

A black and white photograph of a woman with long hair, wearing a denim shirt, sitting and reading a large book to two young children. One child is looking at the book, while the other is partially visible on the right. The background shows a classroom with shelves. The image is overlaid with a blue geometric pattern of triangles on the left side.

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

In the service of over 1,600 early childhood
education and care services across NSW



Australian Childcare Alliance
New South Wales

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ABOUT US

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

One of its primary roles is to advocate for its over 600 Approved Provider owners to Federal, State and Local Governments and their agencies. It also independently engages with the elected representatives as well as political parties.

Another is its range of industrial, regulatory, legal and commercial support services that support the best interests of its members' services in order to provide quality and sustainable early childhood education and care to their enrolled children and families.

ACA NSW also engages with the media and the general public to ensure its members' views are heard and understood.





EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ACA NSW is governed by its elected Executive Committee led by Lyn Connolly as the ACA NSW President, Nicole Upfold (Vice President), Mark Wharton (Treasurer), Eleni Wilson (Secretary), Robert Bateman, Donus Demir, Renae Donovan, Adrian Pattra, Rita Totino and Joan Stone.

The Executive Committee is elected each year by its members prior to the Annual General Meeting.



GOVERNANCE

The elected Executive Committee are unremunerated non-executive directors of the Association of Quality Child Care Centres of NSW Incorporated (trading as the Australian Childcare Alliance NSW).

The Executive Committee meets a minimum of 10 times per calendar year. For FY2020/2021, it had five sub-committees - the Membership Sub-Committee, the Finance Sub-Committee, the Governance Sub-Committee and the Political Sub-Committee.

MEETINGS

Executive Committee meetings are held every fourth Monday during February to November.

Sub-Committee meetings are generally held monthly or as required.

COMMITMENT

Executive Committee members are asked to contribute a minimum of 25 hours per year, plus at least another 15 hours per year through their assigned Sub-Committees.

ADVOCACY

Executive Committee members, especially the President, are also called upon to conduct and participate in advocacy engagements with elected leaders and their bureacrats, the media as well as sector leaders and supply chain representatives.

SUPPORT

Executive Committee members review the performances and range of member support offerings. Such member support are continually improved by feedback and input from members directly, satisfaction surveys and via Network Meetings.





MEMBER SERVICES

ACA NSW provides an invaluable industrial relations service to members, providing information, advice, support and access to resources to assist members comply with and implement their legal industrial relations requirements, including expert advice on Modern Award conditions, pay summaries ('wage rates') and a range of issues from terminations to long service leave and everything in between.

The thousands of calls received by the ACA NSW team as well the expert team at NSW Business Chamber (through our NSW Business Chamber membership) are evidence of the value of this essential member service. We continue to be expertly represented at the Fair Work Commission for the unions' applications to increase award rates, make major changes to a number of conditions under the Awards, as well as in the review of the Modern Awards.

We also continue to have a massive number of member inquiries regarding the National Law and Regulations, assessment and rating, health and wellbeing, policy development, licensing and regulatory issues and so on! We are very fortunate to have access to Kenneally and Co Lawyers for more complex legal inquiries, an incredibly valuable member benefit that hundreds of members have accessed throughout the year.

We have also assisted countless members navigate the complex planning approvals process, engaging their respective local councils directly to assist members in defending their local services.

ACA NSW aims to:

- equip members with the information and resources to assist them in delivering high quality early childhood education and care; and
- positively influence policy and legislation to achieve high quality, accessible early childhood education and care for children and their families and enable members' businesses to flourish.



CODE OF ETHICS

ACA NSW abides by a Code of Ethics, committing members to ensuring they always act in a proper manner in their relationships with their children, families, employees, their fellow members and with the community.



VISION

ACA NSW's vision is that all Australians have access to affordable and high quality early childhood education and care, which ensures the wellbeing, safety and security of children in an environment conducive to their individual development.



CONSTITUTION

ACA NSW is an association registered under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009, governed by NSW Legislation, as well as by the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth). In addition, a variety of legislation and general law govern ACA NSW.

