FEDERAL BUDGET 2013

Every year the Federal Government invites families, individuals, businesses and community groups to submit their ideas and priorities for the Federal Budget. ECA have proposed their priorities for the 2013–14 Federal Budget.

ECA’s submission outlined three critical priorities of concern to the early childhood sector:

1. Commitment to the National Quality Framework Implementation.

ECA believes that it is important to maintain the implementation time frames for the National Quality Framework (NQF) as they are. Delay on these time frames will mean that some children receive lower quality care than we have committed to providing, based on sound research and extensive consultation. We recommend an increase in support to services to help those experiencing difficulties with the implementation of the NQF.

2. Strengthening the workforce through federal subsidies for pay increases and national support for qualification attainment.

ECA agrees with other peak and representative bodies that the next step in providing a stable and sustainable ECEC sector is the introduction of professional wages so the sector can attract and retain qualified and professional educators. This is critical to ensuring quality education and care but the cost burden cannot be borne by families or services, federal government support is needed. In addition to pay rates, the ECEC sector needs more assistance to increase the supply of qualified educators and create satisfying careers to retain talent.

3. Enhancing access and affordability for families.

To minimise out-of-pocket expenses to families ECA recommends that the Child Care Rebate be paid directly to services rather than as a reimbursement to families. This is a small change but has the potential to make a significant difference. Families will better understand the level of subsidy available to them and the real cost of early childhood services. This also has the potential to be easier to administer, reducing red tape.

In recognition that there are challenges in meeting the demand for early childhood services in ‘hot spots’ around the nation, ECA has proposed a capital grants scheme be established to provide low or no interest loans for the establishment of new services or expansion of existing services in areas of high unmet need. This scheme could be a collaborative initiative across Federal, State and Local Governments with a commitment to fast track both the capital investment and the planning approval processes.

ECA supports the Early Years Workforce Strategy but also calls for increased assistance for students undertaking training in early childhood education.

ECA looks forward to assessing and reviewing the 2013–2014 Federal Budget when it is announced on 14 May 2013.

To read ECA’s budget submission, please visit: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au.

‘ECA believes that it is important to maintain the implementation time frames for the National Quality Framework ...’
RATING S SHOW CH ILDREN ALREADY SEEING EDUCATION AND CARE IMPROVEMENTS

Children are already starting to experience the benefits of new National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care services.

Early Childhood Australia CEO Samantha Page recently visited Coco’s Early Learning Centre in Melbourne, one of the services that have received a first National Quality Standard rating of their progress in implementing the new standards since they were introduced a year ago.

The ratings show that where centres have shown a commitment to the new standards, they are making progress in improving their ability to deliver a quality early learning and care experience for children.

Approved services will be assessed and rated against each of the seven Quality Areas of the National Quality Standard and the National Regulations. They will also be given an overall rating. The rating and assessment process aims to drive continuous quality improvement at services and provide families with better information for making choices about their children’s education and care.

ECA is confident that the majority of services are meeting standards and will be affirmed and, for those that are not, we will be better able to identify their needs and provide support to them.

As Patron for Early Childhood Australia, I congratulate and thank those individuals who are working hard to place children and families at the centre of your ethos and attention.

The issues surrounding the health and wellbeing of our children are more challenging than they have ever been and I give you my greatest encouragement and support as you contribute to the lives of our future Australians.

With warm greetings,

31.1.13.

Ms Quentin Bryce, AC CVO
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Message from Her Excellency

Early Childhood Australia

A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia will advocate to ensure quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children from birth to eight years.

Our values are:

- The rights of children
- Leadership
- Excellence
- Respect
- Courage
- Honesty
- Openness
- Collaboration
- Diversity
- Justice
- Social inclusion of children.

Educational Leader Forums

Maroondah Federation Estate
32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood
5.30pm to 7.30pm

Thursday 14 March
Thursday 23 May
Thursday 8 August
Thursday 31 October

Led by Early Childhood specialist Nicole Pilsworth, the free forums will cover the expectations of Educational Leaders in educational and care services within Maroondah.

