

OECD Country Note

Early Childhood Education and Care Policy

in

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Thematic Review

1. This Country Note forms part of the OECD *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*, that was launched by the OECD Education Committee in March 1998. The impetus for the project came from the 1996 Ministerial meeting, *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All*. The Ministers assigned a high priority to the goal of improving access and quality in early childhood education, in partnership with families, so as to strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning (OECD, 1996). The goal of the review is to provide cross-national analysis to help improve policy-making in early childhood education and care in all OECD countries.¹

2. Australia is one of the twelve countries participating in the review between 1998 and 2000. The others are Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. These countries provide a wide range of social, economic and political systems, differing value assumptions and varied policy approaches towards the care and education of young children.

3. The review covers children from birth to compulsory school age and includes the transition period into primary schooling. In order to examine thoroughly what children experience in the first years of life, the review has adopted a broad, holistic approach to study early childhood policy and provision. To that end, consideration has been given to the roles of families, communities and other environmental influences on children's early learning and development. Particular emphasis has been laid on aspects concerning quality, access and equity, with an emphasis on policy development in the following areas: regulations; staffing; programme content and implementation; family engagement and support; funding and financing.

4. As part of the review process, each country hosts a Review Team for an intensive case study visit. After each country visit, the OECD produces a short Country Note that draws together background materials and the Review Team's observations. The present report for Australia has been one input into the final OECD Comparative Report that will provide a review and analysis of ECEC (early childhood education and care) policy in all 12 countries participating in the review.

Australia's participation in the Review

5. Australia was the twelfth, and final, country to host an OECD review team visit. Prior to the visit, a Background Report on ECEC Policy in Australia was prepared by Professor Alan Hayes and Ms. Frances Press from Macquarie University (Press & Hayes, 2000). Guided by a common framework that has been accepted by all participating countries, the Background Report provides a concise overview of the country

1. A detailed description of the review's objectives, analytical framework, and methodology is provided in OECD (1998).

context, major issues and concerns, distinctive ECEC policies and provision, innovative approaches and available education data. The Background Reports are an important output of the review process, because they provide a state-of-the-art overview of policy and provision in each participating country.²

6. The preparation of the Background Report involved collaborative and consultative processes. The authors located and collated existing sources of relevant information. A thorough review of existing information was undertaken to ensure that the available information was comprehensive and contemporary, and to identify any gaps. To complement the information derived from existing sources, the project team visited every State and Territory to confirm the currency of the information already available, to identify initiatives, to document recent changes in policy and service delivery approaches and to provide a deeper understanding of unique regional characteristics. Face-to-face consultations were undertaken to ensure that a range of perspectives were available to provide a comprehensive national response. A Steering Committee, with senior policy personnel contributed to the planning of the project and reviewed the accuracy, currency and comprehensiveness of the drafts of the report.

7. After analysis of the Background Report, a review team consisting of two OECD Secretariat members and three experts with diverse analytic and policy backgrounds (see Appendix I) visited Australia between 12-23 June 2000. The two-week visit was co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). During the course of the visit, the team met with many of the major actors involved in ECEC policy and practice in four different states and territories—Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Northern Territory (NT), New South Wales (NSW), and South Australia (SA)—and with representatives from Commonwealth government departments and national professional organisations in Canberra. The team also had the opportunity to observe many examples of early childhood programmes and services for children aged birth to eight years in the four States and Territories (see Appendix III).

8. Given the geographic and time constraints, it was necessary to select the states and territories for the review team to visit. The co-ordinating Commonwealth departments, guided by a steering committee of experts, chose the above-mentioned states because they represent different socio-geographical areas, but also because each has different examples of innovative policy-making, which may be helpful for informing the national and State/Territory policy debates. The OECD team used the experience and knowledge gained from talks and observations in these four States and Territories as a framework for reflecting on ECEC in Australia as a whole.

9. Discussions during the review visit revolved around six main issues:

- the ECEC context, major policy concerns, and policy responses to address these concerns;
- the roles of Commonwealth government, state and territory, local authorities, and other social partners, and the institutional resources devoted by each to planning and implementation;
- feasible policy options that are suited to diverse State/Territory and local contexts;
- the impact, coherence and effectiveness of different approaches;
- innovative policies and practices including their potential for replication;

2. Background Reports and Country Notes from the review are available online at: <http://www.oecd.org/oecd/pages/home/displaygeneral/0,3380,EN-document-602-nodirectorate-no-27-20308-4,FF.html#title5>

- types of data and instruments that exist to support policymaking, research and evaluation.

Structure of the Country Note

10. The Country Note presents the Review Team’s analyses of key policy issues related to ECEC in Australia. It draws upon information provided in the Background Report, formal and informal discussions, literature surveys and the observations of the Review Team. In addition to the present introduction which forms Chapter 1, the structure of the report is as follows:

- Chapter 2: *Contextual issues shaping ECEC policy in Australia*. Some selected elements of the social, political, economic contexts that impact ECEC policy in Australia are discussed.
- Chapter 3: *Overview of ECEC in Australia*. This chapter provides a synthesis of information provided in the *Background Report*, supplemented by data from other sources. It includes short summaries of ECEC in the states and territories visited by the OECD review team, as well as brief overviews of those the team did not visit.
- Chapter 4: *Issues and innovation in ECEC in Australia* discusses nine policy issues: (1) geographic distance and ECEC provision; (2) initiatives and issues regarding ECEC for Indigenous children; (3) supporting the people in the ECEC workforce; (4) structural frameworks for ECEC provision; (5) policy priorities and the interests of children; (6) gender, employment, and ECEC; (7) curriculum development in ECEC; (8) access to quality ECEC; and (9) ECEC research issues. Innovative initiatives to address these issues are profiled.
- Chapter 5: *Conclusions*, presents some concluding suggestions that policy makers in Australia may wish to consider in their discussions of early childhood policy and provision.

Acknowledgements

11. The OECD team wishes to thank those involved in preparing the Background Report and the comprehensive programme proposed for the team review visit. The reviewers also wish to place on record their appreciation of the hospitable, open and informative meetings that were held throughout the review process and the extensive documentation that each group provided. We were privileged to visit several geographic locations, observe diverse forms of provision, and discuss with a variety of decision makers, stakeholders, including staff, parents, and children.

12. Throughout the Country Note, the analyses and suggestions offered are tentative, in recognition of the difficulty facing a review team—no matter how well briefed—in fully grasping the variety and complexity of a country-wide system and the range of issues that need to be taken into account. While the members of the team are experienced researchers and policy analysts in the field of ECEC, they are clearly influenced by their own cultural perspectives. A two-week fieldwork period is limited in terms of the amount of data that can be collected and verified. The survey method employed relied heavily, therefore, on cross-checking approaches and further feedback from experts in Australia.

13. The facts and opinions expressed in the Country Note are the sole responsibility of the review team. While we have received every help from government officials, researchers and practitioners in Australia, they have no part in any shortcomings which this document may present. To mitigate the potential for misunderstanding, it is assumed that the Country Note will be read in conjunction with the Australia Background Report, as the two documents are intended to complement one another.

Terminology

14. The report uses the following terms to describe the main forms of ECEC provision in Australia:

Family Day Care (FDC). FDC provides home based care for children aged 0–12 years. Care is provided by registered caregivers within the carer's home. Local FDC co-ordination units oversee the placement of children, recruit and resource caregivers.

Home Based Care. Home based carers look after other people's children in the carer's own homes for payment. They are not attached to a family day care scheme. In some States and Territories, home based care may be regulated depending upon the number of children cared for. Where such care is unregulated, it is part of the informal care sector.

Long Day Care Centres (LDC). LDC centres primarily cater to children from birth to school age. They are open for at least eight hours a day, five days a week and 48 weeks per year.

Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS). MACS cater to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children aged 0–12 years and are managed by the local ATSI community. MACS provide a range of different services according to the needs of their community.

Multifunctional Children's Services (MCS). MCS cater to children 0–12 years in rural areas and offer a range of different types of care and education according to the needs of their community (e.g., long day care, outside school hours care and family day care).

Mobile Children's Services (Mobiles). Mobiles are travelling resource units which cater to families in rural and remote areas. Mobiles may offer a range of services including child care and pre-school, as well as activities for older children, playgroups and toy libraries.

Occasional Care Centres (OCC). OCC cater to children birth to school age. They provide short-term care on a regular or irregular basis. Hours and days of operation vary.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC). OSHC provides activities for children aged 5–12 years before and after school hours and during school vacations.

Playgroups. Playgroups provide activities for families with children aged birth to school age. Playgroups are usually attended by children in the company of their parents (or carers).

Pre-schools. Pre-schools generally cater to children aged 3–5 years. They are usually open only during school terms, between 9h and 15h. Children may attend on a half day or full day basis. Pre-schools may also be referred to as kindergartens or pre-primary. There are variations regarding the age of children attending pre-school, hours of operation, location and management of programmes.

Registered care. Under registered care, carers such as relatives, friends, home based carers and nannies are registered with the Family Assistance Office. Registration does not play a regulatory role, but enables eligible parents to receive fee subsidies.

Schools. Children age six and older attend compulsory school, for up to six hours per day. In general, children are able to enrol in a preparatory year sometime during their fifth year.

15. The currency in Australia is the Australian Dollar (A\$). In October 2000, 1 Australian Dollar = 0.5213 US Dollar = 0.6213 Euro.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES SHAPING ECEC POLICY IN AUSTRALIA

16. Diversity, distances and divides characterise Australia as a country and a nation. These characteristics broadly apply to its peoples and histories, environment and populations, economy and social systems, as well as to its governance and politics. All of these have an impact on the particular administration and policy frameworks of Australian ECEC. Australia is geographically distant from the other countries participating in the thematic review. Nevertheless, close political, cultural, familial and economic ties with Europe and the United States, since the European settlement of Australia in the late 18th century, provide many shared values, institutions and practices for the care and education of young children. On the other hand, the location of the land mass of Australia in the Asia-Pacific region, combined with different ethnic, historical and political roots has created some distinctive approaches to, and challenges for, ECEC policy.

Environment and populations

17. The Australian landscape, and its areas of population, rural, remote and urban, are characterised by regional diversity and difference which permeate the cultural, political and policy fabric of the nation. Nineteen million inhabitants live in a land area only slightly less than the United States. Most of the population is concentrated on the South East and East Coast in urban areas, with the majority of Australians living in the capital cities of States and Territories.

18. Vast distances separate many pockets of population in rural areas whereas the most densely populated 1% of the area contains 84% of the population. A declining population in rural and remote Australia, reflecting the effect of social, economic, technological and industrial changes has had significant local impacts. There are higher than average levels of unemployment, poverty and disadvantage in these areas. This places additional pressures on educational and social services in a context where distance and delivery already make access and participation difficult. The divide between remote rural and urban Australia provides equity challenges in a range of policy contexts.

Indigenous Australians

19. The Indigenous Australians have lived on Australia's land mass for over 50,000 years or 2000 generations. The Indigenous people were, throughout all these generations, semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers moving in small family groups in both inland and coastal regions, and embracing the climatic and terrain extremes of the desert and the wet tropics. Young children, their learning and education, were a visible and integral part of the work of survival and the social life of family-communities and tribes. By the time of European settlement after 1788 it is estimated there were between 300,000 and a million Indigenous people, divided into around 600 tribes, each with its own distinct territory, language and culture. Diversity, identification with land, its forms and life, and mobility, are characteristics still affecting the world view and life priorities of many Indigenous Australians today.

20. Today, there are 170 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, made up of several dialects, spoken by 21% of Indigenous Australians over five years of age. In 1996 the Indigenous population was approximately 352,970 and around 2% of the total population. 40% of the Indigenous population were aged under 15 years, compared to 21% of the total population; and 15% were below five years of age compared to 7% of the total population. Only 3% of the Indigenous population were over 65 years. Current life expectancy is 20 years less than for the rest of the population. Indigenous children are less likely to be attending an educational institution full time or participating in early childhood education. On leaving primary school, they show significantly lower rates of literacy and numeracy skill development. By comparison too, the unemployment levels of Indigenous Australians is double that of other Australians. Indigenous Australians are more likely to live in scattered rural locations with the most urbanised populations in Victoria and South Australia. These historical, educational, demographic and economic contexts pose many challenges regarding the shape, philosophy and delivery of ECEC for Indigenous Australians.

21. Policies to support Indigenous Australian education have been supported by several national statements over the past decade beginning with, *The Hobart Declaration on Schooling* (1989). *The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* (1989) included Goals for ECEC and a commitment to partnership. *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (1999) acknowledged the role of Indigenous parents as the first educators of their children and the close relationship between the low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services. Recent Commonwealth Government policies for ‘closing the gaps’, the ‘stronger families and communities strategy’ and the ‘literacy and numeracy strategy’, while broadly based, are also intended as a catalyst and a funding source for policies to reduce the, ‘magnitude of the barriers faced by our people to take their rightful place in the Australian community’ (*Supporting Statement from Indigenous Australians*, DETYA, March 2000c).

Majority Australian peoples

22. For over two hundred years of mainly European settlement, waves of migrants have each contributed to the creation of an Australian nation and its distinctive culture; still linked to the Northern hemisphere of Europe and Western political and economic ideals, yet located to the east and in the Southern hemisphere. Over the 20th century a broader range of migrants from across Europe, more recently, Asia the Pacific and very recently Africa, has contributed to the multicultural character of contemporary Australia. At the most recent census 3.9 million residents had been born overseas in one of 200 countries and 111 languages apart from ATSI languages are currently spoken. There has been a steady increase in the population in recent years of approximately 1% per year, comparable to the growth rate in China, Indonesia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the United States. This is mainly a result of overseas migration. There is considerable Trans-Tasman [sea] two-way migration and recreation between Australia and New Zealand, and close economic and political ties have developed between the two countries. Trans-Tasman Ministerial collaboration through the Community Services Ministers Conference and the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), along with numerous professional and institutional links in the education and welfare sectors have led to some similarity in policy directions.

Economic and social contexts

23. GDP per capita (for 1999) using PPPs³ is \$24,400 (US) and tax-GDP ratio (in 1997) is 29.8% (OECD, 2000). A comparison with other OECD countries ranks Australia 14 and 24 in terms of GDP per capita and tax-GDP ratios, respectively. Australia's tightly targeted welfare system and more progressive income tax is seen as being more effective than other developed countries in reducing child poverty. Using a relative poverty line set at 50% of median income, UNICEF estimated that in 1996, 12.6% of Australian children lived in poverty, the sixth highest level of 19 countries (UNICEF, 2000). A NATSEM study (Harding & Szukalska, 1998) estimates a decline in relative child poverty in the past decade.

24. Indigenous children have the highest rate of poverty of any demographic group although statistics do not always identify these children as a group. Most statistical studies of Aboriginal poverty are based on the 1991 census figures and identify issues of housing, health, lack of employment. Ross and Mikalauskas (1996) estimate that whereas indigenous children make up 2.7% of all Australian children, they constitute 7% of all Australian children in poverty. The main factor associated with Indigenous child poverty is the lack of employment of their parents. However, Ross and Mikalauskas show that for Indigenous children, having a parent in employment is a less likely means of escaping poverty than for non-Indigenous Australian children.

25. The rate of national employment is 63.6%, while the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is 6.9%.⁴ Unemployment has been falling since 1993. An improving economy has, however, affected older employment patterns. There has been a trend towards: (a) increasing casual and part-time work; (b) more people being 'employed' in 'non permanent' contexts; (c) longer hours and a lengthening working week for some; and (d) shortened hours and working week for others. In the Background Report, it is noted that,

It is difficult to talk of standard working arrangements, as Australians are increasingly likely to be involved in a range of employment types...The range of parental work patterns to be accommodated by ECEC, their flexibility and unpredictability now present much more complexity than even a decade ago (Press & Hayes, 2000, p. 15)

26. Approximately 70% of women are in some kind of paid employment, either part time or full time, with over 90% of women between 25 to 34 years in employment. In 1997, 49% of mothers with children under four years of age worked.⁵ The rate of participation of women in the workforce is influenced by their relationship status, the age of the youngest child and the cost and availability of childcare (cited in Press & Hayes, 2000). Those with a partner are more likely to be employed (62%) than those who are lone parents (51%); and workforce participation rate is lower for those whose children are under three. Federal and State Government legislation provides for parental leave surrounding the birth of a child for parents who have completed at least 12 months continuous service with their employer. They are entitled to a total of 52 weeks *unpaid* leave. Paid parental leave, ranging between 6-12 weeks, is available under some workplace awards and agreements.

27. ECEC services are integrally linked to issues of family structure and formation. Some changing trends can be summarised:

3. Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) are the rate of currency conversion that eliminates the differences in price levels between countries. They are used to compare the volume of GDP in different countries. PPPs are obtained by evaluating the costs of a basket of goods and services between countries for all components of GDP; PPPs are given in national currency units per US dollar.

4. Source: OECD Labour Force Statistics database.

5. Source: OECD Labour Force Statistics database.

- declining fertility rate which reached its lowest level in 1998 at 1.74. This could translate into a drop between 5% to 7% of the population of children in the next decade;
- delayed childbearing with nearly one in three children born to women over 30 years old. 27% of women aged 40 remain childless;
- steady increase in the percentage of single parent families. By 1998 this figure was 21.5%.

28. These trends suggest some broader issues regarding the status of children as a ‘scarce resource’, the potential economic divides between, childless and childrearing families, and single and two (or multi) parent families.

29. Major tax reform took place in 2000, which included the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (GST). ECEC services will be GST-free, but not the goods and services used in the service. The latter can, however, be claimed back by the ECEC services as tax credits. A means tested Family Tax Benefit for families with a dependent child under 18 replaced an older Family Allowance. A new and more generous Child Care Benefit (described below), replaces older forms of childcare assistance through means tested fee subsidies and the Child Care Rebate to parents using childcare for work related reasons.

Governance and politics

30. Australia has a federal system of government with power and responsibility shared between the Commonwealth and the six State and two Territory Governments. Prior to federation in 1901 each State was self-governing. A century later the assertion of State rights is still a strong theme in Australian politics, and was evident to the review team during visits to two States and two Territories. The powers of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments are determined by the Australian Constitution and each level or kind of government has different areas of responsibility. A further tier of local government is established and regulated by State and Territory parliaments. All of these levels of government are involved in ECEC, although not every local government body. There are particular challenges faced by federal systems of government, regarding the division of responsibilities between the Federal and State/Territory governments, which makes it more difficult to develop an integrated ECEC system.

31. Of the taxation revenue collected in 1998-9, the Commonwealth received 77%, and the rest was received by State and Local governments. In general terms, the Commonwealth delivers social security which also includes responsibility for Child Care Support, whilst state governments have primary responsibility for schooling and education, although they regulate and provide some funding to child care services. In the past there have also been some Commonwealth/State agreements on cost shared arrangements for the provision of child care services. Thus the policy and funding matters relating to different forms of ECEC services, broadly and sometimes unfortunately defined in terms of care and education, rests with different tiers of government. As a result of this division, and as a reflection of differing State priorities, there are considerable variations in ECEC provision, priorities and positioning in relation to schooling and education between States and Territories. Under the Constitution, responsibility for education lies primarily with the States and Territories. In recent years, the Commonwealth Government has been seeking to exert more influence over the direction of education through some agreed national strategies.

32. National and governmental values are based on the democratic premise that ‘everyone in Australia has a chance’ which translates into a view that all young people should have the opportunity to reach their potential and demonstrate their abilities. There is, however, no overall national vision, plan, statement or strategy to further this vision for very young children within ECEC in Australia.

Commonwealth Government policy makers, key ECEC sector advocates and a number of ECEC peak organisations suggest, however, that it is timely for a more cohesive national overview and directions. This OECD review is regarded as a step in this process, noted too in the Australian Background Report (Press & Hayes, 2000) which concludes with the statement:

It is timely to articulate a clear national vision for children. Such a vision could encapsulate existing and emerging perspectives in ECEC and help formulate a national framework for the future development of policy throughout Australia...The time is opportune to embrace the foundational significance of children's early years. In this, and many senses, Australia is a nation at the crossroads (p. 60-61).

33. The Commonwealth Government portfolios that embrace ECEC are moving towards more collaborative approaches to policy development for the early years. The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) promotes and supports policies of national significance aimed at addressing key aspects of school education which have implications for the achievement of the nation's broader social and economic goals. The implementation of these policies occurs differently within each State and Territory. The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) has direct responsibility for the funding, policy and delivery of a national Child Care Program through the administration of the *Child Care Act 1972*. From July 2000, most of this Act was subsumed under new legislation in the *Family Assistance Act 1999*. The policies of both Departments are cognisant of Government goals for 'closing the gaps' economically and educationally across both cultural and geographic divides.

Current family and educational policy directions

34. The final sections of this chapter identify some broad family and educational policy directions and contexts, within which ECEC is positioned under the respective portfolios of FaCS and DETYA. These contexts and priorities emphasise different philosophical constructions of ECEC which shape the functions and status of the respective institutions. These constructions are not exclusive but would need cohesive interweaving in any national plan.

Family policy framework

35. The *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* is a key Government policy being implemented by FaCS. The focus is on the prevention and early intervention for Australian families and communities with particular attention and support for families at risk:

...the best social welfare program yet devised is the family unit. Strong and healthy family relationships are our best guarantee for strong and healthy individuals who are able to contribute to their communities and the wider society (FaCS, 2000, p. 1)

36. A raft of new programmes and policies flow from this Strategy, alongside which the Department has also positioned its long established work in the ECEC area (FaCS, 2000; National Crime Prevention, 1999). The Government phrase 'capacity building' is used to describe its Strategy 'to increase the resources of individuals and communities to develop the skills and capacities they need to seize opportunities that come their way' (FaCS, 2000, p. 6). A broader goal to stem the cost of welfare services and benefits, reduce welfare dependency and to reappraise the Government's traditional role in the funding and delivery of social and welfare services (Newman, September, 1999) is also a rationale. These rationales and policies are not unique to Australia and the issues are being addressed similarly, not without controversy, in a number of OECD countries (e.g., the Netherlands, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA).

37. The role of FaCS in ECEC through its Child Care Support has traditionally been linked to the objective to assist families, and in particular women, with dependent children to participate in the workforce. This objective remains compatible with the new *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*, intended to support more self-reliant individuals and families. However, changes in employment patterns pose some challenges to, and possible strains on, the ability of ECEC services to best manage and balance the needs of both parents and children in this context.

Education policy framework

38. There are strong links between education policy initiatives and economic development agendas. The Commonwealth Government is focussing considerable effort on raising standards in Australian schools and ensuring that all education authorities are held accountable to the community for delivering outcomes. All education ministers were involved in the development of the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* in 1999. The Declaration states in the Preamble that:

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

39. There are several key strategies associated with this Declaration which will have an impact on ECEC, particularly on the services under the umbrella of State and Territory education portfolios. First, is the Commonwealth policy for Indigenous education, already noted earlier in the chapter. Second, there is a move towards outcomes' focussed National Goals with associated benchmarks, targets and performance information.

40. Children are assessed in primary school at Years 3 and 5 against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks. In 1999, 86.9% of students in Year 3 achieved the national benchmark in reading. Almost five per cent more girls achieved the benchmark than boys. The percentage of Indigenous children achieving the benchmark is 66.1%. A Government priority for school education is to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all young Australians (DETYA 1998, 2000b). The Adelaide Declaration agreed to the goal, 'that every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level'. The Ministers had previously agreed, 'that every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years (DETYA, 1998, p. 8). These goals place particular emphasis on the first years of schooling and, hence, concern the readiness and preparation of children prior to entry into school.

41. The impact of these strategies on ECEC will be explored in subsequent chapters. DETYA acknowledges that its increasing focus on the importance of the early years education is linked to achieving better literacy and numeracy outcomes. In particular, early childhood experiences are considered important to the achievement of the National Goals for Schooling. These Commonwealth strategies are linked to broad economic outcomes for Australia, and also towards 'closing the gaps', by 'countering other forms of educational and social disadvantage [with] strong foundational literacy and numeracy skills [which are] successfully taught to all children' (DETYA, 1998).

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF ECEC IN AUSTRALIA

42. Comprehending the complexity, diversity and fragmentation of ECEC in Australia was a challenge for the review team, whose snapshot insight across two Territories and two States could not encompass the whole. The provision of ECEC, like education, is different in each State or Territory. The OECD review focussed on the understanding and analysis of some common Australia-wide themes. The Australia Background Report provides fuller documentation of the whole, the compilation of which was a consultative exercise and distilling of information, not previously undertaken in Australia. Its background overview is a foundation towards an Australia-wide appraisal of policy directions and frameworks for ECEC. The imagery suggested by a senior researcher and government advisor was that it is now possible and timely to ‘move from the patchwork to the tapestry’. This chapter summarises some key aspects of ECEC in Australia. An overview of some key elements of ECEC in South Australia, New South Wales, Northern Territory and ACT illustrates some of the diverse approaches to ECEC. Other aspects of ECEC are dealt in the next chapter which elaborates some broader issues considered by the review team.

Current provision of ECEC

43. There is a diverse range of ECEC services that reflect the different needs of families and communities (see also Terminology in Chapter 1):

- Long day care centres and family day care schemes (0-5 years) and outside school hours services (5-12 years), primarily, but not exclusively, established to meet the needs of working parents with children.
- Pre-schools, oriented mainly to providing sessional educational experiences for children aged 3-5 years prior to school entry (almost always at five, although compulsory school age is six).
- Occasional care services providing limited casual care for children in a range of contexts
- Multi-functional Aboriginal Services for children from 0-12 years (but mainly under 6 years).
- Flexible and Multi-functional services for children in rural and remote areas which also includes some mobile services.
- Playgroups which provide activities for children from 0-5 years accompanied by parents or carers.

44. ECEC is diverse in terms of location, too, and includes neighbourhood-based, work-based, or school-based sites. The pattern varies between States, but there is a trend towards co-located or in some cases, integrated services. Similarly, the upper age between ECEC and school is different across States. In Western Australia, recent reforms have blurred the distinction between school and early childhood: universal and free ‘school’ starts at kindergarten, with an age range from 3 years 7 months to 4 years 7

months, for four-and-a-half days a week, and the following year, for five full days. Across States the pattern of ECEC provision is also diverse through a mixture of public, non-government not-for-profit, private for-profit, and private not-for-profit organisations. The latter are often church-based schools which operate outside of the public school sector but might also operate ECEC programmes. Most centre-based long day care is provided by the private sector (73%). These centres operate mainly as small for-profit businesses. Most other ECEC services are provided either by State/Territory and/or local (town and city) government in the public sector or by community based services in the non-profit sector. The latter are often operated by charitable, community or parent organisations that operate one or many services.

45. An answer to the question of the percentage of Australian children attending an ECEC programme is elusive. There is no national data base for this calculation. Commonwealth data records the numbers of children per age in the services funded under the Commonwealth Child Care Support as well as the places available across the States and Territories. This data from the Background Report is found in Table 1 and 2 below. There is no comparable national data for pre-school attendance whose provision and funding is State and Territory budgets and policies. Statistics for pre-school places per State and Territory are not always indicative of the extent to which four year olds maybe attending both a part day pre-school and a child care centre. The 1998 *Report on Government Services* (ROGS) estimated that the 1996 participation rate for pre-school attendance was 69.4%, excluding the use of other formal care. The 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Child Care Survey* showed that 76% of 4 year old children in formal child care are attending a pre-school. The 1999 ABS *Child Care Survey* shows that 73.3% of all four year olds used some formal care. This survey also shows that 23.5% of all children under the age of five in Australia are in some kind of formal ECEC arrangement. Several documents quote the figure of 10% of four year olds missing out on early childhood education.

Table 1: Number of places provided in services included in the Commonwealth Government Census of Child Care, (number)^a

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
<i>1995-96^b</i>									
Centre based long day care	54 200	35 000	50 400	13 900	8 100	2 050	2 950	1 400	168 000
Family day care	19 200	16 400	10 700	3 700	5 100	1 700	2 500	900	60 200
Outside school hours care ^c	24 100	18 200	13 600	6 100	5 500	1 700	2 000	700	71 900
Occasional care ^d	1 400	1 300	750	550	450	250	150	50	4 900
Other care	510	280	200	250	200	30	0	200	1 670
<i>1997-98^e</i>									
Centre based long day care	62 100	43 700	55 000	15 300	10 100	2 600	3 930	1 800	194 530
Family day care	20 500	16 800	11 800	4 000	5 100	2 000	2 600	900	63 700
Vacation care	14 600	4 700	8 200	3 000	4 100	600	960	1 100	37 260
Before school hours care	10 500	6 300	2 900	1 700	3 500	100	460	50	25 510
After school hours care	21 500	17 900	13 900	5 200	7 300	1 500	2 600	1 300	71 200
Occasional care	1 500	1 300	800	500	450	200	130	50	4 930
Other care	550	250	300	270	180	40	0	200	1 790
<i>1998-99^f</i>									
Centre based long day care	62 150	41 350	54 350	14 600	9 900	2 400	3 700	1 850	190 300
Family day care	20 900	16 900	11 900	3 600	5 200	2 040	2 600	900	64 040
Outside school hours care	49 600	40 900	33 150	11 400	16 100	2 850	3 800	3 200	161 000
Occasional care	1 500	1 400	750	500	450	200	130	50	4 980
Other care	500	300	250	300	200	30	0	200	1 780

^a Data sourced from the Child Care System. ^b Number of operational places at June 1996. The numbers of places were rounded.

^c Disaggregated data were not available for vacation care, before and after school hours services. ^d Included neighbourhood model places. ^e Number of operational places at 30 June 1998. ^f Number of operational places at 30 June 1999.

Source: SCRCSSP, 2000 Table 13A.3 in Press & Hayes, 2000.

Table 2: Children Details – Age¹

	< 1 yr	1 yr	2 yrs	3yrs	4 yrs	5 yrs
Community Based Centres	3,360	12,820	20,280	23,340	18,270	2,160
Private Centres	6,450	24,100	45,200	61,760	56,260	8,770
Family Day Care Schemes	4,550	13,010	15,260	14,370	11,560	2,800
Sub-Total- Long Day Care	14,360	49,930	80,740	99,470	86,090	13,730
Occasional Care Services	470	1,580	2, 640	2,720	1,300	120
Neighbourhood Model # Occasional Care Services	660	2,190	4,530	5,480	2,230	240
Multifunctional Children’s Services	50	160	230	220	210	50
Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services	70	180	370	470	430	30
TOTAL	15,610	54,040	88,510	108,360	90,260	14,170

1. These figures represent children who do not attend a school.

Source: FaCS Preliminary data – 1999 Census of Child Care Services weighted at the national level based on preliminary response rates in Press & Hayes, 2000.

Neighbourhood Model – 1996 Census of Child Care Services

Historical context

46. The ‘weight of history’ was a sentiment frequently expressed to explain the complexity of charting or changing the policy direction of ECEC – state-wide and nation-wide. This is partly because the pattern and emphasis of development has been different for each State, but due also to various Commonwealth initiatives which were overlaid across State efforts. Bringing together this divided past towards an Australia-wide framework for ECEC is deemed challenging by many policy officials. Some broad patterns and shifts in policy directions can be identified and are important for understanding the complexity of present, as well as the some of the issues to be unravelled if policy is to change.

47. From the 1850s through to the present, waves of new ideas concerning children and changing needs of families have led to the emergence of a range of institutions for ECEC. The roots of these institutions parallel similar ideas in Europe and the USA. Institutions that gained political acceptance have been able to demonstrate their ability to support government priorities in the areas of welfare, education, and/or employment at particular times. In recent years both State and Commonwealth governments have been more proactive in looking towards the ECEC sector to meet some of their policy goals.

48. The Kindergarten Union of New South Wales was formed in 1895. Its mission was to establish philanthropic ‘free’ kindergartens for the poor in inner city suburbs and introduce kindergarten principles into schools. By 1911 similar organisations operated in all states. Early kindergartens sometimes provided day nursery care but the strategic alignment of kindergartens with schools and education caused separate day nursery organisations to emerge in the early 20th century. An exception was the Queensland Creche and Kindergarten Association. Day nurseries operated for longer hours, and cared for younger aged children and emphasised physical health and well being. Kindergarten organisations trained and employed

teachers whilst the day nurseries employed nurses and placed less emphasis on staff qualifications. This early split between care and education was institutionalised within different organisations and subsequent funding arrangements (Brennan, 1998), and has subsequently ‘resonated through many of the ensuing debates and policy initiatives which have shaped ECEC provision in Australia’ (Press & Hayes, 2000, p. 7).

49. Between 1938-1940, in the burgeoning era of the welfare state, the Commonwealth Government made its first move into the early childhood field and established a Lady Gowrie Centre, for mainly underprivileged families, in each of the State capital cities. The centres embraced progressive education ideas. The all day programmes emphasised health, education and parent education. The centres were intended too as a research-based demonstration centre for each State. These centres, whose fortunes were buffeted by changing Commonwealth interest, still operate and are highly regarded.

50. After the Second World War, a part day kindergarten experience prior to school was deemed a good idea. During the 1940s and 1950s many more pre-schools, as they became known, were established. During the 1960s and 1970s these pre-schools became incorporated and/or supported in different ways within the education sector. Increasing expectations by parents and from schools, that children experience pre-school education continued to shape policies of funding, expansion and curriculum for ECEC in the respective States and Territories.

51. The first ECEC for Indigenous children began in the 1960s in the context of the compensatory and assimilationist views of the time (Mellor, 1990).⁶ In 1963, Save The Children Fund (STCF) opened a centre at Coffs harbour. By the end of the 1970s there were 14 STCF pre-schools in NSW and 3 in Victoria. Each was run by a non-Aboriginal teacher and assisted by Aboriginal staff. In 1967 the Dutch-based Bernard van Leer Foundation started to provide funding for research projects relating to Aboriginal pre-school education. This first successful venture, noted for *not* accepting the dominant discourse of deprivation-compensation was the development of Aboriginal Family Education Centres under the auspices of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Sydney (Teasdale, 1981). A key person was New Zealander Lex Grey who invited to Australia, Maori women who had set up their own playgroups in New Zealand outside of the mainstream services (Mellor, 1990). The Indigenous women of both countries worked and collaborated together for some years. Early childhood training for Indigenous Australian women was established within this project. The Bernard van Leer Foundation continues to fund projects to support Indigenous early childhood programmes.