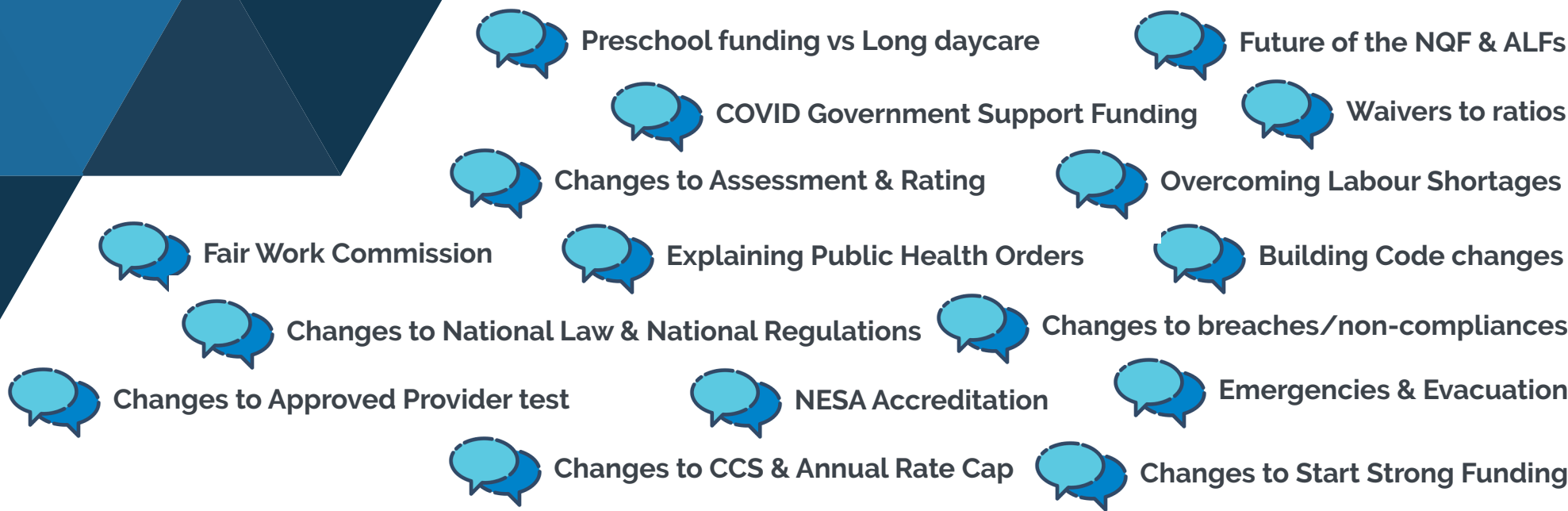
NETWORK MEETINGS

For FY2020/2021, ACA NSW conducted 21 Network Meetings. This exceeded the minimum of 18 per year and was largely due to the demand for information during the COVID-19 pandemic. ACA NSW Network Meetings were open to members and non-members.



ELECTRONICALLY

Due largely to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACA NSW members used the webinars and video-on-demand platforms much more. During FY2020/2021, as many as 93 members and non-members participated during the live-webinar Network Meetings. ACA NSW members were also able to access the recorded videos of every Network Meetings on-demand via the ACA NSW website.



HIGHLIGHTS OF Network Meetings

When ACA NSW Network Meetings were re-introduced, there tended to be about 14 sessions held face-to-face. And even prior to COVID, webinar-based Network Meetings were trialled only to have them now as the main platform on which ACA NSW members and non-members can attend and participate.

For FY2020/2021, there were 21 Network Meetings held both electronically and face-to-face.

CONVENIENCE

Conducting Network Meetings via webinars both during business hours as well as after hours enabled members and non-members to attend and participate at a time that suits them, while no longer being restricted by distance.

ACCOUNTABILITY

ACA NSW Network Meetings are also one of the ways in which ACA NSW can be held accountable to its members. Not only are the issues discussed and developed, new issues or additional insights are also provided to ensure ACA NSW is continually aligned in its advocacies and support.

EFFECTIVENESS

ACA NSW Network Meetings are almost always conducted in 2 hours or less. Recognising the members' being time-poor, the format of the Network Meetings ensures timely information is shared yet allow all participants to ask questions and discuss the issues.

ACCESSIBILITY

Whether it be via webinars, video-on-demand or face-to-face, ACA NSW members can always access the information provided at ACA NSW Network Meetings, as well as engage with ACA NSW representatives. It is envisaged that this aspect will be further expanded in FY2021/2022.



