



NSW Government Submission to the Productivity Commission's Early Childhood Workforce Study

Scope

This paper is the NSW Government's response to the Productivity Commission Study: Early Childhood Development Workforce. The primary contributors to this submission are the NSW Department of Human Services, NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education and Training.

The Productivity Commission defines the Early Childhood Development (ECD) workforce as including, but not limited to, those involved in delivering or administering childcare, preschool education, maternal and child health services, family support services, and services for children with additional needs.

The NSW Government, as a signatory to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* has agreed to a framework which considers equally the care, health, developmental and learning needs of children of all ages in the years prior to school. This approach is also reflected in the Australian Government's Early Years Learning Framework.

Also in this context, accepted international research argues that in early childhood, 'care' for very young children is inseparable from a child's development and education (*Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD: 2001).

This submission provides an overview of NSW Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services within the context of National Frameworks, Partnerships and strategies, as well as State priorities. Information on key policy and program reform initiatives, and how these impact on the development of the sector's workforce is provided. Consideration is given to the specific challenges in nurturing the Aboriginal workforce, and workforces in remote communities.

A key issue for this Study into the ECD sector is the limited availability of reliable and robust workforce data. This presents a significant challenge in respect to effective workforce planning in the short, medium and longer term for both the government and non-government sector. NSW recognises that workforce data from the *National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census*, Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council (CDSMAC) sponsored research by the National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University, and recent research sponsored by the NSW Government, *Profiling Non-government Community Service Organisations in NSW*, all address this issue.

The fundamental principle underpinning this submission is that investing in early childhood education, and ensuring access to affordable and quality services, is one of the best ways of improving life outcomes for children. In delivering on this principle, NSW recognises the need for a workforce with the appropriate mix of knowledge and skills to meet service needs.

1. Background

The role of the NSW Government in the NSW Early Childhood Development sector is significant and key responsibilities for funding, regulating and providing services are undertaken by various government agencies. Primary roles performed by the Government include:

- funding and regulating (licensing and monitoring) children's services through the functions of the Department of Human Services
- providing children's services (preschools and early intervention classes) through the NSW Department of Education and Training
- child health services through child and family health services provided by NSW Health, and
- funding non-government organisations (NGOs) to provide family support services, and directly providing specialist family support services under a range of service programs managed by the Department of Human Services.

These key roles and services include:

- children's services - children's services in NSW are varied, with a large range of service types and providers. Commercial and not-for-profit operators are the main suppliers and the NSW Government, through the Department of Human Services, funds many of the not-for-profit providers and regulates all providers of these services. The NSW Department of Education and Training also provides preschools and early intervention classes. In this paper, children's services refers to:
 - **Centre-based services**, including long day care, preschool and occasional care services
 - **Mobile services**, including children's services that provide flexible and responsive services to children in isolated circumstances
 - **Family day care**, where an agency registers self employed carers to provide child care in their own homes
 - **Home-based care**, where individual carers directly provide services in their own homes
 - **Outside school hours care**, where services provide care outside of school hours on school days and during school vacations, to children enrolled in school.
- child health services – NSW Health funds and provides child health services through child and family community health services delivered by teams of health professionals and registered nurses who specialise in child health. These teams provide a range of services, including initial health checks before a child is six weeks old and supporting new parents in their caring role.
- family support services – in this submission, family support services include a wide range of early intervention services, often provided to children and families with specific needs (e.g. children with a disability), under a range of specialised government programs and delivered to families either by NGO or government providers. In NSW, the Department of Human Services, Community Services and Ageing, Disability and Home Care divisions are the main funders and providers of these services.

An overview of the early childhood development sector is provided at **APPENDIX 1**.

2. NSW policy context

In NSW the primary government policy drivers for the children's services workforce are the *Children's Services Regulation 2004*, the NSW Government's *Preschool Investment and Reform Plan* and the *National Partnership Agreements on Early Childhood Education and the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care*.

Over the past five years the NSW Government has significantly increased funding to community preschools to improve access to preschool program places, to increase participation rates for all children, but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to improve the overall

sustainability of the community preschool sector. These reforms have been underway since 2006 through the initiative known as the *Preschool Investment and Reform Plan*.

In June 2009 the Commonwealth Government and all States and Territories entered into the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education*. Through this Agreement the Commonwealth Government is investing \$970 million in early childhood and care services nationally over a five year period, including \$955 million to States and Territories to support their implementation of the *Universal Access* initiative. The NSW Government's share of this five year funding initiative is \$278.6 million, which is being delivered through a Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth.

The objectives of the National Partnership Agreement are closely aligned with the objectives that were already being implemented in NSW through the *Preschool Investment and Reform Plan*. These are to:

- provide universal access to 15 hours a week of a quality early childhood education and care program, 40 weeks a year for all children in the year before school by 2013
- increase early childhood education participation rates to 95 percent, particularly for Indigenous and disadvantaged children, and
- ensure that cost is not a barrier to access for families.

Under the *Preschool Investment and Reform Plan*, the NSW Government has made a commitment to create an extra 5,250 preschool places to give an additional 10,500 children access to a preschool program for 12 hours a week in the year prior to school.

The program delivery for these places has been increased from 12 hours a week to 15 hours a week through the Bilateral Agreement between NSW and the Commonwealth under the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education*. The target is for 95 percent participation of children in the year before school by 2013.

In December 2009 COAG endorsed the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care*. This Agreement incorporates the *Early Years Learning Framework* and provides that a new regulatory system, known as the National Quality Framework, will apply to preschool, long day care, family day care, and outside school hours care services across Australia from January 2012. The National Quality Framework will extend children's services regulation to cover more than 5,500 early childhood and school age care services across NSW. Under the National Quality Framework, all Australian governments have agreed to:

- streamlined regulatory arrangements so as to end the wasteful duplication and overlap that exists currently with both Commonwealth and State Governments involved in regulating most of these services
- phase in over the 2010-2020 decade mandatory National Quality Standards with improved staff to child ratios and a more qualified early childhood workforce
- a transparent ratings system, which gives families more meaningful information about the quality of education and care services, and
- a new national body, to be based in Sydney, to guide the implementation and management of the framework.

In addition, COAG has agreed to the *Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development*, which promotes and supports the integration of early childhood services through the development of Children and Family Centres, increased access to antenatal care, and increased access to and use of maternal and child health services for Aboriginal families.

Through COAG, the NSW Government continues to participate with other jurisdictions in the development of an *Early Years Workforce Strategy* aimed at increasing the supply and quality of the early childhood workforce.

3. Workforce Profile

Population Demographics:

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data show 94,700 registered births in NSW in 2008, an increase of 5.8 percent since 2007. Rates increased most in Central Western Sydney and the Mid-North Coast (ABS: 2010 NSW State and Regional Indicators - No. 1338.1). Another perspective of interest is the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), representing the number of children a female would bear during her lifetime if she experienced current age-specific fertility rates at each age of her reproductive life. The TFR for NSW began to decline in 1993, reached its minimum of 1.76 per woman in 2001, but since then has continued to climb. The TFR for NSW in 2006 was 1.9 per woman (ABS Australian Social Trends 2007).

