

10 March 2023

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC
NSW Minister for Education & Early Childhood Learning
Parliament of New South Wales
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister Mitchell,

Re: Request for NSW to emulate WA Regulatory Authority's deferral of ACECQA's proposed changes to notification period for assessment & rating to 1-5 days

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) NSW is the largest peak body representing the privately-owned early childhood education and care sector serving over 1,600 services primarily across New South Wales. Our members collectively employ over 25,000 staff and support over 125,000 families.

As a member of the Education Ministers Council, you would be aware of the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) announced changes in November 2022 about assessments and ratings. More specifically, the change of the notification period of early childhood education and care services to 1-5 days instead of the current 2-3 months.

You would be aware of the widespread sector fatigue as well as the worsening labour shortages that combined are negatively affecting educators and teachers across all early childhood education and care services.

ACA NSW is concerned that our educators, teachers and services presently do not need any additional pressure to perform, especially when now 88% of services are rated Meeting or Exceeding the National Quality Standards.

In that context, I share a recent official communique (see attached) from the Western Australia Regulatory Authority stating that:

"In Western Australia, there is no immediate change to assessment and rating processes. ECRU will continue to work with other jurisdictions to inform the most effective way to implement the changes whilst giving time for development of supporting information resources for both the sector and authorised officers."

During February and March 2023, the NSW Department of Education has been conducting consultation with the sector about these changes. These consultations included ACA NSW's [in-person event on 27 February 2023](#), as well as the Department's [webinar on 7 March 2023](#).

ACA NSW has also conducted a sector-wide survey that showed that [77.9% of respondents were against](#) ACECQA's proposed change of notification of assessment and rating to 1-5 days. It should also be noted that only 8.4% of respondents were in favour.

Before the NSW state election on 25 March 2023, ACA NSW is again asking that a re-elected NSW Coalition Government will emulate the Western Australia Regulatory Authority and defer the proposed changes announced by ACECQA until further notice.

Before 25 March 2023, I will be actively seeking your formal response.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,



Chiang Lim
CEO

encl 1. WA Regulatory Authority's newsletter (20 Feb 2023)
2. ACECQA's "Making Quality Assessment and Rating More Effective (Nov 2022)

cc Gabrielle Sinclair, CEO, Australian Children's Education & Care Authority
Gillian White, Deputy Secretary, NSW Department of Education
Leanne Nixon, A/Deputy Secretary, NSW Department of Education

From: ECRU <ECRU@communities.wa.gov.au>

Date: 20 February 2023 at 12:19:30 AEDT

Subject: In Focus February 2023

Reply-To: ECRU@communities.wa.gov.au

No images? [Click here](#)



Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities

ECRU Education and Care
Regulatory Unit



In Focus



Regulatory Spotlight

New transportation requirements for centre based services from 1 March 2023

From 1 March 2023 the following new regulatory requirements will apply to centre based services that provide regular transportation:

- Approved providers and nominated supervisors must ensure a staff member or nominated supervisor (other than the driver) accounts for children as they get in or out of a vehicle at an education and care service.
- Approved providers and nominated supervisors must ensure records are made showing children are accounted for as they get in or out of a vehicle at the education and care service.
- Approved providers and nominated supervisors must ensure records are made confirming a check of the inside of a vehicle was completed at the service after all children have left to ensure no children remain.
- Approved providers must notify the regulatory authority when they start providing or arranging regular transport, and again when they finish. This can be done through the NQA ITS.

[Changes to the National Regulations](#) have now been made and new guidance information and resources listed below can be found on the [ACECQA website](#):

- [Information sheet – Changes to regular transportation of children](#)
- [Information sheet – Minimising the risk of children left in vehicles](#)
- [Information sheet - Guidance for adequate supervision during transportation](#)
- [Safe Transportation of Children Safety Checklist and regular transportation record form](#)

ACECQA will also be publishing amendments to the national policy and procedure guidelines and updates to the Guide to the National Quality Framework.

