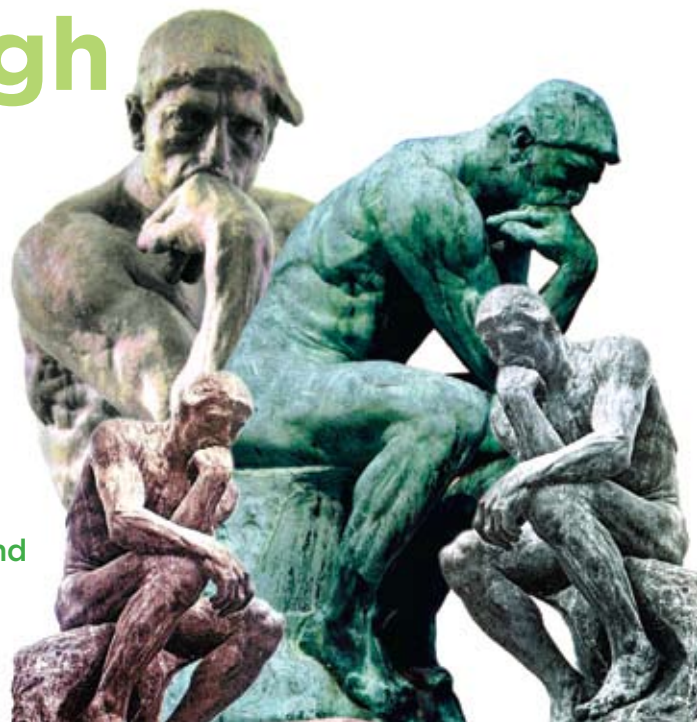


Learning through collaboration and reflection

Reflective practice has been defined as 'an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning' (Boud, Cohen and Walker, p.19). It is through reflection that educators create new ways and opportunities to think about: why they do what they do; how they can improve on what they do; and seek opportunities to do things differently in order to improve.



Reflective practice is an important part of the learning and professional journey, as educators consider the range of possibilities available to them in order to improve their approaches to education. Combining reflective practice and professional development can create a powerful and transformative experience. For many, attendance to professional development provides the necessary inspiration to create changes in the workplace. However, determination is not always enough. Creating positive change upon return from a professional development program can be enhanced through:

- sharing and exploring the 'how to' with others who have also participated in the learning journey;
- providing time in an ordered and paced manner which is reflective of complexity required to make the change sustainable into the future;
- creating space for others also on the journey to share the successes and frustrations in order to assist others also travelling on a similar journey to learn from each other's experiences.

It is in acknowledgement of such requirements that **practitioner inquiry** provides the ideal learning structure for supporting sustainable change. Practitioner inquiry is about researching with people to

create and study change in and through the research process. It is based on the principle that a group of people can work together over a period of time to achieve a common goal by reflecting and acting as a cohesive team. It is a spiral process which allows action and research to be achieved at the same time. What does practitioner inquiry look like when it comes to learning?

Children's Services Central has scheduled a number of practitioner inquiry projects in 2009. Facilitated by Semann & Slattery, practitioners will come together once a month over a period of five months to explore in greater detail a topic of collective relevance, in this instance to gain greater understanding of infant and toddler curriculum. Semann & Slattery have facilitated over 30 practitioner inquiry projects across Australia. Director, Colin Slattery, believes 'practitioner inquiry is one of the most powerful tools for learning available to the children's services sector, as practitioners work through the challenges, successes and niggles which sit within their everyday practices in an environment which supports and promotes practitioners to change'.

Anthony Semann,
Director, Semann & Slattery
Ph.D Candidate, Macquarie University

★ ROUNDUP

Licences: 100 point checks

As part of Licence Applications for children's services, licensees and Authorised Supervisors have to complete a Background Check Consent and Request Form to enable the Department of Community Services to have Working with Children's Checks undertaken on applicants.

A new process and forms were introduced on 2 March. The changes are a result of new requirements of the Commission for Children and Young People and other authorities responsible for these checks. DoCS will now use a '100 point' identity check to verify the identity of people being screened for children's services licensing.

Licensees and Authorised Supervisors need to provide identification documents making up a 100 points – similar to the requirements for opening a bank account. A range of documents can be provided, such as birth certificates, driving licences, passports, electricity or gas bills, credit cards or Medicare cards. References from 'acceptable' referees who have sighted original ID documents are another option.

