

Want more information?

There is a lot of information that you could read at this time to give you more information about the National Quality Framework.

Probably the most important information you can read is the *Guide to the National Quality Standard* and the *Guide to the National Regulations and National Law 2011*. These provide general information regarding the National Quality Framework and the introduction of the new National Quality Standard and rating system.

You can download a copy of these from:

www.cccnsw.org.au/changes

Who is going to fund it all?

There is no specific funding available at this stage from the Commonwealth or NSW governments. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has said: 'Because these changes will be put in place over a number of years, and services will have time to adjust, there should not be a sudden increase in the cost of services. Providers will continue to make their own business decisions about the level of service they provide.'

There was an extensive cost analysis performed by the Council of Australian Governments prior to

the changes being approved. This acknowledged that fees in services will need to increase to pay for the changes but, generally, only by a small amount. Access Economics have estimated that the average out-of-pocket cost for parents will be \$8.67 per week by 2014–2015.

When considering cost increases, it is important to remember that those things that will cost the most, such as improved ratios and more qualified staff, are those that enhance quality and ensure better outcomes for children.

Your responsibilities

Management Committee members' responsibilities under the NQF are similar to what they are under the existing licensing system. You should become familiar with the new Regulations and you should be aware that one of the standards under which your service is assessed is Leadership and Service Management. You will need to be able to show that your service is effectively managed: for example, the management and administrative systems in your service enable the effective provision of a quality service. Your committee will also need to support your staff to make the changes required under the National Quality Framework.



Community Child Care is proud to present its new book, *SO NOW YOU ARE ON THE COMMITTEE*. The book is aimed at all committee members of community-based children's services.

Being part of a management committee can sometimes be overwhelming, with so many responsibilities and issues for members to be aware of.

So Now You Are On The Committee outlines what a management committee actually does, providing an easy-to-read guide for all those wishing to join a committee, or for those already acting in the role.

To order email: info@cccncsw.org.au

NQF IN A NUTSHELL

What the National Quality Framework means for YOUR service



(Almost) everything a community-based management committee of a children's service needs to know about the National Quality Framework for children's services.

At the December 2009 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting, all Australian Governments agreed to a **National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care**. This will mean some changes to the way your service operates. Community Child Care Co-operative (NSW) was asked by our members to provide a short summary for management committees.

The **National Quality Agenda** is the overarching name given to the reforms designed to improve the quality of early education and care services. It incorporates a new **National Quality Standard**, including the Early Years Learning Framework, a new rating system and the associated regulatory system.

The **National Quality Framework** (NQF) refers to the overall national quality framework and its new National Quality Standard and ratings system. The NQF consists of:

- The National Quality Standard (7 quality areas);
- A new rating system (each service to be given 1 of 5 possible ratings ranging from excellent to Significant Improvement Required);
- A new streamlined regulatory system which is nationally consistent.



National Quality Standard

These are the seven areas in which your service will have to demonstrate its quality provision.

Reflect upon your service and consider your service implements these standards to the best quality.

- Educational program and practice;
- Children's health and safety;
- Physical environment;
- Staffing arrangements;
- Relationships with children;
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities;
- Leadership and service management.

These are the seven areas under which your service will be assessed. You will be rated against each of these seven areas and your performance in each area will be combined to provide your service rating overall.

The NQF also delivers us a new 'single streamlined national regulatory system to regulate and enforce the National Quality Standard'. What this means is that there is now one set of consistent regulations for services across the country.

These replace existing separate licensing and quality assurance processes and will be administered in NSW by The Department of Education and Communities (DEC) under the guidance of a new national body (ACECQA).



This should reduce the burden of having to comply with different systems, especially for long day care centres. Essentially, for long day care services, this means that the 'accreditation system' has been replaced by the National Quality Framework. For preschools, it will mean having to undergo an assessment and rating process for the first time.

What changes will your service have to make?

As well as enhancing quality education and care for your children, the aim of the National Quality Framework is also to provide clearer and more comprehensive information through the quality ratings system to families about the quality of education and care at their service.

It will provide more information to families about what makes quality education and care – what quality education looks like.

The main changes that your service will be implementing are:

- **Implementing a new framework for learning** – the Early Years Learning Framework.
- **Ratios** – improvements to staff/child ratios. From 2016, the toddlers ratio will be 1:5 (from the current 1:8).
- **Qualifications** – by 2014, at least 50 per cent of staff are to have (or be actively engaged in working towards) a Diploma level qualification or above. Other staff are to have (or be actively engaged in working towards) a Certificate III. Services that are not currently required to employ an early childhood teacher will need to have one working with the service or working at the service depending upon their size.
- **Changes to licenses** – As a licensed service, you will be granted a Provider Approval and a Service Approval under the National Quality Framework which will be continuing approvals.
- **Regulation** – National regulations will mean some changes to the way your service operates on a day-to-day basis. It is this regulations which will prescribe detailed regulatory requirements for services in much the same way as the *Children's Services Regulation 2004* did in NSW to date.

To find out more about the NQF, please go to: www.ccccnsw.org.au/changes

Please remember that these changes are designed to improve the quality of education and care received by children in children's services. Although some of the changes may initially seem challenging, they will result in access to better quality education and care for all children at your centre.

As usual, Community Child Care Co-operative is here to support you during this period of change.

What YOUR service needs to do in more detail

Your service Director or Co-ordinator will have been to information sessions about the National Quality Framework. They will have a good idea of what will need to change at your service to ensure you comply with the National Quality Standard and receive a positive rating against the standard, but here is a bit more information.

Information and Training

Your staff will need to access professional development to make sure they understand the requirements of the National Quality Framework and have an in-depth understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework. If your director/co-ordinator is a teaching director, they may require time away from teaching duties to plan for the introduction of change and to prepare experiences for staff to ensure understanding.

Ratios

The changes to ratios may mean employing more staff, or changing how your existing staff are deployed.

Qualifications

Your service will need to employ more qualified staff or your existing staff will need to upgrade their qualifications. Every staff member working with children will need at least a Certificate III qualification, and half of your staff will require a diploma or teaching degree by 2014. You may want to assist your staff to obtain the required qualifications through increasing study leave or inquiring about existing working traineeships (including government funding) and recognition of prior learning pathways. (If you are interested in learning about these, please send an email to: training@cccsw.org.au)

Policies

You may need to cover or comply with your policies and procedures so that they fit in with the National Quality Standard and the new Regulations and Law.

Preparation for Rating against the National Quality Standard

As we stated earlier, all services will be rated against the National Standard and that rating will be published on the Commonwealth Government's MyChild website. Obviously, committees would like their rating to be as high as possible. The scale is a five-point scale:

- Excellent;
- Exceeding National Quality Standard;
- Meeting National Quality Standard;
- Working towards National Quality Standard;
- Significant Improvement Required.

Services will be rated at one of the four lower levels. If you are rated as Exceeding National Quality Standard, you can then apply under a separate process to be recognised as 'Excellent'.

For long day care services this system replaces the current accreditation system. For preschools this is a new process. The Department of Education and Communities will be undertaking the rating of your service – your first rating will occur sometime between 2012 and 2015.

Until this time your service will be rated as Provisional—Not Yet Assessed under the National Quality Framework.

Quality Improvement Plan

As part of the rating process, your service will need to complete a self assessment and an annual Quality Improvement Plan. The Quality Improvement Plan will identify which parts of your service delivery you will be working on improving against the National Standard. This is a small plan – a maximum of 15 pages – so preparation should not be too onerous. Your staff and committee may also need additional meetings and time to prepare this document.