RECOGNISING AND ACKNOWLEDGING COMPLEXITY

INFORMING THE INCLUSION OF EARLY YEARS EDUCATORS’ WORK IN THE AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

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JULY 2018
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

**Purpose of this paper**

**Context for the Australian Teacher Professional Standards**

**AITSL Priorities and the National Review of Teacher Registration**

**Early Childhood Policy Reforms**

**Outline of this Paper**

2. **DEFINING AND DESCRIBING THE FIELD**

**The Early Years and Early Years Education**

**The Early Years Education Workforce**

3. **RESEARCH MATTERS**

**Research about the Early Years**

**The Importance of the Early Years for Children’s Learning and Development**

**The Role of Early Years Education**

**Quality and Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education and Care**

A Focus on the First Years of School

**Children Aged Birth to Three Years**

**Impacts of Early Childhood Teachers**

4. **POLICY MATTERS**

**Early Childhood Reform Agenda**

**Curriculum and Pedagogy Across the Early Years**

**Early Childhood Teacher Education and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**

**Teacher Registration**

5. **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POLICY PRACTICE AND RESEARCH**

**Context**

**Text**

**Consequences**

6. **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Inclusion of Early Years Teachers**

**Content and Structure of the Standards**

**Congruence with Research Findings, Policy Requirements and Practice Conventions**

**Consultation**

**References**

**Appendices**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Preschool and school starting ages across Australian jurisdictions</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Provision of early childhood education and care in Australia</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Summary of the National Quality Standard (Revised 2018)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Overview of NQS ratings</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Key Components of Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>National Quality Standard: Legal requirements for employment of early childhood teachers – Relevant Excerpts</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>An Example of Possible Links Between the EYLF and the AC</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ECA Code of Ethics – Core Principles</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACARA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACECQA</td>
<td>Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEDC</td>
<td>Australian Early Development Census</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AITSL</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APST</td>
<td>Australian Professional Standards for Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECD</td>
<td>Department for Education and Child Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECS</td>
<td>Department for Education and Children’s Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department for Education and Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Early Childhood Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early childhood education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early childhood education and care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECT</td>
<td>Early Childhood Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYLF</td>
<td>Early Years Learning Framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Quality Framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQS</td>
<td>National Quality Framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACSA</td>
<td>South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCSEEC</td>
<td>Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRBSA</td>
<td>Teachers Registration Board of South Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCAA</td>
<td>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VELDF</td>
<td>Victorian Early Learning and Development Framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Pedagogies for the first years of school .................................................................. 33
Figure 2: The five priority areas of the National Early Childhood development workforce strategy (SCEEC 2012) .................................................................................................................. 41
Figure 3: Policy context for early childhood education and care workforce reforms. (from SCEEC 2012) .............................................................. 43
Figure 4: A national overview of the NQF assessments and rating as at May 2018. (ACECQA 2018) ......................................................... 55

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of findings from U.S. early childhood longitudinal studies ........................................... 29
Table 2: Registration requirements for early childhood teachers in Australia ........................................... 48
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arguments supporting the significance of the early years of life and the importance of early learning and development are now widely recognised and emphasised in research and policy. Research is unequivocal about the need for highly qualified specialised educators working with young children in group settings, but policy decisions do not always reflect the evidence revealed by research.

Understanding contemporary contexts related to the education of young children can provide a foundation for mounting an argument for the inclusion of early years teachers in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST).