Under the new guidelines, certified copies will be acceptable for licensee applications. For Authorised Supervisors, certified copies of birth certificates and citizenship certificates will be accepted, however, all other documents will need to be originals.

Download the new forms and more information at: www.community.nsw.gov.au/licensingforms

Caring for young children

The Centre for Community Child Health have released a new Policy Brief: *Caring for Young Children: What Children Need*. Written by Margaret Sims from the University of New England, the brief argues, among other things, that we must ensure parents have available parental leave provisions to care for young children and that those working with young children need appropriate training to recognise and support the development of secure attachments between children and their carers.

To read the brief go to: www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/PB15-caring_for_children.pdf

Children's Services Central is the Professional Support Co-ordinator in New South Wales and is an initiative funded by the Australian Government under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program. Children's Services Central is managed by a consortium of key organisations that resource and support the sectors of children's services in New South Wales.

Children's Services Central

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Web: www.cscentral.org.au ABN: 81 174 903 921



2009 July–November Calendar now out

Children's Services Central has released its Training Calendar for the next six months. All services should now have received a copy.

A copy can also be downloaded from our website at www.cscentral.org.au and all courses can be booked at: www.cscentral.org.au/training

Licence fees from 2010

The NSW Government has announced it will introduce licence fees for children's services that are licensed under the *NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004*. All licensed children's services will be required to pay fees from 2010.

When the announcement was made, it was indicated that annual fees would range from \$700 for services with under 30 children to \$900 for medium services and \$1,100 for services over 60 children.

The actual schedule of fees, and more information about when and how the fees will be payable, will be made public around August or September 2009.

DoCS have advised children's services providers who want to budget ahead to consider setting aside an amount in the range specified above, which will be payable within the 2010 calendar year.

Minister for Children's Services



The Federal Government has established a Ministry for Early Childhood Education and Childcare for the first time – reflecting the importance the Australian Government places on early education and childcare. The inaugural Minister is Kate Ellis, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth.

The new Minister was born in Melbourne and grew up in rural South Australia where her family owned the local bakery and her mother worked as a teacher. Ms Ellis studied International Relations at Flinders University and worked as a research officer for state and federal parliamentarians before being elected to the House of Representatives at the 2004 federal election. She is the second-youngest member of the House of Representatives.



National Quality Agenda

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has released the first national Early Childhood Development Strategy: Investing in the Early Years as well as a new National Quality Agenda for children's services. See story on page 5.

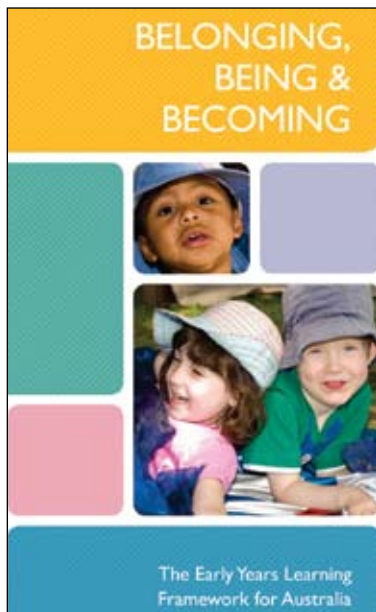
Preschools and quality assurance

Under the National Quality Agenda process, COAG is canvassing options for implementing quality improvements for children's services, including the option of replacing current licensing and quality assurance processes with a new body jointly governed by the States, territories and Commonwealth Government.

If implemented, these changes will mean that community based preschools will also come under the new processes as well as Australian Government Approved Child Care Services.

For more information, see the Consultation Regulation Impact Statement at <http://tiny.cc/quality642>

Early Years Learning Framework



The Early Years Learning Framework has been released: *Belonging, Being and Becoming—The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* which the Commonwealth Government say describes 'the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school' has now been finalised and released.

In their fact sheet about the Framework, the Commonwealth Government states that 'it is expected that early childhood settings will need to provide evidence of their use of the Early Years Learning Framework in designing and delivering their early learning programs'.

Children's Services Central, like the Professional Support Co-ordinators in other states, will have a key role in assisting services to implement the Early Years Learning Framework within their service, and a range of training options are currently being developed. The Professional Support Co-ordinators' Alliance is developing workshops to be rolled out in each state from August 2009.

In addition, the Government has commissioned an Educator's Guide to the Framework which is expected to be released in October. They are working together with state and territory governments to develop a range of support strategies for children's services to implement the Framework.



New voice

Children's Services Central is pleased to welcome Francesca Corcoran to NSW Family Day Care Association (NSWFDCA). Fran may answer your call on the 1800 157 818 phone line.

Fran is enjoying helping Family Day Care Co-ordination Units and Carers and believes the best part of her job is her daily contact with the wonderful people that make up the Family Day Care and children's services community.

Currently part-time, Fran is based at NSWFDCA's Petersham office on Thursdays and Fridays. An experienced Project Officer, Fran also brings skills in call centre management, website and publication development, as well as conference organisation. Fran is helping organise the NSW Family Day Care Associations' Annual Professional Development and Networking Forum. Quality Assurance support also forms a major part of Fran's role.

Fran has been a part of the Family Day Care community, with her son attending the Leichhardt service for several years. Fran and her family value the Family Day Care system, especially the nurturing and professionalism carers provided. Family Day Care was a very important part of her family's life, providing a brilliant introduction to the world of childcare.

CCB and CCT increases

Changes to Child Care Benefit rates and income thresholds, and to the maximum amount of Child Care Tax Rebate will occur from 1 July 2009. The hourly maximum one child rate of CCB will increase from \$3.47 to \$3.60.

The Maximum Child Care Tax Rebate will increase from \$7,500 to \$ 7,778 per annum. The Registered Care rate will increase from \$ 0.581 to \$ 0.602 per hour.

The increases are linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 3.7 per cent for the 12 months to December 2008.

Separately, the name 'Child Care Tax Rebate' (CCTR) will change to the Child Care Rebate (CCR) in recognition of the fact that the rebate is no longer a tax offset but it is a benefit paid to families to assist with childcare costs.

What's coming up with Children's Services Central?

A number of new projects are under development and will be available for services in coming months. Keep an eye on the professional development calendar and the website for the following:

Aspiring Leaders Community

This project is designed to identify, encourage and empower aspiring leaders. Aspiring leaders in the children's services field will gather in both a virtual and real time community to explore the concept of leadership.

The project will involve assessment of leadership growth and development, exposure to new ideas and approaches and critical challenges designed to empower and inspire the leaders of the future. Members of the community will initially be involved over a 12-month period.

Contemporary Research Focus

New and developing research is consistently undertaken in the area of early and middle childhood. This project aims to deliver this new research in an effective manner, so that it may be considered in daily practice within children's services.

This will involve a collaboration among universities and Professional Service Support Providers (PSSPs) to highlight research and provide a platform for dissemination.

Financial Management Project

One of the greatest challenges in any quality service is financial management.

There are three components in this professional development offering-the first is an opportunity for services to undergo a comprehensive financial health check, then to undertake training in financial management, followed by a support visit to overview the progress of financial management within the service.

Online Learning

An additional five modules of online learning are under development covering topics of emerging interest within children's services. Staff have found online learning is a great

approach to training where they want to experience training in their own environment at a personally convenient time.

Qualifications Articulation Project

In order to contribute to the training and qualification needs of the sector, this project will explore, map and provide guidance on training provided by professional development organisations, Registered Training Organisations, Colleges and Universities. The project will provide information on a number of levels assisting new entrants and current staff to understand their opportunities for training and to look ahead to a productive and exciting career in the field of children's services.

Management Committee Support Project

This project will offer community management committees training and individual service support on roles and responsibilities, governance, and staffing. Resource materials will also be developed to provide for the ongoing needs of committees.

Training Needs Analysis

Children's Services Central will undertake a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA) throughout the month of August.

The TNA will involve online surveys via the Children's Services Central website, analysis of regional needs and professional development evaluations, evaluation of requests, issues and needs and in depth questioning within focus groups.

If you would like to be a part of a teleconference focus group in August (and have the opportunity to receive a free training voucher) please email us at info@cscentral.org.au with the subject line 'TNA Teleconference'.

We also encourage you to email us with your feedback and express your professional development needs.

End-of-day lock-up

The Department of Community Services recently performed a mini enforcement blitz on regulated children's services end-of-day procedures.

It is important for services to remember requirements under the Regulation in this area.

At your service:

- when a child arrives, does a member of staff receive the child?
- is a child only allowed to leave with a parent or a person with written authorisation from a parent? If this is not possible, do you have other safeguards in place? If the child is of school age,

do you have written procedures from the parent for arrival and departure?

- at the end of each day, are all beds and all areas of the premises indoors or outdoors thoroughly checked by at least two staff to ensure that no child remains on the premises after the service closes for the day?
- do you have a policy that outlines procedures for the above points?

