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*Workforce Council Response to PC  
Childcare and Early Childhood  
Learning Draft Report*

# Workforce Council Response to PC Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Draft Report

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## Executive Summary

The following document provides Workforce Council's responses to Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Childcare and Early Childhood Learning. This submission focuses on the crucial role of the early childhood education and care workforce in relation to the provision of quality early childhood education and care services for children and families.

Workforce Council commends the commissions focus on the provision of quality services for children and families and suggests that:

- Workforce planning plays a critical role in ensuring an ECEC workforce that can deliver quality services and recommends considered, targeted and effective investment in the Australian Government Early Years Workforce Strategy.
- Effective professional support and development opportunities are critical to the effective delivery of services which meet the National Quality Standard.
- Workforce Council recommends the continuation of the coordinated approach to professional support and development currently being implemented under the Inclusion and professional support program. This program has delivered the following services across Australia in the past year:
  - 14 000 instances of support by email and telephone
  - around 4000 professional development events to 56 000 participants
  - about 900 intensive support visits to services in crisis or working towards the NQF in four or more quality areas
  - 1 700 provisions of bi-cultural supports in 56 languages, and
  - Around 900 pieces of specialist equipment provided to assist with inclusion.
- Minimum qualification levels in line with the current levels required under the National Quality Standard should be maintained
- Achieving Integrated Service Delivery will require specific workforce development strategies to ensure the workforce have the relevant skills in working in cross disciplinary settings with a range of people.

## About the Workforce Council

The Workforce Council is the peak body for the health and community services workforce in Queensland, representing 13,000 employers and 295,500 employees. Founded in 1992, the Workforce Council has developed into one of Queensland's leading industry workforce bodies. The Workforce Council specialises in the Health and Community Services Industry with a reputation as an inclusive and active peak body delivering insightful, informed and intelligent support in workforce research and representation, planning, development and advice. Over more than two decades, the Workforce Council has developed unique and effective expertise which is underpinned by a truly collaborative approach and deep connections with industry, community and government. Our members include private, public and not for profit organisations.

The Workforce Council offers our industry services in the following areas:

### *Research and Representation*

Collecting and reporting of key data to represent the industry and promote policy change, target investment in workforce and skills development and speak up for capacity building within industry and government.

### *Workforce Planning*

Supporting industry to use the evidence to develop workforce plans that supports future workforce and service needs.

### *Workforce Development*

Delivering workforce development strategies that practically support organisational and individual participant's workforce goals, including skills and professional development.

### *Advice and Support*

We provide a suite of strategic consulting, advice and support services along with people and expertise to deliver a practical, sustainable workforce outcome.

The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) support available through the Workforce Council is made possible through funding provided by the National Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP), funded by the Australian Government and the Queensland Government.

The Health and Community Services Workforce Council welcomes the Productivity Commission's focus on the ECEC sector and more specifically on exploring service delivery to ensure affordable and flexible service delivery while maintaining quality outcomes for children and families.

## Quality Early Childhood Education and Care

As noted in the Workforce Council's submission in response to the Productivity Commission Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Issues Paper, extensive research demonstrates that secure relationship development in the first three years of a child's life is critical. Over the next decade, the early childhood education and care (ECEC) system will be required to meet the dual purposes of increasing productivity through supporting employment of our future workforce while ensuring a child's right to access quality early learning and development is maintained. This will require services to deliver high quality programs which support children's learning and development while being responsive to the needs of families and communities.

The Workforce Council commends the Commission's focus on the importance of the delivery of quality services and the significance of a workforce which is caring, nurturing, attentive and able to support learning and development. The current National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a nationally consistent approach to quality across all key areas of service delivery, is already well underway in terms of implementation and is broadly supported by the sector. The delivery of quality services which meet the elements of the National Quality Framework relies on the sector having a workforce which is relatively stable, skilled and resilient.

### National Quality Framework

The Workforce Council commends the Commission's acknowledgement of the importance of retaining the National Quality Framework for ECEC services and the recognition of the broad support for this framework across the ECEC sector (2014). The extension of this framework to all government funded services is supported; however the Workforce Council urges caution in relation to the adaptation or tailoring of the current standard. As recognised by the Commission, the standards are "...already tailored to recognise the unique environment provided by family day care, and would need to also be tailored and include a transition plan to reflect the different physical circumstances of services such as home-based care, mobile and other block funded services in some regional areas" (2014: 36). Tailoring in line with the current arrangement for family day care is supported as the level of service delivery required to meet the standards is in no way diminished through this level of tailoring. In the case of family day care, the standards adapt the examples to demonstrate their application in the family day care environment. The Workforce Council supports this approach to bringing other services in line with the NQF; however, tailoring and amendments which serve to reduce the level of quality provided are not supported for a number of reasons:

- The National Quality Framework is recognised as leading the world in a number of areas, watering it down for different services will hinder the ability of the Government to ensure that investment is supporting all children and families
- Parents, families and children should be receiving a consistent level of quality in service delivery across service types. Lack of consistency will result in families having inequitable access to quality and will be counterproductive to ensuring that all parents and families, regardless of the type of care available, the flexibility of care they require or their location, are able to access a consistent level of quality in the service.

