



## THE NQF ROCKS!

**Here at Children's Services Central, we believe in the National Quality Framework (NQF). In this special NQF-themed edition of *Central*, we explore many of the major areas of the NQF and cover some of the reasons why we believe children's services should embrace it.**

Children's Services Central reads all the documentation that has been generated through the National Quality Framework (NQF) process so we can provide ongoing support to services. We know from our contact with services that some people, who dedicate their time to the care and education of children, may be puzzled about the NQF and its connection to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and *My Time, Our Place*.

We know that some people are concerned about what they have to do to prepare for the NQF in 12 months time. This issue of *Central* attempts to break down some of the main elements of the NQF and looks at what services may consider doing in preparation.

Above all, this edition of *Central* attempts to communicate why we at Children's Services Central believe that the NQF is not just another change for services, but possibly the most important change to the children's services landscape in many years.

### Why?

Without even preparing an absolutely comprehensive list of reasons, a quick brainstorm gives us the following:

- For most services it means a reduction in processes – no longer will you have to undergo licensing visits by Community Services and Accreditation by the National Childcare Accreditation Council.
- Services will provide better quality education and care to children. The National Quality Standard (NQS) is based on research about the things that improve quality – the changes to ratios and qualifications are a small but essential part of this.
- Fees to operate (licence fees) will drop substantially.
- The changes will allow services to articulate to families and the community about what it is we do with children while they are at our services. This has to lead to increased status and standing of children's services and by flow on, to educators.

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# ★ ROUNDUP

## FEES UP FRONT?

With the announcement of new legislation to enable families to have the Child Care Rebate (CCR) paid at the time their childcare service submits their attendance data, services may wish to consider how they can encourage families to elect to have their CCR paid directly to their childcare service.

Families can either opt to do this, and thus receive an immediate reduction on their bills, or can choose to continue to receive the Rebate as a direct payment. Services who are struggling to get fees paid in a timely manner may find that encouraging families to have their rebate paid directly to the service may help reduce the total of unpaid fees.

## NEW ONLINE TRAINING COURSE FOR EYLF

Children's Services Central has developed a new online training module: 'Introduction to the EYLF'. This online course is designed to introduce early childhood educators and services to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

It aims to assist with unpacking the EYLF document and investigates ways to implement it within a service. Activities and reflections throughout the course provide participants with practical ways of viewing the principles, practices and learning outcomes.

Opportunities are also available for viewing a variety of service journeys as they express their experiences. The cost of the course is \$11 and it can be completed at any time. To book into the course, go to: [www.cscentral.org.au/pd](http://www.cscentral.org.au/pd)

## ENDURING EXCHANGES

Children's Services Central has developed a new resource, the Enduring Exchanges series.

Enduring Exchanges is a series of team meeting packages designed to guide and assist early childhood educators to

implement the National Quality Framework (NQF) within their settings. Each package is designed to be used at staff meetings or professional development sessions at a service. Enduring Exchanges is designed to initiate and support continuing conversations between educators around aspects of the NQF. There will be several topics in the series, the first of which looks at Reflective Practices. This resource assists educators to feel confident in identifying the concepts of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) within their service.

The Enduring Exchanges packages are free and will be sent to services via email. If you would like to receive Enduring Exchanges, please email your name and service details to [info@cscentral.org.au](mailto:info@cscentral.org.au)

## NQF E-TIPS

Have you registered for *NQF e-tips* from Children's Services Central? These tips are emailed directly to your inbox. Sign up at: [www.cscentral.org.au](http://www.cscentral.org.au)



## NEW STAFF MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES CENTRAL



Children's Services Central is pleased to welcome a new Project Officer to our team. Elaine Pezzano holds a Bachelor of Teaching (Birth to 5 years) and a Diploma of Children's Services. She has over 10 years experience within the early childhood sector as an educator and director. During this time, she has worked in OOSH, long day care and preschool settings. Elaine is a welcome addition to our organisation.