By broad age groups, projections suggest that population numbers will increase in the age groups of interest: 0-4 and 5-11. Projections for the 0-4 age group are 457,600 in 2011 and 470,700 by 2015 in NSW. For the age group 5-11, projections are 627,300 by 2011 and 648,200 by 2015. These projections are based on assumptions regarding a range of variables such as fertility, mortality and migration (Department of Planning NSW - State and Regional Population Projections 2008).

Over the last two decades, fertility rates for mothers aged 30 years and over have increased, while the fertility rate for mothers aged under 30 years old has decreased. Of importance to this submission is the fact that the fertility of young women in less advantaged quintiles has increased markedly. For example, in 2005 the fertility of young women (under 30 years) contributed 62% of TFR in the least advantaged quintile but only 25% in the most advantaged quintile. Teenage fertility (women between 15-19) in the least advantaged quintile was over seven times greater than in the most advantaged quintile (ABS Social Trends 2007 - Recent Increases in Australian Fertility).

It would appear that not only will there be an increased demand for ECD services but a major social need in equity terms for children born into lower socio-economic families or into families where parenting skills may require significant support.

Workforce Data

Across some segments of the sector (e.g. childcare and preschool services) there is significant workforce data available for analysis, however NSW recognises that there is a lack of consistent state data in the child health and family support sections of the workforce. These data limitations present a significant challenge for effective workforce planning and development goals in the sector. NSW recognises that workforce data from the CDSMAC sponsored research by the National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University, *Who Works in Community Services*, and recent research sponsored by the NSW Government, *Profiling Non-government Community Service Organisations in NSW*, both address aspects of this issue.

Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce data

The Child Care Management System (CCMS) is the primary source for Australian Government data for ECEC services. Preliminary data from the *National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census* (National ECEC Workforce Census), conducted for the first time in 2010 and replacing the *Australian Government Childcare Provider Survey* (AGCCPS) and the *Australian Government Child Care Census*, will be an important data source in building an accurate picture of the number of people in the ECD workforce, their qualifications and the service settings within which they work.

Preliminary data from the National ECEC Workforce Census indicates that in 2009/10 there was a total of 14,161 paid staff (8,084 Full Time Equivalent - FTE) in NSW Government funded or provided child care services, and a total of 7,296 paid staff (3,839 FTE) in NSW Government funded or provided preschools (Report on Government Services – ROGs - 2011: Table 3A.48).

Table 1 below provides a summary of staff employed by NSW Government funded and/or managed child care and preschool service providers.

Table 1: Staff employed by NSW State Government funded and/or managed child care and preschool service providers (Productivity Commission: 2011)

Staff employed by NSW State Government funded and/or managed child care and preschool service providers, (a), (b), (c)						
	Unit	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09 (d)	2009-10 (e)
Staff in NSW Government funded and/or provided child care services (Full Time Equivalent – FTE – staff)						
Primary contact staff	FTE	6 442	6 366	6 325	9 979	6 861
Administrative staff	FTE	589	599	552	651	703
Other staff	FTE	480	463	444	554	520
All FTE staff	FTE	7 511	7 428	7 321	11 184	8 084
Family Day Carers						
Employed as employees	FTE	na	na	na	na	na
Employed as contractors	FTE	na	na	na	na	na
All family day carers	FTE	na	na	na	na	na
Total Paid Staff						
Primary contact staff	no.	10 065	10 229	10 267	15 778	11 640
Administrative staff	no.	1 181	1 215	1 141	1 365	1 358
Other staff	no.	1 028	939	930	1 203	1 163
All paid staff	no.	12 274	12 383	12 338	18 346	14 161
Total Unpaid Staff						
All unpaid staff	no.	2 145	2 058	1 939	2 453	na
Staff in State Government funded and/or provided preschool services (FTE) (f)						
Primary contact staff	FTE	2 745	2 990	3 002	4 280	3 227
Administrative staff	FTE	311	307	310	338	385
Other staff	FTE	182	167	154	216	227
All FTE staff	FTE	3 238	3 464	3 466	4 834	3 839
Total paid staff (full-time and part time) (g)						
Primary contact staff	no.	4 704	4 840	4 840	7 234	5 795
Administrative staff	no.	700	664	670	852	951
Other staff	no.	451	382	375	508	550
All paid staff	no.	5 855	5 886	5 885	8 594	7 296

- (a) Data provided by States and Territories complement the data collected by the Australian Government. To avoid misrepresenting child care services, jurisdictions were asked to report on only those data items where the Australian Government was also able to provide data.
- (b) FTE = full time equivalent. Part time positions are calculated based on a rate of 0.5 of an FTE position.
- (c) Primary contact staff include child care workers, early childhood teachers, teaching authorised supervisor and untrained child care workers. Other staff include child development officers, cleaner/maintenance, non-teaching authorised supervisors and cooks.
- (d) Data are based on the number of licensed funded services operating during the survey week in August 2009.
- (e) Data for 2009-10 are not directly comparable to 2008-09 due to a change in collection methodology and counting rules.
- (f) Data for 2006-07 onwards include information from both DoCS and DET. DoCS Preschools are calculated for services which are designated preschools only, and are based on the number of licensed funded services operating during the survey week in September. DET figures for FTE paid primary contact staff included teachers and teacher aids. DET figures are not included in the FTE paid employees involved in other tasks. The information on primary contact staff does not relate directly to the number of children receiving a preschool program.
- (g) DET figures are not included in the total paid staff count.

na = Not available.

Report on Government Services (Productivity Commission) 2011: Table 3A.48

Source: NSW Department of Human Services, Community Services, NSW Department of Education (unpublished).

Workforce requirements for children's services

The Department of Human Services' Community Services division licenses, regulates, and monitors children's services for children from birth through to school age under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988* and the *Children's Services Regulation 2004*. The Regulation includes reference to staff qualifications, staff to child ratios and child numbers. Community Services also registers out of school hours care (OSHC) services, including before and after school hours care and vacation care services.

In order to be eligible to be appointed as the Authorised Supervisor of any children's service, Clause 16(c) of the Regulation specifies that the person must have:

- an approved degree or diploma in early childhood education from a university following a course with a duration (on a full-time basis) of not less than 3 years,
- a Diploma of Children's Services (Early Childhood Education and Care), a Child Care Certificate, a Certificate of Child Care Studies or an Associate Diploma of Social Science (Child

- Studies) from a registered training organisation, or
- another approved qualification.

The Regulation also specifies the number of early childhood teaching staff members who must be in attendance at a centre based or mobile service, ranging from one teaching staff member for 30 or more but less than 40 children, up to 4 teaching staff members if there are 80 or more children. Clause 52(4) of the Regulation defines a teaching staff member as a member of staff who has a degree or diploma in early childhood education from a university following a course with a duration (on a full-time basis) of not less than 3 years, or some other approved qualification, or has some other approved training and other approved experience.