52. In 1972, the Commonwealth Government emerged as a key player in ECEC. The Liberal Coalition promoting ideals of social justice, alongside the advocacy of a women’s liberation movement, initiated a raft of legislation on rights and discrimination. The *Child Care Act 1972* was introduced by the Minister of Labour and National Service and linked to policies supporting the employment of women, and amidst some concern about children being cared for in less than suitable arrangements. The Act has been through several transformations and Department portfolios, reflecting shifting government priorities regarding, the role of child care. In recent years there has been more awareness of childcare as both an educational service and a family support. ECEC services under the Act have become a key plank of the Commonwealth Government’s children’s services policy. The Commonwealth move into ECEC, under the broad realm of issues of employment and family support, alongside State and Territory Government

6. These programmes were not the first to accept Indigenous children. Already, in the late 1950s, Indigenous children attended pre-school programmes in the Northern Territory, funded by the Commonwealth Department of the Interior. Some of these programmes had significant numbers of Indigenous children, particularly in Darwin and the larger towns. The first qualified Indigenous pre-school teacher and trained teacher’s assistant in Darwin were appointed in 1963.

oversight of pre-school education, reinforced a split between care and education. Increasing demand, expansion and government involvement has characterised ECEC services in both contexts.

Changing context of Commonwealth support

53. Since their inception Commonwealth children's services policies have been subject to various reviews posing questions regarding, where responsibility for young children should sit; what types of ECEC services and settings should be supported; and who should bear the cost. Under the Labor Government of 1983-1990, childcare provision was linked to policies on the social wage (government-provided benefits and services). This resulted in an expansion of child care services, places and expenditure; reliant too upon local, state and territory governments. Direct operational funding for child care centres, and the child care fee subsidies for parents from the Commonwealth, were available to non profit services, usually managed by parent associations, church groups, local government and organisations such as the Kindergarten Union. Overall the policies characterised a community – government partnership under the auspices of strong advocacy from community and national early childhood organisations, also concerned to improve quality as well as extend provision and access.

54. In 1990, the Labor Government extended the availability of child care fee subsidies to families using for-profit ECEC services. This fuelled the rapid expansion of the private sector in the field of ECEC. The move of government into supporting for-profit ECEC was controversial, given the community roots of ECEC in Australia. Within the wider picture of education in Australia, this move is less surprising as there is a strong private, non-government school sector in Australia which receives considerable government funding support. The Commonwealth rationale for extending fee subsidies was to provide equity for the families using private centres (at that stage there was a large proportion of families using private centres without access to fee subsidies) and to stimulate investment in child care from the private sector. The argument of successive governments has been that policies of 'levelling the playing field' (FaCS, 2000) have allowed improved access and affordability for more families.

55. During the 1993 election campaign, the Labor government announced Labor's child care policies alongside its economic statement for 'Investing in the Nation' The government suggested that the 'time had come to move child care out of the welfare area and into the economic mainstream' (cited in Brennan, 1994. p. 210). Linked to this shift was the introduction of a non-means-tested cash rebate for working parents alongside the child care fee subsidies. The rebate has been incorporated into the new Child Care Benefit of the Family Assistance Act.

56. As part of the decision to extend fee subsidies to families using private centres, the Commonwealth established the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long day care centres. This was introduced in 1993-4 after a two year development process. Eligibility to receive a fee subsidy for long day care centres became tied to the participation of the centre in the accreditation process. The idea for accreditation was borrowed from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation scheme in the USA, but a key difference in Australia was the link to government funding. Centres undergo both self and external review of their performance in relation to 52 principles and are accredited for between one and three years. The QIAS has recently been reviewed, and a more streamlined system aimed at reducing the administrative effort of centres while retaining quality assurance and continuous improvement will be introduced from 1 January 2002.

57. In 1998, the Commonwealth Coalition Government sought to further 'level the playing field' across the private and community ECEC sector by removing direct operational subsidies to non-profit long day care and outside of school hours care. The policy has been contentious, as critics fear that this has undermined quality in non profit services. The trend to more private sector involvement is likely to

continue, with the announcement that from 2001, planned new places for family day care and outside school hours care will be open to the private sector. Commonwealth funding for these two forms of provision will be linked to accreditation processes. The rapid expansion of private for profit long day care centres has caused concern over issues of over supply and under supply. To address these concerns, the Commonwealth capped the number of long day care centre places available for fee subsidy in 1997. This cap has expired, but the implementation of the July 2000 Family Assistance legislation has the capacity to limit the number and location of long day care centre places if needed. Specifically, a National Planning System, which determines high need areas for centres, family day care and outside school hours care, has been devised to address the oversupply of services in some areas and an undersupply in others.

Direct and indirect Commonwealth support for ECEC

58. Commonwealth support for ECEC is directed primarily to childcare and Indigenous services and currently framed within the *Stronger Communities and Family Strategy*. The total expenditure by Commonwealth State and Territory Government expenditure on ECEC in 1998-99 was A\$1.4 billion. Of this approximately A\$1 billion was provided by the Commonwealth. The majority of support is directed to funding fee subsidies for parents (A\$800 million). The remaining A\$200 million was spent in child care support services, including:

- Operational and establishment funding for family day care and occasional care;
- Subsidies to facilitate the development of playgroups;
- Capital programmes to upgrade and replace community based centres;
- In-service training and resource and advisory agencies;
- Support for quality initiatives, including the QIAS;
- Support for children with special needs via funding to support additional staff in services and to support training agencies facilitating the integration of children with special needs;
- Support for flexible, innovative services, and the Disadvantaged Area Subsidy, which provides support for services particularly in rural and regional Australia;
- Support for Multi-functional Aboriginal Services and Multi-functional services.

59. In July 2000 (after the OECD visit), the new Child Care Benefit (CCB) replaced the Commonwealth Childcare Assistance and Childcare Rebate. The CCB is targeted to provide greater assistance for low- and middle-income families using approved child care services. All families using approved services receive at least the minimum level of CCB. The rate of assistance is dependent on income level, the number of children in care, the hours used in relation to the work status of parents, and the school status of the children in care. Working families using registered (informal) child care services receive the minimum level of CCB. Since the introduction of CCB low-income families now pay less than 10% of their incomes on child care. Families using private for profit, local government and community based or other non-profit child care services are all eligible for the same CCB. Families with income below A\$28,200 or receiving income support are eligible to receive the maximum amount of assistance ranging from A\$122 per week for one child up to A\$392 per week for three children in the 2000-01 financial year. A reducing scale of benefit is available for families whose yearly income ranges from A\$28,000 - \$81,000

for one child (and up to A\$100,000 for three children) in care. Families on higher incomes receive the minimum level of CCB. All rates and income limits for Child Care Benefits are indexed in July each year.

60. Some direct funding from the Commonwealth to early childhood services provides for the establishment of non-profit new family day care and outside school hours care services in the form of equipment, establishment and set-up grants. From 2001, private operators will be eligible to apply for this funding.

61. The Commonwealth addresses issues of distance through a range of initiatives including operational subsidies or disadvantaged area subsidies. To date, some 300 flexible rural and regional services are either operational or in development and include: Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services of which 28 are in rural and remote areas; multifunctional children's services; mobile services; and 80 innovative and flexible services (e.g. 'in home' care for farming communities, FDC operating from a community facility or co-located centre-based care with other community facilities such as State funded pre-schools). There are also many small services that offer enrichment/development programmes, playgroups and related family support, operating mainly in remote Aboriginal communities.

Pre-school trends

62. Commonwealth interest in pre-schools is not one of funding or provision, but is associated more with its broad educational and economic goals for schooling outlined in Chapter 2, and will be developed further in Chapter 4. In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, government pre-school services are provided at no compulsory cost to parents. In Victoria, South Australia, West Australia and the ACT the majority of parents pay some fee for pre-schools, although it is not compulsory. In New South Wales and Queensland, fees vary depending upon the provider of the service. The minimum level of CCB is available to working families using community pre-schools for which fees are charged, if the pre-school registers as a service provider for the purposes of CCB.

63. The ABS statistical survey *Child Care Australia* released in June 2000 coincided with the review visit, and includes the only data on enrolment trends in pre-schools. Total enrolments in pre-school in 1999 were 231,600. For the first time long day care had passed pre-schools as the most used form of formal care outside of the home. Over the decade, there was a decline in the pre-school share of formal care from just over 50% in 1990 to 31.5 % in 1999. This reflected the growth in the availability of long day care and the limited orientation of pre-schools to the needs of working parents. Since 1996, however, a 25% decline in pre-school enrolments between 1990-1996 was stemmed with a 15% increase to 1999. Comment on the survey suggested that a return to earlier levels of pre-school participation would require a boost in pre-school funding and a greater orientation of the sector to the needs of working families (O'Reilly, 2000). The survey identifies some other trends:

- Long day care is used mainly by children 0-4, while pre-schools are used mainly by three- to five-year-olds and especially four-year-olds;
- Over the decade long day care has more than doubled and the use of before and after school care has almost quadrupled. Other forms of formal care has been stable or declined;
- There has been a rise in the use of formal (regulated) care arrangements for children 0-12 years from 17.7% in 1990 to 23.5% in 1999.

64. The combined expenditure by States and Territories on pre-schools is approximately A\$400 million. The integration of some pre-school provision within the school system makes a more exact figure of pre-school expenditure difficult to calculate.

ECEC services for Indigenous Australians

65. In 2000, DEYTA funded over 2000 pre-schools in the government and non-government sectors, catering for approximately 13,000 Indigenous children. These provide a flexible packaging of ECEC options related to the particular needs of often remote communities. Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) offer care for pre-school and school aged children including long day care, playgroups, outside school hours care, school holiday care and cultural programmes. Three mobile services provide ECEC for Indigenous communities. There is no figure on overall participation rates of Indigenous children in ECEC. The 1995 census indicated a less than 2% of Indigenous children attended other children's services – not including pre-schools. Participation rates at pre-schools are not available. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), a key consultative group, uses the figure of 4,000 Indigenous children aged six weeks to five years who are participating in centre-based child care throughout Australia with just under half of these children enrolled in one of the MACS.

66. The Indigenous population is recognised as being the most educationally and economically disadvantaged in Australia. ECEC for Indigenous children is now deemed a foundation for the success of other strategies. The fragmentation of ECEC services across State-Territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions is reflected in the delivery and provision of ECEC for Indigenous children. Past history and geographic location have an impact on the policies, priorities and initiatives for ECEC within different States. In recent years, the Commonwealth has taken a more proactive role in co-ordinating Indigenous education issues. Each State has (or is developing) a plan relating to Indigenous education. The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Education Policy*, (MCEETYA, 1989) detailed 21 goals to improve access to, participation in, and preparation for school (through pre-school and other services) for Indigenous children. The recently released *National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004* (DETYA, 2000b) is a key initiative towards implementing the 1989 *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Education Policy*. The Strategy has six key elements, one of which is 'providing, wherever possible, pre-schooling opportunities.' The Commonwealth is investing new resources in its overall Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and there is targeted money of A\$1.5 billion set aside for the years 2001-4 to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students under the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programmes, including early childhood projects. The *Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme* provides support for Indigenous people to further their education and can support enrolment in early childhood qualification programmes. There is an *Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Programme* that provides A\$110 per child in a non remote school or pre-school, and A\$215 per child in a remote school or pre-school. Funding is allocated to parent committees to be used in a variety of ways to further the learning of Indigenous children.

67. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) has proposed that there be a single source of Commonwealth funding for the whole range of Indigenous children's services as defined by Indigenous peoples, as the fragmentation of funding has been a concern (D'Souza, 1999). This would be linked to a national policy to co-ordinate and monitor children's services across the Commonwealth State and Territory levels. Legislation that restores the rights of Indigenous peoples in the upbringing of their children and to safeguard the rights of their children is also being sought. SNAICC expresses concerns about participation in and quality of ECEC for Indigenous children. Excerpts from the SNAICC's United Nations submission (July 2000) note that the exemption from accreditation processes for MACS has allowed subsidies to flow to Indigenous parents, but at the same time has created an environment within which the quality of care within MACS has not been centrally monitored or

systematically improved (p. 14). SNAICC has recently been commissioned by the Federal Government to compile a report on the MACS that have been operating for ten years. There has been no expansion in the number of centres or the number of places for children within existing centres.

Key consultative groups to the Commonwealth

68. There is a network of inter-government, inter-department and non-government consultative groups whose role is important in the quest for a national direction for ECEC. Some groups are engaging in debate on a national vision or framework for ECEC.

69. Other than from FaCS, ministerial advice on the Commonwealth Child Care Support comes from the Commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council, which advises the Minister for Family and Community Services. The Council is currently engaged in debate on *Child Care Beyond 2001* (May 2000) by promoting and consulting over a proposed 'Australian Vision for Child Care' in which 'the Commonwealth will make the best interests of children a central focus of government policy and decision-making'. The Council has undertaken a review of the QIAS aimed at strengthening and streamlining the administrative requirements and ensuring greater validity and reliability in the accreditation process.

70. Key national stakeholders outside of government include:

- The Australian Early Childhood Association (AECA) whose secretariat is partially funded by the Commonwealth. Its interests were originally in advocacy for pre-school education but later broadened to include childcare (Brennan, 1998). AECA produces a range of resources and publications for early childhood in Australia and beyond, including the *Australian Journal for Early Childhood*. AECA has promulgated a voluntary Code of Ethics for early childhood professionals. In its efforts to define a national framework for ECEC, AECA emphasises the priority needs and interests of children for high quality services (Vaughan & Cahir, 1996);
- The National Children's Services Forum (NCSF) which acts as an advocacy group, chaired by AECA, for most national sector organisations that provide services under the Commonwealth Government Child Care Support;
- The National Family Day Care Council which provides relevant services and resources to support family day care;
- The Australian Federation of Child Care Associations and the Australian Confederation of Child Care, which are national peak bodies representing private long day care operators. The Australian Federation of Child Care Associations' aims to 'provide professional and ethical representation of the private child care sector'; and the Australian Confederation of Child Care' aims to 'protect, nurture and develop the interests of children and families in private early childhood services;
- The National Association of Community Based Children's Services, which is the national advocacy, lobbying and support group for community based children's services including long day care, occasional care and out of school hours care. The Association focuses on the 'development of non-profit, community owned, good quality services for children';
- The National Outside School Hours Services Association which provides advocacy and support services for school children;

- The National Occasional Child Care Association, a national peak body representing occasional care services.

71. At the State and Commonwealth level, there are inter-governmental committees that consider issues relating to ECEC and/or policies that impact on ECEC. These are:

- The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), which provides a forum for national collaboration in policy development and implementation in the school sector such as the literacy and numeracy strategies.
- The Conference of Education Chief Executive Offices (CESCEO) includes the CEO in Education from each of the States and Territories and the CEO of DETYA. Underneath this Council sits an Early Childhood Education Working Party which has recently completed a draft discussion paper ‘Literacy and Numeracy and Social Outcomes in Early Childhood Education and Care,’ as a first move toward a national strategy in these areas for ECEC.
- The Community Services Ministers Conference is a counterpart to MCEETYA in the broad areas of community and family.
- The Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council which implements the decisions of the above. The Commonwealth/State Children’s Services Administrators sub-group provides a liaison between governments.

Regulations and standards

72. Regulations and standards defining minimum compliance for ECEC overlap Commonwealth and State jurisdictions. The pattern is different in every State, but regulations generally reflect the care and education split. State and Territory Governments have developed jointly agreed National Standards for long day care, family day care and outside school hours care. These are not legally enforceable and are both better and worse than respective State regulations where they exist.

73. Regulations cover such areas as record keeping, physical space, qualifications of staff, staff-child ratios, health and safety. Compliance is linked to the license of the service to operate. Long day care is regulated in every State and Territory, whereas family day care is regulated only in some. In most States and Territories, pre-schools are operated by the Department of Education. When such is the case, the Long Day Care regulations do not apply. Responsibility for the monitoring of regulations vary depending on the where particular ECEC services are located within the State or Territory. In general, regulations governing non-school ECEC come under child welfare legislation. The regulation or monitoring of pre-schools vary according to which government department has jurisdiction over them. Regulations are under currently review in nearly all States and Territories. Table 3 shows the regulations by service type of the States and Territories visited. More details are provided in the Background Report.

Table 3: ECEC Regulations by Service Type

State/ Territory	Pre-school	Long Day Care Centre	Family Day Care	Home Based Care	Mobile Children's Services	Outside School Hours Care
Australian Capital Territory	Mainly operated by Department of Education. Otherwise Children's Services Amendment Bill 1999. Licence Conditions Handbook (No regulations – power stems from Act)	Children's Services Amendment Bill 1999. Licence Conditions Handbook (No regulations – power stems from Act)	No territory regulation if less than 5 children who have not enrolled in school or 8 children under age 12	No territory regulation if less than 5 children who have not enrolled in school or 8 children under age 12	No mobile children services	Children's Services Act
New South Wales	Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Regulation (No2) 1996	Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Regulation (No2) 1996	Family Day Care and Home-based Child Care Services Regulation 1996	Family Day Care and Home-based Child Care Services Regulations 1996	Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Regulation (No2) 1996	No state regulations
Northern Territory	Mainly operated by Department of Education. Otherwise Community Welfare (Child Care) Regulations 1987: Standards NT Child Care Centres 1997	Community Welfare (Child Care) Regulations 1987: Standards NT Child Care Centres 1997	None if less than 6 children under 6 years.	No Territory regulation if less than 6 children under 6 years of age. Guidelines for Home Based Child Care – published but legislated.	No	No territory regulations
South Australia	Mainly operated by Department of Education Training and Employment (DETE). Otherwise Children's Services (Child Care Centre) Regulations 1998	Children's Services (Child Care Centre) Regulations 1998	FDC National Standards in service agreements. DETE must approve services.	No state regulation if less than 4 children. If more than 4 children requires a licence under Children's Services Act	Licensed under the Children's Services Act as a babysitting agency.	OSHC National Standards in service agreements

Source: Press & Hayes, 2000.

Staff and qualifications

74. The staffing of ECEC varies according to the regulatory requirements of each State, and across the different kinds of services. There is again a general split, although not totally neat or complete, in the kind of qualifications required between long day care and pre-school services.

75. In general, pre-schools require at least one staff member to have a teaching qualification although it is not always required that the teaching qualification be an early childhood degree. Other staff could

include a pre-school assistant with a lesser qualification. Teaching degrees for early childhood and schools may be three or four years and are gained through the university sector which is funded by the Commonwealth. An early childhood degree enables teachers to work in all ECEC services, and in some instances in the early years of school up to year 3.

76. Long day care centres employ a mix of trained and untrained staff whose qualifications have originated mainly in the vocational sector through State and Territory-funded Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions. In some places the supervisor of a long day care centre may be required to have a higher level qualification and in some jurisdictions a pre-school teacher is required. A range of qualifications are recognised in long day care, some no longer being taught. The main qualification is now the Diploma of Community Services and the Advanced Diploma of Community Services, which can be preceded by Certificate level qualifications. These qualifications can allow for specialisations in centre-based care, outside school hours care or family day care.

77. Staff co-ordinating family day care schemes are required to have relevant qualifications in jurisdictions where regulations apply. Family day carers are required to have a first aid certificate. There is increasing encouragement for carers to undergo training. Orientation programmes are often a requirement.

78. The training approaches in TAFE and university contexts are different. In a TAFE setting, training is offered via nationally endorsed packages which set out the relevant competencies to be attained. In the university sector, the teaching degrees are academically based and the content determined primarily by the institution. Both require practical work in early childhood settings. There are mechanisms for articulating the diploma and advanced diploma qualifications into a degree although some universities found it difficult to mesh the two approaches. Tensions between the two training sectors reinforce a split between care and education, theory and practice that may not be the reality in the respective programmes.

79. The wages and conditions of early childhood personnel are determined by various award or enterprise agreements, and involve a number of industrial unions. There are significant disparities between the wages and conditions between teachers in long day care and teachers in pre-schools and schools. The amount of unpaid overtime that child care workers and teachers and centre directors take on is significant, alongside a considerable voluntary component from parents and staff in a number of the ECEC services.

Research

80. In the past, the energy of early childhood professionals has been directed mainly to the priority need for provision and advocacy. In more recent years, there has been a much greater involvement in research and the building of a research infrastructure. This has in part been associated with realignments in the tertiary sector which saw the amalgamation of Colleges of Advanced Education with universities. There are several institutes associated with universities actively engaged in research, and a more vibrant research culture in early childhood has emerged over the past decade. One example is the Australian Research in Early Childhood Education Conference held annually since 1993 at the University of Canberra. The *Journal of Australian Research in Early Childhood Education* publishes the proceedings. Research funding is available through the Australian Research Council. 16 projects involving infants or young children were funded during 1990-9, but few had a specific ECEC focus. Various government agencies commission research for specific purposes particularly in relation to evaluations of projects or reviews of literature. Overall, there is still much reliance on research from North America and the UK.

Summary overview of ECEC in States and Territories visited by the OECD review team
(figures provided by the Australian Background Report of State offices)

South Australia

81. In South Australia, all ECEC services are under the responsibility of the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE). There are, however, different legislative jurisdictions and funding regimes for ECEC services which still create 'residual barriers'. Nevertheless, DETE has looked at how to bring the parts closer together in a more integrated way. There have been challenges in relation to divides between: care and education, private – community, compulsory – non compulsory centre-school based and home-based sector. The development of integrated services where possible, an emphasis on the importance of the early years, and a more seamless approach to curriculum that encompass learning from 0-18 years are key aspects of policy development in DETE. In the school sector, which includes pre-school, DETE is introducing Partnership 21 a model of management that gives more control and responsibility to local communities in the management decisions in the funding, staffing and implementation of policy the school settings.

82. 90% of four year old children in South Australia attend free four half day sessions a week at pre-school. DETE provides programmes for 19,090 pre-school aged children at 415 pre-schools - the majority of which are community operated. 650 children attend 37 play centre programmes often in more rural locations which cannot support a pre-school. In other children's services under the umbrella of DETE, 17,500 children are in child care, 14,500 in family day care, 15,000 in play groups, 2500 children attend 65 occasional care programmes and 21,000 children are in outside school hours and vacation care. The latter has grown dramatically over the past five years.

83. In 1999 DETE released *The Plan for Aboriginal Early Childhood and School 1999-2003*, supported also by Aboriginal Perspectives on the Early Years of Learning (1999). This complements the Foundation Areas for Learning, the early childhood curriculum document in South Australia.

New South Wales

84. In New South Wales (NSW), the primary legislative, funding and policy responsibility for ECEC, other than school, rests with the Department of Community Services (DoCS), through its Office of Child Care. The Department of Education and Training (DET) is concerned with the school sector and the pre-schools attached to schools. DET operates 78 pre-schools which offer one year of pre-school education for 4016 children in the year prior to school entry. Nine of these pre-schools are located in Aboriginal communities, catering for 208 children. DET pre-schools are established at local primary school sites in disadvantaged areas to aid children's transition to school. NSW is the only State without universal pre-school provision for four year olds. Community-based pre-schools often include three year olds. Under the umbrella of DET, TAFE operate 20 long day care centres attached to TAFE colleges. DET also operates 46 early intervention classes in mainstream schools. Fourteen of these are co-located with DET pre-schools. Long day care centres and community pre-schools with over 30 children must employ a pre-school teacher.

85. The NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services *The Practice of Relationships* (2000) (currently in draft) is intended to replace older curriculum guidelines and will apply across all children's services and pre-schools in NSW. The NSW Government has developed and approved a child-centred policy framework for early childhood with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and a growing interest in the intrinsic value of the early childhood years.

86. NSW also gives funding to non profit childcare, for example by funding an operational subsidy for non profit long day care. There is a long history of community based management of childcare in the NSW through organisations such as the Kindergarten Union. The Union also operates four Aboriginal centres. Family Day Care is separately regulated as a service and caters for 24,090 children. Altogether combined State and Commonwealth funding provides child care places for 47,000 pre-school aged children and 15,000 places for older children in out of school programmes.

ACT

87. In the Australian Capital Territory, as in South Australia, all responsibility for ECEC rests with one department: the Department of Education and Community Services. Responsibility for both pre-school services and child care licensing are located in the Children's Services Branch of the Department. The Department regulates child care centres, outside school hours care and family day care. The Australian Capital Territory is currently consulting on a draft (October 1999) three-year plan for pre-schools within the context of the range of ECEC services available. In Canberra, there are 80 pre-schools catering for 3694 four year olds. Three of these pre-schools cater for 58 Indigenous children. An Indigenous Services Plan is currently being developed. The pre-schools provide 10.5 free hours a week to children. Participation is around 90%. There are also 79 long day care centres, 11 occasional centres, 17 play schools, 5 Family Day Care Schemes and 4 independent pre-schools and 106 school age care programmes. An early childhood curriculum framework, *Connections: A Framework for Learning* is now in draft form (see discussion in Chapter 4).

Northern Territory

88. There are 3599 four-year-old children using government funded or provided pre-schools. The figure is higher than the four-year-old population and it is suggested that children can be double or even triple counted. Participation rates are therefore uncertain. Territory Health Services is responsible for all formal ECEC services other than school and half day pre-schools. The latter come under the auspices of the Department of Education and are usually co-located with schools. Issues of transition from pre-school to primary school are given emphasis. Territory Health Services focus on early childhood in the context of child health and care with support for families. Most child care centres 'stand alone' and have limited contact with the education sector. Territory Health and the Northern Territory Department of Education are currently collaborating to establish a 'whole of government' approach to the development and implementation of early childhood policy. At present, services for care and education are in separate domains. Issues of distance in the Northern Territory pose challenges of access and provision. A few pre-school children access programmes through School of the Air (described in more detail later) which provides resources and contact with parents and children. Northern Territory pre-schools use the South Australia curriculum document *Foundation Areas of Learning*.

89. Indigenous early childhood responsibilities sit in the Indigenous Education Branch of the Department of Education. There are 30 early childhood sites across the Territory. Some are community-based others are school-based. Issues of distance and remoteness pose additional challenges. Sometimes pre-school children will be grouped with children in a junior primary class. Child health is also a key concern, as it is estimated that 80% of Indigenous children are affected by ear infections which reduce hearing.

Brief summary of ECEC in other States and Territories (from the Australian Background Report)

90. **Queensland:** The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care (FYCC) is concerned with all formal ECEC services other than schools and pre-schools. The latter come under the auspices of Education Queensland. Policy for ECEC services outside school lies within the context of meeting family needs.

91. **Tasmania:** Responsibility for all ECEC services now rests with the Department of Education. This has been a relatively recent move designed to facilitate linkages between schools and child care, to cater more comprehensively for children's educational, care and welfare needs, and to improve the co-ordination of support for families.

92. **Victoria:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) takes responsibility for all ECEC other than school, including the funding of most pre-schools. The Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) has responsibility for schools. Recent policy changes enable school councils to operate pre-schools, however, these are still funded and regulated by the DHS. DHS links ECEC with other services which support families with young children including maternal and child health services.

93. **Western Australia:** The Education Department of Western Australia provides a universal, free, kindergarten and pre-primary education service within an integrated school system. This system offers one part-time year and one full-time year of schooling before the compulsory school age. Family and Children's Services (FCS) has responsibility for all ECEC services other than school and pre-school.

CHAPTER 4: ISSUES AND INNOVATION IN ECEC IN AUSTRALIA

94. The policy issues identified for comment in this chapter arise primarily from what the review team saw, what we were told, and what we asked, as well as what we read in the documents received and requested. The snapshot was intensive and wide ranging, and the outside insight of the team has brought different cultural and policy perspectives to complement the Australia Background Report. It is in the spirit of support and professional dialogue that the reviewers offer their outsiders' perceptions of nine policy issues. The issues identified are a few parts of the 'patchwork' that provide some patterns for the 'tapestry' of a national direction, strategy, plan, vision for young children and ECEC. The team is aware of the sensitivity with which such issues need to be addressed, particularly, in a situation where governance arrangements are already complex and delicately balanced. The twinning of issues and innovation supports the team's understanding that the issues are already identified, and that some innovative initiatives already underway signpost the future. The team acknowledges that various Australian colleagues in the course of the visit referred openly to the issues that we discuss.

Geographic distance and ECEC provision

95. The vast size and sparse population distribution across Australia will always be a challenge to ECEC provision. On the other hand Australian people, community organisations and policy makers have long experience in addressing the issues of distance through the keys of pragmatism, flexibility and funding. Nevertheless, issues of access and choice, affordability and quality, staff qualifications and retention are most acute in remote settings. So, too, is the paucity of support systems for parents at home, and for ECEC staff and services that operate in remote areas. Population downturn in small towns in rural Australia is causing further pressure on the viability of existing services.

96. Multi-functional child care services under FaCS Child Care Support is one successful policy response. FaCS works with state, territory and local governments to encourage provision in rural and regional areas and develop ways of meeting child care needs. Child Care Support assists 2,000 services providing 58,000 places in rural and regional areas. Models developed include a range of services delivered from one site, mobile multipurpose services covering a number of communities, 'on farm' child care for isolated farm families, and multi-sited child care services with a mobile support unit. The establishment of new services in these areas involves community development activities to ensure that services meet the particular needs of communities, and that they are viable in the longer term. In some locations, a Disadvantaged Area Subsidy is available to services. Programmes are allowed great flexibility in terms of funding, location, opening hours, and regulations.

97. In South Australia, co-location and integration of ECEC and school are approaches to provision in remote or rural areas. As an example, the Nurioopta Community Children's Centre – an integrated early childhood service for children under five in a rural town – is providing a 'one stop' service for families. In more remote locations in South Australia pre-school aged children are included in school aged classrooms, or for younger children, a family day care service is situated alongside a pre-school. Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) has provided 'on-farm care' and other family support services to address child care issues in farming communities. In the Northern Territory, pre-school classes are formed from a group

of schools to provide a viable and cohesive stand alone programme. *Indigenous E.C. Stars* (Vol. 1, No. 1) provides insight into very remote ventures using a trailer, a mobile pre-school linked to a school, and 'pre-school in a box' using a portable classroom. For 21 years in NSW, the organisation Contact Incorporated has supported isolated people caring for young children and identifying areas of need. Funding support for Contact comes from the Commonwealth Children's Services Program. These examples should not disguise the difficulties, but they demonstrate the resourcefulness of existing initiatives.

98. The School of the Air is possibly the most well known Australian innovation in the field of distance and very remote education. The review team visited the Alice Springs School of the Air (there are others) in the outback of the Northern Territory. The school caters for 120 children aged from 4 to 12 years who live across an area of 1.2 million square miles on pastoral cattle stations, or whose parents work as doctors, nurses, police, government officials in remote settlements, or who belong to remote Indigenous communities. The school provides on air two-way communication lessons, correspondence lessons, home visits and town visits for children. The older children are also 'on-line'. Toy boxes and parent education materials are sent to pre-school children. The focus is to provide a source of interesting learning activities for the child to share with another adult. The transition class for five year olds integrates the areas of learning around twelve, two week themes. The concern of staff is that there are no organised activities for children prior to aged four. The School of the Air booklet sums up the ongoing challenge for ECEC provision in Australia:

In spite of all this innovation it is clear that geographic isolation is a factor which will always make our students educationally disadvantaged in some ways. At the same time the individualised lesson packages, the presentation of interesting radio lessons, instructional videos, computers and personal contact with a dedicated teacher should ensure that the educational service available to the isolated central Australia child is the best possible (p. 21).

99. The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in Alice Springs offers distance childcare training in a number of remote communities. It also provides community support to remote centres. The increasing demand for both training and support reflects the growth of, and interest in early childhood education in both Indigenous and remote communities. Few of the communities are able to sustain a fully licensed childcare centre. Often those who wish to establish a child care service have had very little experience in or familiarity with formal child care settings. It is important for training to include exposure to other existing programmes and to allow time for discussion about the relevancy of existing licensing conditions for their own community setting (Wilshire, 2000). Close community liaison and the tailoring of programmes for adults and children to meet community needs is the key to success. The cost of this in time, people and resources is not always factored into ECEC funding.

Initiatives and issues regarding ECEC for Indigenous children

100. Earlier sections of the report summarise some Commonwealth initiatives to address educational and economic disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. The State and Territory governments are also developing more proactive and consultative policies in both urban and rural settings. There are considerable resources tagged to these programmes. Yet, for Indigenous children, important health, educational and attendance issues can arise in the school setting, set within the broader context of economic and social disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous communities. For both school and early childhood sectors, there are also issues of qualifications and autonomy for Indigenous staff. Yet in this situation, the review team was privileged to see some very encouraging programmes. The key to the success of these programmes, are the elements of self determination, cultural ownership, respect, and for

some, language. The examples below are presented in some detail but are illustrative of diverse approaches to some different situations and aspirations of Indigenous Australians.

101. Darlington Public School in Sydney is a mainstream school attended by children from a diverse range of cultures and included two pre-school classes for four year olds. One third of the children are Indigenous and the school was designated a priority Aboriginal school. There are three Indigenous staff members (not teachers) who are charged with supporting the learning of Indigenous children and given 'community time' beyond the school. The most striking feature for the team was the visible vibrancy of Indigenous art and the awareness that these children and their culture were valued. Embedded in this was also the cultural celebration and respect of all children. Literacy programmes feature strongly in programmes with older children. The team watched a teacher using a microphone during one such session to overcome the hearing deficiencies of children.⁷ Some teachers expressed concern that literacy initiatives should not outweigh a developmental, cultural and social focus in the early years programme. To that end, self-esteem and self-assurance were key planks of the pre-school programme and the medium was play and discovery. There was a sense of emerging partnership between Indigenous, migrant and older Australians, and a place where a new generation of Australian children were being enriched by valuing cultural respect and identity.

102. At the remote Titjikala School in the Northern Territory, all the children are Indigenous. In 1999 the community decided to develop a Plan for teachers and the Department of Education to explain what the community wants and expects from the school. 'The teachers [not all Indigenous] will come and go but Titjikala people will always be here. The school is for the community'. It was decided to write the *tjukurpa* (story) of how the Plan was created. The Plan and the *Titjikala Tjukurpa* were developed in consultation with elders, the council, teachers and community: 'celebrating today, planning for tomorrow.' The Plan for learning at Titjikala School identified some key values, including: 'Everyone can teach and everyone can learn'; 'Having visitors and visiting other people', 'Learning about culture, learning about language'. Each of the values is elaborated into a number of goals. For example, five goals are about school as a place for having fun and friends and laughing. Also important are 'Speaking, reading, writing English', 'doing maths' and 'using computers'. *Titjikala Tjukurpa* is an expression of self determination describing how this small community is engaged in a process of exploring some different values for learning.

103. Yipirinya School is an independent, community-operated Aboriginal school with a unique history. The establishment of the school was the initiative of members of the Alice Springs town camp community in response to dissatisfaction with mainstream schools, which did not offer programmes which supported the world view and cultural background of the children. Parents were concerned that their children would lose their language and spiritual link with land. 'It was [also] felt that mainstream schools were also a source of humiliation for the children.' Yipirinya School was one of the first independent schools in Australia. The school includes a childcare centre and a pre-school. Yipirinya cares for children from 18 camps around Alice Springs plus some children who live in suburban housing. As the children and their families are much affected by poor health and living conditions, there is an emphasis on health and nutrition. Yipirinya School is well housed and receives Commonwealth and State Government support. The philosophical focus for the school is a 'two way bi-lingual/bi-cultural model' which reinforces oral and literacy skills in English as well as in four indigenous languages. There is much emphasis on reinforcing Aboriginal identity, cultural knowledge, values and spirituality. The school principal and some of the staff are non-indigenous Australians, but the cultural principal - a parallel position to the school principal - is Indigenous. The school demonstrates both autonomy and partnership, and has created a secure setting for nurturing and educating Indigenous children, their families, languages and cultures.

