



A message to Australia's Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers

'Argue for evidence based quality in early childhood education and care in COAG on 7 December!'

As organisations with broad experience in working with and for the wellbeing of families and children we call on COAG, at the meeting on 7 December 2009, to endorse Options 3 & 4 in the COAG Consultation Regulation Impact Statement, with an immediate move to Option 3 and a commitment to implement Option 4 over the longer term.

We represent organisations from across the nation, and are well informed about relevant research and evidence. We know the great significance of experiences in the early years of life for early brain development and providing the foundation for a wide range of developmental outcomes that shape self confidence, mental health, learning, achievement, self control and conflict resolution, friendships and intimate relationships and, ultimately, parenting skills.

As the Heads of Australia's Governments you have recognised this in the COAG vision for 2020, which states that 'all children get the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation'.

How children are educated and cared for in their first five years has a profound impact on their later life. For many babies and young children, early childhood education and care services are an important part of this early experience. Evidence says that high quality early education and care means that these children will do better on all measures in the future – including learning, education, and less participation in the criminal justice and social security systems.

COAG's own National Quality Agenda recognises that standards in many of our early childhood education and care services need to be improved to achieve the desired outcomes – and we certainly agree with this.

We are therefore calling on COAG to move to improve standards in early childhood education and care services to the levels indicated in the evidence by:

- setting immediate standards at the level of ratios specified in Option 3 of the COAG Consultation Regulation Impact Statement
- improving staff qualifications so that services have well-trained and qualified staff including degree-qualified early childhood teachers
- implementing a national quality rating system ('accreditation') that specifies standards for ratios and qualifications for all services

and

- committing to a longer term goal of staff:child ratios for babies and children under two at 1:3, for two- to three-year-olds at 1:5, and for three- to five-year-olds at 1:10. These ratios are as per Option 4 in the COAG Consultation Regulation Impact Statement.

We know that these improvements cannot be achieved overnight, and therefore we urge COAG to consult with service providers and families to implement a staged, achievable and affordable plan for the improvements and to make regular reports on progress to Parliament.

To achieve the required return on investment in early childhood education and care services Australia cannot afford NOT to make these improvements to the higher level. We know it **can** be done. Some services are already operating at these levels, and this can be implemented nationally if it is well planned and well staged.

We urge COAG to endorse this, so that in the future parents and the broader community can be confident in the quality of early childhood education and care services around Australia, children can enjoy and benefit from them in the here and now, and they can contribute to a strong future for our country.



Early Childhood Australia



Gowrie Adelaide



Gowrie Western Australia



Cooloon Children's Centre



Lady Gowrie Child Centre – NSW



Lady Gowrie Tasmania



Australian Council of Social Service



Gowrie Victoria



C&K Preschooling Professionals



SDN Children's Services Inc.



Social Policy Research Centre



Lipscombe Community Child Care



Benevolent Society



St Philip's Preschool Kindergarten



Darwin Family Day Care



Community Connections Solutions Australia Inc.



Association of Children's Welfare Agencies

INCLUSION SUPPORT AGENCY

● Gold Coast

Inclusion Support Agency



Community Child Care Co-operative



Bertram Hawker Kindergarten



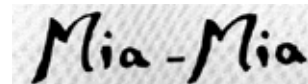
KPV Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc



Margaret Ives Community Children's Centre Inc.



Social Justice in Early Childhood



Mia-Mia Child and Family Study Centre



T Downes

Professor Toni Downes
Dean, Faculty of Education
Charles Sturt University



Mission Australia



Phoenix Children's Services



Early Childhood Intervention Australia



FKA Children's Services Inc.



The Infants' Home Child and Family Services

Australian Association for Infant Mental Health Inc.

affiliated with



AAIMHI



KU Children's Services



Families Australia



UnitingCare Children's Services



NIFTeY National & NIFTeY NSW

Tanami Group School

Institute of Early Childhood
Macquarie University

Woden Early Childhood Centre

Acton Early Childhood Centre

AIS Caretaker's Cottage
Child Care Centre

Nicholls Early Childhood Centre

CSIROCare Black Mountain E.C.C.

Kirinari Early Childhood Centre
University of Canberra