



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The National Early Childhood Reform Agenda

Welcome and Overview

Setting the context

The journey

Seeking your contributions



Why does Australia need a National Early Childhood Reform Agenda? What's the evidence?

- Australia is seventh down the list of OECD countries in terms of quality early childhood outcomes
- Australia is at the bottom of the ladder of OCED countries in investment in early childhood education
- In some disadvantaged communities children's lives have actually worsened - some say 20% of children in Australia



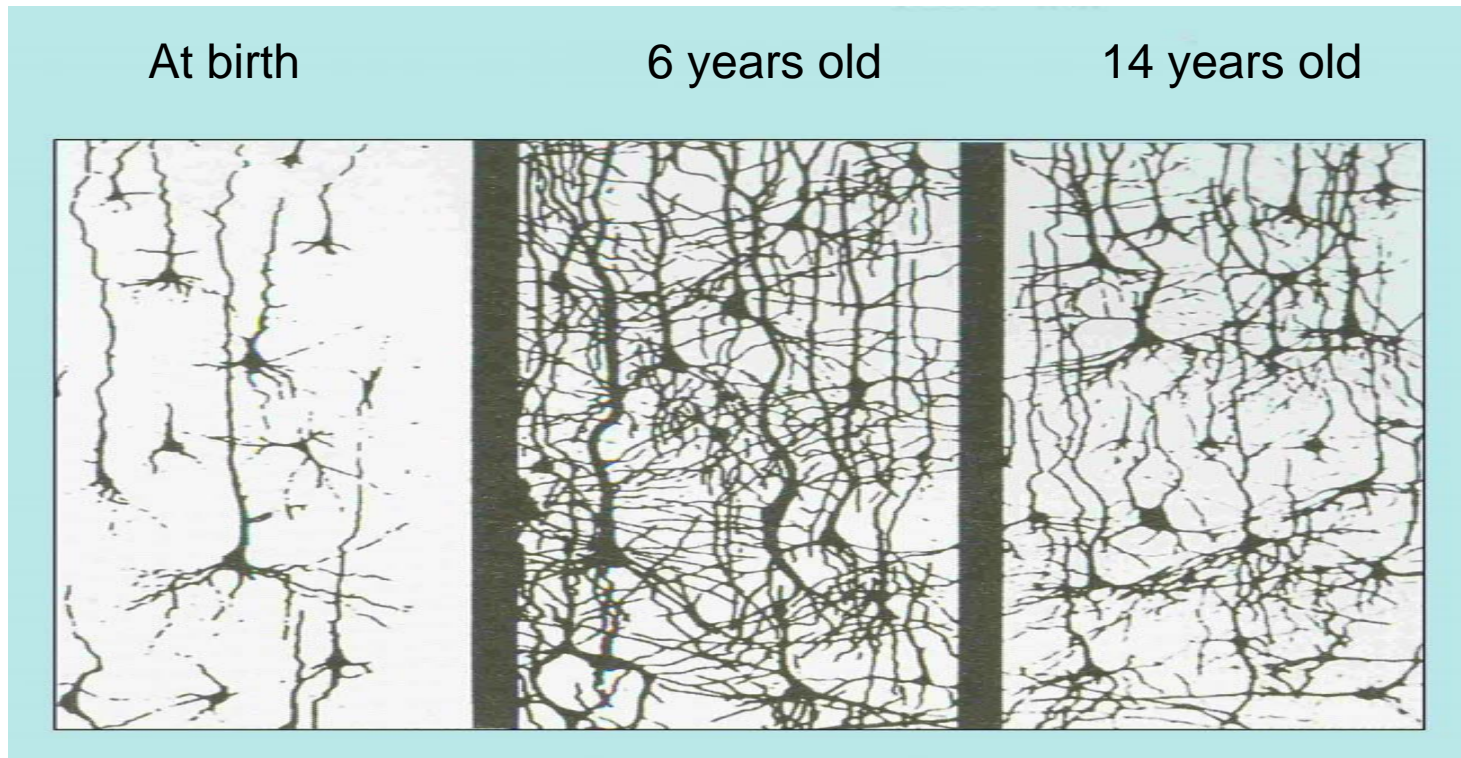
What's the evidence?

Brain research shows the importance of early childhood learning in improving outcomes for children (Stanley F., Shonkoff J.,)

- Birth to age five children develop foundational capabilities
- Brain cell growth and wiring connections drive remarkable linguistic and cognitive gains and development of emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities
- The brain is at its most malleable time of growth
- Early learning in life means later educational experiences have greater impact
- Early Intervention and Prevention is never too early



The critical message from research: 'early years provide the foundations'



The early childhood period is critical. Studies of children's brains at different stages of development show the extensive neuron connections that occur in the first six years of life. (Fraser Mustard, 2006).



The Evidence - Continued:

- We have a fragmented service system which varies in terms of quality, fees and availability depending on where you live
- Around 20% of all four year olds nationally do not participate in early childhood education (higher in Qld) and more than half of all Indigenous four year olds miss out
- Nationally only seven percent of early childhood workers in long day care centres hold a bachelor degree or higher qualification and 39% of the workforce have no formal qualifications



What is the National Reform Agenda?

The reform agenda recognises that:

- ✓ The Child is the centre of policy and service deliver
- ✓ New standards are being considered to integrate education and care in a variety of early childhood settings
- ✓ Nationally consistent and quality early childhood education and care for all children regardless of where they live
- ✓ An integrated service system including health and parent support
- ✓ Families, workers, services, communities and governments engaged together to bring about better outcomes for all children regardless of their life circumstance



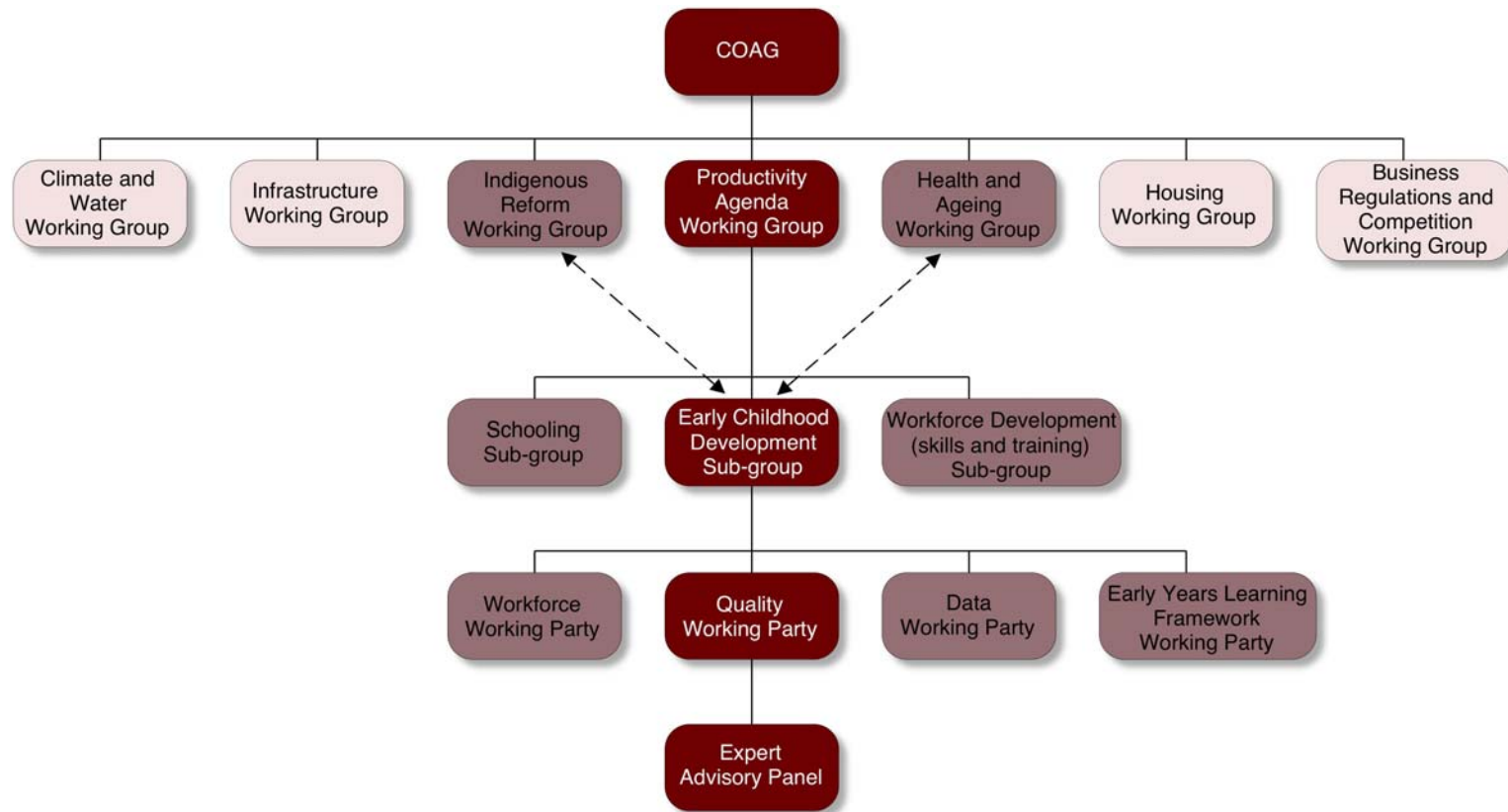
The Vision

Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

That children are born healthy and have access to the support, education and care throughout early childhood that equips them for life and learning, delivered in a way that actively engages parents, and meets the workforce participation needs of parents



