



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The COAG Early Childhood Reform Agenda

ANZSOG Early Childhood Development Workshop
Melbourne - 22 May 2009



Presented by Vicki Rundle

Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care

Early Childhood Development: a priority policy area

- **Fundamental to the Government's broader productivity agenda and the Education Revolution**
- **A key mechanism to improve individual outcomes, build social inclusion and support workforce participation of parents**
- **A cornerstone of the Prime Minister's apology and commitment to Indigenous Australians**
- **Highlighted in the 2020 Summit**



Rationale for action

- Evidence about brain development and effectiveness of early childhood programs
- remaining internationally competitive & positioning for the future
- Concern about burden of chronic disease and mental health problems, child abuse and neglect, pressures on families and intergenerational disadvantage
- fragmented service delivery



COAG agreed outcomes for children

- Children are born and remain healthy
- Children acquire the basic skills for life and learning
- Children benefit for better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children
- All children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal schooling
- Quality early childhood education and care supports the workforce participation choices of parents with children in the years before formal schooling



COAG achievements to date

- **Progressed in 2008 under the Productivity Agenda and Indigenous Reform Working Groups**
- **Initial focus on early childhood education and care reforms and 'closing the gap' for Indigenous children**
- **Two significant National Partnerships signed**
- **Aim to develop a National Early Childhood Development Strategy by July 2009**



2008 early childhood reforms underway

Early Childhood Development

Improving quality and accessibility of early childhood education and care, service integration, and targeting Indigenous

Quality	Workforce	Early Childhood Education	Support for Parents	Infrastructure	Data	Indigenous Early Childhood
National standards Rating system Early years learning framework Streamlined regulation	University places HECS remission No TAFE fees	Universal access to early childhood education including remote Indigenous children	interaction program Increased CCTR Child Protection Framework Information on service quality	Early learning & care centres Indigenous children & family centres	AEDI National Performance Information Framework	Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership

COAG agreed early childhood policy directions beyond election commitments

Improving antenatal care

Strengthen the health, development and learning of 0-5 year olds

Improving the quality and sustainability of the early years workforce

Enhancing and integrating the provision of Early Childhood Education and Care services

Boosting the participation of parents in the learning and development of their children



Recently announced Commitments

- **National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children including 'Communities for Children Plus'**
- **Paid Parental Leave starting January 2011**



Investing in the Early Years: A National Early Childhood Development Strategy

- **July 2008: COAG asked that a National Early Childhood Strategy be developed**
- **Vision for 2020 *'All children get the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and the nation'***
- **Identifies a set of outcomes for children and families**



Key challenges for achieving the vision

- Supporting children in families and communities
- Balancing universal and targeted service responses
- A sustainable and qualified workforce
- Balancing quality and cost
- Effective governance across diverse responsibilities
- Meeting infrastructure requirements
- Comprehensive information and evidence to inform decisions



Supporting children in families and communities

- When and how should government get involved?
- Which children, families and communities need the most support?
- What is the nature of those supports?
- What emphasis of action should be directed at the child, family or community?
- How do we best support isolated children, families and communities?
- How do we improve the overall literacy of families and communities on the significance of early childhood development?



Balancing universal and targeted service responses

- What is an appropriate balance between universal and targeted responses given finite resources?
- How can we build more integrated approaches that achieve this balance?
- How do we reach/engage at risk families?
- What are some of the implications for existing services and how can this be managed?



A sustainable and qualified workforce

- **What are the key workforce considerations for meeting our immediate commitments – UA, EYLF, quality reforms?**
- **What workforce development is needed to better position Australia for ongoing reform?**
 - Leadership, culture, change management
- **What are the key risks and how might they be mitigated?**
 - Eg, IR – pay and conditions and cost impacts



Balancing quality and cost

- **What are some of the timing considerations in implementing the quality agenda for ECEC – what is the balance between quality and cost?**
- **Informing families to be able to make decisions in relation to trade-offs between quality and cost**



Effective governance

- **What governance mechanisms are going to be most effective to drive the early childhood reform agenda?**
 - **Service level governance**
 - **local government and local governance (eg trusts)**
 - **State**
 - **Commonwealth**
 - **Whole of Government approaches**
 - **Ministerial leadership (including COAG)**
 - **Place based approaches**



Infrastructure to support reform

- What needs to happen to maximise use of existing infrastructure to support the reform?
- What additional infrastructure is needed?
- How can government leverage third party investment in infrastructure?
- What infrastructure issues are there in rural and remote areas and how might these be addressed?
- How can we make our infrastructure “fit for purpose” – eg, integrated settings



Information and evidence to inform decisions

- **How can we lead the development of data and information in Australia - Early Childhood Information and Data Strategy?**
 - How can we better utilise, link and disseminate existing data sources and minimise duplication?
- **What are the big gaps in the Australian evidence base?**



For More Information

Visit our website at: www.oececc.gov.au

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