In addition, Clause 52(2) of the Regulation currently requires that a licensee of a centre based or a mobile children's service must ensure that when a child under two years of age is being provided with the service, there must be in attendance at least one primary contact staff member who:

- is an enrolled nurse with a Certificate IV (Parenthood) from a TAFE establishment or a Certificate III from a registered training organisation in Children's Services, or
- is a registered nurse with previous work experience in providing a children's service or with another approved qualification, or
- has obtained a Child Care Certificate, a Certificate of Child Care Studies or an Associate Diploma of Social Science (Child Studies) from a TAFE establishment, or a Diploma of Community Services (Children's Services) from a registered training organisation, or
- has some other approved qualification.

NSW Department of Education preschool workforce requirements

Staff working in the 100 NSW Department of Education preschools attached to primary schools are appointed under the same conditions and requirements as all other primary teacher appointments. All teachers working in NSW Department of Education and Training preschools require early childhood teaching qualifications as well as the same qualifications as those teaching in our primary schools. Teachers who work for the Department are employed under the *Teaching Service Act 1980* and are appointed to the school. Preschool teachers working for the Department have a three or four year early childhood university qualification. In the Department:

- each preschool has 20 children with a teacher and a school learning support officer (also known as a teacher's aide)
- each preschool has an allocation of one day a week for a school administrative officer
- each early intervention class has five to eight children ranging from three years to six years with a full-time teacher and a support staff member known as a school learning support officer
- preschool and early intervention teacher salaries range from \$51,246 per annum for a three year trained teacher to a maximum of \$84,759 per annum for a four or more years trained teacher (the same salary scale applies to all teachers employed by the department)
- school learning support officer salaries range from \$35,360 to \$37,342 per annum, and
- permanent teachers receive an annual professional learning funding allocation that is utilised in conjunction with each school's professional learning plan.

Teachers employed with the Department will meet the teaching qualification requirement under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and School Age Care. However, school learning support officers employed by the Department are not currently required to hold a qualification. All new teachers working in NSW Department of Education and Training preschools must meet the requirements of the NSW Institute of Teachers and gain accreditation against the Professional Teaching Standards as required of all teachers in NSW schools since 2004. These requirements include mandatory areas of study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, special education and training in challenging behaviours/classroom management as well as the mandatory subject content requirements. The requirements for teachers in NSW Government preschools for Aboriginal children are the same as for all NSW teachers working in NSW government primary schools. Each of these preschools for Aboriginal children requires an Aboriginal preschool teacher's aide or Aboriginal Education Officer.

Teachers employed with the NSW Department of Education will meet the teaching qualification requirement under the National Quality Standard. However, school learning support officers employed by the Department are not currently required to hold a qualification. Under the National Quality Standard a minimum qualification will be required for these positions from 2014 which could have an impact on individual staff and their future employment. A transition process to achieve this qualification by giving recognition for prior learning and/or experience in conjunction with some training is one possible strategy to address this issue. Consideration may need to be given to reviewing current award conditions if school learning support officers are expected to gain a qualification. Also, additional funding would be required for training, and any subsequent wage impact.

Currently the NSW Minister for Education, through the NSW Institute of Teachers approves initial teacher training courses. However, with the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), a new national system for initial teacher training is likely to take effect in NSW on 1 January 2012. NSW has been working closely with AITSL as a board member to enable a smooth transition from state to national requirements. All new initial teacher education training programs will be approved/accredited under AITSL national rules from 1 January 2012. In addition there will be a new requirement for the allocation of places to students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds under the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education.

The teaching workforce in NSW, as elsewhere in Australia, is ageing (Teacher Age Profiles: *Workforce Management and Systems Improvement* - DET September 2010). However, in NSW there is a strong continuing supply of teachers from the university sector. There is a variety of strategies to attract people to teach in NSW government schools including active promotion of teaching as a career through the *Teach NSW* campaign, teacher education scholarships and retraining programs. There are incentives to attract teachers to NSW government schools in rural and remote areas of the state as well as excellent working conditions for all teachers including those in preschools.

Child Health Services Workforce Data

Existing data describing the profile of the child health service workforce is limited in terms of the number, qualifications and service settings of child health nurses and other health professionals employed across the sector. Recent analysis has been undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) utilising survey data from the Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey 2008. In NSW a total of 1,772 nurses (registered and enrolled) were employed in family and child health services in 2008.

Table 2: Employed nurses by clinical area: selected characteristics, New South Wales^(a), 2008

Clinical area	Number	Average age (years)	Per cent male	Per cent registered	Average weekly hours worked	Per cent part-time	Per cent with post-registration/enrolment qualifications
<i>Medical and surgical areas</i>							
Medical	12,338	43.6	9.2	75.3	34.3	42.1	40.0
Surgical	7,117	41.6	7.3	80.0	33.9	43.3	32.9
Mixed medical and surgical	3,667	41.9	6.9	78.6	32.9	46.6	37.9
<i>Other clinical areas</i>							
Aged care	8,317	50.2	7.2	78.8	34.1	46.4	31.4
Community health	4,773	46.6	8.0	89.9	32.1	49.9	46.4
Critical care/emergency	16,397	40.2	13.4	88.3	35.8	34.5	53.1
Family and child health	1,772	46.1	3.1	94.6	31.9	53.1	73.9
Mental health	4,919	46.0	31.9	84.2	37.7	26.9	50.4
Midwifery	5,406	45.2	1.2	96.5	32.2	53.8	56.3
Perioperative	6,146	42.6	8.9	86.2	34.3	42.9	50.3
Rehabilitation/disability	2,804	47.5	15.8	65.6	35.2	37.9	29.7
Other	4,691	46.8	9.6	87.6	35.8	37.1	61.1
Total	78,345	44.1	10.5	83.6	34.5	41.5	45.8

(a) State and territory estimates for 2008 should be treated with caution due to low response rates in some jurisdictions. See explanatory notes for further information. **Source:** AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2008.

Child and Family health nurses are registered nurses, many of whom work in the community setting and are linked to community health services. Some nurses work in residential and day stay services, providing additional assessment and support for families with extended needs. While post graduate qualifications in child and family health nursing for these nurses are ideal, such qualifications are not mandatory and can be gained after entering the area of practice.

Family Support Services Workforce Data

As with the child health workforce, consistent data is not available to quantify the early childhood development family support workforce. NSW has recognised lack of consistent data has been an issue and that the National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University study, *Who Works in Community Services*, and recent research sponsored by the NSW Government, *Profiling Non-government Community Service Organisations in NSW*, both address aspects of this issue.

The non-government family support service workforce

As mentioned above, the NSW Government funds and provides a wide range of prevention and early intervention services to support children's participation in quality early childhood education and to enable each child in NSW to have the best possible start to life. Non-government organisation (NGOs) funded to provide these services employ a wide range of professional staff primarily under the modern Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010, which commenced on 1 January 2010 following the expiry of the Social and Community Services Employees (State) Award on 3 March 2009. This new national Award sets the minimum employment standards for all NGO employees previously set under the Social and Community Services Employees (State) Award or the Notional Agreement Preserving State Award (the NAPSA).

To inform the NSW Government's position in response to the Australian Services Union (ASU) Equal Remuneration Application, the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), University of NSW, has recently completed research profiling NGOs funded by the NSW Government to deliver social and community services, focussing on workforce characteristics and organisational arrangements. The final report has identified that:

- eighty five percent of workforce as female
- an under-representation of ATSI and CALD staff relative to the proportions of these groups as service users
- The majority of workers are covered by awards, however a significant proportion of staff are also employed on enterprise agreements

The report notes that any restructuring of awards should take into account the fact that salary sacrifice is not a universal benefit, enjoyed by all or even most workers in non-government community service organisations. (*Profiling Non-government Community Service Organisations in NSW*: Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), University of NSW, November 2010.

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/Report8_10_ProfilingNSWNGOs.pdf

The Department of Human Services' family support services workforce

The Department of Human Services' Community Services division employs approximately 350 caseworker positions under the Brighter Futures program. Brighter Futures caseworkers provide case management to ensure effective, integrated and appropriate support for families in a planned and coordinated manner. In providing early intervention services to families, caseworkers must also understand the broader role and responsibilities associated with casework practice within DHS Community Services.

DHS Community Services caseworkers are required to have a suitable degree-level qualification (in social work or social welfare) and relevant experience. If Aboriginal, caseworkers are required to have a minimum of two-years relevant experience working with Aboriginal communities. In addition, DHS, Community Services provides a six-month Caseworker Development Program for new appointees, with additional bridging training for Aboriginal appointees who do not have a

degree. DHS, Community Services caseworkers are employed under the Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award at Administrative & Clerical Grade 3/7.

Early Childhood Services for children with a disability provided by DHS through Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) are primarily delivered through Community Support Teams (CSTs). The eligibility criteria for services to children aged below six years of age are broader than that of most other ADHC services and this can result in larger numbers of children under six years being able to request services. In 2009/2010 around 15 percent of services provided by CSTs were to children under six.

CST staff are required to visit a range of locations to undertake assessments, and provide support and services. Staff are required to be flexible and creative in service delivery, particularly when working in geographically isolated areas. CST staff access a range of training to provide skills to deliver services across the life span of the client. Some of this training is specific to the younger groups.

All staff in CSTs may provide Early Childhood Development (ECD) services. The proportion of the work that is for ECD will vary. In June 2010, ADHC employed over 870 staff in the CST area. Approximately 345 of these staff were made up of psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists or speech pathologists. The remaining staff were case managers, community workers, behaviour support specialists and support staff. A third of these staff were aged 45 or older, and a third aged under 30; thirteen percent of CST staff were male. Almost 80 percent of staff were permanent, with the remainder on fixed term contracts (ADHC data unpublished).

4. Factors impacting on workforce demand and supply

The supply of new early childhood development services is determined by:

- the number of children in the local area
- the existing providers of services in the market, their price and their quality
- the availability of suitably qualified and experienced staff
- the capital costs required to establish the centre (where relevant - centre based)
- requirements of government regulation, particularly minimum standards
- employment opportunities for parents
- parental attitudes to early education, and
- the availability of government funding or incentives for service provision (Blaxland et al 2009).

A family's choice to use an ECD service, and the subsequent demand for ECD workers, varies significantly according to individual circumstances. The developing evidence-base regarding access to ECD services notes the demand for early childhood service places within a local area is largely determined by:

- the number of children in the local area
- the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the local population, which will affect factors such as labour force participation and the availability of informal care
- the availability of places within the local area — access to early childhood education and care is an influence on parents' decisions about participating in the workforce or how they allocate time outside formal work, and
- the affordability of services to the local population — if out-of-pocket costs are higher, demand for services should be lower (Blaxland et al: 2009).

Labour costs are generally the most significant cost for providers of children's services. These costs are influenced by a number of factors:

- *child-to-staff ratios* — which affect staff costs per child;
- *the hourly wage rate* — which affects the cost of employing any staff member, and
- *the mix and flexibility of staff* — for example some centres may have staff that perform both administrative tasks in addition to core early childhood education and care tasks (Allen Consulting Group 2010: p.10).

Table 3 below shows how staffing costs vary (although not significantly) according to location and service type:

Table 3: Summary of Staffing Costs for Children's Services – 2008/09

Children's service	Labour cost as a percentage of total cost (%)	
	Regional/Rural	Metropolitan
Preschool	76 – 79	74 – 76
Mobile services	77	77
LDC	74 – 82	73 – 79
Occasional care	75	79

Source: CS. 2008-09, Costing Manual for Child and Family Services in New South Wales – Children's Services

Labour Force Participation and Demand

The impact of the cost of children's services on demand and labour force participation was considered in the recent Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) regarding proposed amendments to the *NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004* which suggested that while workforce participation is highly correlated with child care demand, *'there is weak evidence on the impact of the price of care on workforce participation rates. In other words, there is clear evidence that the choice to participate in the workforce drives demand for formal (and informal) child care.'* (Allen Consulting Group 2010: 79). This analysis also notes that there is considerably weaker evidence of the impact of changes in child care price on employment decisions. Research suggests that, even with significant changes in price, there is only a small change in workforce participation rates.

While it appears that there is low price sensitivity (or 'elasticities of demand') for the cost of ECD services, further research suggests that the effect of costs on labour supply in Australia is most significant in low wage households (Doiron and Kalb: 2005).

The impact of the cost of services on demand was also considered by COAG under the Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) for Early Childhood Education and Care Quality Reforms (COAG Decision RIS, 2009: 41), which noted:

"Research internationally shows that demand for child care is 'inelastic' (that is, it does not vary significantly) when costs rise, though there is an understandably greater impact on lower income earners than higher income earners. Research shows that child care demand in Australia is particularly unchanged by cost increases." (COAG Decision RIS, 2009: 41).

Quality Standards, Staff Ratios and Demand

The staff to child ratio is widely regarded as a primary indicator of quality in children's services, especially for very young children (e.g. *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD: 2001). Evidence indicates that an appropriate minimum standard of staff to child ratio is one of the most important regulatory interventions that can be made.

In October 2008 the NSW Government announced the introduction of a 1:4 staff to child ratio for children under two years of age in centre-based and mobile children's services. This represents an improvement from the previous 1:5 staff to child ratio that was specified for children less than two years under the *Children's Services Regulation 2004*.

An economic analysis assessing the impact of moving to the new lower ratio concluded that the lower ratio is not expected to reduce the supply of places. The report shows that the market for

child care providers is such that services will generally employ more staff, rather than withdraw supply (Booz and Co: 2008).

In NSW, extensive consultation has taken place regarding the implementation of the 1:4 ratio. Overall, support for its implementation is strong and approximately one third of services already provide this ratio.

The impact of the National Quality Framework on workforce demand was also specifically considered by COAG through the Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) for Early Childhood Education and Care Quality Reforms. This analysis concluded that the workforce demands arising from the reforms could reasonably be met, but strategies would be needed to improve staff recruitment and retention, and increase training (COAG Decision RIS, 2009).

