

**Working to keep quality a priority:
A message from National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC)**

On 7 December 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) announced news about the National Quality Agenda. Since that time child care services have contacted NCAC asking whether they should continue progressing through Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA). Services have also questioned whether they should continue reflecting on and evaluating their practices against the standards in the *Quality Practices Guides*.

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for everyone. NCAC is in the process of planning the transition from the CCQA systems to the National Quality Agenda, and will advise services as soon as decisions have been made. In the interim, unless advised by NCAC or the Department of Education, Employment or Workplace Relations (DEEWR):

- Services should continue to maintain quality standards in accordance with the relevant *Quality Practices Guide*.
- All services must continue to submit their *Self-study Reports* to NCAC by the due date.
- NCAC will continue to assess services against the current CCQA standards through Validation Visits and Spot Checks.

NCAC will promptly advise services of any changes via the *Putting Children First* magazine, the NCAC website and through direct correspondence.

The following message regarding the National Quality Agenda was forwarded to services via the Child Care Management System (CCMS) from Michael Manthorpe, Deputy Secretary Department of Education, Employment and Industrial Relations. This following is an extract from his message:

Since the agreement in December 2009 to the new National Quality Agenda for early childhood education and school age care, Australian governments have been working together to develop the transition arrangements to the new system that will commence from January 2012. From January 2012, new legislation will be in place to underpin the nationally consistent regulation and rating of early childhood education and care and school age care services. States and Territories will have responsibility for administering the legislation and a new National body will be in place to ensure consistency of process across the country.

Between now and January 2012, a range of activities will move forward simultaneously, which include:

- Developing the legislation for the new system
- Setting up the new national body and associated IT system
- Working with the NCAC and States and Territories on transitioning to the new system
- Development, application and refinement of the new assessment and rating system including compliance and support activities
- Development of the training and support tools for services

During the transition phase we need to continue to ensure that the quality of services is maintained. Until the new legislation takes effect in January 2012, the current State and Territory regulations and Commonwealth requirements apply and you will need to continue to participate in quality assurance processes.

NCAC's commitment to services and families

In 2010, NCAC will continue to conduct Spot Checks and Validation Visits in family day care, long day care and outside school hours care services. We remain committed to ensuring that services and child care professionals receive the most up to date and current information about CCQA and quality child care practice. This includes providing families with resources when choosing and using quality child care.

We will continue to provide child care professionals and families with support, guidance and information through our:

- Website (www.ncac.gov.au) – developed for services and families to find the most up to date information about choosing quality child care and CCQA, and download and print a wide range of NCAC's resources including *Service Factsheets*, *Family Factsheets*, *Quality Companions* and Policy Templates. Many of our resources on the website have been translated into 24 community languages.
- National magazine, *Putting Children First* – published quarterly with current information about CCQA and quality child care practices.
- *Factsheets* for services and families – produced to assist services to deliver quality child care and progress through CCQA or help families understand quality child care practice. The factsheets provide practical examples, explanations about quality child care practice and issues to consider.

Where to go for more information and support

NCAC encourages services to regularly visit the DEEWR website (www.deewr.gov.au) and NCAC's website (www.ncac.gov.au) for information about the National Quality Agenda and the transition process.

Services and families are also encouraged to contact NCAC's Child Care Advisers by telephoning 1300 136 554 or emailing (qualitycare@ncac.gov.au) for additional support and guidance when progressing through CCQA.

Please contact PSCTAs for further information and/or support

Phone: 1800 647 718

Email: psctas@gowrie-tas.com.au