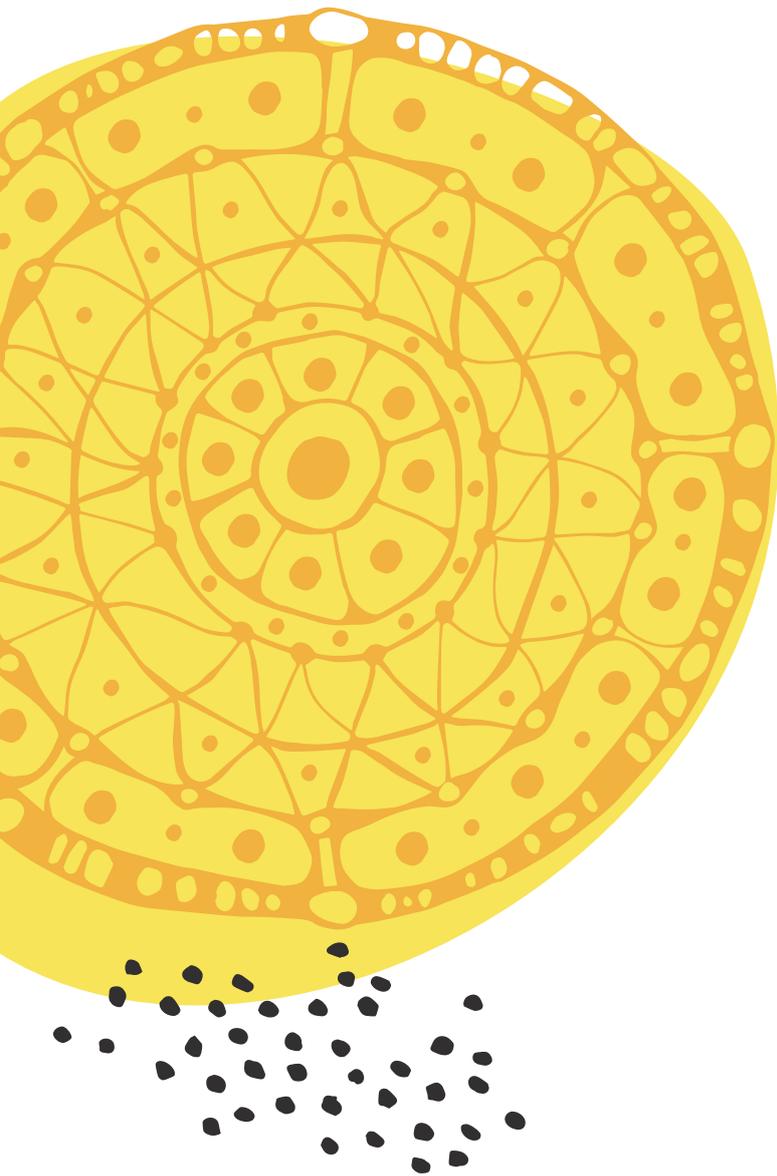


GETTING TO KNOW THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK TOOL FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS





This resource provides information for committee members about the key guiding framework for education and care services – the National Quality Framework (NQF). It introduces the different parts of the NQF and provides ideas about how you may incorporate it into your education and care service.

It is part of a governance induction kit for committee members of New South Wales (NSW) education and care services. Other resources in the kit that may be useful are:

- (a) Your Responsibilities as a Committee Member;
- (b) Who's Who at our Service;
- (c) Checklist of Obligations under the National Quality Framework; and
- (d) Introduction to Committee Roles and Responsibilities in an Education and Care Service, video clip.

The NQF was introduced in 2012 to improve education and care services (long day care, preschool, family day care and outside school hours care). The framework focuses on the safety, health and wellbeing of children at education and care services, as well as improving their educational and developmental outcomes.

It is guided by a series of principles, including valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This means that recognition and respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures must apply to all parts of the NQF.

The guiding principles of the NQF

- Rights and best interests of the child are paramount;
- Children are successful, competent and capable learners;
- Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework;
- Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued;
- The role of families and communities is respected and supported; and
- Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.

WHY IS THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK IMPORTANT?

We all want the best for our children. We want to see them grow up as strong and healthy as they can be. The first years of their lives are really important to set them on this path. Their brains are developing so quickly! They are also picking up many social skills and values that will stay with them for life.