- Government investment in ECEC services will be inequitable – with some services receiving the same amount of funding for delivering a service of lower quality compared to another.

#### **Draft Recommendation 7.1**

The Workforce Council does not support a system which allows scope for services to provide care-only and care-educational services and recommends no changes are made to the National Quality Framework.

#### **Draft Recommendation 8.5**

The Workforce Council supports the eligibility of nannies for government funding when they meet the National Quality Standards (NQS), minimum qualification requirements and ratio requirements. This support is offered on the proviso that nannies are required to deliver the same level of quality as other services as per the current NQF, that they are monitored effectively by ACECQA and their Regulatory Authority and be subject to the same level of scrutiny and noncompliance ramifications as other service types.

#### **Draft Recommendation 7.10**

Workforce Council supports the harmonisation of background checks for ECEC staff and volunteers.

## **Workforce**

### **Workforce Planning**

Workforce planning is critical to the availability of a workforce with the skills and knowledge to deliver quality ECEC services to children and families. Regional, sector and enterprise level workforce planning will be critical to ensuring efficient and effective investment by government, enterprises and individuals in programs which support the continued development of a workforce capable of delivering quality ECEC services to children and families now and into the future.

Workforce planning should concentrate on the strategic use of both our workforce and skills, including a focus on our existing unpaid workforce. A critical factor in sustaining an ECEC workforce is the significant proportion of workers who leave the sector every year. While continuing to supply new workers to the sector is essential, resources and policy attention should be directed toward supporting workforce planning and workplace practices that address the leakage of qualified workers from the sector. This will not only service to address our skill shortages but will also reduce the wastage created by training workers who do not stay in the sector workforce.

Initiatives to increase the supply of Early Childhood Development (ECD) workers have often exacerbated workforce churn with many people being trained but only a small proportion remaining in the industries. This will only be addressed if workforce planning is perceived as more than training: training is one part of workforce planning and development and a primary focus on training and qualifications often discounts other critical factors such as remuneration, provision of professional development and learning opportunities, career pathways and the undervalued nature of the sectors. Workforce planning must embrace the integrated nature of the system and include the development of mentoring programs, career pathways, ongoing professional development opportunities and relevant skills sets for specific areas.

Where services fail to meet the needs of communities, workforce shortages and/or skills gaps must be addressed and should not be used as reason to lower quality standards. To improve the delivery of services to families and children with additional needs, a flexible and regionally targeted approach to workforce planning and development is required.

The Australian Government Early Years Workforce Strategy (<https://www.education.gov.au/early-years-workforce-strategy>) provides an overarching framework for addressing workforce issues experienced by the sector and the Workforce Council recommends considered, targeted and effective investment in this strategy. The strategy addresses five key areas relevant to early childhood education and care:

- Providing a professional early childhood education and care workforce through:
  - Supporting professional development and leadership opportunities
  - Promoting the professionalism of the ECEC workforce to the wider community
  - Recognising professional practice
- Ensuring a growing workforce to continue to meet community demand by:
  - Promoting early childhood careers
  - Promoting existing training programmes and pathways
  - Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to build careers in ECEC
- Aiding early childhood educators to gain the qualifications and skills the workforce needs to continue to provide high quality care by:
  - Facilitating greater uptake of existing training initiatives
  - Supporting the higher education and training sector to continue to deliver high quality, relevant and flexible training to the ECEC sector
  - Reviewing training initiatives
- Fostering the creation of a responsive workforce, one which can address the needs of all children through:
  - Enhancing the capability of educators to meet the needs of children from diverse social and cultural backgrounds
  - Developing the capability of ECEC educators to further develop skills in working with children with diverse needs and connecting them with appropriate support services
- Facilitate collaboration amongst members of the broader early childhood development workforce by:
  - Supporting qualifications that enhance the skills of ECEC educators to work effectively with other ECD professionals
  - Promoting evidence-based integrated service practice
  - Improve the Australian evidence base on ECD.

The Queensland Government is currently reviewing the Early Childhood Education and Care Action plan, the Workforce Council is currently working with the Queensland Government and a number of other stakeholders in this review.