Defining the early years is not always consistent, across Australia or internationally. This may depend on who is deciding on the definition. In considering the constructs of child development and subsequent policies, consistency and continuity of experiences for young children, and how the profession internationally is most likely to describe them, the early years can be best defined as from birth to eight years (b-8). This is despite the varied administrative arrangements for institutions that have created an artificial disjunction, distinctly different views about children and learning, and historic patterns of division between education and care, as well as between early childhood education and care and the first years of school. For the purposes of this project, the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia describes early years teachers as those who are registered, or able to be registered, and educate children from birth to eight years, acknowledging that there are specific aspects of curriculum and pedagogy that have different emphases for children from b-2, 3-5 and 5-8 years of age respectively, still with many aspects of practice relating to the whole age group. Policy resources, such as the APST that provide a common language and concepts, along with specialised knowledge across the age range can assist in bridging the gaps created by institutional divisions, reinforcing stability for the profession and for the children and families it serves. As an example, the commitment to this can be seen in the adoption by South Australian universities (Flinders University and University of South Australia) to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs to prepare students to teach children b-8, reinforcing a particular philosophical standpoint, and also affording a practical solution for staffing in rural and remote locations in particular.

Making early years teachers’ work visible in the APST is crucial at this point in time and is of significance for a number of reasons. These include the huge growth in this sector of the teaching profession, a focus on contemporary research about learning and teaching in the early years of life, major national and international reforms, and the need to achieve policy congruence in a complex field.

South Australia has previously argued for inclusion of early years teachers in the APST, with limited success. Now, on this occasion, the contexts for early childhood education and care and the first years of school have changed. Since the development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, early childhood national reforms have focussed on improving the quality of services as one aspect of the following initiatives:
• The National Early Childhood Development Strategy
• The National Quality Framework consisting of
  o National Law
  o Regulations enacted in each State and Territory jurisdiction
  o The National Quality Standard embedded in the law, that outlines consistent
    expectations for programmes about quality
  o A national quality rating and assessment process that rates services against
    the National Quality Standard and the Regulations.
  o The Early Years Learning Framework which outlines principles, practices and
    outcomes for early childhood programs.
• Universal access to early childhood education in the year before starting school.
• The National Workforce Development Strategy

While some of these very visible reforms relate to the care and education of children aged from birth to eight years, the focus is primarily on the age group from birth to five years in a range of settings. Conversely, specific attention to the early years of school, particularly in terms of research and policy, has diminished, although there are promising signs in some jurisdictions that a new focus may be emerging, for example with the Age Appropriate Pedagogies program in Queensland.

The extent of the early childhood education and care field and its associated resources are substantial, but in comparison to other OECD countries, Australia falls well short of the OECD average expenditure of 0.8% of GDP with approximately 0.5%, compared to countries such as Denmark and Sweden with almost 2%. The total Australian, State and Territory governments’ recurrent and capital expenditure on early childhood education and care services was approximately $9.4 billion in 2016-17, compared with $9.2 billion in 2015-16.

There are now 15,767 early childhood education and care services (ECEC) approved across Australia under the National Quality Framework (NQF), with more than 7000 providers approved to operate education and care services in the mixed market system.

In 2016, there were 11,070 ECEC services in Australia delivering preschool education (Productivity Commission 2018). Of these services, 6,827 (61.7 per cent) were delivered from long day care centres and the remainder were delivered from stand-alone preschools or preschools attached to a school. South Australia’s share of these is 778, including 349 long day care centres situated with preschools or delivering preschool programs, and 368 where preschool programs are delivered without Long Day Care.

It is estimated that there are almost 185,000 children from b-8 living in this State, with a national estimate of 2.8 million in that age group. Nationally, around 900,000 families access education and care services for approximately 1.3 million children (ACECQA, 2017).

The changes brought about by the National Quality Framework (NQF) have resulted in an actual increase in the number of qualified early childhood teachers, with a further increase expected by 2020. The need for early childhood teachers working in the prior-to-school sector is anticipated to increase by 26.4% to 2022, from 44,500 in 2017, which was an increase of 81.9% from 2012.
Internationally, the education and care of young children has shifted from the private to the public domain, with much attention to the complementary roles of families and ECEC institutions in young children’s early development and learning. However there remains a view in some countries that government intervention and provision is interfering with the rights and responsibilities of parents. Further government regulation of early childhood teachers’ practice in the ECEC sector may be seen as a positive move by the community if the association with higher quality is overt. But it may be viewed as yet another imposition on an already stressed and unstable workforce. Promotion of the benefits will be better understood if links with research findings and existing policy requirements are made.