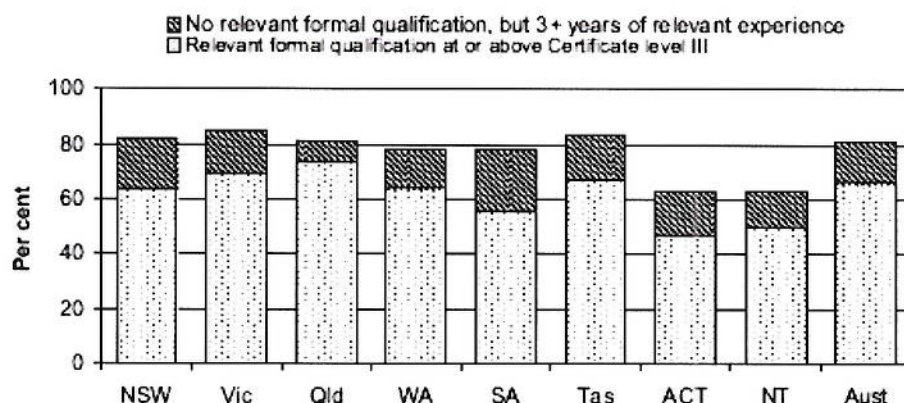
The sector has raised some concerns regarding the introduction of the 1:4 ratio and possible cost impacts on childcare and a potential reduction of places for children, with the NSW Government putting in place measures to assist in the transition to the 1:4 ratio as a result (eg. increasing the maximum group size for children from birth to two years) for inclusion in the amending Regulation which commenced in January 2011.

Qualifications and influence on demand

The proportion of paid primary contact staff with relevant formal qualifications or three or more years of relevant experience varied across jurisdictions in 2009/10. According to the Report on Government Services, nationally, the majority of paid primary contact staff with relevant formal qualifications in approved Australian Government child care services held a certificate III or IV or a diploma or advanced diploma (44.4 percent and 40.9 percent, respectively). Of the 8,546 (or 14.8 percent) paid primary contact staff with a bachelor degree or above, 83.3 percent held university qualifications in the field of early childhood education (ROGs 2011: 3.39).

NSW had a slightly lower than Australian average percentage of primary contact staff with relevant formal qualifications at or above Certificate Level III (approximately 65 percent), with approximately 24 percent of primary contact staff without formal qualifications, but with three years or more of relevant experience.

Table 6: Paid Primary Contact Staff Employed by Australian Government Approved Child Care Services, by Relevant Qualification - 2010 (Productivity Commission: 2011)



^a Data for 2010 are weighted data drawn from the National ECEC Workforce Census and are not directly comparable with data for previous years (presented in table 3A.29) due to a change in data source. Refer to box 3.4 and table 3A.29 for more information.

Source: DEEWR (unpublished) *National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census, 2010* (preliminary data); table 3A.29.

5. Issues for Consideration

Future demand for ECD workers

Future demand for ECD workers is likely to focus on qualified staff. Under the National Quality Framework, 50 percent of educators will be required to have Diploma level or above and other educators to have Certificate III. Similarly the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* provides for a preschool program to be delivered to children in the year before school by a four-year university trained early childhood teacher. Extent of demand for such staff will need to be established through analysis of data from the National ECEC Workforce Census.

Pay equity

The Australian Services Union (ASU), together with a number of affiliated unions, lodged an Equal Remuneration Order – Social, Community and Disability Services Industry, with Fair Work Australia on 11 March 2010. This Order seeks to apply the principles of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decision on the Community Services and Crisis Assistance Award 2008 in the federal jurisdiction.

In terms of addressing wage-related concerns for the family support worker sector, the NSW Government is fully committed to working in partnership with the community services sector on the outcomes of the ASU Equal Remuneration Claim, currently before Fair Work Australia, with a decision expected in 2011.

Consultation with union, industry and non-government peak bodies has resulted in agreement to develop two reform streams to prepare for the implementation of the FWA decision. Specifically, this involves:

- a productivity reform strategy to establish effective strategies for adoption by NGOs to improve service quality and efficiency, and
- a workforce reform agenda that brings real opportunities for workers, develops qualifications and provides consistency in the use of classifications across NGOs to address issues of attraction and retention of staff within the sector.

In NSW there are already established workforce development agendas in place across the community services, disability services and health sectors. Specific workforce development activities to support *Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing* reforms commenced in 2010/11, as did specific strategies around Aboriginal workforce and employment.

Implementation of 'Universal Access'

It is expected that the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* will also influence the demand for ECD workers as a result of the commitment to achieving the objectives of Universal Access by 2013. The objectives are to provide all Australian children, in the year before they begin formal school, with access to a preschool program (15 hours a week for 40 weeks a year) delivered by four-year University-qualified early childhood teacher. A priority under the Agreement is to contain and reduce fees so that the cost of preschool does not act as a barrier to access.

Under the National Partnership Agreement, Commonwealth 'Universal Access' funds delivered a major boost to NSW community preschool funding levels in early 2009/10, delivering a further \$21.3 million in funding in addition to existing NSW Government commitments, with a total of more than \$131 million.

Through the *Preschool Investment and Reform Plan*, NSW had already introduced a resource allocation model to ensure fair and equitable funding for all community based preschools. The resource allocation model provides preschools with a higher rate of funding for children from Indigenous, low income, and culturally and linguistically diverse families, and for preschools located in acknowledged areas of socio-economic disadvantage. A further loading is given to remote and mobile services per child enrolled to reflect the extra costs associated with providing these services.

This investment has resulted in higher funding allocations to 650 preschools across NSW and has had a direct and positive impact on affordability and participation rates with attendance rates for Aboriginal children increasing by 8.6 percent and by 1.5 percent for children from low income families in 2009/10.

Recruiting and Retaining Staff

Particular workforce recruitment and retention issues for NSW include:

- existing early childhood education workforce shortages in a number of isolated rural and regional locations
- workforce capability issues and recruiting appropriately trained staff to meet the early childhood development needs of Aboriginal children, and
- developing a culturally competent ECD workforce to respond effectively to the needs of children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Teacher shortages in rural schools have been an issue for many decades in Australia (Lyons, Cooksey, Panizzon, Parnell, & Pegg, 2006 cited in *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol 33, 4 August 2008). A range of incentives to attract and retain government staff in rural and remote areas of the state, including subsidised housing, relocation subsidies and extended leave arrangements are designed to increase the number of skilled government employees in hard-to-staff locations. There is also some evidence that providing preservice teachers with a brief experience both living and teaching in a rural environment will lead to significant attitudinal changes (Hudson P; Hudson S, 2008).

Aboriginal people wanting to obtain ECD qualifications face a number of barriers to successfully completing studies. These barriers can include a lack of prior experience in formal education settings and/or undertaking higher qualifications, poor or no access to tertiary training facilities (especially in regional and remote areas), financial barriers, an inflexible structure or format of ECD courses, lack of opportunities for work placement during and following the completion of studies. In some cases there may also be cultural barriers in terms of the cultural competency of training providers and in terms of the structure of adult learning curriculum and learning environments.

Targeted scholarship programs (such as the Enhanced Teacher Training Program – ETP) provide important support for students to further develop their capacity to understand the issues facing Aboriginal communities and to support their engagement with the early childhood development needs of the communities.

NSW also recognises that a culturally competent workforce is essential in responding effectively to the early childhood and education needs of children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and that these children may require early intervention, family support and specialist early childhood services. This includes the adoption of a child-centred approach, with workers who are responsive to individual characteristics, including culture and language.

Increased recruitment of bilingual workers with cultural knowledge is required in order to develop a diverse and competent workforce. Staff with linguistic and cultural skills are particularly effective in working with new and emerging communities, where needs are frequently not identified early, non-English language resources are very limited and cultural factors may be a barrier to engagement (NSW Government White Paper: *Cultural Harmony: The Next Decade* 2002-12).

6. NSW Strategies Supporting Improvements to the ECD Sector

Building workforce capacity

Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce

NSW is developing an Early Childhood Teacher Costs Contribution Scheme under the *Bilateral Agreement on Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education* between the NSW and Australian Governments. The scheme aims to increase the number of university-qualified teachers, including those with four-year qualifications. The Scheme is intended to offset the costs for the employment and professional development of early childhood teachers from 2011/12

The NSW Department of Education and Training and the Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Body, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, are also developing a plan to help workers in the children's services sector gain the appropriate Certificate III and Diploma level qualifications to meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework. It is estimated that 5,800 workers in children's services in NSW will need to be upskilled.

To meet this workforce requirement, a four pronged action plan has been developed.

- Recognition of skills already gained on the job;
- Subsidised training to undertake the Certificate III and Diploma of Children's Services;
- Professional development for registered training organisations (RTOs) on how to deliver recognition services using industry standard tools and guidelines;
- A focus on language, literacy and numeracy skills in training to be provided.

Implementation of the action plan began in January 2011 and will continue until December 2013

https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs_services/not_funded/childrens_services/index.html

Implementation of these strategies, as well as any additional strategies developed by COAG under the proposed Early Years Workforce Strategy, should be informed by the analysis of the National ECEC Workforce Census.

Child Health Workforce

Pathways from Vocational Education and Training nursing education, through to registered nursing, and then specialisation, do exist in NSW, and there is a range of scholarship programs such as postgraduate and rural undergraduate scholarships and clinical placement grants to support people undertaking these programs.

The early childhood nursing workforce, in line with the broader nursing workforce, is ageing and there are potential challenges regarding future supply. A direct entry undergraduate midwifery program is now available and could be determined as a pre-requisite for entry into child and family health programs in the same way as a nursing qualification does now. Further work on the interface between professional early childhood nurses and other workers is needed.

Working in partnership with NGOs

A key focus for the NSW Government, in delivering on the commitments under the current ECD reform agenda, is strengthening partnerships with NGOs. The NSW Government has anticipated the increasing pressures on the delivery of services by the NGO sector in the light of factors such as an ageing population, shortage of skills and labour, and difficulties in attracting and retaining staff. Through a range of capacity building strategies, the Government is assisting NGO service providers to respond to these pressures.

To ensure effective implementation of the National Quality Framework, consultation with NSW stakeholders occurs through the NSW National Quality Framework Reference Group, with 22 leading industry stakeholders representing all relevant sectors of the NSW children's services industry, including service providers, peak groups, unions and other major sectoral interests.

The Reference Group is providing industry knowledge and expertise on major issues relating to the implementation of the National Quality Framework in NSW and advice on sector consultation and communications that will be required to promote and support the implementation of the National Quality Framework in NSW. The Reference Group is also providing input on amendments to NSW children's services legislation occurring as part of the transition to the National Quality Framework.

The NSW Government is also investing substantial resources in developing the capacity and productivity of the NGO sector to ensure that they are well placed and operate sustainable services for children and families in need. This investment includes strategies that are designed to improve the capacity of the non-government sector in NSW and improve the administrative and service delivery efficiency of programs where NGOs are a key contributor, often including specific strategies to reduce red tape for providers.

Service Innovation – Integrated Service Provision

Integrated services provide children and their families with streamlined access to a range of services focusing on ensuring all children achieve positive outcomes. The current shift towards establishing integrated services is based on the knowledge that children's care, education, and healthy development are interdependent and should be increasingly blended (*Integrated Service Development, A Framework for Children and Family Services*, Discussion Paper (WA Dept for Communities, 2009); Improving developmental outcomes for children through effective integrated early years services (Lord, P et al 2008). Integrated service delivery usually has a universal service as a base, a mix of other targeted services designed to meet local needs, and the capacity to refer to specialist services

Better integrated ECD services offer the potential to address workforce retention issues across the sector as well as providing strong benefits to children and families.

The Department of Human Services has a specific focus on investment in prevention and early intervention strategies, including:

- Better targeting resources to evidence based programs such as quality childcare and parenting programs which strengthen families, children and young people
- Intervening at the first stages of problems emerging in families and individuals (targeted early intervention), and
- Broader prevention activity, such as investment in breaking down concentrations of public housing associated with disadvantage, and funding programs which strengthen communities and reduce social isolation.

DHS is specifically focused on providing better integrated services to vulnerable children, and their families and communities. DHS is implementing a range of initiatives to improve integrated service delivery to clients, which will benefit children, their families and communities, including:

- providing better responses to children and families with multiple and complex needs
- enhanced information sharing and referral networks to ensure clients get the services and support they need
- better integrating regional service delivery arrangements across the state, including through establishment of "one stop shops" for DHS services in rural and remote areas
- improved community planning to deliver a single-DHS service plan for a given geographical location – "one place, one plan"

The current DHS reform program presents real opportunities to provide better integrated services for vulnerable children, bringing together resources for early intervention and community strengthening from within the department (across community services, housing and homelessness, and disability services), as well as enabling better coordinated approaches with other government departments and stronger partnerships with the non-government sector.

APPENDIX 2 provides case examples of NSW led innovation in the provision of integrated ECD services.

7. Recommendations

To drive the effective implementation of nationally agreed early childhood reforms, significant effort is required to support and build capacity across the ECD workforce. Coordinated action across Commonwealth and State Governments and the NGO sector is required to progress ECD workforce priorities.

Given that the development of the ECD workforce is a national issue, NSW strongly supports further consideration of the following issues being driven at a national level:

- Undertaking an analysis of the results of the National ECEC Workforce Census with a specific focus on identifying supply and demand gaps at a jurisdictional level.
- Developing national recruitment and retention strategies to support capacity building strategies for the workforce.
- Undertaking workforce capacity building strategies in partnership with providers to develop staff qualifications and improve consistency in service provision.
- Enhancing professional development strategies for the ECD workforce, including the mapping of career pathways through improved induction, mentoring and coaching opportunities.
- Investing in initiatives that provide workforce incentives and offset the costs of employing early childhood teachers.
- Scoping conversion courses for early childhood professionals who currently have no formal qualifications.
- Supporting service integration initiatives that drive best practice and enhance staff satisfaction.
- Promoting programs to increase the number of Aboriginal people employed in the ECD sector.

