

## Fact sheet

## Information for families

In December 2009, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to establish a National Quality Framework (NQF) for early childhood education and care.

From 1 January 2012, the NQF will introduce a new quality assessment and rating system for services and new national standards that will include more educators to educate and care for children and enhanced educator qualification requirements.

The NQF introduces changes for long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and kindergarten services.

## The rationale

Research shows that a child's experience in their first five years sets the course for the rest of their life.

The NQF will put in place a new National Quality Standard (NQS) to ensure high quality and consistent early childhood education and care across Australia.

These changes will help providers to enhance their services in the areas that impact on a child's development and help families to make informed choices about which service is best for their child.

## The National Quality Standard

The NQS will introduce a new suite of learning frameworks—the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the draft *My Time, Our Place – a framework for school-age care*—which will help services deliver quality outcomes for children.

The NQS is focussed on seven quality areas:

- educational program and practice
- children's health and safety
- physical environment
- staffing arrangements
- relationships with children
- collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- leadership and service management.

Services will be rated against these seven quality areas and given an overall rating that they will be required to display. Parents will also be able to view these ratings online.

See overleaf for key changes for early childhood centres.

## Impact on the cost of education and care

The NQF aims to balance enhanced quality in early childhood with maintaining affordability for families.

When the national Decision Regulatory Impact Statement was publicly released in December 2009, the estimated cost of implementing national quality reforms in Queensland for long day care services was about \$5.99 per child, per day by 2020. Half of these costs are expected to be covered by the



Australian Government through the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate. The estimated impact to kindergartens is minimal as current standards already in place in kindergartens will assist in meeting the new national standard. The importance of affordable education and child care is recognised and the cost impact of the reforms will be monitored.

## Key changes for early childhood centres

Key change	What it means
New quality rating system	All services will be assessed against a National Quality Standard (NQS) in seven quality areas, as well as providing an overall service assessment. Services will be required to display their NQS assessment rating and it will also be published online.
New educator qualification requirements	A new minimum Certificate III qualification will be introduced for all family day care educators and early childhood teachers will be required in all long day care and kindergarten services from 2014. Other qualification requirements will mean minimal change to current Queensland requirements.
More educators working with children	There will be nationally consistent ratios of educators to children. Given that Queensland already meets the ratio requirement being implemented in 2014, the first substantial change for Queensland services will be in 2016.
New suite of learning frameworks	The <i>Early Years Learning Framework</i> and the draft <i>My Time, Our Place – a framework for school-age care</i> will ensure delivery of nationally consistent and quality early childhood education across all settings throughout Australia.
New national body	The <i>Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority</i> will monitor national consistency and assure quality implementation of the NQF.

## Consultation with families

The Department of Education and Training is committed to working with families in development of the NQF. This includes the establishment of an Early Years Parent Roundtable, consultation opportunities during key stages of the NQF and information at public events.



## More information

Further information about the NQF is available at [www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood](http://www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood) or via email [ECEC@deta.qld.gov.au](mailto:ECEC@deta.qld.gov.au).

For the latest information on the NQF sign-up to the e-newsletter, A-Z of Early Childhood.

The [mychild.gov.au](http://mychild.gov.au) website provides information about services funded by the Australian Government in your local area including in some instances the fees they charge. The site also includes links to an online estimator to find out about your entitlement for the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate.