27 February 2020

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: ee.reps@aph.gov.au

ACECQA submission – *Education in Remote and Complex Environments*

Dear Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training's inquiry into education in remote and complex environments.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is the independent national authority established under the *Education and Care Services National Law* to guide the implementation and administration of the National Quality Framework (NQF).

The NQF is the national system for regulating education and care services, setting standards for safety and quality so that all children who attend long day care, preschool/kindergarten, outside school hours care and family day care are supported to have the best start in life. The NQF is jointly governed by the Australian Government and all state and territory governments as a means of driving continuous improvement in the quality of these services, and realising the efficiency benefits and cost effectiveness of a unified national system.

Of particular relevance to this inquiry, ACECQA collaborates with state and territory governments and the education and care sector to:

- monitor and evaluate the performance of the NQF
- improve sector practice by promoting research evidence relevant to high quality education and care delivery
- support policy reviews relevant to the education and care sector.

Please find attached ACECQA's responses to topic areas raised in the Terms of Reference (see **Attachment A**).

We strongly support an increased focus on school readiness in remote and complex environments and improved linkages between the early childhood education and care, school, and outside school hours care sectors.

We agree that our attached responses may be made publically available and attributable.

If you would like to discuss our responses to the discussion paper, or would like further information, please contact Michael Petrie, General Manager Strategy, Communications and Consistency, on 02 8240 4230.

Yours sincerely

Gabrielle Sinclair
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment A: ACECQA responses to Terms of Reference

> **A child's journey through early childhood, primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary education in remote communities, like the tri-border region of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory**

Impact of high quality early childhood education and care

As recognised in the recent Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, early childhood education and care is an integral part of the Australian education system and lays the foundations for children's later learning and development. It is also an area of significant government investment.[1]

There is a large body of research that shows high quality early childhood education and care leads to better health, employment and education outcomes later in life.[2,3] Brain architecture and function develops rapidly during early childhood, making it a vital time for establishing competencies which will support children's medium and long term outcomes.[4]

Attendance at high quality early childhood education and care services is shown to contribute to children's learning and development, including their cognitive, health, social and emotional development.[5] International research shows that attendance at higher quality early childhood education and care services is significantly related to higher standardised test scores, increased independence, and decreased anti-social behaviour in primary school.[6,7,8]

In particular, evidence indicates that children from disadvantaged backgrounds stand to gain the most from quality education and care,[9] which leads to improved developmental outcomes including learning skills and improved quality of life.[10]

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[1] Australian, state and territory governments invested $9.8 billion in early childhood education and care services in 2018-19, of which $7.9 billion was Australian Government expenditure. Source: Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2020) Report on Government Services 2020, Vol. B.

[2] Elliott, A. Australian Council for Educational Research (2006) Early Childhood Education, Pathways to quality and equity for all children, *Australian Education Review*, Volume 50. (Note A. Elliot is a former member of the ACECQA Board).

[3] Smith, A.B. (2014) School Completion/Academic Achievement - Outcomes of Early Childhood Education in Tremblay RE, Boivin M, Peters R de V, eds. Vitaro F, topic ed. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development* (online).

[4] Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (2010) Engaging families in the early childhood development story, p15–23.

[5] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2012) Starting Strong III: Early Childhood Education and Care.

[6] Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B. (2004) Technical Paper 12, The Final Report: Effective Pre-school Education.

[7] Reynolds, A., Temple, A., et al. (2011) Schoolbased early childhood education and age-28 well-being: Effects by timing, dosage, and subgroups. Science, 333, 360.

[8] Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (1983) As the twig is bent... lasting effects of preschool programs.

[9] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015) Literature review of the impact of early childhood education and care on learning and development: working paper.

[10] PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011) A practical vision for early childhood education and care.

Connecting early childhood education and care quality with educational outcomes

All NQF-approved early childhood education and outside school hours care services in Australia are assessed and rated against a National Quality Standard (NQS) and given a public quality rating[11] of their performance against seven quality areas that are important to outcomes for children.[12]

In 2016, Australian and state and territory governments commissioned the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to link NQS ratings data with two other datasets – Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 2015 and the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (NECECC) 2013 and 2014 – to form an enhanced dataset.

The ABS analysed the links between developmental vulnerabilities of children when they started full-time school, their experiences of approved education and care programs in the previous two years, and their teachers' perceptions of their home learning experiences.

The project found a moderate relationship between service quality as measured by performance against the NQS and lower developmental vulnerability in the language and cognitive domain. It also found that a greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in regional and remote areas were developmentally vulnerable on one or more AEDC domains than their non-Indigenous peers in those areas.

Although the analysis recognises several methodological limitations, it provides several valuable insights. It also lays the groundwork for further investigation of factors influencing developmental vulnerability, including the quality of education and care programs.

Further data linkage projects including *The First Five Years: What Makes a Difference?* are planned to to investigate the link between early education and care quality and later outcomes.

Importance of transitions

Transitions between educational settings are critical to successful educational outcomes. Researchers and policy makers are increasingly turning their attention to the transition to primary school and recognising the important role that it plays. Participation in high quality early childhood education and care can effectively prepare children for a lifetime of learning and development. However, the benefits of early learning can dissipate during the first years of school if the transitions between early childhood education and care and primary school are not well-managed, or if their school education is not of high quality.[13,14]

Children experiencing developmental vulnerability are particularly at risk of falling further behind during the transition process.[15] Strong partnerships between schools, early childhood education and care services and community organisations can assist children during times of transition and counteract the risk of vulnerable children falling behind.[16]

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[11] Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2018) Quality ratings.
[12] Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2018) National Quality Standard.
[13] Schlicher, A. (2017) Primed for primary school, blogpost, OECD Education and Skills Directorate.
[14] Fabian, H & Dunlop, A-W. (2006). Outcomes of good practice in transition process for children entering primary school.
[15] Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2015) Report on Education Transitions.
[16] Victorian Department of Education and Training (2017) Early Years Transitions – Support for children and families at risk of experiencing vulnerability: practice review report.

Key barriers to the education journey, including the effects of environmental factors such as drought on families and communities

As noted above, all NQF-approved early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services in Australia are assessed and rated against the NQS and given a public quality rating.

Education and care services in remote and very remote areas are less likely than other services to be rated Meeting NQS or above overall and for most quality standards.[17]

A literature review on rural and remote education found the primary driver of the difference in outcomes between metropolitan and regional students is difference in socioeconomic status. Other characteristics of rural and regional communities identified in the review (higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and smaller schools) were also correlated with lower levels of student attainment.[18]

Remote and very remote education and care services face a number of contextual challenges including attracting and retaining suitably experienced and qualified staff, and limited access to professional development and networking opportunities.

The role of culture and country in a child's learning

Connection to culture and country are central to children's identity, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Cultural competence is fundamental to children's sense of *being* and *belonging* and has been attributed to children's success in lifelong learning.[19]

There are several benefits associated with culturally safe education and care settings which include Aboriginal voices and perspectives and which provide continuity with knowledge systems in children's homes. These benefits include supporting children's learning, affirming their identity and encouraging participation by children and families where historically there has been distrust, fear and disengagement from educational institutions.[20]

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[17] Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2020) NQF Snapshot Q4 2019 - Online Snapshot.
[18] NSW Department of Education and Communities (2013) Rural and remote education: Literature review.
[19] Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2009) Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF), p16.
[20] Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews & Bronwyn Carlson (2016) The legacy of racism and Indigenous Australian identity within education, Race Ethnicity and Education, 19:4, 784-807.

Cultural competence within the approved learning frameworks and National Quality Standard

Cultural competence for educators is embedded within the national approved learning frameworks – the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and Framework for School Age Care (FSAC) – and the National Quality Standard (NQS).

The EYLF and FSAC define cultural competence as 'much more than awareness of cultural differences' but rather 'the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures'. Cultural competence encompasses:

- being aware of one's own world view
- developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures.[21,22]

Principles within the learning frameworks include fostering secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships, partnerships, high expectations and equity and respect for diversity. Issues of respecting and valuing diversity and culture are also embedded. The *Educators' Guide to the EYLF*[23] stresses that cultural competence needs to be applied on the individual, educator and systems level and the framework explicitly encourages educators to develop respectful and reciprocal relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within their local context.

Cultural competence is embedded within the entire NQS but the following two elements are particularly relevant:

- Element 1.1.2 (Child-centred): each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program
- Element 6.1.2 (Parent views are respected): expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.

Distinguishing features and evidence-based principles for achieving positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children[24] notes services that provide high quality and culturally appropriate education and care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children generally share the following distinguishing features:

- strong historical base
- community ownership and management
- partnerships with parents, families and communities
- overcome barriers to access
- build strength and self-esteem through a focus on identity, being, belong and becoming
- focus on wellbeing.[25]

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[21] Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2009) Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF), p16.

[22] Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2009) My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia, p16.

[23] Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2010) Educators Being, Belonging and Becoming: Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.

[24] SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (formerly the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care) is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

[25] SNAICC (2012) Learning from Good Practice: Implementing the Early Years Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

They have also identified evidence-based principles for achieving positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- applying innovative governance strategies that recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and governance
- fostering an empowering culture
- supporting identity and culture
- holistic and responsive service delivery.[26]

Community and family structures that support a child's education and their attendance at school

There is evidence that children from disadvantaged backgrounds (including children from lower socio-economic status backgrounds) are less likely to access education and care than other children.[27,28,29]

The most recent Report on Government Services found participation in *child care services*[30] by the following special needs groups was lower than their representation in the community: children from regional and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with disability. It also found lower participation in a *preschool program in the year before full time schooling* amongst: children from low-income families, children from non-English speaking backgrounds and children with disability.[31]

A range of barriers may hinder access, including cost, lack of transport, staffing issues, lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and a lower availability of high quality education and care in low income and disadvantaged areas.[32,33,34,35]

Furthermore, children from lower socio-economic status backgrounds who access education and care programs often attend for fewer hours than their more advantaged peers.[36,37]

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[26] SNAICC (2015) Good Practices in Early Childhood Education and Care Services.

[27] Baxter, J., & Hand, K. (2013). Access to early childhood education in Australia.

[28] Gilley, T., Tayler, C., Niklas, F., & Cloney, D. (2015). Too late and not enough for some children: Early childhood education and care (ECEC) program usage patterns in the years before school in Australia. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 9*(1), 9.

[29] Harrison, L. J., Ungerer, J., Smith, G. J., Zubrick, S. R., Wise, S., Press, F., & Waniganayake, M. (2010). Child care and early education in Australia - the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children.

[30] The report defines child care services as those providing centre based day care; family day care; outside school hours care and other care.

[31] Productivity Commission (2020) Report on Government Services 2020. Part B, Chapter 3: Early Childhood Education and Care.

[32] Bainbridge, J., Meyers, M. K., Tanaka, S., & Waldfogel, J. (2005). Who gets an early education? Family income and the enrolment of three-to five-year-olds from 1968 to 2000. *Social Science Quarterly, 86*(3), 724-745.

[33] Liu, M., & Anderson, S. G. (2012). Neighbourhood effects on working mothers' child care arrangements. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(4), 740-747.

[34] Cloney, D., Cleveland, G., Hattie, J., & Tayler, C. (2016). Variations in the availability and quality of early childhood education and care by socioeconomic status of neighbourhoods. *Early Education and Development, 27*(3), 384-401.

[35] SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2012) Learning from Good Practice: Implementing the Early Years Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

[36] Gilley, T., Tayler, C., Niklas, F., & Cloney, D. (2015). Too late and not enough for some children: Early childhood education and care (ECEC) program usage patterns in the years before school in Australia. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 9*(1), 9.

[37] Harrison, L. J., Ungerer, J., Smith, G. J., Zubrick, S. R., Wise, S., Press, F., & Waniganayake, M. (2010). Child care and early education in Australia - the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children note that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community owned and managed services overcome many of these barriers and are best-placed to increase participation and engagement.[38] This is reinforced by other literature which finds that the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or parents, and well-established personal cross-cultural relationships and a 'culture-friendly' climate have been successful in increasing participation rates amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.[39]

Kempsey South Public School and Condobolin Preschool Centre (both in NSW) implemented a number of initiatives to improve transition arrangements and boost attendance for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool students. Kempsey South Public School undertook a number of activities including inviting parents to attend the first two weeks of school, doing home visits when children did not attend, maintaining child health files and providing transport for families where necessary. Condobolin Preschool Centre focused on cross-cultural awareness training for educators, a parent awareness program, culturally-appropriate assessment tools, community-school partnerships, and ensuring familiar songs, games and approaches were incorporated into their program.

A partnership between Yirrkala Preschool in the Northern Territory, the local school and their Women's Learning and Action Circle has also resulted in an improvement in children's attendance and engagement at both the preschool and school.[40]

> **Effective government initiatives, past and present, that support remote communities to enable greater educational outcomes, including those that have improved attainment in literacy and numeracy**

Committee members may be interested in some of the specific models of early childhood education and care offered to children in regional and remote areas. For example, mobile services provide flexible, responsive and innovative services to geographically isolated children and families in many parts of Australia.[41] 'In home' and distance early childhood education and care programs are also available to children in many rural and remote areas.