Overview of the NSW Early Childhood Development Sector Funded and/or Provided by the NSW Government

Early Childhood Education and Care Services

The children's services sector in NSW is varied, with a large range of service types and providers. Non-Government organisations (NGOs) and private operators are the main suppliers and the NSW Government, through the Department of Human Services, funds, regulates and licenses providers to supply these services. The NSW Department of Education and Training also provides preschools and early intervention classes.

The following services are regulated and must be licensed under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and the *Children's Services Regulation 2004*:

- **Centre-based services** — A children's service provided at fixed premises. Centre-based services comprise services such as long day care (LDC), preschool and occasional care.
 - *Long Day Care* services involve the provision of full or part day care for children aged 0 to 6 years at a centre on a regular basis. Usually, care is provided in a building, or part of a building, that has been specifically developed for the service, with children grouped together according to age.
 - *Preschool* is a planned sessional educational program, generally for children in the year prior to the commencement of schooling. Preschool usually entails play-based educational programs designed and delivered by a degree-qualified early childhood teacher. Preschool programs are located at government and non-government schools, LDC centres or local community venues.
 - *Occasional care* relates to the provision of care for children aged 0 to 6 years who attend the centre on an hourly or sessional basis, for short periods of time at irregular intervals. Typically parents who need occasional care for their child as distinct from regular professional care, use this form of service.
- **Mobile services** — A children's service that visits specific premises, areas or places at specific times to provide flexible and responsive care and education services to children in isolated circumstances. Isolation may be geographic, social, cultural and/or economic.
- **Family day care** — A children's service where an agency registers self-employed carers to provide flexible care in their own homes. This flexibility is reflected in FDC carers' ability to provide care for whole or part of a day regularly or on an irregular basis.
- **Home-based Care** — Individual carers are licensed directly to provide a children's service from their homes. Home-based care also allows for flexibility between regular and irregular care.

Other major types of children's services in NSW, which are not covered by the *Children's Services Regulation 2004*, include:

- **Outside school hours care (OSHC)**: OSHC means a service that provides care outside school hours on school days, or at any time during school vacations, to children who are enrolled in school. OSHC services are usually provided from primary school premises such as the school hall and/or playground. Services may also be located in early childhood education and care centres or community facilities located near the primary school. OSHC services are required to be registered with DHS Community services, but are not otherwise regulated in NSW at this time. (*The Allen Consulting Group, 2010: p 6-7*).

In NSW there are around 3,500 licensed children's services providing care each day for over 154,000 children (Department of Human Services (DHS) Annual Report 2009/10). These services

are operated by a mix of commercial, not-for-profit, and government providers. **Table 1** below provides a break-down of NSW licensed children's services by service type:

Table 1: NSW Licensed Children's Services 2005/06 – 2009/10

Licensed children's services

Services	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08		2008/09		2009/10	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Family day care	108	3.3	108	3.2	103	3.0	99	2.9	100	2.9
Home-based services	136	4.2	131	3.9	116	3.4	90	2.6	87	2.5
Mobile services	12	0.4	12	0.4	12	0.4	14	0.4	27	0.8
Centre-based services	1,695	52.4	1,818	54.4	1,909	55.8	1,964	57.1	1,983	57.4
Funded centre-based services	1,239	38.3	1,226	36.7	1,210	35.4	1,191	34.6	1,163	33.7
Funded mobile services	46	1.4	49	1.4	48	1.4	46	1.3	37	1.1
School-based services					21	0.6	36	1.0	55	1.6
Total	3,236	100	3,344	100	3,419	100	3,440	100	3,452	100
Estimated total licensed capacity (places per day)	138,648		146,120		150,776		154,351		135,238	

Note: The NSW Government Licensing System introduced in 2009/10 does not capture information about the capacity of each family day care scheme. This is because the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004 does not require this information as part of a scheme's approval, or on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the capacity of family day care schemes has been excluded from the estimated total 'licensed' capacity. However, figures from previous years indicate that there are approximately 3,700 family day carers registered with family day care schemes across NSW, and each carer can offer care for up to seven children, giving an estimated total of up to 25,900 places per day. As such, data for 2009/10 is not directly comparable to previous years.

(Source: *DHS Annual Report 2009/10: p 117*)

In 2010/11 the Community Services Children's Services Program budget is \$176.6 million, increasing the NSW Government's investment in children's services by a further \$12 million above the 2009/10 budget commitment. The majority of this funding is allocated to some 760 community preschools. **Table 2** below provides a breakdown of NSW funded children's services by service type:

Table 2: NSW Funded Children's Services 2005/06 – 2009/10

Funded children's services

Services	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08		2008/09		2009/10	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Centre-based services	1,239	75.5	1,226	75.7	1,210	75.2	1,191	75.2	1,163	75.9
Mobile services*	66	4.0	67	4.1	69	4.3	67	4.2	37	2.4
Vacation care**	258	15.7	249	15.4	246	15.3	242	15.3	244	15.9
Early childhood services**	78	4.8	77	4.8	84	5.2	83	5.2	88	5.7
Total***	1,641	100	1,619	100	1,609	100	1,583	100	1,532	100
Estimated total licensed/funded capacity (places per day)	46,132		46,008		45,957		45,477		45,342	

Note: Counting rules were revised in 2005/06 to eliminate potential double counting of services.

* Mobile services include licensed mobile preschools and funded-only mobile services. Funded-only mobile services are not recorded on the system as having a licensed capacity.

** These services are not recorded on the system as having a licensed capacity.

*** Information relates to children aged 0–5 attending funded licensed services during one week in August each year.

(Source: *DHS Annual Report 2009/10: p 117*)

The NSW Department of Education and Training has 100 preschools and 47 early intervention classes across NSW. This constitutes only a small component of the total provision of early childhood services in NSW. Departmental preschools are licensed and give priority of access to the most disadvantaged families and children in the local community (NSW Department of Education and Training 2010 <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/enrolment/preschool.php>)

NSW Health Child Health Services

The NSW health system and health workers play a key role in assisting children and families to achieve health and wellbeing. The NSW Department of Health (NSW Health) provides a range of health care services to children and their families. Health services specifically provided for children and their families include:

- Early childhood health services
- Family care centres
- Residential family care centres
- Parent help telephone lines
- Child and family teams in community health services
- Child protection services
- Child and adolescent mental health services
- Children's wards in general hospitals, and
- Specialist children's hospitals.

General practitioners, as major providers of care within the primary health care system, are key partners in the provision of health services for children and their families. To maximise the opportunities to improve the health of children, the NSW Health Department maintains strong partnerships with other relevant government departments, local government, non-government organisations, health professionals and the families of children (<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/mch>).