Read the actual requirements in clause 74 of the Regulation at: www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_reg/csr2004287/s74.html

COAG reforms

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed major early childhood reforms at its meeting on 2 July 2009.

National Early Childhood Development Strategy

The last COAG meeting also endorsed the first national Early Childhood Development Strategy: Investing in the Early Years to guide future reforms to support children aged under eight and their families.

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy aims to improve the health, safety, early learning and wellbeing of Australia's children, and spells out COAG's shared vision – that by 2020 all children can have the best possible start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation.

The Strategy proposes six priority areas for reform to be further developed for COAG in 2010, and as resources allow:

- Strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services;
- Support for vulnerable children;
- Engaging parents and the community in understanding the importance of ECD;
- Improve early childhood infrastructure;
- Strengthen the workforce across ECD and family support services; and
- Build better information and a solid evidence base.

National Quality Agenda

The National Quality Agenda they endorsed comprises four key components:

- new national quality standards;
- a quality rating system; and
- enhanced regulatory arrangements;
- an Early Years Learning Framework.

COAG has released a Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) about the reforms for public consultation.

It outlines COAG's proposals to implement a national system to replace current licensing and quality assurance processes, and a single set of national quality standards for education and care, including options for improved staff to child ratios and higher staff qualification requirements.

To read the consultation document, go to:

<http://tiny.cc/quality642>



The full **Consultation Regulation Impact Statement** about the quality reforms is available online: <http://tiny.cc/quality642>

Introducing the Quality Companions

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) has developed a series of resources called the Quality Companions to replace the current Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) Support Documents.

These new resources convey key messages about each step of CCQA and ensure services have the most up to date knowledge about how to progress through the Five Steps.

Step 2: Self-study and Continuing Improvement and Step 3: Validation are a particular focus of the Quality Companions. Feedback from services indicated that child care professionals required

more detailed information about these two Steps - especially if they are working through CCQA for the first time or need to communicate to new families about the importance of their involvement in the process.

Eleven Quality Companions address some of the issues services need to consider throughout the self-study and Validation timeframes, which include understanding how CCQA benefits the service and its stakeholders, ways in which to seek support and help throughout the process, how to prepare for a Validation Visit and strategies to help services maintain their quality practices after they receive an Accreditation Decision.

The Quality Companions for Step 2: Self-study and Continuing Improvement are:

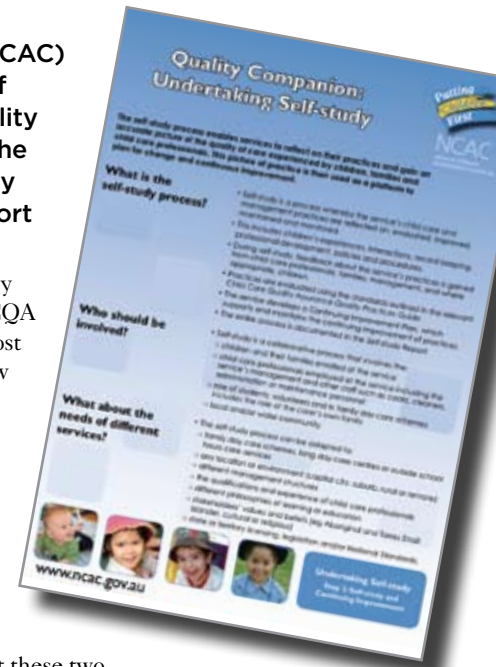
- Understanding CCQA;
- Undertaking Self-study;
- Seeking Support;
- Developing and Reviewing Policies;
- Encouraging Family Participation;
- Reflecting on and Evaluating Practice;
- Completing the Self-study Report; and
- Maintaining Momentum.

The Quality Companions for Step 3: Validation are:

- The Validation Process;
- Preparing for the Validation Visit;
- The Validation Report.

Other Quality Companions include information about Registration, Moderation and the Accreditation Decision. Services will receive Quality Companions at various stages as they progress through CCQA and they can be printed from the NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au).