It is highly recommended you attend all four forums to benefit from the shared learning.

Bookings are essential. Visit Council’s website for more information, or contact Children’s Services Officer, Kate Tracchi on 9294 5739 or email kate.tracchi@maroondah.vic.gov.au

www.maroondah.vic.gov.au  1300 88 22 33
ROYAL COMMISSION ANNOUNCED
On Friday 11 January 2013, her Excellency Quentin Bryce, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, issued Letters Patent to appoint a six-member Royal Commission to investigate Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Royal Commission will make inquiries into how institutions with a responsibility and care for children have managed and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse. The Commissioners will investigate systems that have been unsuccessful in protecting children, and make recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions.

For the Terms of Reference and more information, please go to: www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au.

WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR NATIONAL ECEC AWARDS
A program helping to get more Aboriginal children into preschool and an educator dedicated to providing tailored learning to babies claimed top honours at the 2012 HESTA Early Childhood Education & Care Awards, on Friday 5 October, 2012.

Drawn from more than 600 nominations, the two winners were recognised for providing outstanding levels of care and education for children from birth to eight years of age in the two award categories:

Outstanding Educator: Amy Douglas (right) of Margaret Ives Community Children’s Centre in Norwood, SA for her commitment to developing a greater understanding of young children and challenging their emerging skills.

Advancing Practice: Buninyong Preschool—an initiative of Dubbo and District Preschool in Dubbo, NSW—led by Director Louise Simpson (left), for providing low-income and Indigenous families with non-fee-paying early childhood education services.

The winners shared in a $20,000 prize pool, courtesy of long-time awards sponsor ME Bank.

Finalists and winners were recognised at the awards night in Perth, presented by HESTA and held in conjunction with the ECA National Conference.

Please visit: www.hestaawards.com.au to learn more about the awards.

LIVING AND LEARNING TOGETHER
The Wanniassa School community is committed to developing and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment where we each understand true equality and all of our school members experience positive relationships, receive and give respect, and that we each experience success. We are committed to community involvement through consultation and celebration.

As part of a P–10 school, the preschool works to implement the school Reconciliation Action Plan. Our preschool includes the Koori Preschool group, offering a program with a cultural focus for children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

All preschool groups work together, aiming at developing positive relationships and forming lasting friendships. We enjoy many activities together and ensure that we celebrate special times of the year. During NAIDOC Week in 2012, we celebrated with a community lunch and the children were involved in planting a NAIDOC garden and creating mosaic tiles as artworks for the garden. We also celebrated Reconciliation Week with shared activities and morning tea.

There are many opportunities for all families to be involved in consultation about what happens in the preschool and the planning of celebrations. Parent Association membership is open to all parents and families attending the preschool. The main focus of the Parent Association is community building. All families are invited to participate and there have been quite a few shared events such as the creation of a preschool vegetable garden and our Special Grown-Up’s Breakfasts. This year we are going to develop a bush tucker garden with support from Rotary and some of the students from the senior campus.

Our children learn about and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being through visits from members of the community who present various cultural activities including storytelling, music, dance and art. We have a growing collection of Indigenous resources which enhance children’s learning in this area. All of the groups very much enjoy the stories, music, puzzles and games.

Our community works towards Reconciliation throughout the year which contributes a richness to the learning of all.

Judy Richards and Virginia Fanning
Preschool teachers, Wanniassa School, ACT
Early Childhood Australia – Voice Vol.15 No.1 2013

The Framework not only delivers a national benchmark for the quality of education and care services, but it is raising the status of the profession and changing the way parents think about early childhood education and care for the better.

When we proposed these reforms, some people said that improving the quality of care was too difficult, too expensive, or both.

I am very proud of the effort that every staff member in every early childhood education and care facility has put into the transition to the National Quality Framework and thank you for your work so far and for embracing the new system.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has been established and will ensure early childhood education and care remains high-quality and is consistent across the country.