The early years are important for children to:

- build a strong cultural identity;
- build resilience;
- believe in themselves;
- grow up healthy and strong; and
- be ready to continue learning when they reach Primary School.

While families are children's first teachers, quality education and care services also play a key role. High quality education and care in these first years leads to better health, education and employment outcomes throughout children's lives.

The NQF helps to ensure that all education and care services are good quality and will set children up to achieve their potential.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK?

The NQF aims to improve the quality of education and care services by setting enforceable minimum standards and requiring quality assessment and rating of services against the National Quality Standard (NQS).

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations outlines the legal obligations of approved providers in managing their services, and sets out the role of the bodies that oversee and support service quality.

The National Law sets a national standard for children's education and care across Australia. The National Regulations provide more detail on the operational requirements for a service. This includes:

- qualifications of educators (regulation 126, section 169);
- adequate supervision of children (section 165);
- ensuring the service and its furniture and equipment are safe, clean and in working order (regulation 103);
- ensuring children have access to water and nutritious food (regulations 78-79, 168(2)(i));
- protection of children from things likely to hurt them and having a safe environment (section 167, regulations 82, 83, 97, 103);
- good health and hygiene practices regarding food (regulation 77); and
- ensuring certain information, such as a service's approval, rating and hours of operation, is displayed at the centre (regulation 173, section 172).



NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

The NQS is part of the National Regulations. It sets out what quality means for education and care services through seven quality areas. These cover the important elements of an education and care service.

QA1 Educational program and practice
– *How learning happens*

QA2 Children's health and safety
– *Supporting children to grow up strong*

QA3 Physical environment
– *Creating a deadly space*

QA4 Staffing arrangements
– *Deadly staff and educators*

QA5 Relationships with children
– *Nurturing relationships*

QA6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
– *Working with families and communities*