## Professional Development and Support

As recognised by the Commission in the Draft Report, “...a professional and skilled workforce is critical to achieving quality ECEC services and consequent learning and development outcomes” (2014:466). The nature of the ECEC workforce requires individuals to have problem solving capacity and analytical skills - skills that are built up over a period of time with support and guidance. In addition to these skills, the ECEC workforce includes people in a wide range of diverse roles, including specialized roles. In this context, a focus on using innovative strategies to support current workers to up-skill and participate in relevant ongoing professional development is fundamental. Professional development in this context is defined as “...continuous learning that promotes personal and professional growth; professional learning enables practitioners to affirm existing understandings as well as to acquire new knowledge and skills and thereby remain up-to-date with evolving developments in the profession” (Waniganayake et al 2008: 119). The vital role of such learning is also supported by Huntsman (2008: 7) who state that ‘...the link between levels of caregiver education and/or specialised qualifications, process quality and child outcomes is perhaps the strongest in research on quality.’”

If the NQF is to meet its intended policy outcomes including providing nationally consistent high quality ECEC services, organisations delivering services need access to high quality professional development and support to ensure they have the capacity and capability to meet those standards. This access is necessary during and beyond the NQF implementation period as the framework itself is a continuous improvement model, requiring services to show continuous improvement over a period of time. The Workforce Council advocates for the continuation of a shared responsibility for funding professional development and support with Government, employers and employees sharing the cost of professional support for the following reasons:

- As noted in the report (2014), the wages of ECEC employees are below the median wage and in some cases as much as 36% below. The full cost of professional development and support becomes a barrier for ECEC workforce to access professional development without shared investment.
- Research shows that qualifications and specialist knowledge impact on service quality and safety (Huntsman 2008) such that if the ECEC workforce doesn't access professional development and support, both service quality and safety may be affected.
- Under the current Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) system professional development is jointly funded by governments, enterprises and individuals. To move the money from government funding to enterprise level funding will most certainly result in greater costs for the business and consequently an increase in fees for families.
- Currently governments invest significant resources in ECEC services such as funding provided to families to purchase services and the resultant cost of regulatory oversight, and also ensuring families have access to quality services. Quality is inherently linked to the skills of the person providing the service, and professional development plays a vital role in the acquisition and application of new skills in the ECEC environment. Governments risk undermining investments in other areas of the industry if this crucial element isn't included in the broader investment strategy.
- Although a minimum standard, mandatory qualifications play a vital role in ensuring a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. The Workforce Council is privy to frequent and regular

anecdotal evidence regarding the failure of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and university systems to provide practical skills to students and the ability to implement knowledge and continue develop as professionals. As a result, the requirement for professional development and support to support career paths by allowing greater movement across specialisations while ensuring new skills are required to maintain quality becomes more necessary.

The Workforce Council has noted that the recommendations in relation to the changes to the Inclusion and Professional Support Program focus on inclusion support and don't explicitly acknowledge the role of the Professional Support Coordinator in this funding program. The IPSP was established in 2005 and began implementation in 2006. The program was based on a review conducted by the Australian Government (The Child Care Support Broadband Review) in 2002/3 which examined all funding offered to support child care services at that time (this review did not include the child care benefit). This review found that ECEC organisations and services indicated that the array of funding available through multiple organisations was confusing and it was sometimes difficult to know where to go for support. In addition organisations delivering ECEC services identified experiencing patchy and inequitable access and that costs were different depending on who was delivering the program. Some of the major recommendations from the review included that there be:

- one coordinator in each state and territory to oversee and manage the delivery of professional support for child care services, to ensure consistency and equity of access
- a regular needs analysis completed to identify the needs of all services
- a set of national professional development priorities identified to ensure national consistency of support provided to child care services across Australia
- a range of Professional Support Service Providers (PSSPs) engaged to provide professional development and support activities across the state, and
- a toll-free help line available to child care services.

At that time in Queensland, there were seven different organisations funded to provide professional development under the following content areas:

- Management
- Quality practice
- Inclusion
- Inclusion of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
- Inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Family day care specific professional development
- Outside school hours care specific professional development

In 2006 the IPSP replaced previous funding arrangements and the Professional Support Coordinator was provided funding to coordinate the delivery of professional support. Each state still has a single coordinating body and, in the first contract, this body was required to subcontract a 60% of the delivery to other organisations, build the capacity of these organisations and provide a one stop shop, complete with free call 1800 number for ECEC organisations to call, regardless of what type of support they required.

