

NSW Children's Services Forum

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Submitted by email to bostes.review@det.nsw.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the NSW Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) on behalf of NSW Children's Services Forum.

As representatives of the early childhood sector, we are delighted that early childhood teachers in prior to school settings will be brought under the *Teacher Accreditation Act* in 2016 and will be accredited by BOSTES as are their peers in school based settings. We see this as an important step in the promotion of the importance of the early years along the educational spectrum as well as lifting the professional status and standing of early childhood teachers. Within this framework, our response to the review of BOSTES is focussed on the infrastructure needed in the prior to school sector to ensure the accreditation process is successful for all early childhood teachers working in NSW in a variety of settings and approved service providers.

About the NSW Children's Services Forum

The NSW Children's Services Forum is comprised of state-wide, not-for-profit community based children's service organisations. The Forum aims to:

- Promote the role of not for profit children's services;
- Advise governments on the quality, range and provision of children's services in NSW;
- Advocate for policies to improve the quality range and provision of children's services in NSW; and
- Engage in regular dialogue with other stakeholders in children's services;
- Promote principles of social justice in the planning, funding and delivery of children's services.

The current list of members of the NSW Children's Services Forum is attached to this submission. The Council of Social Service (NCOSS) provides Secretariat support to the Children's Services Forum.

Issues

1. Governance Arrangements

We believe that with the inclusion of early childhood teachers from the prior to school sector, the governance structure of the BOSTES Board and The Quality Teaching Council (QTC) needs to be amended or expanded to include a wider representation of the early childhood education sector.

Currently, whilst the system focuses on quality teacher standards, there is limited representation on the Board and the Council of the early childhood sector and there is limited knowledge about the national *Early Years Learning Framework* and the theoretical basis for a play based approach to curriculum implementation for young children.

Recommendation 1:

- ***Representation on the BOSTES Board and The Quality Teaching Council (QTC) be expanded to include greater representation of the early childhood sector; and***
- ***BOSTES formally establish an early childhood committee to provide ongoing advice to the Board and the QTC***

2. Infrastructure needed for the Accreditation of Early Childhood Teachers in prior to school settings.

Unlike school settings, early childhood services are diverse. Some are operated by large approved not for profit providers; others may be operated by large for profit providers, whilst the majority of services are operated by single private owners or single community based not for profit parent management committees.

Currently in school settings the Principal is able to accredit their own teaching staff; however, in the prior to school settings, this will not be achievable for single stand alone services which may only have one teacher on staff. Parent committees will not be able to assess the teacher against the teaching standards, and the teacher cannot assess themselves. The small stand alone organisations will have to outsource to a TAA of some kind. There will be an added cost to the organisation to pay the TAA. This will result in increases to the operational costs which in turn are usually recovered in fee income from the parents given other revenue streams such as additional Department funding is limited.

For large early childhood organisations which have the knowledge and expertise to become a TAA, it will still be a challenge as this may necessitate the employment of additional staff to carry out this role. This will increase the costs for families if there is no additional funding available for these positions.

If large early childhood organisations became TAAs, they would not be able to provide accreditation services to other stand alone services without needing to recover their costs. Once again, this would have a direct impact on fees for families.

Recommendation 2:

- ***Serious consideration be given to the infrastructure needed for the successful implementation of the accreditation process for early childhood teachers in prior to school settings and how this will be funded.***

3. Workforce issues and approval of early childhood teaching courses

Currently university courses in early childhood education are approved by ACECQA and do not come under the umbrella of BOSTES.

Historically, early childhood education teacher courses covered the birth to 8 years age range and focussed on child development, play based curriculum and the importance of interactions and relationships with young children in the context of the family and the community.

Over the last several years, early childhood university courses have been expanded to cover a wider age range (from birth to twelve years) to accommodate the needs of schools. This has resulted in many graduating students choosing to work in the school sector for a variety of reasons:

- Career opportunities
- Higher salary and better conditions of employment
- More status and greater recognition as a 'real teacher'

Generally, the early childhood prior to school sector is experiencing a shortage of qualified staff, particularly in rural and remote settings. Additionally, we have seen a decline in the quality of graduate applicants. We believe this is due to the pressure on universities to cover a wider range of units in their course content for an expanded age range, rather than focussing on the complexity of young children's learning and development. Often early childhood services are a soft entry point for families and a place where skilled early childhood teachers can identify children with additional needs and provide additional support before the child commences formal schooling.

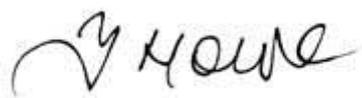
Recommendation 3:

- ***Consideration needs to be given to the reintroduction of early childhood teacher birth to 8 courses in universities and that BOSTES liaise closely with ACECQA to ensure early childhood teachers in prior to school settings are better equipped to begin their work with young children and their families.***

Contact details for further information:

Should you require any additional information on this submission, please do not hesitate to contact John Mikelsons, NCOSS Deputy CEO, by emailing john@ncoss.org.au or phoning (02) 8960 7918.

Yours sincerely,



Tracy Howe
NCOSS CEO, on behalf of the NSW Children's Services Forum

Members of NSW Children's Services Forum

- Australian Community Children's Services - NSW
- Benevolent Society
- CCSA (formerly Community Connections Solutions Australia)
- Community Child Care (NSW)
- Contact Inc
- Ethnic Child Care Family & Community Services
- Goodstart Early Learning
- Gowrie NSW
- KU Children's Services
- Local Government NSW
- Montessori Australia Foundation
- Network Of Community Activities
- Nikinpa Child & Family Centre / SNAICC
- NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS)
- NSW Family Day Care Association Inc
- Occasional Child Care Association Of NSW
- Playgroup NSW Inc
- SDN Children's Services
- Uniting
- YMCA