

Improvements to National Quality Framework

RATIONALE

- ACA supports the National Quality Framework (NQF), which aims for the provision of consistent, high quality Early Childhood Education and Care services nation-wide, via a set of nationally consistent standards.

CURRENT SITUATION

- The National Quality Framework (NQF) took effect on 1 January 2012, as part of the Federal Government's agenda to provide Australian families with high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and child care. The NQF's purpose is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services through:
 - a national legislative framework
 - a National Quality Standard
 - a national quality rating and assessment process
 - a national body called the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).
- Due to state government influence, the NQF is **not implemented consistently** across Australia's early learning service providers. This includes:
 - educator-to-child ratios
 - unique state-level processes
 - different regulatory practices and interpretations.

- This outcome defeats the purpose of the NQF, which is to deliver high quality and **nationally consistent** education and care across long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten, and outside school hours care services.
- Despite the major federal funding and resources invested into the NQF, there is currently no longitudinal assessment of the educational outcomes associated with the NQF and the early learning models it supports.
- Under the Federal Budget released in May 2018, the Federal Government did not renew the National Partnership on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which expired on 31 December 2018.
- As an alternative, the Federal Government directed \$14.9 million to directly fund ACECQA, which had previously been funded by the state governments through funding received as part of the National Partnership Agreement.

<i>ACA Recommended Educator to Child Ratios for Centre-based Services Australia-wide¹²</i>	
Age range	Ratio
Birth to 24 months	1–4
Children older than 24 months and younger than 36 months	1–5
Children older than 36 months (not including children over preschool age)	1–11
Children over preschool age	1–15

RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on all parties to support:

- Continually working towards a nationally consistent compliance approach to the requirements set out in the National Quality Standards and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Regular reviews of the NQF to ensure that the intended positive outcomes are quantifiable.
- The reinstatement of federal funding to support the national quality agenda and the delivery of high quality early learning.
- Government investment in **new longitudinal research** which tracks and measures the educational outcomes of children attending early learning services associated with the NQF.
- The extension of the National Partnership for Regulatory Reform (NPRR) to assist the Review of NQF in 2019.

