

National Early Childhood Development Strategy

The Hon Kate Ellis MP

This is a significant announcement we are making here today with yesterday COAG endorsing the first ever National Childhood development strategy.

This is a sign of the Commonwealth's regard for Early Childhood as a crucial chapter in our Education Agenda, but it also recognises a new approach in working in collaboration with the States and the Territories in this critical area of early learning. The strategy which we are releasing is a landmark document which signifies a historic partnership and a step forward when it comes to early childhood education in this country, and this is something, that I think everybody that has worked long and hard on should feel tremendously proud of.

The strategy is a national action statement that will provide a road map for governments, and right across the country to help the improve outcomes for Australian children and for their families.

It will help all levels of government to build a more effective and better coordinated National Strategy when it comes to these critical years off learning, and a key plank of the Early Childhood development strategy is the National Quality agenda for Early Childhood Education and for Child care, and we know this is critical when it comes to children themselves, but it's also critical when it comes to parents and families to be assured of that National Quality Standards.

The National Quality Agenda comprises four key components which I will briefly outline today. These are the Early Years Learning framework, the document I have here in my hand. The Improved Quality Standards for Early Child Care Education and Child Care Services including lower staff to child ratios, and higher Staff Qualification requirements. A new rating system which is designed to give parents more information about the services in which they [place their children, and what is the service they are receiving there, and new National Governance arrangements which reflect the shared responsibilities of the Australian Government in this area.

The first part of The National Quality Agenda - Early Years Learning Framework was endorsed by COAG yesterday, and will now be implemented right across the country. The Framework is a key document for educators to help them develop quality settings. The document describes the principles and outcomes which are essential to support and enhance their learning from birth right through to five years of age, and it also helps to transition them into school.

The next step in COAG's reform process is Quality Reform Agenda to improve the quality of Early Childhood Education right around the Nation. It means looking at ratios, it means looking at rating systems and it means accountability and transparency for parents.