Research demonstrates the following important findings:

- The early years of life, particularly the first three years have a crucial and lasting effect on individuals’ wellbeing, health, education, employment, and social and economic status.
- The economic returns to society on investing in the early years can be as much as $17 for every $1 spent, brought about by prevention rather than later intervention.
- Children learn from birth.
- Attending an early childhood program has a positive effect for children when compared to not attending.
- There are strong benefits in attending early childhood programs for children who are living in disadvantaged circumstances.
- Early childhood education programs in which there are highly qualified teachers with specialised knowledge have better outcomes for children.
- Children do better when they attend high quality programs.
- Conversely, low quality programs can have a detrimental effect on children.
- Structural factors of quality (such as staff child ratios, group size, staff qualifications), make a difference because they can provide a foundation to enact process factors of quality related to pedagogy.
- High quality programs combine intellectual and social/emotional experiences for children in a play-based program.
- Helping children develop dispositions, with educators building trust, confidence and independence, social and emotional well-being, supporting and extending language and communication, supporting learning and critical thinking, and assessing learning and language are all important elements of a high quality early childhood program.
- Children make gains in programs where there are respectful relationships in which children are engaged and can make decisions, and there is a balance between adult initiated and child chosen activities.

One of the challenges of developing and implementing curriculum and learning frameworks for educators of young children and programs for children is getting a balance between the here-and-now of childhood and the future adult whom is to develop. Debates about the focus of curriculum in the early years are vigorous and have resulted in an emphasis in some countries on academic readiness for school rather than a more balanced approach as indicated by research findings and advocated by the early years teaching field. This may result in contradictory requirement that guide teachers’ practice.
If a strong and equal partnership is to be developed between the ECEC field and school education, as proposed by the OECD, then the revised APST can provide an opportunity to bring together the diverse perspectives and methods of both ECEC and schools, focusing on the strengths of both approaches, without an assimilation of one sector into the other.

The APST must recognise in an equitable and visible way the enormous changes that have taken place in recent years in the ECEC field and that are expected to evolve as new research informs developments in policy and practice. There is the opportunity to include early years teachers in ways that are congruent with existing policy requirements, thus supporting an individual teacher’s development alongside quality improvement at a local service level. In turn, this can assist, along with significant attention to resolving other outstanding workforce issues such as remuneration, high turnover and burnout, to heighten the professionalisation and public perception of the workforce.

Any commitment to realising the wide-ranging and socially-just benefits that could entail from public investment in ECEC provision requires a sustained commitment to developing a skilled workforce which understands the needs of children at multiple levels, and can deliver a high quality curriculum to children with differing needs and to support families to do the same (Siraj et al, 2017, p.30)

The inclusion of early years teachers in the APST is one strategy that can support a skilled workforce to develop further skills in this crucial field.

The following recommendations are made:

**Inclusion of early years teachers**

1. The revised Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are inclusive of early years teachers working with children from b-8 in education and care settings.

2. The language used is inclusive of early years (b-8) teachers’ work and recognises the settings in which they work.

**Content and Structure of the Standards**

3. The general structure and components of the APST framework remain the same

4. That the three Domains of Teaching remain as
   - Professional Knowledge
   - Professional Practice
   - Professional Engagement

5. The APST reflect ways of expressing the focus areas for each standard that are inclusive of early years teachers (b-8), and create congruent connections between practices in the prior-to-school and the early years of school.
6. The descriptors are expressed in more specific terms that apply to each level of education, for example, the early years (b-8), the primary years, the middle years and the senior years, resulting in equitable treatment of each.

**Congruence with research findings, policy requirements and practice conventions**

7. The concepts and descriptors in the APST are informed by international research, and acknowledge the specialised knowledge that is required to work with young children b-8.

8. The concepts and descriptors in the APST are congruent with the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard as they are enshrined in the national law and regulations, and the ECA Code of Ethics.