Early Childhood Health Centres, operated by NSW Health, provide valuable free services for children and families, including:

- an initial health check before a child is 6 weeks old in their home or the clinic
- courses in parenting
- details on childhood immunisation clinics
- details on specialist services, and
- new parent groups

Early Childhood Health Centres are staffed by health professionals including registered nurses who specialise in Child and Family Health.

Department of Human Services Family Support Services

The NSW Government funds NGOs and provides a wide range of prevention and early intervention services to increase participation in quality early childhood education to enable each child in NSW to have the best possible start to life. Following are some key examples of these services:

- Early intervention services through the Brighter Futures Program are provided to families with children under nine years of age who are experiencing a range of vulnerabilities, including domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, child behaviour problems and/or lack of parenting skills. Priority is given to families with children under three years of age and work has begun to develop a service model for vulnerable nine to 15 year olds. In 2009/10, Brighter Futures provided more than \$47.6 million in funding to 14 lead agencies to provide case management, structured home visiting, group parenting programs and quality children's services to client families.

At 30 June 2010, 3,580 families were either engaged in or participating in Brighter Futures across NSW. During the year, 27 projects and services were funded to deliver case management, home visiting, parenting programs and quality children's services to participating families. Brighter Futures includes provision for:

- 2,686 families to receive case management from lead agencies across NSW (including 693 places for Indigenous families and 371 for CALD families)
- 1,254 children to receive two days per week in quality children's services, and
- 2,184 group parenting program places for participating families (*DHS Annual Report 2009/10*: p 120).
- Families NSW is a state-wide prevention and early intervention strategy aimed at improving outcomes for children aged 0-8 and their families. In addition to service models such as supported playgroups and family workers, Families NSW includes other Government initiatives such as universal eye testing for preschool aged children, the introduction of the Triple P Positive Parenting Program, the Parentline telephone hotline, and Safe Start – a program to help women at risk of postnatal depression and other mental health issues during pregnancy and after the birth of their baby (*DHS Annual Report 2009/10*: p. 114).
- Through *Stronger Together: a new direction for disability services in NSW 2006-2016*, the NSW Government is committed to providing a comprehensive range of services for children and young people with a disability. Between 2007 and 2011, the NSW Government will have invested over \$21.9 million to support children and young people with autism and their families through services, projects and activities specifically relating to autism. This includes the introduction in 2011 of the Autism Early Years Demonstration Service, providing 24 child care places for children with autism, and outreach support for up to 50 children with autism in child care settings in Western Sydney. The investment in the Autism Early Years Demonstration Service will be \$3.2 million in the first year, totalling \$6.8 million in the initial four years. The investment in autism-specific services builds on and complements the NSW Government's \$41.5 million investment in support and services for all children and young people with a disability including those with autism (DHS-ADHC 2010/11 Grants Budget Build).

The NSW Government has recently announced the second phase of this 10-year plan for disability service in NSW, *Stronger Together. A new direction for disability services in NSW 2006-16. The Second Phase*, covering the period 2011 to 2016. New commitments under the Plan will increase the number of Non-government organisation (NGO) funded early childhood development staff to provide services an additional 3,700 Early Intervention places for children and young people at a cost of \$77.6 million over five years. Early Start diagnosis support workers will provide 3,600 places at a cost of \$10.6 million. There are also 1,000 flexible funding packages to assist children with autism at a cost of \$21.1 million over five years (*Stronger Together, A new direction for disability services in NSW 2006-16 - The Second Phase*).

NSW Service Innovation – Integrated Service Provision

Aboriginal Child and Family Centres

Nine Aboriginal Child and Family Centres are currently being established across NSW under the COAG *National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development*.

Local communities in each Centre location, with the support of DHS staff, have begun workforce development initiatives to foster and develop the capacity of the local Aboriginal community in each location to provide suitably qualified staff to work in the Centres.

While each community is approaching this differently, a number of key partner agencies have been engaged within local communities to facilitate this work. Partner agencies include local councils, TAFE, local universities, local Aboriginal Land Councils, local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employment agencies, and local childcare and early learning services.

In all locations, these agencies are cooperating to provide opportunities and support for local Aboriginal people to undertake education and training in ECD. While these efforts are in their early stages, the local communities involved are confident that in the longer term they will be able to meet the staffing needs of the Aboriginal Child and Family Centres, as well as other ECD services in the area, by supporting Aboriginal people through the process of obtaining the appropriate qualifications and finding employment within their local area.

(Source: Department of Human Services - 2010)

The Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy

The NSW Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy (AMIHS) provides antenatal and early postnatal support for Aboriginal women through community midwives and Aboriginal health education officers. The Strategy also helps to connect women to their local community and local services during this important time, helping to reduce preterm births and increase birth weights for Aboriginal infants. The Strategy operated on a trial basis in seven locations across NSW from 2000.

In April 2007, the then Department of Community Services and NSW Health entered into a partnership arrangement to jointly fund the expansion of AMIHS services, connecting them with the Community Services Brighter Futures Early Intervention Program and thereby linking Aboriginal children and families more effectively with appropriate prevention and early intervention services. The total cost is \$8.8 million, with each agency contributing \$4.4 million over 2 years.

The Strategy partnership arrangements give Aboriginal maternal and infant health services preferred referrer status to the Brighter Futures Early Intervention Program. In practice, this allows those services to refer families direct to Brighter Futures via the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy – Brighter Futures pathway. Families referred through this pathway (if they are determined as eligible) are given priority of access into the Brighter Futures program.

The state-wide implementation of the Strategy will also help to connect families needing extra support to the Community Services Brighter Futures program, providing help from the very start of children's lives.

(Source: NSW Health and Department of Human Services - 2010)

Safe Start

The NSW whole-of-government *Families NSW* initiative is an overarching strategy to enhance the health and wellbeing of children up to 8 years and their families. One way it does this is by improving the way agencies work together, so that parents get the services, support and information they need.

Under Families NSW, Safe Start involves NSW Health as a key partner with other human service agencies in developing prevention and early intervention services that assist parents and communities to sustain children's health and wellbeing in the long term. The vision is for a comprehensive and integrated health response for families. This response encompasses all stages of pregnancy and early childhood development and links hospital, community and specialist health services. The aim is to assist families in the transition to parenthood, build on their strengths, and ameliorate any identified risks that can contribute to the development of problems in infants and later on in life. The initiatives are an important contribution to the provision of services that enhance the health of parents and their infants, help to protect against child abuse and neglect, and enhance the wellbeing of the whole community.

Safe Start also includes developing a supported and skilled workforce with enhanced knowledge and skills of health and related workers to deliver psychosocial assessment and depression screening; and in the provision of early mental health interventions for mothers, infants and their families. In order to achieve this, sustainable SAFE START training and education strategy is being embedded relevant service sectors throughout the state. Other workforce capacity building actions include working with universities, tertiary education facilities and professional associations to incorporate training specific to:

- perinatal and infant mental health;
- psychosocial assessment and depression;
- screening during pregnancy and the postnatal period; and
- social and emotional development.

(Source: NSW Health 2010)

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