The eKindy program in Queensland, for example, offers a comprehensive 'at home' preschool/kindergarten program for children living in rural and remote areas, as well as those who are travelling or medically unable to attend a local early childhood service.[42] Similar programs are offered by some divisions of School of the Air in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and other jurisdictions.[43]

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[38] SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2012) Learning from Good Practice: Implementing the Early Years Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
[39] Australian Government (2006) What Works. The Work Program. Improving outcomes for Indigenous students: Successful practice.
[40] Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2019) Yirrkala Preschool has been awarded an Excellent Rating.
[41] Mobile Children's Services Association of NSW (2017) About Mobile Children's Services.
[42] Queensland Department of Education (2020) Early Childhood and Community Education – eKindy.
[43] See for example: School of the Air Broken Hill and Hay (NSW), Alice Springs School of the Air (NT) and Kimberley School of the Air (WA).

Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) also operate in multiple parts of Australia, particularly in rural and remote areas. These services are managed by the local Aboriginal community and are funded to meet the educational, social and developmental needs of Aboriginal children.

Playgroups are another model of service delivery that provide a safe environment where children can play with similar aged children on a regular basis, and can offer an important opportunity for parents to assist in their child's development.

There are three models of playgroups in Australia: *community playgroups* (which are run by parents and caregivers) and *supported* and *intensive supported playgroups* (which are facilitated programs run by trained staff).

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are less likely to participate in playgroups than other Australian families,[44] there is evidence that playgroup participation can enhance children's home learning environments and developmental outcomes[45] and that they can provide soft entry points to link otherwise disengaged families to formal health and education supports.[46,47]

State and territory governments including New South Wales have developed rural and remote education strategies[48] while others such as the Northern Territory have developed Indigenous Education Strategies.[49]

KindiLink (WA) and Families as First Teachers (NT) are two notable examples of government initiatives which support educational outcomes in remote communities.

KindiLink, a play-and-learn initiative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are not old enough to enrol in school, is provided in 38 public schools across Western Australia.[50] Similarly, *Families as First Teachers* is an early learning and family support program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in remote parts of the Northern Territory.[51]

Both aim to improve developmental outcomes for children by working with both families and children prior to school entry.

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[44] Williams, K. E., Berthelsen, D., Viviani, M. and Nicholson, J. M. (2017). Participation of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in a parent support programme: longitudinal associations between playgroup attendance and child, parent and community outcomes. Child: Care, Health and Development, 43 (3), 441- 450.

[45] Gregory, T., Sincovich, A., Harman-Smith, Y., & Brinkman, S. (2017). The reach of Playgroups across Australia and their benefits for children's development: A comparison of 2012 and 2015 AEDC data.

[46] Williams, K.E., Berthelsen, D., Nicholson, J. M., & Viviani, M. (2015). Systematic literature review: Research on Supported Playgroups.

[47] Commerford, J. and Robinson, E. (2016). Supported playgroups for parents and children: The evidence for their benefits.

[48] NSW Department of Education (2019) Regional and Remote Education: A blueprint for action.

[49] Norther Territory Department of Education (2015) A share in the future: Indigenous Education Strategy.

[50] Western Australia Department of Education (2020) KindiLink.

[51] Norther Territory Department of Education (2020) Families as First Teachers (FaFT).

> **Innovative approaches to workforce, including recruitment, professional learning, retention and support, and lessons from communities that could be more generally applied**

Children's education and care is an integral part of the Australian education system that is dependent on a qualified workforce. There are persistent and increasingly pressing issues relating to the attraction, supply and retention of educators and early childhood teachers, particularly for providers in remote, regional and low socio-economic status areas.[52]

Providers of education and care are increasingly investing in workforce and professional development initiatives. There is the opportunity to learn from these initiatives, share successful approaches, and consider how educators and teachers can be attracted and supported to work in these communities.

The Regional Early Education Development (REED) initiative was established in 2018 to provide a cluster model of management for early childhood services in Narrogin, Pingelly, Wickepin, Corrigin and Merredin as well as Beverley and Dumbleyung, in the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia. The initiative reduces the burden on local committees and shires by creating economies of scale for a range of initiatives, including workforce development. REED has increased the professional development opportunities available locally and provides new career pathways to support attraction and retention. The cluster also plays a role in promoting careers in the region through partnerships with the University of Western Australia McCusker Centre for Citizenship, the Moorditj Youth Foundation Aboriginal Corporation and initiatives with South Regional TAFE.[53]

State and territory governments have implemented specific initiatives to support and develop the workforce in remote and complex environments. Queensland's *Growing our own* program provided study support for rural and remote educators while the *Indigenous Remote Support Coordination Program* supports educators in remote Indigenous communities to gain an approved qualification.[54] The Queensland workforce strategy is currently at the review and evaluation stage.