7. Many Indigenous children experience middle-ear infections and hearing deficiencies, as well as a range of other health and nutrition problems that can affect learning.

104. Yuendumu is one of the largest remote Indigenous desert communities. It was established in the 1940s as a feeding post during a famine. The community is renowned for its art and a community owned gallery provides work opportunities and recognition for Indigenous artists. A large art work underway, displayed outside on the red dirt was destined for a gallery in Paris. A childcare centre is attached to the school. The main language is Warlpiri and the name of the centre and the focus of the programme is Warlpiri kurdu-kurdu kurlangu kurla – children ‘learning both ways’ about Warlpiri and Kardiya (non Aboriginal people). There are fears that it will be a struggle to keep the Warlpiri language strong as the children use more English. Senior administrative officials in the school, police, council, church, medical services are non-indigenous Australian although all have indigenous counterparts in training. Early childhood staff are accessing training through the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education – an institution with an Indigenous Board of Management.

Supporting the people in the ECEC workforce

105. People, not policy or funding, are the most important resource for good ECEC services. The review team was impressed with the level of expertise across the spectrum of research, training, professional support, policy personnel, and particularly amongst teachers and other adults who work with children. There was considerable reflection on, and commitment to, quality services in the settings selected for the review team visits. In every setting, the eloquence and self awareness was notable, with staff with all levels of training, explaining what they do, why they do it and reflecting on what needed to be done. At the same time, staff ‘at the front line’ working with children and families are often working under pressure to deliver a quality programme for children. Feeling unsupported by management, the low status and conditions of work, funding cutbacks in community centres, ‘change fatigue’, the amount of voluntary work needed to do the job properly, ‘doing battle’ with various curriculum requirements, and the need to gain additional qualifications, were among the pressures identified by staff in a number of settings visited.

106. The poorer conditions of work for teachers and staff in the early childhood sector, compared to the other education sector groups, cannot but undermine quality, and counterbalance the investment governments are making in the sector, or the outcomes that policy makers are expecting from the sector. There are some key disparities in Australia. Where pre-school education is not linked to the education sector, the salaries of teachers are lower. This is particularly apparent, for example, in a state like Victoria where the pre-school teachers are employed by the community sector and not the government. In contrast, pre-school teachers in Western Australia, employed by the education department, have pay parity with their primary and secondary school colleagues. When pre-school teachers are employed in long day care settings their salaries and conditions of work are considerably poorer than teachers working in pre-schools. There are large divides in the pay and conditions of those staff with childcare training and those who are trained as teachers, the justifications of which seem deeply embedded in the care – education split and in the extent and level of training required. There also is a trend for child care staff who upgrade to a teaching qualification to leave the sector which may lead to staff shortages and recruitment difficulties in the future.

107. Ongoing professional development and professional support of teachers and staff was an issue raised in a variety of settings. Variation in the amount of the professional development provided, is partly dependent on industrial conditions and location. In some states, pre-school teachers and their assistants can access five days of approved planning time and staff development including extra days in designated periods during work hours. In another state, professional development is only available in out of work hours. Where staff did feel supported, there was often a professional advisor who would visit, engage in trouble shooting and keep staff up to date with policy and professional development issues. Increasing the investment in the support of teachers and their professional development could be a prudent investment in quality.

108. At the Mia Mia Child Care Centre in Sydney, places are in high demand. The centre is a showcase in terms of its architecture, programme for children and links with research and training. The staff are highly trained, and deeply committed to the children, their families and engaged in exploring new ideas in early education. This centre has all the elements of a quality programme. However, staff contribute well beyond the level of what they are paid or the hours they are paid, and staff meetings and planning (both of which are essential for a quality programme) occur mainly out of hours in unpaid time. This commitment is admirable, but providing quality ECEC should not rely on staff who can ill afford to work extra unpaid hours. Australia is not alone in facing this challenge.

109. Staffing issues are also a concern in family day care. Family day care has been a growth area and the provider of ECEC for many children. Strong family day care organisations, national standards and the plans for a QIAS for family day care are indicative of improving professional oversight for an early childhood programme reliant on mainly unqualified women at home. Professional support, induction and on-going training programmes are features of the schemes visited. At the Belconnen Family Day Care scheme in Canberra, for example, the FDC providers, were also employees with an award which guarantees their wages, and includes retirement benefits, holidays, sick leave etc. In most other schemes, however, providers are 'self employed' and collect their own 'wages' from the fees parents paid to them. The Belconnen scheme had 80 providers, 75% of whom have gained a Childcare Certificate in family day care. The others are all in training. In this scheme, the valuing of FDC providers as professional staff in a sector where remuneration and status tend to be quite low was notable.

Structural frameworks for ECEC provision

110. The complexity of the layers and divides of the structures for ECEC policy and provision in Australia are a challenge to change, but they also have encouraged some determined innovation. This section details three aspects noted by the review team: (1) the divides and integration of care and education; (2) the problems and possibilities of diversity; and (3) some models of integrated services. Any moves towards a national strategy to weave the diverse parts of the pattern into the 'tapestry' will need to balance the dynamics of innovation against the need for a structure that allows better co-ordination and fewer divides.

Care and education

111. The divide between the State and Commonwealth jurisdictions and the institutional framework of provision of ECEC that separates care and education has been described. Rolling back the history and politics underlying this is not possible, nor is there a will for a massive restructuring and realignment of services, funding, training and provision. From a policy perspective there is, however, a growing view that better co-ordination is imperative, and a through a number of jurisdictions have moved to a more integrated system (ACT, South Australia, Tasmania). From a pedagogical perspective more integration of care and education is necessary. Different perceptions relating to programmes for care and education are deeply embedded in the view that 'pre-school' is essential preparation for school. For parents, there is often the inconvenience, and for children unnecessary transitions, as they are moved between rooms, buildings and institutions from 'childcare' to 'pre-school' and vice versa.

112. Strategies to overcome the care and education separation are evident in a range of contexts. Improved co-ordination and collaboration across sectors and jurisdictions is, however, a process of adding on layers to bridge the divide. In most instances, however, full integration is constrained or prevented by funding and/or policy divides between State and Commonwealth jurisdictions. In the ACT and South Australian all children's services are under the same umbrella, even though funding and regulation is

separate. The development of integrated ECEC services is an innovative approach towards mediating the care and education divide. Nevertheless, each of these services is, as one policy official described, a microcosm of the tensions in system with different jurisdictions. For example, at one integrated service, the childcare part of the programme is subject to QIAS processes whereas the pre-school programme is not. Staff are paid differently; there are ‘teachers’ and ‘workers’ depending on whether staff are employed in the pre-school or childcare programme, and children move between rooms depending on whether they are in the pre-school or childcare part of the programme, and on the time of day. The costs, too, are different for parents. Despite the difficulties encountered, the ongoing policy commitment of, for instance, South Australia and the ACT to a cohesive approach to early childhood services is an approach to be supported.

113. The separate training of pre-school teachers and staff for childcare is one of the most evident structural aspects of the care and education separation. This is compounded by State and Commonwealth funding jurisdictions and, as stated in Chapter 3, different philosophical approaches to the packaging of theoretical and practical knowledge. The care and education divides and the related issues of status and training reinforce a separation of programmes in relation to the age of children. The assumption being that younger aged children in childcare do not need highly-trained teachers and are in programmes that have less educational emphasis. The review team saw programmes that did not support this assumption and observed very young children in rich learning environments, particularly in childcare settings with more qualified staff. Pre-schools are primarily for children from four years of age and have teachers with university teaching degrees – although not always early childhood. Staff who work with younger aged children in childcare are trained in TAFEs as vocational workers, but not as teachers.

114. Any national strategy for ECEC that moves towards more structural integration of care and education will need a parallel reform of qualification structures which currently institutionalise the divide. Early childhood training has always been a patchwork, and the need for diversity will remain. Unlike schools, training for ECEC includes people with minimal or no entry qualifications who can, however, progress through a pathway of learning to higher qualifications. The progression of qualifications is in place, and Australia has comprehensive training and teacher education programmes, but consideration of the consequence of the current divides is timely. Submissions from tertiary institutions indicate that attempts to do this are underway but both structural and attitudinal barriers remain. Achieving integrated programmes of care and education for children would need:

- TAFEs and universities to provide more integrated training/degrees and/or smoother pathways between the different qualification structures and levels. The university sector is divided on the extent and kind of collaboration there should be with TAFE training programmes.
- Industrial conditions that focus on the level and length of the qualification of early childhood staff rather than the place of work (i.e., child care vs. pre-school setting).
- Breaking down of divisions between staff who ‘teach’, who ‘work’ and who ‘assist’.

115. The CESCEO Early Childhood Education Working Party has been crafting some philosophical definitions and rationales across the early childhood sectors and jurisdictions which could be a foundation for bridging structural divides. The draft discussion document *Literacy and numeracy and social outcomes*, emphasises the ‘inseparable nature of care and education for young children’ (2000, p. 1), and the ‘holistic way education and care are necessarily twined. Early childhood services blur the distinctions between the two’ (p. 4). The work of CESCEO across states territories and between ministers will remain complex, but the working party is in a position to significantly influence ways in which structures can be more accommodating to philosophical ideals and practical realities.

Diversity

116. Australia has an impressive range of services in the field of ECEC. Some services are very unique and connected with the particular conditions of the country. The separate historical development of ECEC in each State or Territory, and a history of welcoming new people and new ideas underpins much of the diversity. The long involvement of community endeavour, political advocacy, and its 'do-it-yourself' dynamics along with the growth of the private sector has also encouraged diversity. Regardless of the question of access and affordability there seems to be a service for every situation of children and their parents. This has enabled innovation in a way not possible in an overly ordered and/or controlled approach to the development of ECEC provision.

117. The diversity of ECEC services, however, has a cost in the fragmentation, which has been described earlier. These issues have become of concern as Australia as a nation is looking towards its early childhood services as a foundation for a number of key educational, social, and economic policies. The effect 'on the ground' is that different services are scattered and even when they are co-located or in the same neighbourhood, their positioning into different structural arrangements relating to policy, regulations and funding, prevents close working relationships and causes isolation. Pre-schools often have a closer relationship with their neighbourhood school for older age children than they do with a nearby child care centre with children the same age. There is a need for the assumptions of a care and education split to be put to the fore and discussed openly before issues of staffing, funding, and curriculum can be addressed. The issue is not about the range or variety of provision but about diversity in quality offered to families and diversity in access.

Integration

118. The integration of ECEC services is being encouraged as good for families and children: a convenient service to families, a seamless experience for children and providing an improved processes for monitoring children's development and transitions. Structural and philosophical divides limit the possibilities, and the models of integration are varied. The Commonwealth Department of FaCS is encouraging integrated services for children particularly in rural and remote areas. Combinations might include long day care, family day care and out of school care. The South Australian Department of Education has given considerable thought to integration, although industrial barriers prevent staff being fully interchangeable and officials acknowledge that the 'residual barriers [which] arise in sharp relief where there are separate Ministers'. Officials talk of the ideal of integrated services with mixed ages of children rather than age segregated arrangements. Integration also means the co-location of a range of early childhood, school and community services for children, and families. The Adelaide Lady Gowrie Centre combines a range of infant and toddler programmes, a pre-school and childcare programme. There is a training centre, a resource and publishing wing, advisory services to other centres and parent support programmes. The Centre demonstrates the balanced interface between quality ECEC for children, support for families and communities, and support for professionals who provide the fabric of ECEC.

119. There are many models for integration, and ideals of diversity and choice guide some innovative possibilities. The philosophical principles, the needs of children, and the situation of staff that guide ECEC seemed less clearly articulated (particularly where this integration is in a school setting). The commitment to smoother transitions, and improving the links between care and education is a foundation for this articulation.

Policy priorities and the interests of children

120. Chapter 2 identifies key Commonwealth policy priorities underpinning recent policy decisions and interest in the ECEC sector from the Department of FaCS and DETYA. Some of these priorities are already strong forces, and shape the kind and cost of early childhood services available to parents. The ad hoc development of early childhood policy over the years in relation to the needs of parents, the workplace, and the economy, has tended to subsume the needs and interests of children as being synonymous. There are tensions in this, and it is opportune to reflect on current policy priorities from a perspective that places the interests and needs of children to the fore. At present, the interests and needs of children are constructed more often in terms of educational outcomes, family outcomes, economic outcomes etc. There was little evidence of a discourse on children's rights in relation to ECEC. While it is heartening to see strong government interest in supporting ECEC, the development of cohesive rationales for such investment that place realistic demands on teachers, parents and children need some consideration.

National Literacy and Numeracy Plan

121. Commonwealth strategies and funding to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy of all Australian children are noted in Chapter 2. Two documents outline the national perspective: *Literacy for all: The Challenge for Australian Schools*, (DETYA 1998) and *Numeracy, a Priority for All: Challenges for Australian Schools* (DETYA, 2000a). The focus of the policy is on the school sector, nevertheless there is awareness of its impact on ECEC. There are differing views about how this should effect programmes for very young children. All states have developed and are implementing literacy and numeracy strategies for school-age children. In State Government offices, schools, classes and centres, the review team saw and heard much discussion about literacy and numeracy. Policy officials will be heartened to see the enthusiasm in which the strategies are being addressed. The team saw some excellent resources to support this work in both schools and ECEC. To measure the success of the strategy there are State-based assessments against national benchmarks in years 3, 5, and 7 – approximately ages 8, 11, and 13. Some teachers who work with Indigenous students are concerned, however, that the timing and methods (e.g., measures that are separated from Indigenous culture) of the national benchmarking are not appropriate for Indigenous children.

122. There are dangers and possibilities in the Commonwealth focus on ECEC through the framework of a literacy and numeracy agenda. Such issues are caught amidst debates regarding the balance between the 'here and now' of childhood and an investment with the future adult in mind. The danger is the push down of school-based literacy and numeracy expectations into the early years. At worst this leads, often in the hands of inexperienced and lesser trained staff (of which there are many in the ECEC sector), to inappropriate skill based teaching of numbers and letters etc. It can also require ECEC staff to 'prepare' children to meet inappropriate school expectations. Parents may become concerned that their children will fall behind in school if the early childhood curriculum does not explicitly focus on literacy and numeracy. It is timely to reposition and articulate how literacy and numeracy can be integrated throughout broad and holistic early childhood curricula in ways that can balance the importance of life long skills in literacy and numeracy with, for example, the social skills that children need to become competent learners. Early childhood researchers and policy makers in Australia are aware of these dilemmas, and within some of the centres visited by the review team, innovative early literacy and numeracy projects are underway. The national Background Report notes, however, that national programmes for children in Australia have been linked traditionally to economic policy, family policy and latterly, to education policy. "An explicitly defined and primary focus upon children is only just beginning to emerge, and then only in some jurisdictions."

123. Although in parts of Australia some pre-schools are located within schools, and most children begin school by age five, ECEC has goals and aims that are distinct from and broader than those of the school. ECEC is an institution in its own right whose first task is not preparing children for school but supporting children as learners in wide range of contexts, and by providing children with the chance to find their individual way towards the world of adults and society. Play and self motivated actions are the ‘motors’ of children’s development and learning. Support of early literacy and numeracy can arise out these understandings of children’s development, without becoming the main motivation for ECEC programmes. Along these lines, the CESCEO draft discussion paper emphasises that the context for successful literacy and numeracy development is a consequence of a broad range of factors, and identifies areas of policy that need to be addressed first as ‘a way forward’.

Closing the gaps

There is a wide gap between those who enter school well prepared for learning and those who are least prepared. Unless this gap is closed in the first years of school, it will widen, limiting the opportunities for some children to participate in education (DETYA, 1998, p. 13)

124. The Commonwealth Government has broad policy goals towards closing the gaps in educational achievement, with a vision of a society in which all adults ‘have a chance’ of participating equitably. The National Literacy and Numeracy Plan—which includes assessment, reporting and early intervention—is a key plank in this quest, as is the focus on Indigenous education. ‘All students can and should acquire the essential skills for life in modern society’ (DETYA, 2000b). It seemed to the review team that the curriculum development underway will be an effective strategy to raise achievement.

125. ECEC is regarded as one of the ‘preventative actions’ that can assist in overcoming disadvantage. Historically, this is not an unusual role for early childhood, or for governmental rationales for support to ECEC services. It seems important that ECEC grab the momentum but be active in ‘charting the course’. The way in which ECEC is incorporated into this vision will need careful consultation with the sector. The idea of a national strategy for early childhood founded on some agreed philosophical principles of children, is opportune for ‘charting the course’. It is important to go beneath the layers of programmes and plans, and be mindful too that the infrastructure of quality—planning, monitoring, support, staff training, research and development—is a key predictor for making a difference for children. Investing in the fabric of quality in ECEC, addressing issues of access and affordability, are also necessary planks for ECEC to realistically make a difference. Another plank is training, and the DETYA Literacy Policy (1998) cites Bridie Raban’s view that, ‘It is crucial that parents, members of families, carers and teachers employed within child care centres and pre-school have access to education and training that will enable them to facilitate and enhance the emergent literacy knowledge of children...’ (p. 13).

Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

126. The *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* is designed to ensure that families have the skills and capacity for self reliance. The Commonwealth government recognises that childcare programmes and benefits, can act as a ‘platform’ for this strategy by providing both ‘prevention and early intervention’ for children and their families. The government recently commissioned a review of the early childhood literature to aid in the strategy (The Centre for Community Child Health, 2000) and has expressed its broad interest concerning the amount of ECEC ‘intervention’ needed along with issues of access and quality.

127. The focus on the child in the family has become therefore an important arm of the Commonwealth Child Care Program. It will be important, however, that the programme maintain its universal focus towards all children and families and that a rationale of ‘intervention and prevention’ does

not move towards a targeted or ‘at risk’ focus for ECEC. There is a level at which early childhood issues are intertwined with other broad social or education issues, such as poverty reduction, strong families or equality of opportunity in education. The experience of countries with high quality, comprehensive services for young children would suggest, however, that successful policies position all young children - their rights and specific developmental interests - to the fore. Children and families in disadvantaged situations will always need, and should receive, additional kinds of support, but this can be achieved through a universal approach. Moreover, universal approaches tend to garner broad public support and are less likely to stigmatise at-risk populations. In sum, government funding for ECEC can be justified as both an immediate and long term benefit, for *all* children and their families.

128. Strong families are a product of strong communities. Rearing and educating children is a shared responsibility. These sentiments reflect the increasing governmental interest in ECEC in its ‘partnership’ with families. Focussing on the fabric of support for families within communities will strengthen families, but as Raban (2000) writes:

Policy reconceptualisations are required that enable families to easily access all services available for the successful development during the early years of life...This responsibility needs to be acknowledged and shared with families, all of whom should expect to receive support from their communities, community groups, local/regional/State and Territory, federal government departments, employers, and other stakeholders (p. xii).

129. The Pines Campus in Adelaide is a successful strategy for strengthening a community. In this school setting there is a network of co-located services for children including a kindergarten (pre-school), childcare, out of school and vacation care, occasional care, playgroup, plus a range of health, library, multicultural units and programmes for children with special needs. The campus is providing what is described as ‘full service’ for a range of needs and ‘a seamless provision of care and education for children from 0-13 years, as well support services for parents and families’. The various schools and services worked in co-ordination with each other although some, like the child care centre, were also autonomous.

Parental choice

130. Parental choice is an important theme in Australia, which emerges in various contexts. In the context of education, there is a long history of parents choosing private (not for profit) schools which are supported by the Commonwealth and state governments. Similarly, the diversity of ECEC provision is supported politically as an expression of parental choice, an opportunity for parents to exercise choice on behalf of their children, and to meet their own needs. That this is synonymous with the interest of children was often assumed. It was presumed, too, that government would have a key responsibility in supporting parental choice. The market place should enhance this choice. Issues of access, affordability, quality suggest, however, that some further consideration may be necessary concerning the meaning of parental choice in this context. To what extent does ECEC provision meet the needs of children and preferences of parents—across different ethnic, urban/rural, and social-economic groups?

Levelling the playing field

131. Preliminary research by FaCS suggests that both access to and affordability of early childhood services have improved since the introduction of the Child Care Benefit, the system of fee subsidies for all parents using formal approved child care. Parents now receive fee subsidies to access childcare in both private (for-profit) and community centres. This constitutes a shift from funding the service providers to funding families. The recent removal of an operational subsidy to community centres is seen also by

Government and the private for-profit sector as a further 'levelling of the playing field.' The dramatic rise in the number and proportion of private centres (73%) has altered the face of long day care provision in Australia. Hayden (2000) argues, too, that there has also been a shift in the construction of child care as a community service to seeing it also as a business.

132. Representing private childcare centres, the Australian Federation of Child Care Associations presented their perspective on seeing early education and care as a business:

Yes we are people who run a small business, but like doctors, private hospitals and dentists we are people who have chosen to invest in a community service, and we take our commitment to providing a high quality, early childhood service very seriously. We have invested our money, time and skills in the future social capital of this country, in the celebration of early childhood and supporting families.

The views of the community sector are expressed in the submission from the NSW Association of Community Based Children's Services:

Historically the non-profit sector has been the guardian of child care standards...[including licensing, State and Commonwealth funding campaigns, accreditation, improved wages and conditions for staff, training and higher qualifications]...The Australian system of community based, non-profit care developed from a public vision of the well-being of children and families.

133. Senior FaCS officials voice strong support for the 'proactive' and 'smart' management practices of many private centres, which offer an increasing range of services to families, and provide a quality service, sometimes at a lower cost. FaCS surveys indicate that both affordability and access have improved since the introduction of the Child Care Benefit. To address uneven growth of the private sector, the Government has rationed places available for subsidy. Yet, balancing public investment in childcare with private investment that creates private profit in the private sector is a delicate matter.

134. Centres in the community sector are still dealing with the impact of the removal of operational subsidies. The review team was made aware of the realities of this in a range of centres visited. Consequent In these centres - often in low socio-economic neighbourhoods - fee rises for parents, consequent to the removal of operational subsidies, were not always able to be offset by parental subsidies. Parents were cutting back the hours of attendance for children and packaging cheaper options, though there are signs that patterns of service usage are changing with the introduction of the new Child Care Benefit. Centres are dealing with far more families and children for the same number of places, which makes a busier and more stressful place for staff and children. Related employment, training and staffing issues have left many community centres acknowledging that quality has been compromised. The community sector see the 'level playing field' as a policy which encourages competition amongst providers to keep fees affordable, but overlooks variables that have an impact on quality. The government argument is that encouraging investment from the private sector has enabled the demand for child care places to be met.

135. There are broad issues at stake here, regarding who benefits and who may be disadvantaged by a market oriented approach to the provision of ECEC services. The experience of other countries would suggest that the introduction of the market model in the education field offers some advantages but also creates difficulties for low-income families and their children. While some centres may meet effectively consumer requirements, corrective action by government is needed to promote equity - a central aim of many national education systems. If market forces are allowed to operate, special programmes and additional resources need to be provided to disadvantaged neighbourhoods and special groups, to ensure that the education institutions in place do not reinforce social stratification and disadvantage. Compensatory intervention is needed even more in the early childhood field: firstly because in many neighbourhoods,

early childhood services and the infrastructure are scarce, or may not even exist; secondly, unlike the free primary school, early childhood services normally carry a fee, which may be at the limit of affordability for some parents; and thirdly, because research shows that poverty has a decisive impact on the educational performance of young children, and that this impact is most pronounced when the child is youngest. For these reasons, the concerns expressed by providers about multiple care arrangements arising from affordability constraints, or about the deterioration of quality in community centres serving poor neighbourhoods need to be examined.

136. A predominantly market approach to organising early childhood provision also raises concerns about the future of early childhood professionals. When centres competitively keep their fees low to remain affordable, and yet need a profitable return on capital investment, savings will generally come, on the one hand, through improved business practices and economies of scale, and on the other, through lowering investment in staff, in areas such as salaries, training, qualifications, favourable child-staff ratios, and opportunities for professional development. Economies on staffing may be a particular danger in Australia where, unless the number of young children exceeds a specified limit (from 1:8 to 1:20 depending on location), there is no need to employ qualified staff. The Australian Background Report notes that “Resistance to increasing the numbers of staff to children and qualification requirements, arises from the fact that higher numbers of staff to children and higher qualifications both cause the cost of service provision to rise.” Yet, from many countries, there is sufficient research to indicate that training and retaining high quality staff lies at the heart of effective ECEC policy, particularly in contemporary society where early childhood staff must take on growing educational and social responsibilities. The government response has been to ensure adherence to quality standards through certain staffing ratios and licensing requirements, in particular through the QIAS for long day care centres, both private for profit and not for profit. Although useful, it will be important to monitor whether these measures alone can maintain and improve quality sufficiently, or whether a more proactive approach to initial training, staffing requirements and professional development is needed.

Gender, employment and ECEC

137. The employment of women was once the prime rationale for Commonwealth child care policy. Commonwealth interest in ECEC has broadened and is increasingly emphasising the importance of quality experiences for children, as well as its role as a support for working parents. The consequence of more flexible and casual employment patterns has had an impact on ECEC. The responsiveness of the ECEC sector to broaden its role and services to accommodate the needs of parents in the workforce is evident. FaCS policy is to encourage flexibility and diversity of ECEC provision. The consequent growth and scope of out-of-school provision, the flexibility of family day care and occasional care centres assist many working parents. These initiatives have gained government support in a variety of ways.

138. On the other hand, there is less evidence that the workplace is recognising the family needs of its workers, both male and female. Although Federal workplace legislation entitles workers, with family responsibilities and at least 12 months continuous service with their employer, to take a total of 52 weeks unpaid leave on a shared basis to care for their new-born or newly adopted child, Australian women, compared to their European counterparts, have access to minimal maternity leave benefits. Only an estimated 20% of working women are entitled to paid maternity leave, and there is little access to paid

maternity leave in the private sector. Approximately 40% of working women are not eligible even for unpaid maternity leave.⁸

139. It is timely to consider the extent to which ECEC services can continue to mediate the demands of the workplace and the rearing of young children. Overly flexible provision, fragmentation of care, and longer hours, particularly for very young children, start to undermine the quality of ECEC. Moreover, key educational and developmental goals for ECEC are compromised. A better reconciliation of work and family is needed with the onus of responsibility shifting from ECEC to include the workplace. The consequences of a situation which gives the workplace advantages at a cost to family and child well-being is an issue that affects the cohesion of society. The review team recognises that initiating such public discussion about the needs of children and families in an industrial society, and the global economy, may be challenging.

Curriculum development in ECEC

140. There is a bevy of activity and debate concerning issues of curriculum across Australia. These developments originate from Commonwealth strategies for schooling in general, and literacy and numeracy in particular. The trend towards promulgating national curriculum statements in education, however, is world wide, and reflects global trends to articulate links more clearly between schooling and the economy. As a consequence, governments are seeking more control and standardisation over curriculum matters.

141. A number of States and Territories have curriculum documents relating to ECEC either in preparation, or completed. The documents are constructed from various perspectives and for a variety of purposes. Some are ambitious in scope and detail, such as *the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability* (SACSA) Framework that spans from 0 – 18 years. Others, such as the NSW *Practice of Relationships* (April 2000) consultation document, is a succinct philosophical framework for curriculum and practice for children from birth to school entry. The extent and implications of such intensive development, however, has its cost. On the one hand, teachers expressed that they were ‘suffering from change fatigue,’ and they needed additional resources for issues such as professional development to learn to implement the curriculum. On the hand, curriculum development and its implementation are providing a forum for reflection, debate and clarification of the distinctive contexts of learning and development in the early years. Issues of transition to school are also much to the fore.

142. South Australia has been grappling with early childhood curriculum for much of the past decade. *The Foundation Areas of Learning* (FALS) (Department of Education and Children’s Services [DECS], 1996) document has been a resource across Australia and beyond. Staff feel that it is good to work with. This document was preceded by two earlier documents (1989 and 1991), and has now been superseded by the 0-18 years SACSA Framework, although the areas of learning from FALS are incorporated. The SACSA Framework is probably unique in its inclusion of such a wide age range across diverse settings. The framework is divided into age areas of 0-3, 3-5, and 5-8 for children in the early years. The 0-3 document is still in draft and the full framework is still being trialled. The goal is to ‘build a seamless system’ of learning not only in terms of curriculum but also in services. Transitions and continuity are key themes. Concern about the dangers of a downward push from the school curriculum into ECEC is met with the rejoinder that, ‘we are looking for the opportunities of an upward push’. Debates over learning areas in the early years versus subject areas for older children, along with inter-sector arguments are, in the view of departmental officials, helping make SACSA work.

8. FaCS and the Work and Family Unit from the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, estimate that the figure of 40% is too high.

143. *Aboriginal Perspectives on the Early Years* (DETE 1999) is another South Australian resource that is likely to be a valuable resource for teachers. The document is the result of extensive consultation with Indigenous groups, and provided understandings on Aboriginal curriculum perspectives. The document is a blueprint for cultural inclusiveness for all.

144. The NSW *Practice of Relationships* is useful for broader considerations of ECEC, particularly in its acknowledgement that, 'The investment in children's lives, their learning and development, comes from valuing them in the present not largely because of the prospect of a pay-off in the future' (p. 3). The document seeks to promote a broad and holistic approach to ECEC that respects children's rights to live out good childhoods 'in the present' and provides opportunities for them to develop the skills necessary to succeed in school and later life.

145. The ACT early childhood curriculum document, also in draft, *Connections – a Framework for Learning* is likened to a 'map of many journeys' – where learning 'is not a chart for one particular learning. The framework recognises that learning is an individual path and that children learn in a variety of ways and times' (p. 2). This focus on ECEC that begins with the child, who learns through making 'connections' suggests that the document is founded on some thoughtful and well-developed principles.

146. These initiatives in curriculum development do not fully describe the scope of such efforts in Australia. The dynamics, focus and arguments are different across the country. In some States or Territories there is a closer articulation with school curriculum. In others the priority is to keep ECEC distinctive. Some detail, some suggest, some segment and some integrate. Developing national principles for ECEC that allow for adaptation to local circumstances and needs is a task for the future.

Access to quality ECEC

147. The Background Report provides an overview of quality issues and frameworks. This section focuses on the Quality Improvement and Accreditation Scheme (QIAS) which, from an international perspective, is a unique government initiative. The QIAS, which has been briefly described in Chapter 3, provides some national statements and principles on childhood, families and quality. The scheme, which applies only to long day care centres, is currently under review and parallel processes – also linked to funding – are being established for family day care (for mid-2001) and for outside school hours care (for mid-2002). Key features are the emphasis on continuous improvement and a balance of self and peer review. The 52 Principles are likely to be replaced with ten quality areas related to: (1) interactions and communications, (2) the programme, (3) child protection, (4) health and safety, and (5) management support.

148. All long day care centres receiving direct or indirect government subsidies have been through the QIAS process. In centres visited by the review team, staff were generally positive about the QIAS and believed that it did improve quality. There was criticism that pre-schools (sometimes located in the next door room or building) did not have to meet the same criteria. A second concern, substantiated by research (Jackson, 1996), is the issue of time and written work required to go through the QIAS, with no paid time allowed or reduction in child-staff ratios. Third, as in many OECD countries, discussions are emerging on diverse measures of quality. These debates question whether there is a universal definition of quality for all children and across societies. Such issues emerged during the visit, particularly in relation to programmes serving children from ethnic minority and Indigenous backgrounds whose families may have different views of childrearing and of quality ECEC. Butterworth and Candy (1988), for example, surveyed some views that might shape Aboriginal concepts of quality early childhood practice. They note, for example, the 'greater personal freedom from an early age [of Aboriginal children], such as deciding when to eat and sleep, wash etc, as a means of developing personal autonomy and responsibility' (p. 22). This small aspect,

if translated into practice, might mean an ECEC environment that is very different in its pace and routines, than in centres with children from cultural backgrounds that are more protective of very young children. It is an ongoing challenge to ensure that measures of quality are contextually-sensitive, and support ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic inclusiveness.

149. Issues concerning the cost of quality to government and the affordability of quality for parents are difficult to balance, particularly in the child care sector where there is no direct funding to centres, with a few exceptions for special circumstances. State and Commonwealth governments emphasise the importance of quality but recognise the cost implications. The child care subsidies available to parents are designed to assist affordability, particularly for low income families. According to recent research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2001), the Child Care Benefit is having this effect. The issue is, however, that the subsidy to parents is also the main funding to ECEC, and that this funding may be insufficient to ensure ongoing investment in quality improvement efforts. In addition to assisting demand, it is also important to invest in the infrastructure that supports quality, including training, monitoring, and data collection mechanisms. The Commonwealth government affirms that it continues to invest around 16% of its child care budget on infrastructure support, and that demand side subsidies can work if set at a sufficient level. In the coming years, it will be important to monitor the effects of this choice not only on the affordability of ECEC services but also on the overall quality of the system.

150. Affordability is closely linked to access. The latter is also a concern of the Department of FaCS. Overall the enrolment statistics, although somewhat unreliable as overall national statistics for ECEC participation, are relatively low by comparison to most other OECD countries. Around 10% of four year olds, as quoted in several documents, are still missing out on ECEC with the percentage rising dramatically for younger children. Unlike in many other OECD countries, there is little policy discussion in Australia concerning *universal* access to a place in ECEC as a goal or right for children under the age of four. Yet, there are efforts to improve access at a reasonable cost through the new CCB. According to a FaCS' surveys, there has been an increase in demand for care since the introduction of the CCB,, with both the long day care centre sector and family day care reporting that existing families have increased their hours of child care usage and care is now being provided for many families not previously using care. In terms of resource allocation, however, there still is duplication of funding provided by the Commonwealth and the States for four-year-olds who attend both pre-schools and long day care centres. It may be wise to consider streamlining this funding and to shift the resulting economies toward providing greater access to ECEC services for the younger children.

ECEC research issues

151. The review team had little time to study the tertiary sector, which trains the staff at the frontline of work with children and undertakes the research aimed to guide policy and influence practice. A lively meeting with researchers from universities around Australia was illuminating if only by the statement shared that this was perhaps the first meeting of its kind. Geographic and academic divides in a competitive tertiary environment are possible causes. Australia is nevertheless, fortunate to have so many academic centres which are engaged in a wide range of early childhood research and teaching. The positioning of early childhood education as a distinctive area of study within universities has been a trend of the past decade. There are now a number of professorial chairs in early childhood and the annual research conference at the University of Canberra is a notable international event.

