our sector.

This could include funding of qualifications upgrades, funding of staff salaries and innovative recognition of prior learning pathways.

Issues services may wish to consider in their submission include:

1. Current shortages of teachers in the sector. National Quality Framework changes plus Universal Access agreement plus Teacher Costs Contribution Scheme in NSW will all increase demand for teachers, especially the four-year trained. Increased demand will be accompanied by contracting supply of teachers because of ageing workforce, changes in university courses (contraction in 0-5 courses) and status and standing issues of early childhood teachers such as inadequate remuneration.
2. Because children's services are heavily reliant on government funding and tight budgeting, no true labour market exists – for example, shortage of supply will not result in the increased wages and better conditions needed to attract more people into the profession. Services do not have the funding to increase wages, so market cannot achieve balance – the only solution is direct government subsidy of wages or general funding increases. There is also high turnover in the sector.

3. Despite recent Commonwealth intervention in workforce issues (for example, removal of HECS for rural and remote teachers, removal of TAFE fees for Child Studies courses, additional university places) there has been little intervention in the major issue of ECD workforce status and standing within the community. Attraction of school leavers and other new workforce entrants and retention of existing workers is difficult when staff employed in children's services are underpaid, undervalued, and have less tolerable conditions than other industries and even other education sectors. The fact that 99 per cent of the sector is female impacts on status and standing issues.
4. The essential nature of the industry, where employers are small and fragmented, with the majority being in stand alone preschools and long day care centres, means that career paths do not exist.
5. Every year, workers in the sector face increasing levels of responsibility, increasing complexity of regulation, and increased compliance issues and workload demands. This is in contrast to the low and static wages and low status of employees. While workload and work demands increase and there is no commensurate increase in pay and status, workforce demand will always outstrip workforce supply.

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The Road Ahead Forum, held in Sydney in early November and attended by over 200 people, provided a range of shared issues around the national policy agenda for the children's services sector.

The forum was co-sponsored by Community Child Care Co-operative, Social Justice in Early Childhood, Australian Community Children's Services, Network of Community Activities, Early Childhood Australia, NSW Family Day Care, KU Children's Services, Community Connections Solutions Australia, Uniting Care Children's Services, Lady Gowrie Child Centre NSW and SDN Children's Services!

Among other outcomes, the following key issues were agreed upon. Subsequent to the forum, these issues have been distributed to all the key bureaucrats who are working on the implementation of the National Quality Framework in both NSW and Canberra.

The forum decided that the NQF is great **AND** we would like:

- 1. Proper and increased consultation:** We would like an opportunity to influence the shape of the NQF process, especially the assessment and rating process, the assessment and rating instrument, the National Quality Standard, the self-assessment and quality improvement templates and the national regulation.
- 2. Better funding and resourcing of the NQF:** We would like funding for training and support of sector, and more accessible, comprehensive and clearer communication.
- 3. Supported recognition of early childhood teachers:** We would like assured pay parity, status and improved work conditions for EC teachers without increasing costs to families, ensuring we can recruit and retain qualified teachers.
- 4. Qualifications upgrades to be funded:** We would like funding provided to enable staff already employed in centres to obtain their Certificate III, Diploma, or fourth year of their teaching degree, especially through recognition of prior learning.
- 5. A rethink of the 15 hours preschool requirement:** We would like an acknowledgement that 15 hours provision is not based on researched findings about benefits to children and an acknowledgement that this requirement:
 - will make it impossible for a family day care service to achieve an advanced or excellent rating;
 - is as yet undefined in the long day care setting – which 15 hours should be counted?; and
 - is impossible to achieve in NSW preschools because it is unaffordable for families.
- 6. A commitment to improve the status and standing of**

early childhood educators: We need pay equity and improved conditions, including career pathways for all educators to ensure status and the sustainability of the early childhood profession.

7. Recognition within the NQF of support for children with additional needs.

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

A new discussion paper outlining the importance of creating a national children's commissioner has been release by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

The release of the paper coincides with the 20th anniversary of Australia's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and discusses what is meant by children's rights, the human rights issues that affect children, and the roles and responsibilities of a national children's commissioner, if created.

Child-rights focused groups such as UNICEF, Save the Children and the National Children and Youth Law Centre have been lobbying governments for over 10 years and the release follows recent calls from Greens' Senator Sarah Hanson-Young for the creation of a children's commissioner.

The paper is also in response to the Commonwealth Government's announcement of the Australian Human Rights Framework in April this year.

To download the discussion paper, go to:
www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2010/20101029_childrens.html

QUALIFICATIONS for children's services professionals

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