Awesome Events postponed due to COVID

One of the disappointing aspects of the COVID-19 global pandemic has been the postponement of two of ACA NSW's signature events -- the Annual Excellence in Early Childhood Education Awards and the Wheels On The Bus Tours.

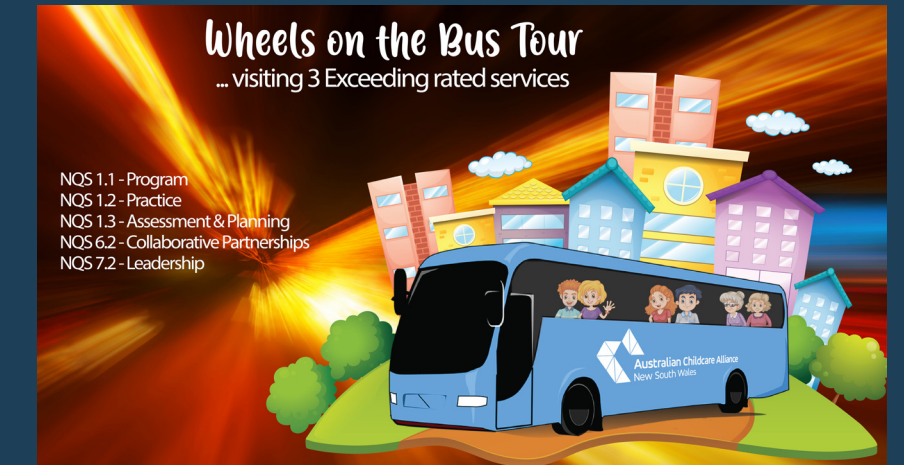
However, as NSW emerges into COVID-normal, ACA NSW is cautiously confident that both events will be restored.

THE ANNUAL EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AWARDS & GALA NIGHT

Notwithstanding the postponement of the Annual Excellence in Early Childhood Education Awards in 2020 (and 2021), the number of nominations received for the 2021/2022 Awards increased by 40.9% to a new record of 382 individual entries!

The Gala Night is now set for Saturday , 26 March 2022 to be held at the prestigious Hyatt Regency in Sydney.

The move from the Shangri-La Hotel to the Hyatt Regency was also in anticipation of a significant increase in the number of attendees on the Gala Night. And with a capacity of up to 750 guests, ACA NSW's Annual Awards and Gala Night will continue to be the largest of its kind.



WHEELS ON THE BUS TOURS

Since the introduction of ACA NSW's Wheels On The Bus tours in 2019, it has become the largest and arguably the most successful touring series of its kind.

Visiting three Exceeding rated long daycare services that are extremely different, participants get the opportunity to step outside of their own services and immerse themselves in another only to be inspired with new ideas and perspectives.

Again, due to COVID, all Wheels On The Bus tours were ultimately cancelled. However, three tours have been planned for the calendar year 2022.

ACA NSW QUICKIES

When ACA NSW Quickies were first introduced in 2019, it was in recognition that Approved Providers were time poor but still in need of relevant information and training. Quickies provide both and in under 2 hours either via face-to-face, interactive webinar or on-demand.

The current stable of topics include:

- Getting It Right - The Approved Provider's Approval Process
- Getting the CCS Application Process To Work For Your Service & Families
- A&R 2021: Creating The Best Possible Submission
- A&R 2021: Skills For The Day & Post-Assessment
- Ensuring Financial Sustainability & Success
- Developing Growth Strategies
- How To Always Be Prepared For A Spotcheck/Compliance Visit
- How To Always Have The Best Possible Policies & Documentation
- Protecting Yourself As An Employer
- Protecting Yourself As A Business

Although COVID provided challenges for the face-to-face sessions, ACA NSW's members and non-members took to webinars and videos-on-demand in droves.

For 2022, ACA NSW will be announcing its expanded suite of ACA NSW Quickies that should delight its members and non-members.

7%

Videos On-Demand

ACA NSW automatically converts every conducted Quickie to a video on-demand version. Access to this version is free and for three months after every Quickie. Notwithstanding, such videos on-demand are also made available separate to the date and time when it was broadcast live.

82%

Webinar

Access to ACA NSW Quickies via webinar expanded particularly during COVID. And webinar access also means geographic distance as an impediment was removed. Live webinar sessions meant interaction remained available to participants, but made more accessible to more people than ever before.

11%

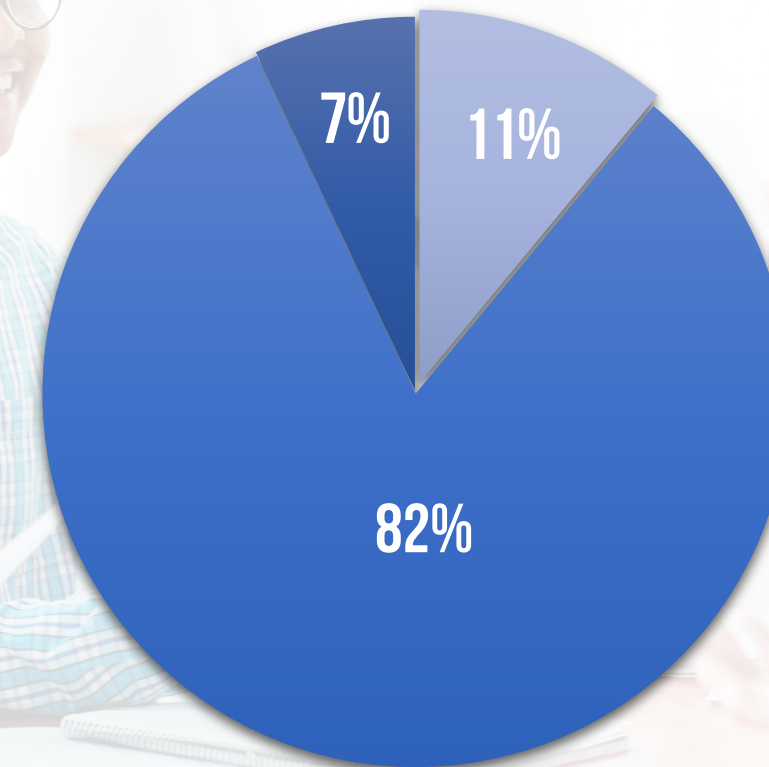
Face-to-face

Notwithstanding COVID, there were some Quickies sessions that were held as face-to-face. In the future COVID-normal, ACA NSW will combine face-to-face participants with live webinar participants so that participants have further choice.

93%

SATISFACTION

At the conclusion or exiting of every Quickie, participants are automatically invited to provide their feedback and level of satisfaction. Participants are also e-mailed with the opportunity to provide their feedback and level of satisfaction too.





Making progress ...

One of the primary roles of ACA NSW is its advocacy on behalf of its member Approved Providers in terms of legislative and regulatory reform. And FY2020/2021 has been no different in terms of its responsibility but also for its performance to making positive and lasting differences.

ACA NSW is pleased that FY2020/2021 will be noted for a range of improvements made, with the following as the highlights.

Assessment & Rating

Rightly or wrongly, the NSW Department of Education took on all of ACA NSW's concerns and created a new and nationally unique system, the Self-Assessment Tool, which effectively enabled all services regardless of type to be assessed more fairly and consistently by the Authorised Officers. The feedback from ACA NSW members is overwhelmingly that it is a significant improvement and very much a step in the right direction.

Breaches/Non-Compliances

Since November 2019, ACA NSW has been continuing to persuade the NSW Department of Education of its then new commitment to reform the transparency of breaches/non-compliances. And in 2021, Approved Providers will finally begin to experience this promised transparency of the evidence supporting Authorised Officers' processes of recording and issuing breaches and non-compliances. ACA NSW and its members at Network Meetings have already seen the proposed changes in the NQAITS portal as well as other NSW platforms which will require Authorised Officers to share the evidence they use and for Approved Providers.

Recruiting New Authorised Officers

In FY2020/2021, the NSW Department of Education include ACA NSW's CEO Chiang Lim to be part of their internal panel to recruit new Authorised Officers. And apart from being embedded in the recruitment process, the interaction between ACA NSW and the NSW Department of Education has never been any closer, to the point where I sincerely believe the Department is genuinely listening and working on the issues we present them with.

Fixing Start Strong Funding

Finally, beginning FY2022/2023, all NSW children enrolled at long daycare services will receive \$1,340 per year in Start Strong funding instead of the \$469 per child per year. This restores all NSW children in the year before school to be treated equitably to all other states, something which the NSW Government has resisted for many many years. ACA NSW thanks the Commonwealth Government for its cooperation and support.



