



NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

On 1 January 2012, the National Quality Framework will be established and will apply to most long day care, family day care, preschool (or kindergarten) and outside schools hours care services.

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services through:

- a national legislative framework
- a National Quality Standard
- a national quality rating and assessment process
- a new national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

The National Quality Framework will take effect on 1 January 2012 with key requirements being phased in overtime. Requirements such as qualification, educator-to-child ratios and other key staffing arrangements will be phased in between 2012 and 2020.

National legislative framework

The national legislative framework is established through an applied laws system and consists of:

- the Education and Care Services National Law
- the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

It creates a jointly governed uniform national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services and replaces existing separate licensing and quality assurance processes. For many services this integrated approach means less red tape.

A Regulatory Authority in each state and territory will be primarily responsible for administering the National Quality Framework, including approving, monitoring and quality assessing services. It will be the first point of contact for services.

A new national body—the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority—will oversee the National Quality Framework and ensure the consistent and effective implementation of the new system.

National Quality Standard

The *National Quality Standard* sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The National Quality Standard is divided into seven Quality Areas:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management.

The National Quality Standard aims to promote:

- the safety, health and wellbeing of children
- a focus on achieving outcomes for children through high-quality educational programs
- families' understanding of what distinguishes a quality service.

National quality rating and assessment process

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.

Assessments for existing services will commence from mid-2012.

The National Quality Framework will replace the National Childcare Accreditation Council.

Refer to the *Assessment and Rating Process Information Sheet* for further information.