Similarly, the Northern Territory's *Early Years Rewarding Careers* initiative is aimed at attracting secondary school students and young adults living in remote communities to the early childhood sector. The program includes traineeships and vocational education and training. Graduates of the program are encouraged to apply for a teaching scholarship, or move into mainstream employment in the early childhood education and care sector.[55]

However, it has been identified that many workforce issues are systemic and require high level (national or multi-jurisdictional) solutions to make a meaningful impact on quality. Recognising this, Education Ministers recently endorsed the development of a new children's education and care national workforce strategy.[56] The new strategy will be developed in the context of the Australian Teacher Workforce Strategy[57] and the development of an Indigenous early childhood strategy.[58]

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[52] Pascoe, S and Brennan, D (2017) Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions.
[53] Regional Early Education Development (2019) Our Journey.
[54] Queensland Government (2016) Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan 2016–2019.
[55] Northern Territory Government (2017) Early Years Rewarding Careers.
[56] Education Council (2019) Communiqué, Thursday 12 December 2019 Alice Springs.
[57] Australian Institute for teaching and School Leadership (2019) National Teacher Workforce Strategy.
[58] Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Minister for Indigenous Australians (2019) Closing the Gap Lunchtime Address by The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP.

> **Access and support to deliver the Australian Curriculum (including STEM) in a flexible way to meet local learning needs and interests of remote students, including examples of innovative ways in which the curriculum is being delivered in remote schools**

Yirrkala Preschool, located in a remote community in the Northern Territory, has been awarded the Excellent rating by ACECQA – the highest rating a service can achieve under the NQF.[59] The service was recognised for collaborative partnerships with professional, community or research organisations, commitment to children that respects, reflects and celebrates culture and diversity, including place of origin, inclusive partnerships with children and families and practice and environments that enhance children's learning and growth.

The preschool has implemented several innovative practices including creating a Women's Learning and Action Circle (WLAC) – a culturally safe place to discuss and share knowledge of children's learning and development in community members' first language. The WLAC instigated a focus on Garma maths, which links Yolngu systems of knowledge with the western curriculum.

There are many other examples of innovative service delivery models detailed in the *What Works: successful practice* series,[60,61] including case studies in early years contexts. Case studies are grouped according to theme, including school–community partnerships, building relationships, cultural awareness, recognition and support and working systematically.

Early years case studies include Kura Yerlo Children's Centre (SA) which focused on pre-literacy, Queanbeyan South Public School (NSW) which introduced a play group as a soft entry point to their preschool program and Kempsey South Public School (NSW) and Condobolin Preschool Centre (NSW) which both focused on improving transitions to school.[62]

Lee-Hammond and Jackson-Barrett explore two other case studies which use what they term *On Country Learning* with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This involves regular group visits to culturally significant places led by local Elders. Children are active participants in this type of learning and not only learn *about* Country but also learn *on* and *with* Country with educators and Elders making connections with learning frameworks and curriculum subject areas.[63]

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[59] Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2019) Yirrkala Preschool has been awarded an Excellent Rating.

[60] Australian Government (2006) What Works. The Work Program. Improving outcomes for Indigenous students: Successful practice;

[61] Australian Government (2011) What Works. The Work Program. Improving outcomes for Indigenous students: Successful practice, 2nd, revised edition.

[62] Australian Government (2006) What Works. The Work Program. Case studies: the early years.

[63] Lee-Hammond, L. and Jackson-Barett, E. (2017) Indigenous perspectives on outdoor learning environments: On Country Learning in Little, H., Elliot, S. & Wyverr, S. (eds) Outdoor Learning Environments: Spaces for exploration, discovery and risk-taking in the early years, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Successful pathways to ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need to enter further education and the workforce

As noted previously, high quality education and care in early and middle childhood lay critical foundations for life-long learning and development. There is strong evidence that attendance at high quality early childhood education and care services contributes to children's cognitive, health, social and emotional development.[64]

Transitions between educational settings are critical to successful educational outcomes and the benefits of early learning can dissipate if the transitions between early childhood education and care and primary school are not well-managed, or if their school education is not of high quality.[65,66]

Strong partnerships between schools, early childhood education and care services and community organisations can assist children during times of transition and counteract the risk of vulnerable children falling behind.[67]

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[64] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2012) Starting Strong III: Early Childhood Education and Care.
[65] Schlicher, A. (2017) Primed for primary school, blogpost, OECD Education and Skills Directorate, OECD, Paris.
[66] Fabian, H & Dunlop, A-W. (2006). Outcomes of good practice in transition process for children entering primary school.
[67] Victorian Department of Education and Training (2017) Early Years Transitions – Support for children and families at risk of experiencing vulnerability: practice review report.