Quality in Focus



Updates to national approved learning frameworks

Version 2 of the national approved learning frameworks are now approved for use under the NQF and are available on the ACECQA website, along with these supporting resources:

- [Information Sheet – Approved Learning Frameworks overview](#)
- [Overview of changes online video](#)
- [‘What’s changed?’ fact sheet for the EYLF V2.0](#)
- [‘What’s changed?’ fact sheet for MTOP V2.0](#)
- [Approved Learning Frameworks Update FAQs](#)
- [Mapping the updated EYLF to V9 Australian Curriculum](#)
- [Mapping the updated MTOP to V9 Australian Curriculum](#)

Additional material will also be developed by governments and ACECQA to support providers and their services to implement the refreshed frameworks.

The updates strengthen the connection between the national approved learning frameworks and the National Quality Standard in areas such as transitions, sustainability, theoretical approaches, critical reflection, the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing, and inclusion.

During 2023, approved providers and their services are encouraged to familiarise themselves with Version 2 of the national approved learning framework(s) as they apply to them and begin incorporating the new aspects into their educational program and practice.

The original national approved learning frameworks will remain in operation alongside the EYLF Version 2.0 and MTOP Version 2.0 in 2023 to enable approved providers and their services time to transition. Both versions can be used throughout 2023, before the original versions of these documents are revoked from early 2024.

Operational Refinements to the Assessment & Rating Process

ACECQA has recently published operational refinements to how regulatory authorities undertake assessment and rating (A&R) under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

The changes, which commenced in 2023, include a shift to a reduced notice period, an enhanced focus on a service’s Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), and greater use of partial A&Rs. The overarching goal, however, remains that the assessment and

rating process generates accurate, current ratings and positively impacts on developmental and educational outcomes for children.

In Western Australia, there is no immediate change to assessment and rating processes. ECRU will continue to work with other jurisdictions to inform the most effective way to implement the changes whilst giving time for development of supporting information resources for both the sector and authorised officers.

Updated content will be published in the national Guide to the NQF, including further guidance on best practice self-assessments and maintaining a current QIP. Approved providers can prepare for these changes by ensuring an up-to-date QIP, informed by a thorough self-assessment, is readily available.

The 'Making quality assessment and rating more effective' information sheet is available on the ACECQA website. You can find it [here](#), under resources and research at acecqa.gov.au.

Other

Reportable Conduct Scheme - Are You Ready?

Starting 1 January 2023, many organisations including schools, childcare services, health services and government departments are required to comply with the Western Australian Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme) that has been established under the Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2022 (the Act).

The Scheme compels heads of organisations to notify allegations of, or convictions for, child abuse by their employees to the Ombudsman and then investigate these allegations.

The Scheme implements key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and ensures that child abuse in organisations will always be:

- notified to an impartial and independent body;
- investigated fully; and
- dealt with to ensure children are protected from abuse within institutions.

To find out more about the Scheme and your organisation's obligations, visit the Ombudsman's [website](#).

Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt reduction scheme – for teachers in very remote services

Teachers, including early childhood teachers, who have completed four years working in very remote Australia can apply from today to receive a cut to their HELP debt.

The average debt reduction for eligible teachers is expected to be around \$35,000. It is expected to help up to 2,000 teachers this year, and 500 each year after that.

The Federal Government is supporting teachers and ensuring schools and centre-based day care services in very remote Australia can attract and retain high-quality teachers.

To be eligible, teachers must complete four years of full-time teaching in a very remote location at a primary or secondary school, centre-based day care service, or preschool. More information can be found [here](#).

Professional Development & Upcoming Events



NQF Induction Modules

ACECQA has produced a suite of National Quality Framework (NQF) professional development eLearning modules that are an ideal induction resource for new teachers and educators or as a refresher for existing staff. Read more [here](#).

Calendar of Events

A selection of calendar events which align with the National Quality Standard (NQS) have been compiled below, along with some suggested ways of celebrating and/or incorporating them into your service.

