

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2013-2014

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

Question 1

Noting the availability on the ACECQA website of a list of all education and care services registered in Australia. Please provide this list in spreadsheet form (the existing spreadsheet used to populate the web site would be adequate), ensuring that for each service the federal electorate, a contact name, contact phone number, street address, postal address, and email contact is provided whenever available. Please also provide this in an electronic format that can be interrogated e.g. an Excel spreadsheet.

Answer

ACECQA has provided an extract in Excel format (extracted on 16 May 2014, attached) of the National Register of all approved education and care services in Australia. The source database does not include federal electorate information. This register is updated weekly on the ACECQA website.

The National Registers and state and territory registers containing the latest data can be downloaded from the ACECQA website from the following page:
<http://www.cecqa.gov.au/national-registers>.

Question 2

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Answer

See response to Question 1 above.

Question 3

The Report on the National Quality Framework and Regulatory Burden released by ACECQA this year found that "Providers whose services have been quality rated are among the groups most supportive of the NQF (section 6.2)" and that "Significantly, these providers also perceive a much lower level of administrative burden (Figure 20)."

Question 3a

Does this result suggest that services that it is the services that are yet to be assessed and rated that have concerns about what the NQF will mean for them, but that once the changes have been made find that it's not as onerous as they anticipated?

Answer

ACECQA has advised that while the report found that services that have been quality rated are among the groups most supportive of the National Quality Framework and perceive a lower level of administrative burden, it did not extrapolate on likely changes to perceived regulatory burden on services yet to be rated.

Question 3b

The report also found that "a significant portion of burden was found to be driven by the transition to the NQF, suggesting that a decrease in administrative burden, perceived and experienced, can be expected at the next stage of the research." The report also found that the level of perceived burden has already declined between 2012 and 2013, and that the cost of compliance is reducing with improved familiarity with the Framework. Based on that finding, does ACECQA expect services' perceptions of regulatory burden will continue to decrease over time?

Answer

ACECQA advises that it is difficult to predict changes in perceived administrative burden as the NQF is being introduced progressively.

The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood has agreed that regulatory burden reporting should occur annually and focus on where perceptions have shifted, including in response to changes to reduce burden.

Question 4

In the report ACECQA made a number of recommendations, which were agreed to at the Standing Council on Education and Early Childhood at their meeting on 29 November 2013. Has ACECQA received any formal advice from the Department or the Minister's office regarding these recommendations, and how they will be progressed?

Answer

ACECQA advises that the recommendations and actions in the report were developed collaboratively with state and territory regulatory authorities and the Australian Government. Progress on the implementation of these recommendations is a collaborative effort and will be reported to SCSEEC.

Question 5

The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood met on 29 November 2013, and, according to the communique: "The Standing Council agreed that officials will develop strategies to streamline the assessment and rating process

to meet the 2015 timetable. Officials will report back in early 2014. All jurisdictions will work with ACECQA to progress this matter.” Has ACECQA received any advice around what these strategies are, or has the Department or the Standing Council sought additional advice or input from ACECQA around the formulation of these strategies?

Answer

ACECQA has advised that at the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood meeting of 11 April 2014, Ministers agreed to streamline the quality assessment and rating process. The actions were developed collaboratively with state and territory Australian Government officials and ACECQA.

The changes to streamline assessment and rating are being rolled out immediately and include:

- more flexible timeframes for assessment and rating
- new and updated resources to simplify the assessment and rating process for services and regulatory authorities
- new assessment and rating report template.

Question 6

Is ACECQA aware of any proposed changes to the regulatory processes and framework since the change of Government other than those identified in the recommendations in the report?

Answer

ACECQA has advised that in addition to changes to streamline the assessment and rating process, amendments to the National Regulations to support the implementation of the National Quality Framework were agreed to by all state and territory ministers and the Australian Government on 11 April 2014. These amendments come into effect on 1 June 2014 in all states and territories with the exception of Western Australia. Due to legislative arrangements in that state, Western Australia will develop separate amendments through a parallel process.

The amendments will streamline processes, reduce paperwork and provide greater flexibility. The amendments include:

- streamlining the supervisor certificate application process
- introducing a probationary period for new educators of up to three months before they need to meet the requirement to be actively working towards at least a certificate III level qualification (except in New South Wales and South Australia)
- extending the timeframe for a person who is actively working towards an early childhood teaching qualification to be counted towards early childhood teacher requirements
- a more practical approach to submission of Quality Improvement Plans for approved providers with a new service, who are now required to submit the Quality Improvement Plan to their regulatory authority on request, rather than within a mandatory three month period.

The amendments have now been published and are available from:
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/search/sessional>

Question 7

ACECQA's Snapshot Q4 2013, its fourth national report on children's education and care services assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard (NQS), was released on 6 February 2014 with data as at 31 December 2013. The report shows that 32 per cent of services nationally have now received a quality rating.

Question 7a

Is this in line with earlier forecasts?

Answer

ACECQA advises that the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (NP) did not set out a forecast for progress on quality rating for end December 2013. However, under the Multilateral Implementation Plan for the NP all jurisdictions committed to having all services quality rated by mid-2015.

Question 7b

Are there particular jurisdictions that have been slower in the rollout of assessments?

Answer

ACECQA advises that the March 2014 Snapshot (Q1, 2014) shows that 35 per cent of all education and care services had received a quality rating at 31 March 2014. Table 5 in the Snapshot shows that the smallest proportion of quality ratings completed are in Western Australia and South Australia (15 per cent and 19 per cent respectively), while the Northern Territory and New South Wales have completed the highest proportion (50 per cent and 42 per cent respectively).

Question 8

The report showed that 59 per cent of all rated services are rated as Meeting or Exceeding the National Quality Standard:

Question 8a

Does that indicate that most centres assessed have transitioned smoothly to the new regulatory framework and increased quality standard?

Answer

ACECQA advises that the assessment and rating process is one component of the National Quality Framework. The latest Snapshot (Q1, 2014) shows that at 31 March 2014 only 35 per cent of services (or 5085 services) have been assessed and rated. Of those rated:

- 39 per cent are Working Towards the National Quality Standard
- 35 per cent are Meeting the National Quality Standard

- 26 per cent are Exceeding the National Quality Standard.

Only 8 of the 5085 quality rated services were rated Significant Improvement Required. This suggests that the National Quality Standard is achievable while still posing a challenge for many providers.

Question 8b

Is there any feature such as the location, operator or cost that the centres exceeding in the NQS have in common?

Answer

According to ACECQA the latest Snapshot (Q1, 2014) shows data for approved services with a quality rating by quality rating level and a range of other characteristics; for example state/territory, service type, Quality Area, Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA), and Accessibility/ Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+).

Data from the latest ACECQA Snapshot (Q1, 2014) show that at 31 March 2014:

- the proportion of services rated Exceeding the National Quality Standard in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria is higher than the national average (see Tables 7 and 8)
- centre-based services and family day care services are equally likely to be rated Exceeding the National Quality Standard
- there is not a clear pattern emerging between socio-economic advantage and quality (see Tables 14 and 15)
- with only a small number of services in remote and very remote areas quality rated, it is not possible to make reliable comparisons about the spread of ratings between services in remote/very remote locations, major cities and inner and outer regional areas (see Tables 14 and 15).

Question 9

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Answer

See response to Question 1 above.

Question 10

The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood met on 29 November 2013 and according to the communique: "The Standing Council agreed that officials will develop strategies to streamline the assessment and rating process to meet the 2015 timetable. Officials will report back in early 2014. All jurisdictions

will work with ACECQA to progress this matter.” What are these strategies and what advice or input has the department or standing council sought from ACECQA around the formulation of these strategies?

Answer

See response to Question 5 above.

Question 11

The Standing Council’s communique also said that “SCSEEC endorsed some relatively simple changes to the Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations).” Can you outline what those changes agreed to were, and advise when they will be implemented?

Answer

See response to Question 6 above.

References

- [NQF Snapshot Q1 2014](#), ACECQA, May 2014
- ACECQA website - National Registers, extracted 16 May 2014
- [Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden](#), ACECQA, 2013