152. Also heartening are the strategic connections being established between early childhood researchers and government departments. In South Australia there is a joint research appointment between the De Lissa Institute for Early Childhood and the Department of Education, Training, and Employment (DETE). Collaborative curriculum development and research is underway. At the Commonwealth level,

DETYA has appointed four research fellows, three from early childhood. The Research Fellowship Scheme is designed to: facilitate better informed policy analysis and development; focus external research on major policy issues; and provide access by researchers to departmental data. A report *Just the Beginning* (Raban,2000), is an important overview of research-policy issues for early childhood. This is a foundation for future partnerships and collaboration between government, researchers and the early childhood sector.

153. The Background Report provides an overview of the early childhood research scene, identifies funding issues and points to the need for Australian based research on the outcomes of ECEC. The review team gained the impression that it was timely for a national strategy for early childhood research, alongside a national strategy for ECEC. A 1996 Senate Enquiry into Early Childhood Education recommended the establishment of a National Centre for Research in Early Childhood Development to conduct longitudinal research. Collaboration between the research and policy community, needs to be dynamic and ensuring that the research community is also challenging and shaping policy. Projects that link research and government policy directions and thereby researchers and policy makers; provide a mechanism for more inter institutional collaboration rather than competition; and establish partnership between researchers and teachers, could be good use of government resources. A recent encouraging initiative is the Commonwealth government's Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, which was announced in the *Stronger Families and Communities Study*.

Summary

154. By highlighting what is distinctive and innovative about ECEC in Australia, it is evident that there is a commonality of the broad issues of ECEC policy provision with other countries. The divides in relation to care and education, school and ECEC, central or local control, migrant and/or Indigenous issues, class, geography, and administrative and funding complexity, are characteristics of ECEC policy in other countries as well. The particular configuration of these divides in Australia has yielded innovation and challenges. Similarly, Australia, along with other OECD countries, is tightening its oversight of education and focussing afresh on the ECEC sector and the early years for children. The interplay between: research, policy and practice in ECEC; family, children, staff and the workplace; culture and autonomy; local, national and global solutions, are elements for possible realignment of the values and the place of ECEC in within the broader context in Australia.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

ECEC at the crossroads?

155. Australian ECEC *is* at the crossroads. The Commonwealth, some State and Territory governments, and stakeholder groups are already testing the waters to provide a range of more integrated services. By moving forward despite the existing divides of jurisdiction, policy and pedagogy, barriers remain and frustrate the process. There is much talk about a '*rethink* of the framework', to improve co-ordination and cohesion. No one is arguing for uniformity, but rather a framework that has the potential for different pathways and priorities in the respective States and Territories, allowing for a better mediation of the divides that characterise ECEC at present. Whether this can occur without some radical restructuring between State and Commonwealth jurisdictions is debatable, although the review team heard no suggestion that this is desirable or possible. Nevertheless, debate and thinking about a new framework and national strategy for ECEC are much in evidence. There is a clear leadership role for the Commonwealth Government in forging such a strategy across jurisdictions, and for ECEC sector communities to work toward collaboratively to achieve more effective co-ordination across the education and care divide.

Towards a vision for childhood

156. While structures may be too rigid and 'weighted down by history' to roll back, ideas, however, can shift. A national strategy for ECEC needs firstly to be underpinned by some shared values or vision of children and childhood in Australia. These can become directional signposts for policy and practice. If ECEC is to be more than the learning of abilities and skills, it needs a philosophical underpinning. Otherwise it risks becoming a technical proceeding, without an anchoring in politics and society, and open to influences from all sides. It was not clear to the review team what is the shared underpinning philosophy of ECEC in Australia. History and policy has created various constructions of ECEC. A national ECEC strategy can enable diversity, but structures, policy and practice should have a reference which begins with the child. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child could help start this discussion. The connections between ECEC and the other aspects of children's lives then come into the field of vision. There were unanswered questions for the review team concerning not only the rights of the child, but also the role of parents and employers in relation to ECEC. There are also questions about children's learning, such as:

- What is the role of children and their interests in teaching and learning?
- What is the perspective of children regarding their experiences within ECEC?
- What are the crucial conditions needed in ECEC for children's basic needs and development?
- What are the advantages and limitations of national evaluations that focus strongly on outcomes?

- What is the importance of children’s socio-emotional development in relation to cognitive domains?
- What are the values and expectations of the local community for ECEC?

Towards a national strategy for ECEC

157. Debating these issues is an integral part of shaping a national strategy for ECEC. Debate on reform, even at a high level of government is not new. In 1995 a working group within the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) published a discussion document on a *Proposed National Framework for Children’s Services in Australia* (COAG, October 1995) and called for reform. The issues identified for consideration are similar to those identified in this review process. The debates have continued – within the Commonwealth, States and Territories, organisations, sector groups and government departments. A few examples are provided as reminders of this work and thinking:

- The Education Union Discussion Paper *Towards a National Plan for Pre-school Education* (Kronemann, 1998) is looking towards a strategy that is more equitable for children, families and staff across the states and territories: ‘Our plan has at its heart a vision of pre-school education which is aligned to and part of a public education system which includes primary, secondary and post compulsory education’ (p. 1).
- Child Care Beyond 2001 is an inquiry being undertaken by the Commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council and is working towards a vision for child care that embraces the changes taking place. ‘This process begins with an understanding of important areas of change and new thinking [including] ...family life, patterns of work, children in the 21st century and community connections’ (Child Care Beyond 2001, 2000, p. 1).
- For some years the Australian Early Childhood Association has been arguing for a national framework for children’s services. They argue strongly that such a framework must ‘listen’ to ‘children first’ (AECA, 1999, p. 1), and state that, ‘It cannot be assumed that if the needs of parents are met that the needs of children are also necessarily met (AJEC, 1996, p. 36).
- At the State/Territory level, the ACT has developed a strategic plan for pre-schools (October 1999). It is an acknowledgement that, ‘parents in the ACT have said that the way pre-school operated at present is not ideal for their family...this plan builds onto the strengths of the current pre-school system and takes account of the changes that are occurring for children, families and the ACT community’ (p. 3).
- At the CEO inter-state level, the CESCEO draft discussion paper (March 2000) identifies three foundation elements critical to programmes: quality teaching and learning, monitoring and intervention, leadership and co-ordination. The conclusion charts ‘a way forward’ with a national strategy from which each State and Territory and the Commonwealth can strengthen ECEC services and provide a platform for prevention and early intervention: ‘Early childhood programs should be based on common goals and principles, but adapted to local diversity, maximising the use of existing facilities (e.g. schools) for family programs’ (p. 21).

158. That there must be a ‘way forward’ is the view of the authors of the Australia Background Report (Press & Hayes, 2000) who conclude:

There are many challenges that confront contemporary ECEC...By facing these challenges and embracing the opportunities they present, Australia can strengthen its commitment to children, families and communities, and explicitly recognise that they are the fabric of the future (p. 63).

159. The initiatives underway are all part of the fabric of the 'patchwork' towards a national strategy for ECEC. Shared values and a vision for children might provide the thread to weave the 'tapestry'. The tapestry should embrace both the past and the present of childhood:

To redress the effects of history, ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island families, and ensure the appropriate recognition of A&TSI culture and child-rearing practices will take significant and cohesive effort on the part of government agencies, and individuals. However, it is not impossible and with the participation and direction of A&TSI people, a key element of achieving success (AJEC, 1999, p. 32).

Strengths of current policy and some issues for the future

160. Australia has made some notable progress in the field of ECEC in recent years. There is determined targeting of resources by governments towards Indigenous educational, economic, and health programmes. The challenges of ECEC provision and access across geographic divides and distance have been recognised and have begun to be addressed. There is much innovation from the field and some policy makers towards overcoming structural divides through the integration of services and improving transitions between ECEC and school. Diversity, and if necessary pragmatism, are considered an ideal of ECEC provision. This includes increasing collaboration and co-ordination across the divides of jurisdictions between and within States and Territories. Resources have been made available to support new curriculum development. The QIAS for long day care (and soon family day care) is a unique and important strategy toward improving quality across different forms of provision. The new comprehensive Child Care Benefit has reduced fees for many parents and may improve access and participation in formal ECEC among children from low-income families. There is comprehensive tertiary training for various types of staff working in the ECEC sector. The tertiary sector is well poised to meet the challenges of further research and emerging collaboration between research and policy development.

161. Amongst so much that is positive, the review team noted some issues which require further consideration. These issues have been discussed in further detail in Chapter 4:

- *Understandings of childhood and ECEC*: ECEC in Australia reveals a range of beliefs and policy directions depending on government philosophy, jurisdiction, type of setting and community served. A clear vision and coherent strategy of Australian ECEC policy should be elaborated, drawing from the views and interests of children, families, communities, professionals and researchers across the states and territories. In particular, there is a need to consider the balance between the benefits for the 'child of today' in rationales for ECEC policy and the broader social, economic and political goals.
- *Inclusive approaches for children in need of special support*: ECEC can play an important role in relation to political and educational strategies for status, equity, self determination and partnership for children and families, particularly those in most need of special support: Indigenous children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children from low socio-economic backgrounds, children from rural and remote areas and children at risk. In this regard, there is a need to recruit, train, and retain staff from diverse backgrounds to the field, to ensure that respect for diversity is integrated throughout the curriculum, and to form meaningful partnerships with parents and the wider community.

- *Staff training and working conditions:* The low pay, status and training levels of ECEC staff have the potential to undermine quality initiatives, and may counterbalance the investments governments are making in the sector. In particular, the poorer work conditions experienced by staff working outside the education sector are a concern, as these are linked to high turnover rates and a shortage of qualified staff in the field. In addition to addressing industrial issues, firmer, nationally consistent, regulations about the qualifications and numbers of *trained* staff to be employed by long day care centres and family daycare would help to improve the quality of services. Expanding access to in-service training at a range of levels for staff is a necessity to ensure the ongoing professional development of the workforce.
- *System coherence and co-ordination:* The complexities of government in a federal system and the multi-layering of administration and regulation limit coherence of ECEC policy and provision. The vastness of the territory and the dispersion of populations pose other challenges. To overcome existing fragmentation, strategies need to be developed to bridge the divides between care and education in the areas of training, qualifications, industrial awards, funding, policy jurisdiction and service provision. As part of this effort, there is a need to streamline the complexity of funding streams and to reduce duplication in favour of a more efficient allocation of resources across the early childhood system. At the services level, coherence and continuity entails facilitating smoother transitions for children from home to ECEC and from ECEC to school, and limiting unnecessary transitions between different ECEC settings on a given day or week.
- *Policies to help parents balance work-family responsibilities:* It is timely to reconsider the extent to which ECEC can continue to mediate the demands of the workplace and the rearing of young children given the limited workplace benefits available for workers with families, and the trend towards longer and/or more fragmented working hours. In particular, the limited access to *paid* maternity and parental leave provision needs to be re-assessed in light of the pressing needs of working parents and infants. The *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* provides the chance to identify ways to enhance the balance of work and family responsibilities, and to ensure greater equity for women.
- *Balancing accessibility, quality, and affordability:* Despite initiatives to expand access and improve affordability, there is still a sizeable proportion of children under five who do not currently benefit from quality, appropriate early childhood experiences. There is a need to consider how to balance the financial viability of services in a mixed-provider market, affordability for parents, cost to government and quality for children (including a stable, well-educated workforce). It will be important to monitor the impact of the new CCB on the triad of quality, accessibility and affordability in order to inform future policy decisions.
- *Curriculum development that supports children’s holistic development:* Existing pedagogical frameworks at the state level provide opportunities, as well as risks for children’s early learning and development. While there are opportunities for an ‘upward push’ of the positive aspects of early childhood pedagogy into primary schooling, there are potential dangers of ‘top down’ policies for curriculum in the school sector impacting inappropriately on ECEC. It is important for curriculum development for young children to build on the best traditions of the early childhood and primary sectors and focus broadly on children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical development.
- *Research and data collection:* The development of a stable research policy framework for ECEC should be a government priority. In particular, government should encourage projects with direct relevance to policy objectives and practice in the field. It also is important to disseminate results of key research on outcomes for children (e.g., the new longitudinal study on child well-being) to diverse stakeholders. Tertiary institutions need to focus on giving ECEC graduates the capacity to contribute to the development of research. In addition, there is a need for ongoing data collection at the

State/Territory and Commonwealth levels to inform and monitor policy decisions. At a minimum, data should be collected on the supply, cost, and structural features (staff qualifications, ratios, facilities) of the range of ECEC provision, and the use of services according to the age of the child and the socio-economic background, geographic location, and employment status of the parents.

* * * * *

162. The review team is well aware that these issues have been recognised by governments and ECEC professionals in Australia, and, in some cases, Commonwealth, State, and/or local initiatives are underway already to address them. Our objective has been to present our outside perspectives on the issues and lend our support to the positive developments in the field. In addition, it is hoped that this report may contribute to current policy discussions and decisions toward improving policy and provision for young children and their families in Australia.

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APPENDIX I: OECD REVIEW TEAM

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APPENDIX II: INFORMATION ON THE AUSTRALIA BACKGROUND REPORT

The OECD review visit in Australia was co-ordinated by Mr. Tony Greer, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), with the assistance of Ms. Nina Bromberg, Literacy Section, DETYA and Ms. Glennys Purcell, Director, Child Care Services Branch, Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS).

The Australia Background Report was prepared by Professor Alan Hayes and Ms. Frances Press, Institute of Early Childhood, Division of Early Childhood and Education, Macquarie University.

The members of the Steering Committee, with Tony Greer as Chair, were Isabelle Adams (Indigenous Representative), Valerie Burns (CESCEO), Dawn Davis (CESCEO), Patrice Marriott (Chair, Commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council), Robyn McKay (FaCS) and June Wangmann (SCCSISA). Dr Marilyn Fleer and Professor Bridie Raban (DETYA Research Fellows) assisted the Steering Committee and contributed to the planning of the project.

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APPENDIX III: PROGRAMME OF THE REVIEW VISIT 13 TO 24 JUNE 2000

Tuesday 13 June

Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Executive Conference Room, Level 6, Times Square Building (DETYA Offices)

09h00 - 10h00

Meeting with Commonwealth officials from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) on Commonwealth policies for ECEC. Participants: Mr Peter Grant, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Mr Tony Greer, First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (National Co-ordinator); Mr Peter Buckskin, Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Education Branch, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Mr Murray Kimber, Director, Literacy Section, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Ms. Nina Bromberg, Literacy Section, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Ms. Robyn Croker, Literacy Section, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Dr Marilyn Fleer, DETYA Research Fellow; Ms. Robyn McKay, Executive Director, Department of Family and Community Services; Ms. Joan Corbett, Assistant Secretary, Child Care Services Branch, Department of Family and Community Services; and Ms. Glennys Purcell, Director, Child Care Services Branch, Department of Family and Community Services.

10h30 - 12h30

Meeting with authors of background report and steering committee. Discussion of the preparation of the report and an overview of ECEC in Australia through the perspectives of the steering committee. Steering committee members and the authors of the report provided a short presentation describing their background and involvement with ECEC in Australia. Participants: Professor Alan Hayes, Dean, Division of Early Childhood and Education, Macquarie University (Author); Ms. Frances Press, Division of Early Childhood and Education, Macquarie University (Author); Mr Tony Greer, First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (National Co-ordinator); Ms. Robyn McKay, Executive Director, Department of Family and Community Services; Mr Murray Kimber, Director, Literacy Section, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Ms. Nina Bromberg, Literacy Section, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Ms. Robyn Croker, Literacy Section, Schools Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; Ms. Glennys Purcell, Director, Child Care Services Branch, Department of Family and Community Services; Ms. Patrice Mariott, Chair, Commonwealth Childcare Advisory Council; Associate Professor June Wangmann, Manager, Office of Child Care, NSW Department of Community Services, representing the Standing Committee of Community Services and Income Security Administrators (SCCSISA); Ms. Dawn Davis, Executive Director, South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, representing Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers (CESCEO);

Ms. Valerie Burns, Director, Education Department of Western Australia, representing CESCEO; Ms. Isabelle Adams, Western Australia, representing the Indigenous community; Professor Bridie Raban, Mooroolbeek Chair of Early Childhood, University of Melbourne; and Dr Marilyn Fler, DETYA Research Fellow.

Room 1, O'Connell Centre, Stuart Street, Griffith

14h00 - 15h00

Meeting with ACT Department of Education and Community Service officials on overview of ECEC policy in the ACT. Participants: Ms. Sue Birtles, Executive Director, Children's, Youth & Family Services, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; Ms. Jill Farrelly, Director, Children's Services, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; Ms. Narelle Hargreaves, Director, Schools, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; Ms. Gillian Styles, Principal Executive Officer, Pre-school Services, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; Ms. Helen Lamming, Manager, Office of Child Care, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; Ms. Anne Roantree, Project Manager, Birth - 8 Early Childhood Project, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; Ms. Mary Hutchinson, Executive Officer, Early intervention Services, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; Ms. Carol Cockburn, Team Leader, Literacy and Numeracy Team, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; and Ms. Gail Winkworth, Manager, Child Abuse and Education Unit, ACT Department of Education and Community Services.

15h30 - 16h30

Meeting with child care service provider peak bodies on child care sector in Australia. Participants: Ms. Judith Atkinson, President, Australian Federation of Child Care Associations; Ms. Jo Comans, Executive Director, National Family Day Care Council (Australian) Inc.; Ms. Ginie Udy, Deputy National Director, Australian Early Childhood Association; and Ms. Lynne Wannan, National Convenor, National Association of Community Based Children's Services.