Feedback from the ECEC sector since the beginning of this program has demonstrated that funded professional development and support opportunities delivered through the coordinated approach have been more visible, more accessible and more relevant. Currently, Professional Support Coordinators are funded to:

- Provide professional development and support to eligible ECEC services
- Manage the bicultural support program
- Manage the free IPSP resource library
- Manage the specialist equipment program
- Develop resources

PSCs are required to deliver the coordination project in a way which meets the needs of eligible services and:

- Aligns with the IPSP principles
- Is based on evidence and good practice and increases the knowledge and skills of eligible ECEC service educators and drives continuous improvement
- Supports services to meet the National Quality Standard, in particular with self assessment and development of Quality Improvement Plans, and to understand and implement approved learning frameworks
- Supports ECEC services to include children from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous children, children with a disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and
- Ensures support is provided in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Across Australia last year, the PSC program delivered the following:

- 14 000 instances of support by email and telephone
- around 4000 professional development events to 56 000 participants
- about 900 intensive support visits to services in crisis or working towards the NQF in four or more quality areas
- 1 700 provisions of bi-cultural supports in 56 languages, and
- around 900 pieces of specialist equipment provided to assist with inclusion.

The provision of funding to support a nationally consistent but state implemented coordination role has enabled professional support coordination units to ensure national consistency; state responsiveness and effective cross sector and cross government professional support activities. This has improved efficiencies, minimised duplication of outcomes across funding programs, and maximised opportunities to value add. This also ensures return on investment for the Government, individuals and organisations as the coordination unit is able to provide a level of quality control to ensure the provision of professional development is based on evidence, good practice and the National Quality Standard.

This model of delivery mirrors the current broader ECEC policy environment which ensures consistency in message and efficient and effective delivery which responds to state nuances and differences in geographical and demographical circumstances. This is demonstrated in some of the partnership and collaborative arrangements described below:

In Queensland, the Workforce Council, through the PSC program and other funding sources has:

**Successfully supported large scale policy implementation** (National Quality Framework) through a variety of measures which are responsive to the needs of the state while being consistent with the national framework including:

- Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and My Time, Our place (MTOPI) through the Professional Conversations Program. A partnership between the regulatory authority (Queensland Government and the Professional Support Coordinator Queensland) to promote and support the implementation of these frameworks with a series of conversations targeting senior educators in management, policy, training and support roles in ECEC, and applying a 'Train-the-Trainer' model of learning and development to maximise impact and cost effectiveness (Case Study 1 Appendix A).
- Delivery of a variety of workshops focussed on all quality areas in the NQF in urban, regional, remote and very remote areas
- Panel discussions and forums open to the sector with representation from Queensland peak bodies and ACECQA (Case Study 2 Appendix A)
- Partnerships with the Queensland Regulatory Authority – the Department of Education, Training and Employment, Early Childhood Education and Care (Case Study 3 Appendix A)

**Developed numerous resources** to support quality practice which have been shared nationally and tailored to meet state requirements where necessary including:

- The Social and Emotional Early Development manual in partnership with Queensland Health and The Gowrie Queensland - a manual which supported professional development workshops throughout Queensland for senior child care and family day care educators using a train the trainer approach. The manual includes a DVD. The SEEDS manual was a collaborative process between the Health and Community Services Workforce Council (Professional Support Coordinator Queensland), Queensland Health and The Gowrie Queensland. The manual was developed by The Gowrie Queensland based on the SEEDS MHP framework which was developed by Queensland Health Southern Area Population Health Service.
- The Approved Providers Guide – Proudly funded and supported by the Queensland Government, the Approved Providers Guide is a free resource which aims to support increased understanding of the role of the approved provider in the context of the National Quality Framework (NQF). This resource has been developed by the Health and Community Service Workforce Council in partnership with the Queensland Government Department of Education and is available FREE to all services through the online platform.
- The Deadly Cards Resource – The Deadly River Sisters, an action research group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous educators, shared their personal and professional reconciliation journeys and it was these journeys that informed the cards development. The Deadly Cards are a resource which were created to support meaningful conversation and reflection to grow understanding of issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, inclusion and reconciliation
- Self-Assessment Tool to support services to develop comprehensive and actionable professional learning plans (Case Study 4 Appendix A)

### **Supported the implementation of the new child care management system**

- Professional Support Coordinators had a key role in supporting the introduction of the new child care management system in 2008. Presenters from each professional support coordination unit travelled to Canberra to become familiar and expert on the CCMS before travelling around Queensland and their respective states delivering workshops which were nationally consistent and implemented at the state level.

### **Developed innovative, efficient and effective models of PD delivery to support inclusive practice**

- Yarn Up - Tok Blo Yumi (talk belongs to you and me), a series of professional conversations to build culturally competent and inclusive early childhood education and care environments (Case Study 5 Appendix A)
- Innovative projects – a funding program delivered by Professional Support Coordinator Queensland (PSCQ) that supports children’s services ability to hold customised (“in-house”) professional support. This round of funding requires services to apply to PSCQ for funding to deliver professional support. Priority is given to applications where:
  - an identified need is not being met,
  - where services are committed to combine with others in the region,
  - where services are committed to ongoing learning opportunities and
  - where services are committing their own funds to the professional development.

This model

- ensures a level of quality control as PSCQ can ensure providers are up to date with current research and delivering effective professional development in line with the national quality standard
  - Rewards services to working together and co investing in professional development
  - Requires a co investment in the professional development
- Learning Through Sharing Program - A program targeted at all eligible ECEC provider and administrated by Professional support Coordinator Queensland, this project supports educators of all levels to identify an area of need and spend a number of days visiting a service who has self-identified or has been identified by PSCQ as delivery services to a high quality standard in the area identified. This program supports participants to learn from peers in the field and build supportive relationships for the future.

Working closely with state governments, ECEC providers and relevant peak bodies, coordination units are able to ensure that there is no duplication of delivery and that professional support is contributing to continuous improvement and better quality outcomes for children and families. The Workforce Council notes the commission’s inclusion of “ one off grants to ECEC providers to build the capacity to provide services to additional needs children – this includes training for staff to meet the needs of children with a disability, indigenous children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds” (2014: 23), and highlights that this is not an expansion of the current program, rather a redirection of professional support funds away from a centrally coordinated and quality controlled system to an enterprise based decentralised model. As noted above, this is not considered an economically efficient and/or effective way to provide professional

support and the Workforce Council recommends the Professional Support Coordinator role be reinstated in the funding arrangements.

#### **Draft Recommendation 7.7**

The Workforce Council agrees that regulatory authorities should provide more detailed and targeted guidance to providers in the areas noted. In addition, the Workforce Council strongly recommends that professional development opportunities are provided for educators and providers to explore their practice and new theories and knowledge which will support the entire quality framework and the approach to quality improvement. If prescriptive and template based guidance is provided, quality is undermined as individuals and services work to templates rather than to their particular context, making the best decisions for families and children. As noted above, the current PSC role provides a unique opportunity to work closely with regulatory authorities to ensure a shared understanding of the authority and the sector in relation to quality practice and the National Quality Framework.

#### **Information Request 13.1**

A major risk involved in the transition to the proposed new funding arrangement for mainstream services is that organisations may need support to understand their business models and change them accordingly. This has been recognised by the Federal Government in the funding of a transition support project – the *FDC Services Education and Support Project* which is available to assist services between now and July 2015. This project is supporting the sector to adjust to the significant changes to funding currently experienced as a result of the cessation of the Community Support Program. The risk in not providing such support is that those who don't have the required skills and knowledge to adapt to the change will no longer be providing ECEC services, which will result in a reduction of services available for families.

#### **Draft Finding 8.1**

The Workforce Council welcomes the recommendation that the IPSP requires additional resourcing in order to better meet its policy objectives.

#### **Draft Recommendation 12.6**

The Workforce Council welcomes the focus on training to support inclusive practice, however questions the effectiveness of a one off grant system.

A coordinated approach ensures that quality professional development is provided by a pool of quality assured presenters, eliminating wasteful spending on ill-informed presenters and the replication of effort and costs. For example under the one off grant system, a single presenter may be called to a remote location on three separate occasions in a single year which represents a gross waste of government funds as the costs of travel and accommodation in this example are tripled. The Workforce Council, through the PSC Queensland project provided lump sum payments to organisations to deliver professional development and support internally. This model required services to organise the professional development and rewarded services when they worked together. Under this model, services were allocated funding for only a percentage of the full cost of

the professional development and the Workforce Council retained some quality control over the presenters.

## Qualifications

A literature review conducted in 2008 highlights that “the level of caregiver formal education is a stronger predictor for children of preschool age than for younger children, while specialised training is more strongly associated with quality in the case of infants and toddlers. Caregivers with a higher levels of formal education had more specialised child-related training, held less authoritarian child-rearing beliefs and were in settings rated as more safe, clean and stimulating” (Huntsman: 7). As mentioned in the quality section above, numerous studies have pointed to the importance of the physical and relational environment for children under three years, and the detrimental impact of poor quality environments and unresponsive caregivers on children of this age group.

### Draft Recommendation 7.2

The Workforce Council argues that minimum qualification levels as per the current levels required under the National Quality Standard are maintained for the following reasons:

- Research on brain development and the first three years demonstrates that these are critical for child development, the rights of the child to access quality care regardless of age is paramount.
- In Queensland, over 56% of those who hold a certificate III level qualification have been working in the ECEC sector between 0 and 5 years, compared with 31% of those with a diploma level qualification. Those with certificate III qualifications are also younger than those with higher level qualifications. This would result in the youngest, most inexperienced, least qualified and lowest paid workforce working with babies from 0-3 years.
- ECEC workforce already experiences workforce shortages due to lack of career paths and low wages. Currently educators with a certificate III are paid more than 36% below the median wage, this policy would result increased movement from the 0-3 age group as the workforce seeks alternative career paths and higher wages.
- Research shows that quality outcomes for infants are linked to specialised training. In the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) (see table in Appendix B), specialised knowledge is only required of those studying at a level 5 (or diploma level). Those at level 3 (certificate III) are required to demonstrate competence only in applying knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy and judgement and to take limited responsibility in *known and stable contexts within established parameters*. Children from 0-3 years in group environments are demanding, the needs between the ages of 0 and three change dramatically and people working in this environment require advanced skills in problem solving and analysis to deal with complex day to day situations, these are not stable contexts.

## Draft Recommendation 7.5

The Workforce Council supports this recommendation to explore ways to make the requirements for approving international qualifications simpler and suggests that ACECQA be the single body responsible for approving international qualifications for those working in the ECEC field.

The Workforce Council recommends changes are not made to the current ratio requirements for the following reasons:

- Lower ratio's of children to adults puts children's safety at risk
- "Having nurturing, warm and attentive carers is arguably the most critical attribute of quality in any ECEC setting, especially for younger children" (Productivity Commission 2014: 12). The ability of an educator to provide attention is directly linked to ratios of staff and children. This proposal reduces the amount of time educators are able to spend providing care, attention and learning and development opportunities. The current ratios are a minimum and any reduction risks undermining the quality of the service.
- Averaged ratios over a week or day will also negatively impact on the stress levels and retention of the workforce as more pressure is placed on the remaining staff required to provide a safe learning and development environment with more children.

Anecdotally the Workforce Council is aware that services with staffing levels above minimum ratios with permanent float staff for all breaks and back up for programming time, retain staff longer

## Quality Training Delivery

Despite the national training package and national competencies, the quality of delivery across the sectors remains varied. This is a key factor influencing whether workers have the necessary skills and attributes to be effective in the workplace. In order to support the industries and the VET Sector, The Workforce Council recommends the development of industry benchmarks to support the Standards for National VET Regulator (NVR) Registered Training Organisations. Such benchmarks would assist audit and registration bodies to understand and implement current industry standards, practice standards and currency of industry trainers for qualification levels in the health and community services industries.

The Workforce Council encourages programs that support service providers to build their capacity to engage in shared models of training and employment, where education providers partner with industry to deliver training. The delivery of training must be culturally and geographically appropriate to the audience and training organisations should be encouraged to offer improved flexible delivery arrangements including timing, location and the mode of delivery that is responsive to diverse needs.

It is important to recognise that base level qualifications and traditional accredited and non-accredited training tend to focus expressly on the development of core skills and competencies. While baseline qualifications are appropriate, the VET system does not always support the ongoing and complex needs of the workforce. However, best-practice and quality frameworks in the ECEC field are increasingly demanding learning outcomes that enable complex thinking and problem solving to support the particular needs of different children and families. This requires a capacity

building approach where continuous learning is supported and embedded into ECEC thinking and practice.

In the Health and Community Services Market Oversight Report, 2014, the Workforce Council highlighted the emergence of a strong fee for service market in the Queensland ECEC sector as a result of significant policy change and reform occurring in the state. The Report recognises the risks in ensuring that an open market meets standards for quality, industry relevancy and currency in a contestable environment (page 16.) Specifically, RTOs competing for business should remain cognisant of and driven by industry needs at all times.

## **Additional needs and Integrated Service Delivery**

The Workforce Council welcomes the Commission's focus on the importance of "build[ing] capacity to provide ECEC for individual additional needs children, for children in highly disadvantaged communities and to facilitate the integration of ECEC with schools and other services" (2014: 2), and draws the Commission's attention to the professional support section above which demonstrates the critical role effective professional support plays in building capacity.

Skills in collaboration and partnership are an essential skill set for the ECD workforce to access in order to work in an integrated way with other services. The ECD workforce must also be able to access flexible and innovative skilling and professional development opportunities which result in the workforce having the skills and capacity to deliver and respond to local needs.

### **Draft Recommendation 5.2**

Achieving Integrated Service Delivery will require specific workforce development strategies to ensure the workforce have the relevant skills in working in cross disciplinary settings with a range of people. This is a new role for much of the workforce in health and community services including the ECEC workforce, and the Workforce Council suggests a coordinated workforce development strategy is required to work in integrated ways and achieve the policy outcomes stated. The Workforce Council recommends an efficient model would be to invest in coordination roles which support integrated service delivery which leverages from current infrastructure. .

The Workforce Council supports an approach which highlights not only the importance of skills mixes and skills sets approach (rather than whole qualifications) but also the importance of developing the capacity of the ECD workforce to think across sectors. Cross sectoral action research projects are an example of how this capacity could be built over a period of time. The PSC Alliance research into Integrated Early Years Provision recommends that particular attention needs to be paid towards professional development which supports the development of governance and leadership skills and abilities for ECD workers in integrated contexts. For more details please go to <http://pscalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FinalCSUreport.pdf>

### **Information Request 8.2**

The Workforce Council highlights the importance of providing funding to support workforce development in this relatively new area of service delivery.

#### **Draft Recommendation 5.4**

The Workforce Council adds that the identification and development of requirements in relation to roles, qualifications and experience of the integrated service delivery workforce, particularly the leadership and coordination roles should be underpinned by research to ensure best practice. In addition, some evaluation of the impact of the qualifications and experience on outcomes should be included in the monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that these can be changed and updated as necessary.

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Waniganyake, M., Harrison, L., Cheeseman, S., De Gioia, K., Burgess, C & Press, F. 2008. *Practice potentials: Impact of participation in professional development and support on quality outcomes for children in child care centres*. Canberra: Professional Support Coordinator Alliance.

## Appendix A

Case study 1	<b><i>Supporting large scale policy implementation – Professional Conversations</i></b>
Client:	Australian Government through the Professional Support Coordinator funding and the Queensland Government Office of Early Childhood Education and Care
Description:	“Toward the end of 2010, the Queensland Health and Community Services Workforce Council (the Workforce Council) working in partnership with the Queensland Office for Early Childhood Education and Care (OECEC) trialed a new approach to professional learning in ECEC, advertised as a series of ‘professional conversations’. Linked to the national reform agenda, the broad aim of this jointly funded project was to promote and support implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework”.(Irvine, S. and Price, J. 2009: 2)
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering a series of 5 professional conversations 196 senior educators in support roles to 14 groups across Queensland</li> <li>• Participants identified increased the knowledge of the early years learning framework and my time our place and a change to more positive feelings and attitudes about the frameworks</li> <li>• Participants identified greater confidence and strengthened capacity to implement the quality framework</li> <li>• The model increased networking among participants</li> <li>• Participants identified the role participation played in supporting collaborative reflective practice, which is a key element to the frameworks</li> </ul>

Case study 2	<b>Supporting large scale policy implementation - Panel discussion and Q and A session</b>
Description:	<p>Educators and services in Moreton Bay, 1 hour north of Brisbane were invited to participate in a panel discussion hosted by Sue Irvine (QUT) and Jennifer Clarke (TAFE Qld, Brisbane). This panel brought a group of highly regarded leaders together to share their views on current topics spanning government policy, funding and regulation of services; making quality visible; links with the school sector; and, of course, leadership, responsibility and accountability in ECEC. The esteemed panel comprised:</p> <p>Rhonda Livingstone (ACECQA)  Jane Bourne (The Gowrie (Qld) Inc.)  Kylie Brannelly (Queensland Children's Activity Network)  Jane Carter (Child, Youth and Family Care, Churches of Christ)  Kym Groth (Family Day Care Association Queensland)  Chris Kyranis (Creche and Kindergarten Association)  Lesley Jones (Goodstart Early Learning)  Julie Price (Health and Community Service Workforce Council)</p>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This event was attended by 50 participations from the local area.</li> <li>• 90% of evaluation survey responses indicated that participants in this event agreed or strongly agreed that they had gained new knowledge and skills as a result of participating in the event while 80% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that it challenges their thinking.</li> <li>• Over 81 % of respondents indicated that they were very likely or likely to implement what they had learnt during the session in their service.</li> </ul>

Case study 3	<b><i>Supporting large scale policy implementation – partnerships with the Queensland Regulatory Authority - Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, Early Childhood and Care</i></b>
Client:	Queensland ECEC industry, Australian Government through the Professional Support Coordinator funding and the Queensland Government Office of Early Childhood Education and Care
Description:	<p>For a number of years, Workforce Council have been working closely with the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, Early Childhood and Care to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a shared understanding of the learning frameworks between the regulatory authority and those in roles which support or lead the implementation of these frameworks (see case study 1)</li> <li>• Provide consistent information to services about changes to the policy environment</li> <li>• Value add and leveraging from shared activities and outcomes by co funding and combining resources</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<p>Numerous jointly funded and attended activities including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current partnership with the Queensland Office of Early Childhood Education and Care (OECEC) to deliver 13 forums (6 co facilitated). During the co facilitated forums, the Department of Education, Training and Employment held an industry consultation focused on the ECEC workforce action plan, while Workforce Council delivered professional development around the new Professional Learning Tool and information about other professional support opportunities.</li> <li>• Since 2009 Office of Early Childhood Education and Care have been invited and accepted the invitation to participate in and/or deliver key messages at 650 Workforce Council events</li> <li>• Central PSC staff participated in a number of DETE forums to collaborate and share information including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Legislation and National Implementation Review Committee</li> <li>○ Sector Development Working Party</li> <li>○ Sector Meetings</li> <li>○ Invitation and attendance at the OECEC Early Years Workforce Action Plan Reference Group</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Case study 4	<p><b>SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL</b></p> <p><b><i>Professional Learning Plan – PSCA</i></b></p>
Description:	<p>The Self-Assessment Tool Professional Learning Plan was developed by the PSC Alliance to support ECEC services to build and develop understanding of the services professional development needs at an individual team and service level.</p> <p>The tool invites services to utilise and build on the work they have undertaken to date in the form of QIPs, Inclusion Improvement Plans and other documents that may identify learning needs. Following this the tool provides a process for individual to determine and assess their needs and then develop a more comprehensive understanding of the needs across the service.</p> <p>The tool provides information regarding effect learning processes. The end result is that a service will have a plan that is tailored for their service.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The Self-Assessment Tool Professional Learning Plan is available on the IPSP online Library.</p> <p>To date the PSCQ has heard that services welcome the availability of the tool.</p> <p>The tool has been used in Regional Forums across Queensland and the response has been positive.</p>

Case study 5	<b>Yarn Up - Tok Blo Yumi (talk belongs to you and me)</b>
Description:	<p>Yarn up Tok Blo Yumi is an ongoing learning series of 8 sessions that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6 professional conversations,</li> <li>- a walk on country with traditional owners</li> <li>- A sharing day where educators who have participated in Yarn Up Tok Blo Yumi share their learnings with other educators from the region.</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<p>Yarn Up- Tok Blo Yumi Project (talk together/talk belong to you and me) has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Been delivered in 11 of the 13 ISA regions across Queensland</li> <li>- involved over 700 educators across all service types</li> <li>- engaged over 25 Elders and community members</li> </ul> <p>It builds culturally competent and inclusive early childhood education and care environments by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- supporting the implementation of the National Quality System including Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) My Time Our Place</li> <li>- using a sustainable model for embedding Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Inclusion</li> <li>- challenging peoples world views which has led to service leaders and educators making huge shifts in their beliefs, attitudes and understanding of aboriginal and Torres Strait islander cultures</li> <li>- acknowledging that everybody has an identity and supports the notion of belonging own world view and identity stating</li> <li>- forming relationships with local elders and other community leaders</li> <li>- encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to enroll in the Centre as there are appropriate displays of cultural safety</li> <li>- practicing critical reflection and supporting this to continue into the service environment for ongoing learning</li> <li>- ensuring practice change across the service to fulfil their vision of embedding Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander perspectives</li> <li>- building cultural safety where all cultures are respected</li> <li>- incorporating cultural activities in a meaningful and purposeful way e.g. local Elders, community members, stories and art</li> </ul>

## Appendix B

AQF Level	Summary	Knowledge	Skills	Application of knowledge and skills
AQF level 3 criteria	Graduates at this level will have theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for work and/or further learning	Graduates at this level will have factual, technical, procedural and some theoretical knowledge of a specific area of work and learning	Graduates at this level will have a range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a specialised range of methods, tools, materials and information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complete routine activities</li> <li>• provide and transmit solutions to predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems</li> </ul>	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy and judgement and to take limited responsibility in known and stable contexts within established parameters
AQF Level 5 Criteria	Graduates at this level will have specialised knowledge and skills for skilled/ paraprofessional work and/or further learning	Graduates at this level will have technical and theoretical knowledge in a specific area or a broad field of work and learning	Graduates at this level will have a broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyse information to complete a range of activities</li> <li>• provide and transmit solutions to sometimes complex problems transmit information and skills to others</li> </ul>	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility in known or changing contexts and within broad but established parameters