At the service level we have seen the introduction of a lower educator to child ratio of 1:4 for 0–2 year olds, which we know will improve outcomes for children.

I know that the Framework has meant big changes for many services but that is why it’s being implemented gradually to 2020—to give services time to adjust.

Services began being assessed and rated from June 2012 and I am pleased that the majority of services have found the assessment and rating process to be a positive experience.

Service’s ratings will be published on the MyChild and ACECQA websites later this year to help parents better understand the quality of care being provided.

The next step in the National Quality Framework will be increased qualifications for our dedicated educators, commencing in 2014. This will be fundamental to ensure educators are equipped with the skills they need to help children learn and develop during a critical time of their lives. This is a significant change but it is backed by $190 million in training support to help staff up skill.

I am incredibly proud of the reforms that have been implemented so far. We’ve come a long way and I look forward to continuing to work with the sector to deliver the best start in life for some 1.3 million Australian kids.

The Hon Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Early Childhood and Child Care

REFLECTING ON ONE YEAR OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK—WHY QUALITY STILL MATTERS

Tuesday 1 January 2013 marked one year since the introduction of the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care in Australia.

CHEESEY VEGETABLE MUFFINS

Makes: 12
Preparation time: 25-30 minutes

Ingredients

2 cups self-raising flour
1 1/2 cups lightly packed grated zucchini
1 1/2 cups lightly packed grated carrot
1/2 cup grated reduced fat tasty cheese*
1/4 cup olive oil*
125g can creamed corn
3/4 cup reduced fat milk*
1 large egg*
Canola oil spray*

*Products available with the Heart Foundation Tick. Remember all fresh fruit and vegetables automatically qualify for the Tick.

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 190°C (170°C fan-forced). Sift flour and stir in zucchini, carrot and cheese.

2. Whisk together oil, creamed corn, milk and egg. Add to flour mixture and stir until ingredients are just combined.

3. Lightly grease a 12 x 1/3-cup capacity non-stick muffin pan with cooking spray. Bake in oven for 25-30 minutes or until muffins are light golden and just firm to touch.

Please contact us via our Facebook page or email us at: publishing@earlychildhood.org.au

Recipe and image reproduced with permission. © 2013 National Heart Foundation of Australia. For more yummy recipe ideas and tips to keep your family healthy, please visit: www.heartfoundation.org.au/mumsunited.
PLAYSILK ACTIVITIES

To an adult, it’s a scarf, but to a child a playsilk can be anything. Find below some activities taken from 30 of the suggested activities in ‘Silk Playground Playsilks’.

Dress-ups

One of the most popular uses of the playsils is dress-ups. You can do a ‘princess dress’ which is a playsilk wrapped around under her arms and tied it at the back. You could encourage children to put on as many playsilks as possible, as a hat, dress, belt and robe. The robe is like a reverse ‘princess dress’. Start at the back, bring it around under her arms, but then tie the ends at the back of her neck, like a halter neck. It provides an extra bit of ‘swish’ to the outfit.

Learning to tie shoelaces

This playsilk idea might help preschoolers who are asserting their independence and learning to tie their own shoelaces. Tie two different-coloured playsilks together at one end and ask your child to sit on a step, take off their shoes and place a foot on top of the knot. Give them one playsilk in each hand and guide them through the process. The bow at the end is going to look a little funny due to it being two-toned, but they’ll get the idea. Let them practice each little step until they’ve mastered it and can move on to the next one.

By using two different-coloured silks, your child will be able to follow your instructions more easily (especially if they cannot always tell their right from left). By learning the technique on a larger scale, they can focus on the steps in the process and don’t have to concern themselves with the manual dexterity needed for much smaller, thinner laces. Once they know how it’s done and have had enough practice, they can move onto trying it with shoelaces and it won’t seem nearly as daunting. The look of self-satisfaction on a child’s face when they achieve this milestone is nothing short of wonderful!