For further information, please telephone a NCAC Child Care Adviser on **1300 136 554** or by e-mail: qualitycare@ncac.gov.au



New Qualifications for children's services in NSW

In November 2008, a new Community Services Training Package was endorsed and includes the qualifications relevant for the children's services sector:

- CHC30708 Certificate III in Children's Services
- CHC41208 Certificate IV in Children's Services (Outside school hours care)
- CHC50908 Diploma of Children's Services (Early childhood education and care)
- CHC51008 Diploma of Children's Services (Outside school hours care)
- CHC60208 Advanced Diploma of Children's Services

Centre-based care

The entry-level qualification for an authorised supervisor in a centre-based children's service in NSW is CHC50908 Diploma of Children's Services (Early childhood education and care). This requirement is regulated by the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) under the NSW Children and Young People (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and Children's Services Regulation 2004. To be an authorised supervisor, a worker is required to have 12 months work experience, post qualification. The Regulation is currently undergoing a review by DoCS and further information will be released as soon as it becomes available.

DoCS also requires authorised supervisors to complete certain elective units. These may include electives on service management, care for babies and regulatory frameworks. Please confirm these units with the Department before assuming competence or relevance in your qualification or job role.

In NSW, the Diploma of Children's Services (Early childhood education and care) may be used as a pathway to a university early childhood qualification. Application to a university is through UAC and advanced standing arrangements vary across courses and universities.

Out-of-school hours care

In NSW, there are no regulations covering this area. Services are strongly encouraged to abide by the National Standards published in 2000. DoCS are currently drafting regulations for the OOSH sector, which will hopefully be released in 2010. No information has been released by the Government on whether or not minimum qualifications will be included in these regulations.

Currently, the National Standards recommend that a ratio of one qualified staff member for every 30 children be maintained. The Standards outline the qualifications that are recognised. These include the Diploma of Children's Services and the Diploma of Out of School Hours Care. It is assumed that the new CHC08 qualifications also meet these Standards.

The Certificate IV in Children's Services (Outside school hours care) is recognised by the sector as the appropriate entry-level qualification for OOSH services in NSW. The Certificate III in Children's Services is not seen as relevant for OOSH in that the focus is much more around the 0-5 sector.

Child protection training

Childcare workers are among the group of people required by law to report to DoCS if they suspect (using their professional judgment and training), on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of harm. All children's services staff, in every type of children's service, must be aware of their obligations as mandatory reporters and must have completed the required training. Training for mandatory reporting is aligned to the Community Services Training Package. The new unit is CHCCHILD401A. It is anticipated that the NSW Child Protection Learning and Development Forum will release upgraded learning and assessment material for this unit in late 2009.

Transition to CHC08

Registered training organisations (RTOs) have until February 2010 to map their learning and assessment material to the new qualifications. The superseded 2002 Training Package cannot be offered to new students after this date. Students currently enrolled in the 2002 qualifications can choose to either complete their existing course of study or roll over to the new qualifications. It is assumed that the 2002 qualifications will still be recognised by regulatory bodies.

The new qualifications

One of the obvious changes to the new Training Package is that the names of qualifications now reflect children's services as a whole and the fundamental differences between offering care and education to children aged 0-5 and programs that focus on play, leisure and recreation for children aged 5-12. The middle childhood qualifications have changed significantly to now include a number of units that address working with children in OOSH services.

Another significant change to the qualification is that of the developmental units. Previously these units addressed development of children aged 0-12. It has long been thought that these units were too broad and tended to be taught very selectively. With the separation of developmental units into 0-5 and 5-12, a new skill set has been developed to address the need for bridging between early childhood and middle childhood work roles. Those workers who hold early childhood qualifications can now complete a skill set addressing developmental areas for children aged 5-12 as a way of garnering knowledge of this age range.

Further information

For any clarification of the material in this article, please seek advice from your peak organisation or the Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Body (CS&H ITAB).

Katherine Newton, Network of Community Activities

Excerpts from this article have been sourced from the CS&H ITAB's website: www.csh-itab.com.au

FDC State Forum: Prepare to Succeed

NSW Family Day Care Association is currently organising their 2009 Annual State Professional Development Forum, Prepare to Succeed.

The theme was chosen in recognition of the fact that the coming year will be one of change for the Family Day Care sector – with Quality Assurance, Regulations and the Early Years Learning Framework taking centre stage.

This year's Forum aims at preparing the foundation for continued success. The forum is being held on the 24–25 September at The Grace Hotel in Sydney.

The Forum will have a wide range of professional development opportunities for Family Day Care staff carers and the broader early childhood community.

Sessions already confirmed include:

- Quality Assurance;
- Regulations today and tomorrow;
- Making Music Magical;
- Transition to school;
- Child safety;
- Early Years Learning Framework;
- Staff management and appraisals;
- Environments for under three year olds;
- Multicultural perspectives in FDC;
- Managing critical incidents;

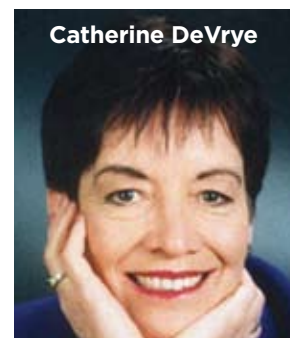
- Child Care Management System;
- Including CALD care providers in service provision;
- Policy development;
- Inclusion; and
- Safety versus fun.

Keynote speakers include Carol Lymbery, Chief Executive Officer of Children's Services Central, who is speaking on the keys to successful organisational management and motivational speaker Catherine DeVrye who, as well as being a top business executive with IBM, is also an author and an athlete who has climbed Kilimanjaro in Africa and cycled the Andes.

NSWFDCA's AGM will also be held during the forum as well as the sector's Annual Networking Dinner.

For more information and how to register, see:

www.nswfdc.org.au



Complaints!

The NSW Ombudsman is in the process of reviewing complaint handling systems in the childcare sector as part of his role under the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews & Monitoring) Act 1993 (otherwise known as CS-CRAMA).

These reviews are conducted on a regular basis across the community services sector and have proven to be extremely useful to individual services and the community services system as a whole.

Under CS-CRAMA, the Ombudsman has responsibility for reviewing the systems of service providers licensed by the Department of Community Services for handling complaints relating to the provision of services by, or the conduct of, service providers.

The Complaint Handling Review, led by Irene Craig, will visit many childcare centres licensed by the NSW Department of Community Services over the coming year. The centres chosen to participate have been selected to reflect a broad cross-section of the sector. Using a modified version of the Australia Standards for Complaint Handling (AS ISO 1002-2006), the Complaint Handling Review team will make face-to-face visits to centres and meet with centre directors and proprietors, managers and frontline staff.

The material gathered from these meetings is then used in two distinct ways. Firstly, an individual and strictly confidential report is prepared for each centre that participates. This report provides valuable feedback to each centre on the effectiveness of their current complaint policies and procedures and how well they are meeting their legal obligations under CS-CRAMA. Where centres are falling short in their obligations, the report provides specific, practical recommendations.

The Complaint Handling Review also uses the information gathered during the review to prepare a comprehensive report to the NSW Minister for Community Services. No mention is made in this report of individual services.

Bruce Barbour, NSW Ombudsman, welcomed the opportunity to work with the child care sector at this time by saying the he believed that 'effective complaint management can lead to improved relationships between service providers and their clients and, in turn, to improvements for both service providers and their clients'.

Tax Breaks for non profit services

Most community-based children's services are not-for-profit organisations. Not-for-profit organisations may be entitled to access income tax, fringe benefits tax and GST (Goods and Services Tax) concessions.

In order to access various concessions and comply with tax obligations, services may need to register for an ABN (Australian Business Number), GST, Fringe Benefits Tax and PAYG (Pay as You Go) withholding tax.

Charities and tax exempt funds require endorsement by the Australian Taxation Office to access most concessions. If the children's service organisation already has an ABN, it can obtain a Tax Concession Charity or Income Tax Exempt Fund endorsement application pack by:

- Contacting the Australian Taxation Office on **1300 130 248**;
- Visiting the Australian Taxation Office website at: **www.ato.gov.au/nonprofit**

Using the form provided in these application packs, a service can apply to the Australian Taxation Office to access one or more of the following tax concessions:

- Income Tax Exemption Fund;
- GST charity concessions;
- Fringe Benefits Tax rebate;

- Fringe Benefits Tax exemption; and
- Payroll tax exemption.

Being endorsed as a Tax Concession Charity or Income Tax Exempt Fund does not entitle a children's service to receive tax deductible gifts. To receive income tax deductible gifts and contributions, such as funds donated by families towards a building fund, an organisation must be a Deductible Gift Recipient. Donors claim income tax deductions for gifts to Deductible Gift Recipients in their income tax returns. Some preschools may be eligible for this status.

Not-for-profit organisations also have access to a range of GST concessions. Charities must be endorsed by the ATO in order to access GST charity concessions. It is important that not-for-profit children's services are aware of these concessions and how they are applied to areas such as fundraising events. Not-for-profit services who receive GST concessions must be fully aware of how much GST they collect and how much they pay out, as any difference may need to be reconciled.