## CENTRAL E-NEWS

Do you receive *Central E-news*? This is the email newsletter for Children's Services Central. To add yourself to the list, go to: [www.cscentral.org.au](http://www.cscentral.org.au) and sign up!

## PROUD OF ECO PROJECTS AT YOUR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE?

**Let others know and win prizes.** The NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network is calling for applications for the 2011 ECEEN Sprouts Practice Awards.

Categories for awards include:

- Energy;
- Connecting with Nature;
- Other (wellbeing, water, waste, etc).

**Entries close 13 May, 2011**

Application form and guidelines at: [www.eceen.org.au](http://www.eceen.org.au) or email: [info@eceen.org.au](mailto:info@eceen.org.au) or phone **0423 080 886**.

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. Feedback and enquiries should initially be directed to the Professional Support Co-ordinator in your region. Further information can be sought by contacting the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

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## THE NQF ROCKS!

- The very existence of the NQF means that governments get the importance of what we do. They understand the importance of the early years and the importance of school-aged care services. An enormous amount of public money has been expended on the NQF. We can celebrate that society has accepted its responsibility for ensuring that children get the best possible start to their education.
- The NQS gives all of us a comprehensive road map to how we can improve the quality of our services. Everyone wants their service to be the best it can be. Nobody who works with children wants to run a poor quality service but, sometimes, we can get lost in what makes a service high quality (is it the sourcing of the policies or is it something bigger?) The NQS sets this out.
- The entire NQF is aspirational in nature. It says, 'here are the minimum ratios and qualifications, but if you are a true

quality service, you will do better than the minimum'. Services that have been rated High Quality on the old Quality Assurance system may not necessarily be rated as highly against the NQS, but this should then give the incentive and guidance to work out how to increase quality provision.

Children's Services Central believes in the NQF. We believe that children's services staff, owners and management committees need support and assistance in understanding and in preparing for the NQF. We are working with other Professional Support Co-ordinators and DEEWR on a range of resources and training courses to support services to build the skills they require. We are doing our best to ensure that these resources are timely and accessible to all. For the first six months of the year, almost all of our NQF-related professional development is free of charge. Book in to an NQF information session today so that you too can be excited by what the NQF can do to make your service a better service for children.

## QUALIFICATIONS

### Planning for higher qualifications

**Why?** Services with more qualified staff are able to supply better quality education and care. Quality early childhood pedagogical leadership produces better outcomes for children.

#### What are the changes for NSW services?

**Long day care and preschools:** All contact staff to have or be working towards a Certificate III, while 50 per cent of staff to have or be working towards having a Diploma. Services between 25 and 29 places must now have a teacher, services under 25 must have a teacher some of the time. Every service is to have a pedagogical leader.

**Family day care:** All carers to have a Certificate III, all co-ordinators (includes co-ordinators, managers, CDOs etc) to have a Diploma.

**Out-of-school hours services:** No set requirements at this time.

**By when?** January 2014.

#### FAQs:

**Q:** Can staff be employed without their Certificate III?

**A:** Yes, but they must enrol in the Certificate III.

**Q:** Will there ever be set qualifications for OOSH staff?

**A:** Yes. Governments are examining this but nothing has been put in place at this time.

**Q:** Someone said these requirements are just minimum – are they?

**A:** Yes. The NQS says that 'in quality services, educators and co-ordinators should have or are supported to work towards qualifications that are higher than the minimum'.

**Q:** Does the 50 per cent requirement for Diploma staff mean 50 per cent of Diploma staff on duty?

**A:** Yes. If there are 15 carers on the premises, eight must have a Diploma or teaching qualification.

#### Services may wish to consider:

- Do you know which staff and how many staff in total will need to increase their qualification?
- What support can you offer staff to increase their qualifications?
- Can you offer financial support?
- Can you find out about possible course providers?
- Can you provide your staff with information about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?
- Do you need to think about study leave for staff who will be studying to get their qualification?
- How will you show that your staff have the qualifications they need?
- Do you have a copy of all staff qualifications in the one file or would you have to go through individual files?
- Would it be worth thinking about holding these electronically (scanning them and storing them on a computer)?
- What changes will you have to make to recruitment policies to ensure people have the qualifications they claim?
- What other changes will you need to make to policies and practices to ensure that your service meets the qualification requirements and supports staff to work towards obtaining higher qualifications?
- Who will you appoint as the pedagogical leader?

#### Which part of the NQS does this requirement come from?

##### Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements

The relevant standards are:

- 4.1 Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing; and
- 4.2 Educators, co-ordinators and staff have the skills and knowledge to support children's learning, health, safety and wellbeing.



# QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

## Planning improvement in your service

**Why?** The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is intended to set out key strengths and areas for improvement against the National Quality Standard (NQS). It is believed that the most effective improvements to service delivery are initiated from within the service.

**What are the changes for NSW services?**

**Long day care, family day care, out-of-school hours services and preschools:**

All services must undertake a self-assessment process that leads to the development of a QIP which contains strategies to address those quality areas determined during this process as not meeting the National Quality Standard. Once the quality of current practice is assessed, a service then works out where quality improvements should be made and plans how to do this. The QIP is updated annually and must be available for review by Community Services at any stage.

**By when?** From January 2012.

**FAQs:**

**Q:** Will there be a template for the QIP?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** How big will it be?

**A:** The length of the QIP will be restricted to 15 pages maximum!

**Q:** Is there a template for the self-assessment?

**A:** No, services are able to decide what self-assessment process best fits their service.

**Q:** Will Community Services be able to direct us to add something into our QIP?

**A:** Yes. If after going through the Assessment and Ratings process, Community Services considers that a service has not met part of the National Quality Standard they can direct that the relevant area be added to a service's QIP.

**Services may wish to consider:**

- Have you examined the draft QIP template (from the DEEWR website)?
- Are you familiar with the concept of SMART goals?
- If you were to assess your service against the National Quality Standard now, what would you put in your QIP?
- Would it be feasible to examine one Quality Area at each staff meeting for the remainder of 2011 and have a discussion about areas which are believed to be not meeting the Standard?

**Which part of the National Standard does this requirement come from?**

**Quality Area 7: Leadership and service management**

The relevant standard is:

- 7.2 There is a commitment to continuous improvement.

# THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

## How your service will be assessed and rated

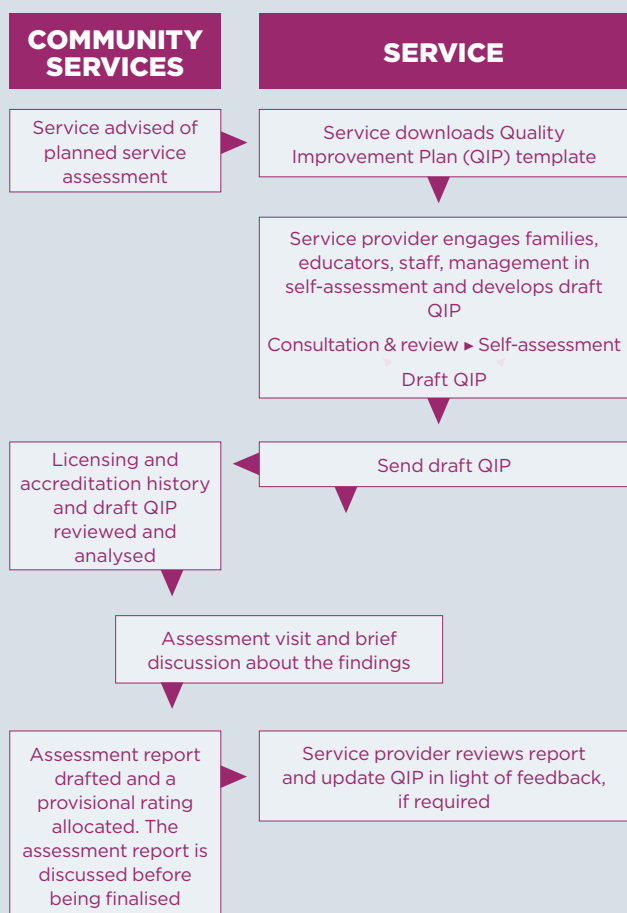
Services will be assessed and rated under the National Quality Standard (NQS) to improve educational and developmental outcomes for children attending services and to ensure families and the public have improved knowledge about and access to information about the quality of care provided in services.