QA7 Governance and leadership
– *Good decision-making processes*

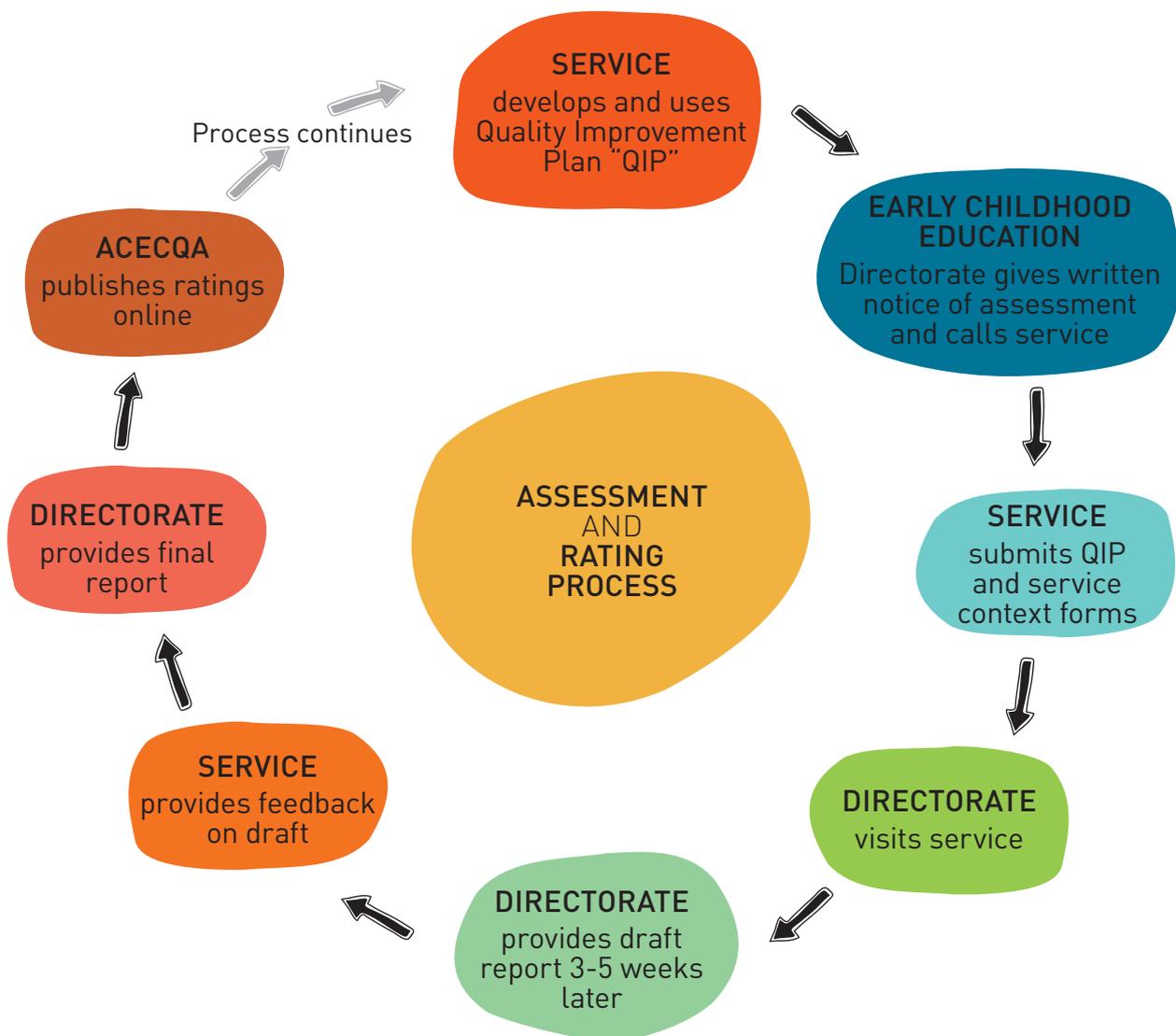


ASSESSMENT AND RATING OF SERVICE QUALITY

Services are assessed on these seven quality areas by the NSW Regulatory Authority, which is the Early Childhood Education within the NSW Department of Education. The assessment process aims to promote ongoing improvement of quality in services and to make information on quality available to help families make informed decisions on which service best meets their needs.

The process involves an assessment by the service of its own quality, strengths and areas for improvement, captured in a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). QIPs must be updated at least once a year and be available on request by the Regulatory Authority or families of a child enrolled or looking to enrol at the service. QIPs should be used regularly by all staff and educators involved with the service.

The process for assessment is as follows:



Services are given a rating for each of the seven quality areas, summarised by an overall rating.

THE POSSIBLE SERVICE RATINGS ARE

EXCELLENT	Service promotes exceptional education and care, demonstrates sector leadership and is committed to continually improving. Awarded through application to the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).
EXCEEDING NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	Service goes beyond NQS requirements in at least four of the seven areas, with at least two of these being Quality Areas 1, 5, 6, or 7.
MEETING NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	Service provides quality education and care in all seven quality areas.
WORKING TOWARDS NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	Service provides a safe program, but there are one or more areas identified for improvement. This means that the service does not meet one or more elements or relevant regulations for the standard.
SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED	Service does not meet one of the seven quality areas or a section of the legislation in a way that the regulatory authority considers there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children. The regulatory authority will take immediate action.

You can see how your service is rated on the [ACECQA](#) website and on the [Starting Blocks](#) website. The quality ratings must also be displayed at the service. You can also ask to see your service's QIP, which identifies areas for improvement and includes a statement of philosophy for the service.

THE EARLY YEARS FRAMEWORK

Under the National Law and Regulations, services must base their educational program on the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). This should focus on addressing the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, while taking into account individual differences.

The EYLF describes principles and practices, as well as the outcomes that children should be achieving, to help educators develop quality programs. SNAICC has developed a series of fact sheets which help bring these to life. These are found on the Early Childhood Resource Hub [here](#).

It promotes five learning outcomes for children:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity;
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world;
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing;
4. Children are confident and involved learners; and
5. Children are effective communicators.

It recognises that children are all very different and learn in different ways. It supports educators and staff to respond to each child's individual needs and support their development and wellbeing through play-based learning activities. It supports educators to see children as capable and independent.

"The framework is culturally appropriate for our children – "Being Belonging and Becoming" really captures it. It is about time that they get it and understand how to include Aboriginal children and families. We build the connection between home life, the family and the preschool. Supporting the connections helps children to develop a sense of belonging and self-worth. They know that the educators have a real interest in their world."

Frayne Barker, Director, Gainmara-Birrilee Preschool, Brewarrina



HOW THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK CONNECTS TO YOUR SERVICE PRACTICE