Games for learning colours

This game is fun for a child learning to recognise colours. Take playsilks and fold into small squares. Lay them out in rows of three, on a soft, non-slippery surface, like a rubber-backed rug or carpet (wooden or tiled floors will be too slippery). Ask your child to step onto a silk, then call out the colour of an adjacent silk and watch your child hop, step or jump from square to square! Mix it up so they go in all directions.

As your child develops, give them a clue that they have to solve first, such as ‘Jump on the colour of … GRASS!’ or ‘Jump on the colour of … FIRE ENGINES’. You can almost see your child’s mind ticking over, before they jump (and giggle!).

Silk Playground playsilks are a 90 x 90cm, 100% high-quality silk that is securely hemmed and make great toys for imaginative children. A standard set has seven bright colours and the dye is lightfast, colourfast and non-toxic. For $86.00 you can order the playsilks and receive access to over 30 illustrated, creative ideas to help you get the most out of the product.

For more information, please visit: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/playsilks.

HESTA, your health & community services industry fund

At HESTA we’re committed to helping members reach their retirement goals. After all, we’ve had 25 years of experience in the health and community services sector.

We deliver our financial education and advice services in easy-to-understand language, using real-life examples.

Led by CEO, Anne-Marie Corboy, our role is to inform you about your options — so you can build a better retirement savings balance, whether you’re 25 or 65. HESTA now has more than 750,000 members, 100,000 employers and more than $20 billion in assets. HESTA’s size means we can offer many benefits to members and employers. These include low fees, a fully portable account, easy administration, access to low-cost income protection and death insurance, limited financial advice (at no extra cost), super education sessions and transition to retirement options.

HESTA members also have access to a range of great value products and services including health insurance, banking and financial planning.

We are at the forefront of super innovation. HESTA was the first major super fund in Australia to introduce a sustainable investment option — Eco Pool — and assess fund managers on their after-tax investment returns.

For more information visit hesta.com.au or free call 1800 813 327.
REFLECTION AS A TOOL FOR QUALITY: WORKING WITH THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

Reflective practice is seen as a ‘core’ task for educators in children’s services. It is the ability to examine the activities within daily work and to use this evaluation as a means of improving practice and knowledge.

Educators are encouraged to think about what has happened in practice and how it could be different. Reflective practice has been described as a very useful activity as the thinking goes backwards and forwards and results in changes to thinking and practice which leads to higher quality outcomes for children.

This RIP has examples of reflection practice in action, as well as describing some of the theory and practice that underpins the process. Understanding the process helps educators to carry out the process effectively.

The reflective process requires three elements that are integral to its success:

1. Self-awareness
2. Building relationships
3. Developing knowledge.

These three elements create the context in which to implement a four-step action-learning model which is fundamental to the process of critical reflection. It includes Deconstruct, Confront, Theorise, and Think otherwise.

The combination of the three elements and the four-step action-learning model results in Circles of Change. A description of the transformational change that can occur in children’s services using the Circles of Change is a feature of this RIP.

For more information, please visit: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/rip1204.

TALKING ABOUT PRACTICE: REVISING A SERVICE PHILOSOPHY

A conversation with Jane Arnett and Shelli Giosis from East Brunswick Kindergarten and Child Care Centre


In this latest video, Anne Kennedy talks to Jane and Shelli about the collaborative process they used to revise their service philosophy. The video has three parts, includes footage of practice to illustrate the conversations in the interview and comes with a supporting document to guide its use in support practice, group discussion and reflection.

Take advantage of the NQS PLP Facebook page to discuss this and other Talking about practice videos with other ECEC educators from around the country.


SUPPORT FOR SERVICES: FAMILY NEWS FROM ACECQA

In November 2012, the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) launched Family News.

Developed for families, the newsletter features information on the National Quality Framework in a short and simple format.

Since launching, Family News has received positive feedback from educators, directors and families. ACECQA has an open survey inviting feedback to shape future editions.

