



Supporting

Quality Early Childhood Education and Care

the building blocks for a brighter future



Message from the Minister



Joy Burch, MLA
Minister for Children and Young People

The first five years of a child's life lasts a life time.

A strong body of research shows that early childhood is the time when the brain develops at a far greater rate, and when the capacity to develop potential skills and knowledge are laid down for life.

Quality early childhood education and care, provided by well-trained educators, gives children the best start in life. Well developed literacy, numeracy and social skills acquired in the years before school gives our children the foundation to realise their full potential.

The ACT is well-positioned to transition to the new National Quality Framework from next year.

In consultation with the ACT early childhood education and care sector, there is strong support and recognition that the new National Quality Standard will ensure all children are safe and well cared for.

The Government has listened to families and the early childhood sector about the need for support during this transition and providing additional places for childcare.

We have announced a range of initiatives that go directly to areas that have been identified – staff training, capital upgrades required to meet the new National Quality Standard while increasing childcare places, and providing additional sites for childcare centres in areas of high demand.

To support the quality, affordability and accessibility of early childhood education and care services for all families, the ACT Government is delivering the Supporting Quality Early Childhood Education and Care package which sets out a range of initiatives including:

- A. Upgrades to community childcare centres**
- B. Childcare centre grants**
- C. Early childhood scholarships**
- D. Holder Early Childhood Centre**
- E. Franklin Early Childhood School**
- F. The release of five sites for childcare use**

Together these measures support the ACT Government's commitment to provide children in Canberra with the foundation for a brighter future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joy Burch'.

Joy Burch, MLA
Minister for Children and Young People

April 2011

About the National Quality Framework for Education and Care Services



About the National Quality Framework for Education and Care Services

The National Quality Framework will begin on 1 January 2012. It will drive quality improvements to early childhood education and care services for children Australia wide, and will be implemented gradually over the next eight years so that services have time to adjust.

The National Quality Framework will apply to long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and preschools. The framework seeks to achieve a better integration of education and care while maintaining affordability.

The National Quality Framework will set a new National Quality Standard which will improve services through:

- better educator-to-child ratios to ensure each child gets more individual care and attention
- new qualification requirements to ensure staff have the skills to help children learn and develop
- a new quality rating system to ensure Australian families have access to information relating to the quality of early childhood education and school age care services
- the establishment of a new national body to ensure early childhood education and outside school hours care is of a high quality.

The assessment and rating system will provide clear and accurate information for families and services.

Each service receives an overall rating which will be displayed publicly.

From the beginning of 2012, services in the ACT will only deal with one organisation providing both a regulatory and quality assurance function.

A single body in each state and territory will provide a one-stop-shop with primary responsibility for licensing and assessing quality services.

The new national body—the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)—will ensure consistency across Australia and oversee the implementation of the new requirements.

Fact:

Under the National Quality Standard services will be rated against seven quality areas:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children’s health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management



Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Facilities

Fact:

As at April 2011, 37 per cent of ACT centres meet the new ratio requirements for children under two years old.



Fact:

All childcare centres in the ACT meet the ratio requirements for children above two years old.

On 1 January 2012, early childhood education and care services will be required to meet new child to staff ratios to ensure each child receives more individual care and attention.

Each centre must provide one educator to four children under two years of age, instead of the current ratio of one educator to five children.

Some existing centre-based services may look to expand their services to adapt to this new configuration for children under two years old.

The ACT Government currently supports a rolling maintenance program for the refurbishment and upgrade of childcare centres of \$800,000 annually.

There will be major works and design planning undertaken in 2011 on Campbell Cottage Childcare Centre (Campbell), Cooina Cottage (Charnwood) and Black Mountain Early Childhood Centre (Braddon) to meet the National Quality Standard.

Work has also commenced on facilitating the expansion of the Fyshwick Early Childhood Centre.

To support existing early childhood education and care facilities in the ACT, the Government has also announced several new initiatives.

Initiative A: Upgrades to community childcare centres

The ACT Government will provide an additional \$9 million over two years to upgrade existing centre-based childcare facilities owned by Community Services in the ACT Government.

Architects, Munns Sly Moore will work with services to assess what upgrades could be made to provide better opportunities to expand and adapt to the new National Quality Standard.

Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Facilities

Initiative B: Childcare centre grants

The ACT Government has established an infrastructure grants program to assist childcare centres adapt to the new National Quality Standard.

A total of \$250,000 funding is available to community organisations to complete minor works to meet the new requirements and maintain or increase childcare places—see www.grants.act.gov.au

1. This one-off grants process has been established to assist eligible ACT childcare centre operators meet some of the costs associated with transitioning to the new compliance requirements set out in the National Quality Framework.
2. Grants of up to \$10,000 per childcare centre are available to successful centres for planning and design, equipment, fit-out and fittings.



Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce

Fact:

As at April 2011, 45 per cent of long day care services in the ACT have a degree qualified early childhood teacher present in their service.



The ACT Government has been working closely with the early childhood education and care sector to support their workforce in a time of change.

The National Quality Framework will create new qualification requirements for early childhood educators to ensure educators have the skills to help children learn and develop.

From 1 January 2014:

- Fifty per cent of educators will need to be qualified with a diploma or be actively working towards this qualification. The remaining educators will need to have or be working towards completing at least a Certificate III in Children's Services.
- Services will be required to have a degree qualified early childhood teacher in attendance. For services that have less than 25 children, an early childhood teacher must attend for 20 per cent of the time the service operates.

By 1 January 2020:

- Services that have over 60 children will require a second early childhood teacher.

Current Training Options in the ACT

There is currently a variety of training models available to early childhood educators in the ACT, either through formal classroom based training at universities and the Canberra Institute of Technology or through work-based

flexible learning models provided by Registered Training Organisations.

To coincide with the introduction of the National Quality Framework the ACT Government committed to waive fees for the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Children's Services which provides extra training places and grows the early childhood workforce.

Students studying a Bachelor of Education Early Childhood degree may also be eligible for assistance via the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and the Higher Education Load Program (HELP). These programs provide the opportunity to study this degree level qualification at a 50 per cent reduction in university fees.

There are also a range of programs available aimed at improving the uptake of qualifications in early childhood education. These include:

1. Australian School-based Apprenticeships (ASBAs)
2. Productivity Places Program (PPP)
3. Priorities Support Program (PSP)

Further information can be obtained via the Department of Education and Training website:

www.det.act.gov.au/vhe/training_and_skills_development

The ACT Government has announced a new initiative to support the qualified early childhood development workforce in the ACT.

Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce

Initiative C: Early childhood scholarships

The ACT Government will introduce a new scholarship program to assist the early childhood workforce to meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework.

The scholarship program (\$785,000 over two years) will sponsor existing staff to up-skill to a Certificate III in Children's Services qualification and to encourage new people into the childcare industry.

The initiative combines course fees, employer incentives and start-up costs for the student. The scholarship will be available for new people and for existing educators in the long day care, independent preschools and family day care sector. The scholarship would also provide access to training for those family day care educators who are self-employed.



Supporting Accessible Quality Education and Care

Fact:

The ACT has lowest childcare vacancy rate in the country at 11 per cent.



The provision of quality, accessible and affordable childcare is important for workforce participation.

The Government has a strong commitment to increase places and equip parents with greater choice about where they send their children.

Long day care places have increased by over 1,100 places in the past two years and there are now 15,988 places available across long day, family day care, outside school hours care and independent preschools.

Excess demand, shown in low vacancy rates, is a key determinate of fees.

Over the past two years, the ACT Government has invested \$2.4 million in childcare centre capital upgrades. These investments go directly to providing more accessible, quality childcare places in areas of demand and reducing costs for families.

Given the high demand for childcare in West Belconnen, the Government provided \$4 million in the 2010-11 Budget to create a quality 110 place childcare centre in part of the former Flynn Primary School. Work is progressing with construction due to be completed in December 2011.

Baringa Childcare Centre has also been extended and now provides for an additional 24 babies at Spence.

In February 2009 the ACT Government responded to the growing demand for childcare in Canberra by identifying sites to be developed for childcare in the north and the south.

The Government has now announced several new initiatives to increase the accessibility and affordability of quality early childhood education and care which has developed from this planning.

Supporting Accessible Quality Education and Care

Initiative D: Holder Early Childhood Centre

The ACT Government will invest \$7.5 million to build a new childcare centre at Holder that will accommodate up to 125 children ranging in age from birth to five years.

This facility will be tendered to childcare providers interested in servicing the Weston Creek and the emerging suburbs of Molonglo.



Holder Block 24, Section 45



Preliminary sketch plan - Holder

Supporting Accessible Quality Education and Care



Initiative E: Franklin Early Childhood School

The ACT Government will invest \$42.7 million to build a new early childhood school in the north in Franklin. The school will include a 120 place childcare centre and accommodate up to 300 preschool to year 2 students.

This facility will be tendered to an education and care service interested in servicing the growing Gungahlin area.

ACT families can access five existing early childhood schools located in:

1. Isabella Plains
2. Lyons
3. Narrabundah
4. Scullin
5. O'Connor

These schools offer a total of 360 licensed childcare places.

Franklin Early Childhood School will complement the Government's existing early childhood schools, providing 15 hours of free preschool, with co-located childcare and early years primary school.

This innovative model also offers healthcare, family support and counselling to help parents and carers.

Supporting Accessible Quality Education and Care

Initiative F: Release of five sites for early childhood education and care services

For immediate release

1. Giralang (Block 9, Section 80).
2. McKellar (Block 4, Section 52).

The McKellar and Giralang sites will be auctioned on 18 May 2011.

3. Macarthur (Block 7, Section 398) will be auctioned in the coming months.

For release in 2011-2012

4. Holt (Part Block 5, Section 52)
A design has been prepared for a site at the Kippax Group Centre in Holt, adjoining the new West Belconnen Child and Family Centre.
5. Gungahlin Town Centre (Block 4, Section 58)
This site is available for release for a childcare centre within the next 12 to 24 months. The site is co-located with other community facilities including the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre.

Community Services will continue to work with ACT planning and property services to determine the suitability of further sites for the development of early childhood education and care services across the ACT to cater for areas of demand.



Future Planning



The Supporting Quality Early Childhood Education and Care package supports the ACT Government's current policy of creating a child-friendly city according to United Nations' principles.

The ACT Government is already planning for new early childhood education and care services where they are needed most.

This planning will identify sites close to home, close to schools, close to places of work and on transport routes.

ACT planning and property services has identified that there is likely to be an increased demand for education and care services as the Territory's birth to five years population grows, and as increasing numbers of women seek to participate in the labour force over the long term.

The National Quality Framework will serve to strengthen education and community initiatives already underway in the ACT and deliver a consistent high-quality service to a national standard as new services come online.



