

# CONSOLIDATING PROGRESS

## for educators, families and children

So far, 2014 is a year of consolidation for the early childhood sector as the *National Quality Framework* (NQF) policies and procedures are implemented.

At the same time, there is continuing reflection on the changes and on ways of streamlining on-the-ground processes. Monitoring and consultations around the new processes are focusing on quality, standards and managing changes. The size, complexity and dynamic nature of the early childhood sector means that implementing any change process is not easy and requires careful staging and transitioning.

It has been pleasing to note that progress seems to be occurring in the quest for registration for all early childhood teachers, including those qualified only for the birth to five sector. This too is complex. There should be a national approach so that early childhood teachers who are appropriately qualified, including those only qualified to teach children aged birth to five, can enjoy equal status with teachers qualified to teach older children.

As we all know, introduction of the NQF has had big implications for staffing early childhood services and has highlighted the shortages of qualified educators more acutely than ever before; attracting and keeping qualified educators must be a priority. There is no question about the challenges in delivering training and professional support to remote Australia, but we must keep in mind that children living in remote communities, and especially

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, need the best educators and early childhood services to help close the large gaps in educational progress and achievement.

While challenges around remote educators are top-of-mind, many people studying early childhood education experience difficulties in accessing education and managing work, personal life and study. Today's early childhood education students are not usually youngsters living at home supported financially by parents. They are mature people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who must support themselves and their families. They need programs of study that are rigorous but flexible and responsive if they are to succeed.

From a family's point of view, while qualified and skilled early childhood educators are important, and all parents want the best for their children, a skilled workforce with higher staffing costs means higher care costs. And someone has to pay these costs. Most families can't afford to, yet families are desperate for flexible, affordable, quality child care. Let's hope that the current government reviews of early childhood education result in practical options that better blend accessibility, flexibility, quality and cost.

Early Childhood Australia is delighted to welcome His Excellency the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) as our official Patron and we look forward to engaging with His Excellency in the coming months.

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In this issue of *Every Child* we continue our focus on quality educational provision for young children. Several writers challenge us to think about future directions for early childhood education and care, the various routes within educators' professional journeys and strategies for building professional expertise. Fran Grant, Anthony Semann and Megan Lodwick focus on strengthening early childhood educators' professional knowledge and practice and Jackie Brien reports on the first steps of a beginning teacher's professional journey. In the area of pedagogy and curriculum, Judy Radich, Nicola Yelland and Amanda Niland prompt us to think about new ways to enhance learning opportunities and Jan Marxsen highlights the importance of opportunities for Indigenous Australian children and the Reconciliation efforts at John Paul College.

**Alison Elliott**  
Editor