- **2 February** - World Wetlands Day - Raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and our planet - Visit or research your local wetlands and learn about the history, flora and fauna native to the area.
- **6 February** - Waitangi Day (Māori: Te Rā o Waitangi), the national day of New Zealand, marks the anniversary of the initial signing – on 6 February 1840 – of the Treaty of Waitangi - Engage with your Marori families and community and invite them into your service to share their culture through stories, song, dance and food.
- **8 February** - Safer Internet Day - A global event that brings together communities, families, schools and organisations from more than 200 countries to help create safer online spaces - Sign up to support Safer Internet Day 2023 and stay up to date with all the latest news. [Sign Up Now](#)
- **11 February** - [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#) - Help raise awareness about the role women and girls play in science and technology communities - Invite a female parent or community member into the service with expertise in this area and get them to lead a science activity with the children - Challenge gender stereotypes and reflect on how you advocate for female representation in science at your service. Share some stories about famous female scientists and their achievements.
- **26 February** - Tell a Fairy Tale Day - Read, tell, and listen to fairy tales, old and new to nurture children's love of reading and develop literacy skills - Ask families to share their favourite book or come in and read the story - Retell stories through visual and creative art experiences - Visit your local library and borrow a book or arrange for the librarian to share their favourite story.
- **1-7 March** - Hearing Awareness Week - Critically reflect on your approach to inclusion. Are you inclusion ready? Review your Inclusion Support Plan or contact your ISP to develop one - Teach children and staff sign language - Visit [Signbank](#)
- **5 March** - Clean Up Australia Day and **18 March** - [Global Recycling Day](#) - A service, school or community clean up is a great way to inspire children to learn about the impact of rubbish on their local environment while playing an active role in their community - Register at [Get Involved as a School - Clean Up Australia](#) to create a 'clean up' and receive a free clean up kit - Access curriculum linked lesson plans - Take the children on a walk around the local neighbourhood, to the local beach or park to clean up -

Share information about this event with families and arrange to be a part of a broader community clean up event - Review your current practices – do you recycle at a service level and educate children about the importance of this practice? Does your service engage with families and local businesses to collect recycled items for use and/or repurposing at the service?

- **15-21 March** - [Harmony Week](#) is the celebration that recognises our diversity and brings together Australians from all different backgrounds. It's about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone - Plan activities from the [free lesson ideas, plans and activities](#) - Have an orange themed day.
- **16 March** - [National Close the Gap Day](#) - More than a decade ago now the Close the Gap Campaign began National Close the Gap Day to give opportunity to schools, business and communities around Australia the opportunity to stand with First Australians in demanding health equality for all - All schools in Australia can be supporters and encourage participation in National Close the Gap Day in their own community. Visit our [Schools Toolkit](#) for a list of event ideas and curriculum resources.
- **20-26 March** - [National Playgroup Week](#) provides an opportunity to celebrate and appreciate the many benefits of playgroup - From small rural groups in the bush, to intergenerational groups in the city this week is a celebration of everything Playgroup can bring to our children, families and communities - Share your local Playgroup information with your families and FDC educators.

[Forward to a Friend](#)



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MAKING QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND RATING MORE EFFECTIVE

From 2023, there will be some process refinements to how regulatory authorities quality assess and rate services under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

These process changes seek to make quality assessment and rating more effective.

Our shared objective remains continuous quality improvement in children's education and care.



OPERATIONAL REFINEMENTS TO THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND RATING PROCESS

The Education and Care Services National Law (National Law) offers flexibility in some of the requirements for undertaking quality assessment and rating under the NQF.

To support clarity and consistency at the national level, the [Guide to the NQF](#) sets out what approved providers and their services can expect as part of a typical assessment and rating process.

From 2023, there will be refinements to some quality assessment and rating processes.

These will include:

- a shift to a shorter notice period of 1-5 days for most assessment and rating visits
- an enhanced focus on the service's self-assessment and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as part of its continuous quality improvement, rather than as a point in time preparation for assessment and rating
- greater use of partial assessment and ratings as currently allowed under the National Law (only applicable to services rated under the 2018 National Quality Standard (NQS)).