The newsletter is designed for services to share with families as an independent print out or email attachment, or for elements of the newsletter to be adapted into service newsletters and websites.

Family News is distributed as an attachment with the ACECQA newsletter or available from: www.acecqa.gov.au. Parents, carers and educators can also subscribe to receive Family News as an email directly from ACECQA.

The first edition for 2013 is due in late February. See acecqa.gov.au/families/family-news-subscription/.
KIDSMATTER EARLY CHILDHOOD: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Research has shown that KidsMatter Early Childhood, a national initiative that supports young children’s mental health and wellbeing, is making a significant, positive impact in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services.

The official evaluation from Flinders University showed that in 105 pilot services around Australia, the mental health and wellbeing of children has improved. Educators also felt more able to support children and better connected to health professionals in their community.

Minister for Mental Health Mark Butler said the initiative, funded by the Australian Government and beyondblue, promotes positive mental health by developing children’s social and coping skills, providing parents with resources to support parenting, and helping parents and educators to respond effectively to children experiencing difficulties.

He said the Flinders University researchers identified a number of positive outcomes:

- One in six children who were experiencing mental health difficulties at the start of the project were no longer classified as experiencing difficulties.
- Staff capacity to recognise and assist children experiencing mental health difficulties increased 20 per cent.
- The project significantly improved educators’ knowledge of young children’s mental health.
- The project improved the quality of educators’ relationships with children in their care.

Tessa McGavock, Director of University of Western Sydney Early Learning, said that ‘the children are now more able to vocalise the emotions that are driving their behaviour’.

KidsMatter Early Childhood is now being implemented in an additional 130 ECEC services across the country. It was developed in collaboration with beyondblue, Early Childhood Australia and the Australian Psychological Society.

To find out more about the Flinders University Evaluation of KidsMatter Early Childhood, please go to: www.kidsmatter.edu.au/early-childhood/evaluation.
Choosing a Career in ECEC—More Than Just Loving Children

Deciding to become an early childhood educator is a significant decision. I’ve heard many students describing their reasons for doing so in terms of ‘loving children’ and wanting to spend time with them. I’m sure there are also many who believe that working with young children is easy and fun.

However, my experiences of working with young children, while mostly fun but rarely easy, have also been consistently challenging and to me that’s what makes early childhood education and care so interesting and worthwhile. Some of the things that have made my work with young children so rewarding have been the challenges involved in thinking about the work I do using diverse theoretical perspectives as frameworks for thinking. Considering the reasons why things are done in the ways they are and who might be advantaged or disadvantaged by those choices is an ongoing challenge.

For example, each morning we acknowledge Indigenous land with the two- to five-year-old children enrolled at our centre and when I did it this morning the older children were able to inform the newer children that the land we are situated on is called Ngunnawal Land. This simple daily acknowledgement of our relationship with Indigenous Australia is part of many curriculum decisions we make as educators due to our commitment to working towards Reconciliation. It’s important work and informs much of what I do with children.

It is an acknowledgement based in post-colonial theories that support notions of equity and inclusion and this is an important aspect of our day-to-day work of educating and caring for young children. It’s not always easy to know how to do this work well and there are many who even challenge the ‘appropriateness’ of starting this work with such young children.

However, challenging ‘norms’ and concepts of ‘appropriateness’ is important if we believe that children need to be well equipped to traverse this rapidly changing and increasingly diverse world to which we all belong. My hope for students considering early childhood education as a career choice is that they move beyond images of cute and innocent children and consider the many challenges of doing early childhood education and care thoughtfully and well.

This is demanding but ultimately rewarding work because it honours children and their right to experience the world in fair and equitable ways. I hope this is something to which all prospective students of early childhood education and care would aspire. 

Carmel Richardson, Educational Leader Wiradjuri Preschool Child Care Centre

We’re as passionate about super as you are about children

We’ve been passionate about the super of early childhood educators for 25 years.

Our consistently strong returns, low fees and industry leading insurance mean more people in your sector choose HESTA than any other fund.

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