### What are the changes for NSW services?

**Long day care, preschools, family day care and out-of-school hours services:** All services will be rated against the NQS on an ongoing basis. Services that score highly on the rating system will be re-rated less frequently (every three years) than services that score at the lower levels (yearly). Service types that previously had to undergo Quality Assurance with the National Childcare Accreditation Council will no longer have to do so.

**By when?** Services will be assessed under the NQF from 2012, although it will probably take up to three years for all services in NSW to have their first assessment.

### What is the process?



### Some important points:

- The National Quality Standard has seven Quality Areas, 23 Standards and 65 Elements;
- The 65 Elements are assessed as met or not met;
- The 23 Standards are rated;
- The seven Quality Areas are rated according to the rating of the Standards;
- A service is given an overall rating based on their ratings for each of the Quality Areas. The possible overall ratings are: Excellent, Advanced, National Quality Standard, Foundation, or Unsatisfactory.

### FAQs

**Q:** Who does the assessment?

**A:** Community Services will be assessing services (subject to any changes after the NSW election on 26 March). Assessors will be employees of Community Services.

**Q:** I have heard that some Quality Areas are more important than others in determining a service's rating – is this true?

**A:** No. All the quality areas are important. To get an Advanced rating, a service does need to have four Quality Areas rated as Advanced, at least two of which need to come from the following quality areas: Quality Area 1 – Educational Programs and Practice; Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children; Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with families and Communities; and Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management. This is because these areas deal with qualitative areas of quality as opposed to more structural areas.

### Services may wish to consider:

- Starting a self-assessment against the National Quality Standard. Which areas are you performing well in, which Standards and Elements are you struggling with?
- What about dividing the Quality Areas up amongst different staff members and getting each member to talk at a staff meeting about how they see the service as performing under each Quality Area?
- Examine the Draft Regulation. Are there policies and procedures that you have in place which will need to be updated so that they are best practice under the Standard and fulfil the requirements of the new Regulation?
- What are the areas of your service's practice that may need improving. Can you implement changes to these areas immediately?
- How are you going with implementing the EYLF or *My Time, Our Place*?
- We know from the trial assessment and rating processes that services that are already well progressed at implementing the appropriate framework/s were rated higher than services that have not yet started this process.

### Which part of the National Standard does this requirement come from?

**All areas!**

Services are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard.

# RATIOS:

## Getting the balance right for children and educators

**Why?** There is a large body of evidence that suggests smaller ratios are a key driver of quality in children’s services. The Standard aims to achieve access to high-quality services by improving this critical indicator.

### What are the changes for NSW services?

**Long day care and preschools:** All services must have a 1:4 ratio in place for babies now and a 1:5 for toddlers by 2016. Preschoolers’ ratios do not change.

**Family day care:** By January 2014, each carer is to have a maximum of seven children with no more than four children under school age.

**Out-of-school hours services:** No set requirements at this time.

**By when?** As above.

### FAQs:

**Q:** Are family day carer’s own children counted in the ratio?

**A:** Yes

**Q:** Will the 1:4 for babies ever become 1:3?

**A:** Possibly. In 2014, the National Partnership Agreement that puts the NQF into effect will be reviewed. A specific issue to be examined in this review is ‘further improvements to the standards, including the staff-to-child ratio for children in the birth to 24 months age range’.

**Q:** Someone said these requirements are just minimum – are they?

**A:** Yes – High quality services would be expected to have practices in place which promote higher educator-to-child ratios than the minimum required under legislation.

**Q:** Will there ever be set ratios for OOSH services?

**A:** Possibly – governments are examining this, but nothing will be put in place for at least a few years.

**Q:** What happens with mixed-age groups?

**A:** In a mixed-age group of children, an educator who is caring for one age range of children can also be counted against another age range of children, provided that the ratio for each age range is maintained and the education and care provided is appropriate against all quality areas. For more information, see page 55 of the *Information Paper on the Education and Care Services National Law and the proposed National Regulations* on the DEEWR website – [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)

### Services may wish to consider:

- How will you plan for implementing the 1:5 toddler ratio?
- Have you considered introducing the new ratio (and associated budget impacts, if any) gradually over the next few years?
- Will you investigate increasing ratios above the minimum standards as a measure of quality within your service?

### Which part of the National Standard does this requirement come from?

#### Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements

The relevant standard is:

- 4.1 Staffing arrangements enhance children’s learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

#### The relevant element is:

- 4.1.1 Educators, co-ordinators and staff-to-child ratios (including qualified and/or trained ratios) are maintained at all times.

# THE NQS WORD CLOUD



This image is a word cloud. Word clouds are designed to give prominence to words that appear more frequently in source text. Community Child Care created this cloud from the full text of the National Quality Standard – it is great to see ‘children’ and ‘quality’ appearing so prominently in the cloud.

# LEARNING FRAMEWORKS

## The foundation for enriching children's learning

**Why?** *Belonging, Being and Becoming, the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* and *My Time, Our Place, the draft Framework for School Age Care in Australia* were developed to support educators to focus their practice on delivering quality learning and play opportunities for children. The Frameworks underpin the National Quality Standard (NQS). The Framework for School Age Care builds on the Early Years Learning Framework and extends the principles, practice and outcomes to school age care settings.

### What are the changes for NSW services?

**Long day care and preschools:** Must use the Early Years Learning Framework to develop a program for each child.

**Family day care:** Must use the Early Years Learning Framework or *My Time, Our Place* as appropriate to develop a program for each child.

**Out-of-school hours services:** Must use *My Time, Our Place* to develop a program for each child.

**By when?** You should be implementing the Frameworks from now.

### Services may wish to consider:

Who will be the pedagogical leader in your service? Could this person lead your service's implementation of the Framework? Have you organised professional development for your staff around the appropriate Framework? Have you mapped your existing practice against the principles and practices outlined in the Framework?

Have you considered how you will implement the Framework? Have you held an information session for families

about the Framework? What about for Carers? Copies of *the Educator's Guide to the EYLF* and *the ELYF in Action* have been sent to all early years services – have you encouraged your staff to read this? (Under the Standard all staff must have access to this guide.) Can you see that the principles and practice of the learning framework are becoming evident in your service? Can you see how the five learning outcomes provide a focus for the programming that is being undertaken at your service?

Children's Services Central offers a range of EYLF training courses and has a new online EYLF training course. In May and June we are running a number of 'Framing OOSH' sessions across the state. We also offer a range of EYLF resources including team meeting packages, online tips and written resources and videos. Go to: [www.cscentral.org.au](http://www.cscentral.org.au)

The peak organisations which make up Children's Services Central can also offer customised professional development at individual services. Early Childhood Australia is also due to offer EYLF courses nationally this year.

### Which part of the NQS does this requirement come from?

#### Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

The relevant standard is:

- 1.1 The Early Years Learning Framework (or other approved learning framework) informs the development of a program for each child that enhances their learning and development.

This said, the EYLF and *My Time, Our Place* are embedded across every area of the NQS! All introductory statements in the NQS reflect and refer to the EYLF/*My Time, Our Place*.

## EXISTING REGULATION CHANGES

The National Quality Framework (NQF) does not come into full existence until January 2012. Until this time, services that were previously licensed (i.e. most children's services apart from OOSH services) are still covered by the NSW *Children's Services Regulation 2004*. Are you aware of the amendments to this Regulation that started on 1 January 2010 and will remain in place till the new NQF Regulation comes into effect at the beginning of next year?

These changes include streamlining of the licensing system, removing some restrictions on the composition of licensed numbers, implementing a new requirement that services undertake risk assessments prior to taking children on an excursion and a requirement that services must keep records of which authorised supervisor is in charge at what time.