MG63, Parliament House, Canberra

17h00 - 17h30

Meeting with Commonwealth Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs on Commonwealth perspective on early childhood education agenda. Participants: Dr David Kemp MP, Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs; and Mr Tony Greer, National Co-ordinator.

Wednesday 14 June

Canberra ACT

First Floor, Juliana House, Bowes Street, Woden

9h00 - 9h30

Meeting with Mr Wayne Jackson, Deputy Secretary, Department of Family and Community Services on Commonwealth perspective on early childhood care agenda.

Deakin Centre for Early Learning, 2 King St, Deakin

09h45 - 10h15

Visit to Deakin Centre for Early Learning, an example of a private for profit long day care centre. Operator: Ms. Evelyn Callaghan.

Conference Room, Level 6, 14 Mort Street, Canberra

11h00 - 11h30

Meeting with representatives of National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and National Council of Independent Schools' Associations (NCISA) on non government school sector perspectives on ECEC in Australia. Participants: Mr David Huggins, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria; Ms Phil Billington, Catholic Education Office of ACT; and Mrs Pauline Nesdale, Director of Research, NCISA.

11h45 - 12h15

Meeting with Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and Australian Parents' Council (APC) on parent perspectives on ECEC in Australia. Participants: Mr Leo Dunne, President, Australian Parents Council; Ms. Josephine Lonergan, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council; Ms. Penny Cook, Executive Officer, Australian Council of State School Organisations; and Ms. Leeta Bacon, Australian Council of State School Organisations.

Flinders Way, Manuka

13h30 - 14h30

Visit to Manuka Occasional Care. Participants: Ms. Jill Farrelly, Director, Children's Services, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; and Ms. Helen Lamming, Manager, Office of Child Care, ACT Department of Education and Community Services.

Kippax Health Centre, Kippax Fair, Holt

14h45 - 15h45

Visit to Belconnen Family Day Care. Participants: Ms. Jill Farrelly, Director, Children's Services, ACT Department of Education and Community Services; and Ms. Helen Lamming, Manager, Office of Child Care, ACT Department of Education and Community Services.

Thursday 15 June

Adelaide, South Australia

Brompton Primary School, Napier St, Renown Park

Group One:

08h00 - 8h45

Visit to Bowden Brompton OSHC – Before School Program, an example of an OSHC service, incorporated into a school's operations. Co-ordinator Panna Tselekidis.

09h00 – 10h15

Visit to The Lady Gowrie Child Centre and Training Centre 39a Dew St., Thebarton
Director Kaye Colmer, an example of a child care centre and Pre-school, as well as on site training

10h35 – 11h30

Visit to Pennington Kindergarten. Met with Ms. Anne Marie Shin (Director). The kindergarten is an example of a sessional Pre-school on a school site, an occasional care centre which integrates children with special needs. Its Learning to Learn Project looks at children's learning styles and motivates young children to learn

15A Northgate St, Pennington

13h10 – 13h45

Meeting with DETE District Office, Early Learning Programme officials. Participants included: Ms. Jenny MacMullin Manager Early Childhood Support Services; Ms. Theresa Amos Early Learning Program; Ms. Betty Elsdon Early Learning Program; Ms. Judy Underdown Director Parenting Network.

DETE District Office, 3rd floor Norwich Centre, 55 King William Rd, North Adelaide

14h00 – 15h00

Meeting with The Briars Special Early Learning Centre official Ms. Jen Mathwin-Raymond (Director). The Centre is a Pre-school for children with special needs and disabilities.

49 Fullarton Rd, Kent Town

15h30 – 16h00

Afternoon tea, Education Development Centre Hindmarsh

Milner Street Hindmarsh

Group Two:

08h00 – 08h45

Visit to Kidman Park OSHC – Before School Program. Co-ordinator: Ms. Karla Konijn.

Dean Avenue Kidman Park

09h10 – 10h10

City West Child Care Centre, Met with Nahid Meharine (Director). Example of a child care centre, students of UNISA and TAFE trained on site, lecturer based at site

Adelaide Institute of TAFE, Corner of Philip and Clarendon Street, Adelaide

10h45 – 11h30

Multicultural Family Day Care. Met with FDC Care provider Suman Savur and Fieldworker Mariana Stokoe.

5 Franklin St., Flinders Park

13h45 – 15h00

Meeting with North Haven Junior Primary School officials Ms. Michelle Pope (Principal) and Ms. Carol White (Deputy Principal). The teacher theme was SACSA Framework Trial.

North Haven Junior Primary School, Tapping Crescent, North Haven

16h00 – 17h00

Meeting of both groups with DETE Officers and DeLissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies staff Education Development Centre Hindmarsh. Participants included: South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment Staff; Ms. Dawn Davis, Executive Director Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services; Ms. Jennifer Stehn, Executive Director Curriculum Policy; Ms. Gerry Mulhearn, Curriculum Superintendent Early Years Strategy; Mr Chris Shakes, Assistant Director Children's Services; Professor Philip Gammage, Research Adviser Early Childhood; Ms. Kath Thelning, Curriculum Officer Early Years; Ms. Jenny Grossi, Co-ordinator Special Projects; DeLissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies Staff; Professor Wendy Schiller, Head of School; Ms. Anne Carrington Lecturer; Ms. Christie Ward, Lecturer. The theme was, South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework.

Milner Street, Hindmarsh

Friday 16 June 2000

Adelaide, South Australia

Group One:

09h00 – 09h45

Meeting with Chief Executive Department of Education Training and Employment and Executive Director Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services 2nd Floor Executive Director Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services office Mr Geoff Spring, Chief Executive, Department of Education Training and Employment; Ms. Dawn Davis, Executive Director Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services South Australian perspectives on ECEC

09h45 – 10h15

Morning tea in Executive Director's office

11h00 – 12h15

Meeting held at Kaurna Plains Early Childhood Centre. Participants included: Ms. Jill Huntley, District Co-ordinator Children's Services; Ms. Carol Smith, District Co-ordinator Schools; Ms. Brenda Carson Director Elizabeth Grove Kindergarten; Ms. Kathryn Bruggeman Principal Smithfield Plains Junior Primary School; Ms. Jo Carson, Family Day Care Field Worker; Ms. Leona Smith and Ms. Elisabeth Kathleen, Kaurna Plains; Ms. Heather Carter, Director Sir Thomas Playford Kindergarten Theme: Approaches to disadvantaged.

Ridley Rd, Elizabeth

Group Two:

09h00 – 09h45

Meeting with Chief Executive Department of Education Training and Employment and Executive Director Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services 2nd Floor Executive Director Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services office; Mr Geoff Spring, Chief Executive, Department of Education Training and Employment; Ms. Dawn Davis, Executive Director Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services. South Australian perspectives on ECEC.

11h30 – 12h15

Visit to Nuriootpa Community Children's Centre. Met with Director Cathy Berry. Theme: Integrated children's services.

Park Ave, Nuriootpa

13h30 – 14h45

Both groups visited The Pines Primary School . Met with Early Childhood Principal Alana Cooper and District Co-ordinator Children's Services Janet Gordon. Theme: Integrated children's services.

42 Andrew Smith Drive, Parafield Gardens

15h30 – 16h00

Afternoon tea. Education Development Centre, Hindmarsh

Milner Street, Hindmarsh

16h00 – 17h00

Meeting of both groups with DETE officers at the Education Development Centre Hindmarsh. Participants included: Ms. Helga Kolbe, Deputy Chief Executive; Ms. Dawn Davis, Executive Director, Metropolitan Schools and Children's Services; Mr R. John Halsey, Executive Director, Country Schools and Children's Services; Ms. Stephanie Page, Director, Student and Professional Services; Ms. Gerry Mulhearn, Curriculum Superintendent, Early Years Strategy; Ms. Ewa Swiecicka, Assistant Director, Performance Reviews; Mr Chris Shakes, Assistant Director, Children's Services; Ms. Karen Lamont, Assistant Director, Licensing and Standards; Ms. Judy Day, Assistant Director, Country; Professor Philip Gammage, Research Adviser Early Childhood; Mr. Rod Cox, District Superintendent. Mr. Alan Young, District Superintendent; Ms. Pam Seaman, District Superintendent; Ms. Helen Leo, Manager, Licensing and Standards; Ms. Suzy McKenna, Manager, Out of School Hours Care; Ms. Sue Jager, Manager, Pre-school Centre Based Care/Early Learning Programme; Ms. Betty Hartnup, Manager, Standards and Investigations; Ms. Heather Dunn, Project Officer, Family Day Care; Ms. Jan Shaw, Assistant State Manager, Family Capabilities Branch, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services; Ms. Jenny Grossi, Co-ordinator Special Projects. Theme: Overview and final questions

Milner Street, Hindmarsh

Monday 19 June 2000

Alice Springs, Northern Territory

Group One:

08h30 – 10h15

Visit to Yipirinya Pre-school and Primary School (co-located). Met with Ms. Fiona McLoughlin, Principal. Example of a co-located Pre-school and primary school in the non government sector (also includes child care services).

Lovegrove Drive, Alice Springs

10h30 – 12h00

Visit to Ampekere Ampere Child Care Centre. Met with Ms. Myra Johnson. Example of Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Service.

12h30 – 14h00

Lunched at Conference Room, Flynn Drive Community Health Centre with Mr. Russell Totham, Ms. Zania Liddle, Mr Don Zoellner, Ms. Maree Toll, Mr Patrick Timmons, Mr Robert Ryan, Ms. Mary Fox, Ms. Helen Crawford.

14h15 – 15h30

Visit to Ross Park Primary School Outside School Hours Service. Met with Principal Alan Rosevear. Site of a joint NT Department of Education and Territory Health Services framework trial.

Winnecke Avenue, Ross Park, Alice Springs

Group Two:

08h00 – 08h30

Meeting with Ida Stanley Pre-school and Gap Neighbourhood Centre officials, Ms. Janet Heley, Teacher In Charge Ida Stanley Pre-school; Ms. Robyn Alexander, Director, Gap Neighbourhood Centre. Site is piloting a comprehensive children's services commencing in 2000/2001.

10h30 – 12h00

Larapinta Pre-school and Primary School. Met with Ms. Ellen Varley (Principal). Newest Pre-school and school in Alice Springs.

Cnr Albrecht and Larapinta Drive, Alice Springs

12h30 – 14h00 Lunch at the Conference Room, Flynn Drive Community Health Centre with Mr Russell Totham, Ms. Zania Liddle, Mr Don Zoellner, Ms. Maree Toll, Mr Patrick Timmons, Mr Robert Ryan, Ms. Mary Fox, Ms. Helen Crawford.

14h15 – 15h30

Visit to Tangentyere Outside School Hours Care service.

16h00 – 17h00

Both groups met with representatives of peak bodies at the Alice Springs Education Centre. Participants included: Director, Institute of Aboriginal Development; Director, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Higher Education; Director, Catholic Education Office; Association of Independent Schools of the NT; Jann Brown, President, NT Outside School Hours Care Association; Bronwyn Truscott, Co-ordinator, Children's Services Resource and Advisory Service; Renata Harris, President, Australian Early Childhood Association (NT Branch); Sharjy King, Co-ordinator, Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi; Lesley Baschiera, Executive Officer, NT Council of Government School Organisations. Themes covered included Indigenous early childhood issues, education and care service delivery in remote areas, staff training and development.

17h00 – 18h00

General meeting with interested teachers, child care workers, other providers, NTDE/THS officers. Participants as above. Themes as above.

Tuesday 20 June 2000

Alice Springs, Northern Territory

Group One:

08h30 – 10h15

Visit to Mutijulu Pre-school and School. Met with Emmanuel Pavlou, Principal. Example of a remote Pre-school and school. Child care centre also on site.

12h00 – 15h30

Visit Yuendumu Pre-school and School. Example of a remote Pre-school/school.

Group Two:

08h30 – 16h00

Visit to Titjikala School. Example of remote community school and child care centre.

Wednesday 21 June

Alice Springs, Northern Territory

09h00 – 11h00

Visit to Alice Springs School of the Air.
Head Street, Braitling, Alice Springs

Thursday 22 June 2000

Sydney, New South Wales

Group One:

08h30 – 09h30

Visit to Darlington Pre-school. Three-unit pre-school with 20% Aboriginal families and 30% NESB families. Met with Ms. Colleen Hayward, Principal, Ms. Margaret Long, Ms. Eleanor Hewitt and Ms. Meli Astri, teachers. Example of a pre-school as an integral part of a primary school.

Darlington Public School, Golden Grove Street, Chippendale NSW 2008

Group Two:

08h30 – 09h30

Visit to TAFE child care centre. Fifty place long day care centre catering for children from six weeks to five years of age. This centre is managed by KU Children's Services. Met with Ms. Liz Pahor, Director and Liz Thomas Education Consultant, KU Children's Services. Other staff will be introduced during the visit. Example of a long day care service established to enable parents to undertake TAFE courses.

Ultimo TAFE Child Care Centre, Building Z, Ground floor, Mary Anne Street, Ultimo

10h30 – 12h00

Meeting of both groups with Children's Services Forum. Deputy Director-General's (Operations) meeting room. Met with Garry Moore, Director of NCOSS (Chair) and representative of each of the service types Funding and Planning for Children's Services

12h00 – 13h00

Lunch with above OECD team and representatives from the Departments of Community Services and Education and Training

Level 2, 35 Bridge Street, Sydney

13h00 – 15h00

Meeting with Officers of the NSW Department of Education and Training and the NSW Department of Community Services -- Office of Child Care: Associate Professor June Wangmann, Director; John Williams, Project Leader; Department of Education and Training: John Sutton, R/Deputy Director-General (Operations); Alan Rice, Executive Director of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Dilys Nicolson, Senior Education Officer, Pre-schools.

16h00 – 17h00

Visit to Outside School Hours Care service, Australia Street Infants School. Met with Ms. Mandy Dawkins, Principal; OSHC co-ordinators: Ms. Nicola Brown and Ms. Gabrielle Carey. Example of an after school care facility to support working parents, managed by the school's Parents and Citizens Association. Program operates from Lennox House in the grounds of Australia Street school. Lennox House also provides before school care, vacation care and other programme to support parents.

Australia Street, Newtown

Sydney, New South Wales

Friday 23 June 2000

Group One:

08h30 – 09h30

Visit to Mia Mia Child and Family Study Centre. Participants included: Ms. Wendy Shepherd, Director. Example of a long day care setting. <http://webpc.iec.mq.edu.au/Staff/MiaMia/Hme.htm>.

Building X5B, Ground Floor, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, NSW

Group Two:

08h30 – 09h30

Visit to Kent Road Public School. Participants included: Ms. Adele Mazoudier, Principal; Robyn Croker. Example of a different approach to the early years of schooling.

Cnr Kent and Herring Roads, EASTWOOD

10h00 – 12h30

Meeting of both groups with appropriate early childhood academics and researchers. Participants included: Professor Alan Hayes, Dean, Division of Early Childhood and Education, Macquarie University (Author);

Ms. Frances Press, Institute of Early Childhood and Education, Macquarie University (Author); Associate Professor Alma Fleet, Head, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University; Dr. Jennifer Bowes, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University; Ms. Kathy Griffith, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University; Ms. Wendy Shepherd, Director, Mia Mia Child and Family Study Centre, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University; Professor Bridie Raban, Mooroolbeek Chair of Early Childhood, University of Melbourne; Dr. Nicola Yelland, DETYA Research Fellow; Ms. Careen Leslie, Convener of Early Childhood Course, University of Canberra; Professor Collette Taylor, Acting Dean, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology; Dr. Margot Boardman, Lecturer in Early Childhood Education, University of Tasmania; Associate Professor Laurie Makin, Early Childhood/School of Humanities, University of Newcastle Central Coast Campus; Professor Wendy Schiller, Head of School, Delissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies, University of South Australia; Ms. Cynthia Beckett, Senior Lecturer, Early Childhood Program, School of Education, University of New England; Dr Agnes Macmillan, Lecturer, Murray Education Unit, Charles Sturt University; Ms. Jill Robbins, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University; Dr. Alan Rice, Executive Director, Early Childhood and Primary Education, NSW DET; Dr. Noel Geoghegan, Head of Department, Department of Early Childhood, University of Southern Queensland. Issues included research and evaluation, and staff training.

Room 292, Building X5B, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, NSW

12h30 – 14h30

Lunch with the above.

14h30 – 15h15

Meeting with union representatives. Participants included: Ms. Rosalie Kinson, Vice President, Victorian Branch, Australian Education Union; Independent Education Union; Ms. Connie De Nino, National Industrial Officer for Child Care, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union. Issues to be canvassed include industrial issues in relation to ECEC in Australia.

Room 012, Building X5B, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW

15h15 – 15h30

Break

15h30 – 16h15

Meeting with officers of the NSW Department Of Education and Training (DET): Ms. Jozefa Sobski, Deputy Director General Development and Support, NSW DET; Dr. Alan Rice, Executive Director, Early Childhood and Primary Education, NSW DET; Ms. Foong-Har Sabin, Program Manager, NSW DET; Ms. Margaret Sullivan, Director, Education Service's Division, NSW DET. Issues to be canvassed are: vocational education and training sector in relation to staff training (curriculum development, links to university training, employment prospects).

Room 012, Building X5B, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW

16h15 – 16h30

Break

16h30 – 17h30

Final wrap up meeting with Mr Tony Greer, First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, DETYA and Ms. Joan Corbett, Assistant Secretary, Child Care Services Branch, FaCS.

Room 012, Building X5B, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW