

Early Years Learning Framework

Most of you already know about the Early Years Learning Framework and the commitment to create a world class, evidence-based early childhood education system. The Australian Government has worked with state and territory governments, early childhood experts and educators to create a draft Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The EYLF will describe the broad parameters, principles and outcomes required to support and enhance young children’s learning from birth to five

years of age, as well as their transition to school. This will form the basis for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings experience quality teaching and learning. Trials are now occurring and input is encouraged from the sector. An on-line forum has been set up to allow discussion and comment on the framework and its implementation. The forum will commence from March 13th.

To register for inclusion in the forum, click on this link www.deewr.gov.au.

COAG Agreements and the National Partnership for Universal Access

Significant reforms to Federal financial relations have been implemented through an Intergovernmental Agreement, designed to improve the quality and effectiveness of funding to the states and territories.

One aspect is the National Partnership for Universal Access. It has been agreed that by 2013 every child will have access to a preschool program in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling. It will be delivered by a four year university qualified early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year and across a diversity of settings, in a form that meets the needs of parents. To view the agreement click on the link www.coag.gov.au.

The COAG Agreement is a first step towards broader early childhood development reform in Australia. Areas for future action include: early childhood workforce development; national quality standards for early childhood education and care; the early years learning framework; improving data and information about services and supports for young children and their families; and further modernising infrastructure and associated service delivery.

A related agreement is the TAFE Fee Waiver for Childcare Places. The agreement has commenced this year and removes fees for eligible child care courses at TAFE and other government providers.

Visit — www.coag.gov.au.

Integrated Children and Family Services

Following the Susan Irvine forum held in February, the Minister, the Hon Robyn McSweeney, will shortly release a discussion paper about integrated services. The Minister’s aim is to develop a shared understanding of the term ‘*integrated services*’ and encourage discussion about –

- integrated service delivery as an appropriate framework for the future development of children and family services; and
- ways for the community, government and non-government providers of services to share in the building of such a framework.

Update on the Early Learning & Care Centres

The Australian Government has committed to establishing 260 additional Early Learning and Care Centres across Australia. The centres will be implemented in 2 phases, with the first phase seeing the development of 38 centres, including 6 autism-specific centres, in priority locations. In WA the centres will be in:

- Mirrabooka
- Darch
- North Perth (Autism Centre)
- Karratha
- Port Hedland

The Government has resolved that the remaining 222 centres will be implemented in phase 2. This will enable the Government to review the implementation and outcome of the first centres and the lessons learnt during the process.

In addition, the development by July 2009 of a National Early Childhood Development Strategy will provide a coherent and comprehensive framework under which centres will deliver services, ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

There have been expressions of interest lodged for the phase 2 centres. Those who lodged these have been advised that their interest will be retained and considered when the remaining centres are rolled out. For more details visit www.mychild.gov.au.

New Look

You may have noticed our colourful and vibrant new look. This will be reflected in all our future publications and communications.

Our website will soon reflect the new branding.

Visit www.communities.wa.gov.au.

Western Australian Childcare and Early Childhood Education Conference

A reminder about this important event to be held in Perth on 3-5 April 2009. Eminent international and national keynote speakers include –

- Prof Ron Lally
- Prof Jane Bertrand
- Prof Frank Oberklaid
- Dr Jennifer Sumsion

The Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education, Maxine McKew MP will give the opening address.

There will also be a pre-conference full day workshop with Prof Lally on Thursday 2 April, allowing participants to gain in-depth knowledge of Prof Lally's work in child care provision and child care quality.

For more details and register go to – www.waecec.com.au.

Update on the former ABC Learning Centres

Bidding has now closed for the 241 centres that are collectively known as the ABC 2 Group. A total of 470 non-binding offers were received for the centres and there will now be a short-listing process. It is intended to resolve the future of these centres by mid May.

For more details go to www.mychild.gov.au/abc.

Forthcoming Forum

As part of our series of Integrated Children and Family Services forums DfC is organising a second forum in April to enable information sharing and discussion from the recent national NIFTeY conference. It is hoped that one of the international early childhood experts who addressed the conference will attend by video link up.

Further details will be provided soon...

Changes in Early Childhood Education and Care Portfolios

Many of you may have heard that there have recently been some changes in ministerial and departmental responsibilities for aspects of early childhood learning and development.

On 13 January Premier Colin Barnett announced the creation of an Early Childhood Development portfolio to be incorporated into Minister Dr Elizabeth Constable's Education portfolio.

The Department for Communities (DfC) will continue to play a significant role in relation to children and families. Community Services Minister, the Hon Robyn McSweeney continues to have responsibility for child care including legislation, licensing, regulation and support; and for child, family and parental support services through Parenting WA. These include the free 24-hour Parenting WA Line,

For more details on DfC programs go to www.parenting.wa.gov.au.

the Parenting WA Library and local parenting support and home visiting programs.

The Department for Communities also continues to have responsibility for the Aboriginal Best Start programs and for supporting local Early Years activities and networks.

Department of Education and Training has established the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning to increase the emphasis and importance of early childhood education to improve the learning and development of all children. David Ansell is the acting Executive Director for this area. More details about the scope and responsibility of the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning will be available in the coming months.

Anaphylaxis management program

The Department for Communities is an active participant in the Department of Health's program to implement the recommendations of the 2008 report: [Anaphylaxis: meeting the challenge for Western Australian children](#).

The program plan to manage anaphylaxis in Western Australian schools and child care services includes:

- raising the awareness of anaphylaxis and its health impact on parents and carers, the community, school and child care services
- planning legislation to govern the safe and secure emergency management of anaphylaxis by teachers and carers
- reviewing first aid and anaphylaxis risk policies in schools and child care services
- setting up a standardised and certified education program for teachers and child care staff.

More information can be found at:

www.health.wa.gov.au/anaphylaxis/home/.

Update on Child Care Regulations

Work is continuing on the review of children's services regulations. The underpinning work is well advanced to implement the changes recommended by the regulations review, including clarification and simplification of the regulations and ensuring they are forward thinking for the best interests of children.

This work includes legislative changes necessary to allow many of the recommendations to proceed, as well as work on the assessment of the potential impact of the recommendations on the sector.

As you are aware, these legal processes are complex and take time. We will be providing regular updates in this newsletter.

Please feel free to make comments or ask questions on the information provided in this update or any related issues. Send queries or feedback to judith.kenny@communities.wa.gov.au or visit the website at www.communities.wa.gov.au.