Specific clauses in the amendment that services should be aware of include:

- 'The licensee of a children's service must ensure that records are made and kept up to date of the name of the authorised supervisor who has the overall supervision of the provision of the service at any time the service is operating.'

- 'The number of children who may attend a centre-based or mobile children's service at any one time while a service is being provided must not exceed the maximum number of children specified in the children's service approval for the service.' (As long as the number of under-2s do not exceed 40).

- 'The licensee and the Authorised Supervisor of a children's service must ensure that a risk assessment is carried out in relation to any excursion before the excursion takes place. In addition, a family day care carer must also ensure that a risk assessment is carried out in relation to any excursion before the excursion takes place. In this clause, risk assessment, in relation to an excursion, means the identification and assessment of the risks associated with the excursion to the safety, welfare and well being of any child participating in the excursion and includes the identification and implementation of measures to manage and minimise any identified risks.'

For more information on the amendment to the regulation go to: [http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/for\\_agencies\\_that\\_work\\_with\\_us/childrens\\_services/regulation/review\\_of\\_the\\_regulation.html](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/for_agencies_that_work_with_us/childrens_services/regulation/review_of_the_regulation.html)

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Searching for  
support, resources  
and professional  
development?  
Call us on  
**1800 157 818**

## READ THE STANDARD

**Children's Services Central is often asked about the best way to prepare for the NQF. The National Quality Framework has generated a lot of documents to contribute to educator understanding. Without doubt, the most important document for services to read is the actual National Quality Standard, *The National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care*.**



Think of the Standard as your road map to the National Quality Framework. It is the Standard that your service will be assessed against.

The Standard outlines the seven Quality Areas and their Standards and Elements. The Standard provides the base information your service needs to know about the National Quality Framework. As the Standard is only 36 pages, it is a document you can download and copy for all staff members.

If the Standard is the Roadmap to the NQF, the *Draft Guide to the National Quality Standard Education and care services – Centre-based and family day care* can be likened to the Lonely Planet Guide to the NQF.

This guide is only a draft guide, prepared for the testing phase of the NQS. In DEEWR's words 'it is not intended to be, and does not represent, a finalised statement of the policy of the Commonwealth of Australia, and does not constitute professional advice for any particular purpose'. This said, however, it has lots and lots of really useful information for services that want to ensure they understand the Quality Areas in the Standard.

In the Draft Guide, each Standard is examined in detail, with an outline of how it contributes to quality education and care. The requirements that approved providers must meet are also examined, as well as general and age-specific questions for services to consider under each Standard. The essential part of the Draft Guide is that it provides guidance for the Standard in everyday practice and what the services rating should be for each Quality Area.

At 155 pages long, the *Draft Guide to the National Quality Standard* is quite a large and informative document and, after going through the contents, services will be very well prepared for the introduction of the National Quality Framework.

Both the *National Quality Standard* and the *Draft Guide to the National Quality Standard* can be downloaded from Children's Services Central website at:

**[www.cscentral.org.au](http://www.cscentral.org.au)**

## CONSULTATIONS ON THE NQF REGULATION

A national consultation process on the proposed draft regulations under the National Quality Framework (NQF) is about to commence. The DEEWR consultation sessions will 'stimulate discussion and feedback on the draft regulations to ensure the regulations work in a practical way'.

The consultation sessions in NSW will begin in the week commencing 14 March. As this issue of Central goes to print, we understand there will be a session in the CBD on 14 March, at Penrith on 15 March, at Parramatta on 15 March, Newcastle on 16 March, Wagga on 17 March and Orange on 18 March. These dates can be confirmed through the DEEWR website.

An information paper on the Education and Care Services National Law and the proposed regulations was released at the end of 2010. It is available at: **[www.deewr.gov.au/Early childhood/Policy\\_Agenda/Pages/DraftNQFRegDocs.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Early_childhood/Policy_Agenda/Pages/DraftNQFRegDocs.aspx)**. The draft of the National Regulations will also be available soon. Written submissions on the regulations need to be sent to DEEWR by **14 April 2011**.