These refinements are consistent and in accordance with existing National Law requirements.

MAKING QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND RATING MORE EFFECTIVE

These operational process changes are intended to make the system more efficient and effective for providers and services, as well as provide families with up-to-date information on service quality to assist them in their decision making.

The adjusted notice period promotes best practice in education and care service delivery, one that is 'always ready' for quality assessment and rating. This meets the intent of observing and assessing typical practice. Approved providers and their services should not be experiencing unnecessary stress or pressure in anticipation of a quality assessment visit.

The introduction of adjusted notice periods for assessment and rating should enable a more accurate and agile process that is more reflective of typical service practice, through targeted evidence gathering and focused discussions.

The overarching goal remains that the assessment and rating process effectively influences, and positively impacts, developmental and educational outcomes for children.

The health, safety and wellbeing of children is our shared priority, and the assessment and rating process is driving national continuous quality improvement.

FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT THE CHANGES

Adjusted notice periods will also apply to any partial assessment processes. A partial assessment and rating is where the regulatory authority reassesses any aspect or element of a service that has already been fully assessed and rated. Where appropriate to do so, a partial reassessment may be undertaken without a visit by the regulatory authority to the service (via a 'desktop' review).

For partial reassessments that do not include a service visit, the regulatory authority may provide 1-5 days' notice that a conversation will occur instead of a visit.

A desktop review may be appropriate where the required evidence includes documentation for sighting or discussions that can be conducted over the phone. A desktop review would not be conducted if the authorised officer needs to observe practice to collect evidence to inform a rating.

Partial assessments, whether in person or via desktop review, provide the opportunity to target quality assessments to specific quality areas with a direct link to improving educational and developmental outcomes for children, without requiring a service to undergo a full assessment. They also require less evidence collection and can offer less disruption to service routines.

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

Providers and their services can prepare for these changes by maintaining an up-to-date quality improvement plan (QIP) (or Self Assessment Working Document in NSW) informed by a thorough self-assessment. The QIP is designed to be a dynamic, evolving document that enables continuous improvement, self-assessment, and self-reflection.

Approved providers should ensure an up-to-date QIP (or Self Assessment Working Document in NSW) is uploaded to the National Quality Agenda IT System portal or via any other jurisdiction specific submission process. The regulatory authority will use the uploaded QIP for quality assessment and rating purposes.

The sector will be further supported to adapt to this shift through updated content to be published in the Guide to the NQF, including further guidance on best practice self-assessments and maintaining a current QIP.

Some regulatory authorities also have self-assessment resources available and encourage their use.

Putting these adjustments into practice will be a matter for each regulatory authority. Your regulatory authority will be communicating further information in relation to these operational refinements to assessment and rating processes in 2023.

ASSESSMENT AND RATING OF SERVICES UNDER THE NQF

Since 2012, services have been quality assessed and rated by their state or territory Regulatory Authority against the National Quality Standard (NQS).

Services are assessed and rated against the NQS to:

- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care; and
- improve knowledge and access to information about the quality of services to help families make informed decisions about their child's education and care.

Most of these quality assessment and ratings have been 'full' assessments. These look at all elements and standards within the seven (7) quality areas.

Regulatory authorities under the National Law (s138) may also conduct partial assessment and ratings of services.

Under the National Law, assessment and rating visits to services can happen at any time.

RESOURCES

Visit the ACECQA website at acecqa.gov.au to download national resources:

[The Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

[ACECQA Information sheet – Developing and reviewing your quality improvement plan](#)

[ACECQA Information sheet – The assessment and rating report](#)

[The National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating Instrument](#)

[Quality Improvement Plan template](#)

[The ACECQA Self-assessment Tool.](#)

Contact your regulatory authority for information about the assessment and rating process in your state/territory. Contact details are available on the [ACECQA website](#).

ACECQA's family focused StartingBlocks.gov.au is the national government one-stop-shop for families to find and shortlist early childhood education and care services, view quality ratings and fees, and estimate out of pocket costs.