Progressing the Reform



The Journey

August to Dec 2008

- First round of broad consultations across Australia
- NP Early Childhood Education and Indigenous Early Childhood Development
- AEDI rolled out Nationally across all schools

July 2009

- Launch of National Early Childhood Development Strategy
- Launch of Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- Regulatory Impact Statement on Quality Reform released for consultation

July 2010 to 2011

- National system for regulation of quality in place

End of 2013

- Universal Access with staff qualifications requirements in place

End of 2015

- Fully operational

End of 2020

- **Australia is highest OECD country in terms of early childhood outcomes**



Reform Initiatives

- **Indigenous National Partnership on Early Childhood Development**
- **Early Childhood Education National Partnership including Universal Access for all children 3 ½ to 4 ½ years**
- **National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care including Early years Learning Framework**
- **260 Early Learning and Care Centres including Autism Centres**
- **National Family Support program**
- **Early Years Workforce Strategy**
- **Australian Early Development Index**
- **Home Interaction Program (HIPPY)**
- **Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for young Australians**



National Partnerships

COAG Signs off on two significant National Partnerships

October 2008 –

The Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership

November 2008 –

The Early Childhood Education National Partnership
(universal access to education for all four year old children)

See www.coag.gov.au for details



Australia's first National Early Childhood Strategy

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

Released by COAG on 2 July 2009

A COAG strategy to ensure that by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and the nation.



National Early Childhood Development Strategy

A shared vision for the development of young children by 2020 and six reform priorities and progress measures by 2010

- Strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services
- Support for vulnerable children
- Engage parents and the community in understanding the importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD)
- Improve early childhood infrastructure
- Strengthen the workforce across ECD and family support services
- Build better information and a solid evidence base



National Quality Reform

- **National Quality Agenda Consultations** – August & September 2008 and July 2009
- Joint work between States, Territories and the Commonwealth, and the NCAC
- Targeted development of standards and ratings framework and
- Release of the Regulatory Impact Statement in July 2009
- Further development work based on feedback provided



A National Quality Standard

Proposed Seven Quality Areas

- Educational program and practice
- Children's wellbeing, health and safety
- Physical environment
- Staffing arrangements
- Relationships– interactions within the service
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Leadership and service management



The Development of the Early Years Learning Framework – The EYLF

- Consultations August and November 2008,
- A consortium led by Charles Sturt University to develop the framework via consultations
- Online forum and trial sites to April 2009
- Launch of EYLF in July 2009 and familiarisation period
- Reopening online forum for feedback on draft Educator's guide September 2009
- Development of Implementation Plan and Support materials including Online Training Modules



Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives

- removing TAFE Fees on up to 8000 child care diplomas and advanced diplomas from 2009;
- creating additional university places for early childhood trained teachers, starting with 500 places in 2009 and rising to 1,500 places by 2011; and
- reducing half the HECS-HELP debts of early childhood teachers who work in regional and remote areas, Indigenous communities and areas of high disadvantage over five years



Early Years Learning Framework

- A first for Australia – a national learning framework for children 0-5 years of age
- The Early Years Learning Framework is a component of the National Quality Standard – the first of the seven proposed quality areas
- The Early Years Learning Framework will have an impact on professional development for educators, and supporting resources however it will not result in early childhood centres becoming schools.
- The framework will be an important document for parents, community and government in understanding and evaluating early childhood services.



Implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework

- ☑ Familiarisation and what does it mean in a post apology Australia?
- ☑ Printed resources to Services for children 0-5 years
- ☑ Online forum for Draft Educators Guide and Online Training Module @ www.deewr.gov.au
- ☑ Inclusion and Professional Support Program
 - Professional Support Coordinators Queensland (PSCQ), the Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU) and the Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs)
- ☑ Qld State Government Office for Early childhood Education and Care



The Journey Now

Current commitments

As a first priority we need to continue to implement existing reform initiatives including

- Universal Access for all four year olds and
- Indigenous Children and Family centres

Immediate actions

Secondly, there are some areas where we can forge new work and make a difference

- Quality Reform/Early Years Learning Framework,

Further steps

Six reform priorities have been identified in the National Early Childhood Development Strategy for future consideration by COAG in 2010.



How can you contribute?

Now is the time to engage with government. Opportunities for participation in each wave of consultation are advertised widely at the appropriate times and further information is available on the websites –

www.coag.gov.au and www.deewr.gov.au and www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood

- Written submissions from interested individuals and organisations are welcomed. Email to ECECQuality@deewr.gov.au

- For more information please visit www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood or phone **1800 220 425**.



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

