



COAG NATIONAL QUALITY AGENDA

- the Family Day Care Australia Submission



In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to pursue substantial reform in the areas of education, skills and early childhood development.

One of the key objectives of the COAG national quality reform agenda is to achieve consistency through an integrated national quality framework across the early childhood education and care sector nationally.

Over the past year Family Day Care Australia has been involved in ongoing consultation with the family day care sector, and continues to work to ensure that the interests of our services and the children who use them are represented in the consultation process.

In July 2009 COAG released the *COAG Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) for Early Childhood Education and Care Quality Reforms* which set out a range of options for consideration. After comprehensive consultation with the family day care sector, Family Day Care Australia put forward a submission on 31 August 2009. The submission is available on the FDCA website at www.fdca.com.au.

continues overleaf ►

Our consultation with the family day care sector indicated that the majority of stakeholders supported the proposal of an integrated national quality framework which would deliver consistency within and across service types. It was seen as important that family day care be involved in the national quality reform agenda and to remain an integral part of the formal early childhood education and child care sector.

The *COAG RIS* put forward two options for family day care that considered strategies in relation to the current inconsistencies with qualifications and ratios of carers to children:

Family Day Care Option 1 - proposed no change to current operations, ie a continuation of inconsistent service delivery within family day care nationally; and

Family Day Care Option 2 - proposed a minimum Certificate III in Children's Services for all carers, a Diploma of Children's Services for relevant coordination unit staff, and a consistent ratio of carers to children of 1:4.

The Family Day Care Australia submission supported *Family Day Care Option 2* with significant provisos as follows:

- There be **no change** to current ratios of 1:4 or 1:5 for the next **four** years (2013) (the *COAG RIS* proposed a change to ratios by 2011)
- During this four year period **research on ratios specific to the family day care context in Australia** should be conducted. This independent research will aim to provide evidence to support the optimum ratio to ensure the best outcomes for children.
- **A longer timeframe of six years** (2015) is sought to meet the target of all carers qualified or enrolled, and provides time for carers to extend existing qualifications to Diploma level if they wish.
- If ratios were to change to 1:4 as a result of the research, six years also provides for a **transition period** which would result in natural attrition reducing the number of children under school age, and a gradual increase in fees for parents so as not to create a financial burden.

It is proposed that after the four year period when outcomes from research can inform decision making, a two year transition phase then follows. If evidence from research is clear and unequivocal

that ratios of 1:4 support quality outcomes for children, or alternatively there is no impact on quality in a 1:5 ratio environment, then a national policy position will be developed based on this research and through consultation with members.

What FDCA proposes, based on evidence that links higher level qualifications with quality outcomes, is that a 1:5 ratio could then be maintained for those carers who have Diploma level qualifications, or a fifth child who attends an external preschool program.

Family Day Care Australia recognises and values the highly skilled, trained and experienced carers who may not hold formal qualifications but who would certainly operate with competencies at Certificate III level or higher.

Members can be assured that your national peak body is committed to working with government, the Industry Skills Council, registered training organisations, state associations and other relevant stakeholders to enable existing competencies to be recognised through a program of recognition of prior learning (RPL), and through the flexible delivery of tertiary qualification courses.

The needs of all carers, including those with English as a second language and those of mature age, will be considered in these discussions, as will cost and resourcing impacts for carers and coordination units.

The Family Day Care Australia *COAG RIS* submission stated clearly and at length the impact of changing ratios on the financial viability of carers and affordability for parents. Family Day Care Australia continues to raise this important issue with government at all opportunities and has provided Access Economics with data to support the scale of this impact in the states and territories that currently have a ratio of 1:5. We are committed to ensuring that these crucial issues continue to be a core consideration for government in determining their options to present to COAG at the end of 2009.

For further information visit our website
www.familydaycareaustralia.com.au
or contact us on 1800 621 218