... big and small

Other progress were also made during FY2020/2021 that had substantive impact on early childhood education and care services across NSW. Furthermore, these coincided with other significant issues that spanned beyond one year.

One such example was the Review of the National Quality Framework, where ACA NSW had highlighted significant concerns.

Approved Provider Tests

In August 2020, the NSW Department of Education finally agreed to normalise its understanding of "Persons of Management or Control" as described in Section 12(2)(b) of the National Law. And since, their Enhanced Approvals Process that was first introduced on 1 July 2016 was amended such that it no longer automatically required all directors to "sit the test".

Stars not mandatory in NSW until ...

Introduced in 2020 by the NSW Government, the stars were to be NSW's equivalent of the corresponding ratings of the National Quality Framework. Following members' feedback, ACA NSW was arguably the sole peak body who confirmed that the stars cannot be legally imposed on early childhood education and care services, and that the NSW Department of Education was unable to challenge ACA NSW's legal advice. This was until the NSW Department of Education sought the support of all other jurisdictions' Regulatory Authorities and changed the National Regulation so that their stars and they as the issuing body became exclusive and compulsory. NSW remains the only state with stars.

Building Code

Extreme concerns were received from ACA NSW members that the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) had draft plans to introduce costly infrastructure requirements for all early childhood education and care services to address emergency and evacuation concerns. Thankfully, and after much lobbying, the ABCB as well as relevant Federal and State Ministers limited those new requirements only to new services in high-rise and multi-storey buildings.

Payroll Tax reduction

The payroll tax threshold was increased to \$1.2 million from \$1 million with the rate of payroll tax lowered from 5.45% to 4.85% for the next two years. ACA NSW estimates that 72% of the remaining NSW-based services still paying NSW Payroll Taxes will cease paying that NSW tax. And those NSW-based services that will continue to pay the NSW Payroll Tax, their tax bill will reduce by at least 11%. This is very much welcomed by ACA NSW given its advocacies to date.

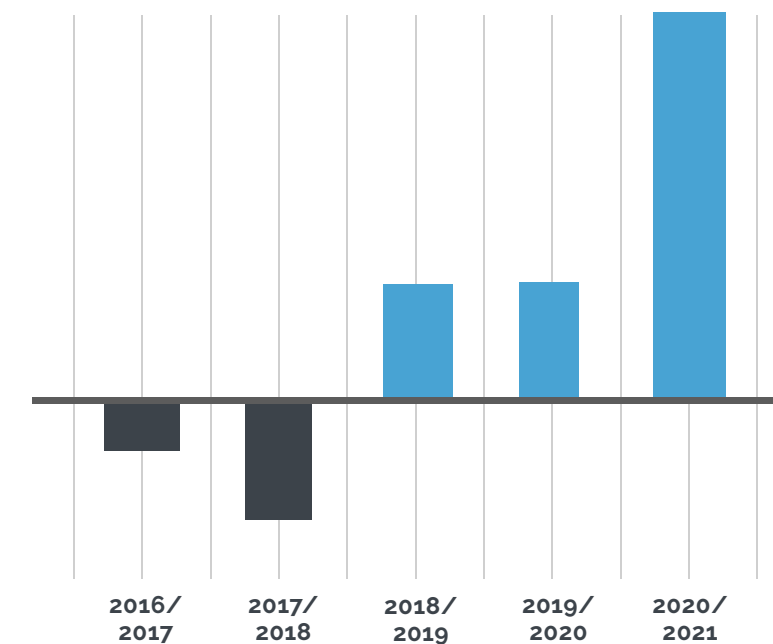


FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Notwithstanding COVID impacting a second financial year, ACA NSW generated a positive financial result that was largely attributed to:

- a 25% increase in revenue due to government support and joint venture revenue
- an 86% increase in general sponsorship; and
- a 19.6% reduction in operating expenditures while maintaining headcount.

And as promised last year, this financial result makes ACA NSW reporting its third nett surplus in a row - its newest record in ACA NSW history.



KS BLACK & CO AUDITOR'S REPORT

"In our opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects (or gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the Association of Quality Child Care Centres of NSW Inc as at 30 June 2021 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 of the financial statements, and the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW)."

Stuart Cameron, Partner, FCA No 75834 (17 September 2021)



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