**Consultation**

9. That during the consultation period specific opportunities are afforded for early years stakeholders to focus on the issues for this part of the teaching workforce and that these opportunities are convened by consultants who have familiarity and contemporary understanding of the concepts, language and issues in the early years field.
1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide a foundation for the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia’s (TRBSA) input to a forthcoming review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) in 2018.

In 2015 the Early Childhood Reference Group – Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – Teachers Registration Board – Future Directions was established to provide advice to the Teachers Registration Board regarding the inclusion of Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) in the APST. This research project supplements the Early Childhood Reference Group’s work in considering the appropriateness of the language of the APST from their perspective and proposing changes to the details of the existing standards framework. The desktop research takes the form of an environmental scan of existing research, policy and practice about education in the early years (birth-8 years) and responds to two significant changes in policy and practice in recent years. These are the recognition that appropriately qualified teachers have a valid role in providing education programs for children from birth to five and that specific understandings about young children and specific pedagogies for children in the first years of school have not been given enough recent acknowledgement and focus.

The project includes the following:

- A literature review of significant relevant early childhood research (local and international)
- An analysis of specific policy matters relevant to the provision of early years education
- Discussion about the congruence or conflict between research findings and policy and identification of relevant issues
- Recommendations for recognition and inclusion of early years teachers’ work in the revised APST.

The objective of this research project is to provide a sound foundation to the feedback provided by South Australia in the review of the APST, demonstrating the need for inclusive language to be built into the APST framework. It is anticipated that this change would lead to the successful registration of early childhood teachers who can meet relevant Graduate Standards and make a smooth transition from Provisional to (full) Registration using inclusive APST.

This paper is a report to the TRBSA in consultation with the Early Childhood Reference Group. The outcomes of the project will be presented to the reference group to facilitate conversations in forming the basis of a response to AITSL’s review.
Context for the Australian Teacher Professional Standards

The APST were developed in support of the Goals for All Young Australians in the Melbourne Declaration:

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
Goal 2: All young Australians become:
– successful learners
– confident and creative individuals – active and informed citizens. (MCEETYA, 2008)

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in consultation with teacher regulatory authorities across Australia published the Standards in December 2011.

In a statement that indicates the crucial influence of teachers and the importance of professional accountability, AITSL argues:

The greatest resource in Australian schools is our teachers. They account for the vast majority of expenditure in school education and have the greatest impact on student learning, far outweighing the impact of any other education program or policy. (AITSL, 2011, p.1)

As indicated in the Institute’s title and in the above statement, the work of AITSL was and is still largely concerned with teaching in schools, rather than including early childhood teachers as a priority. At that time, preschool teachers in South Australia were required to be registered, while in some other jurisdictions their early childhood colleagues may have been eligible but not compelled to be registered.

From the outset, South Australia recognised the need for the language used in the Standards and their descriptors to be inclusive of the early childhood sector and advocated for this. Nationally, consideration of registration of teachers in early childhood settings was not a high priority and full implementation of the National Early Childhood Reform Agenda had not commenced. It is apparent that South Australia’s advice was paid scant attention in the development of the APST, but numerous personal comments from pre-service teachers and practising teachers to this author and colleagues indicate that they have to work hard in order to translate the focus areas and descriptors to fit with appropriate practice in early childhood settings.

In 2016 AITSL signalled a review of the standards to be held in 2018.

AITSL priorities and the National Review of Teacher Registration

As a priority, AITSL has a leadership role in ‘advocating for quality and rigour in the design and implementation of national policies, tools and resources’ (AITSL 2017, p.5). Promotion and supporting implementation of the APST is a focus for AITSL’s work, and it is committed to ‘building, enhancing and sustaining effective teaching and leadership at every level of the education system’ (AITSL, 2017, p.5). It does this by working with a range of agencies such as schools and early childhood settings, systems, sectors, higher education providers,
professional associations and other agencies. While it acknowledges the professional understandings of teachers about the importance of evidence-informed decision-making, it points out that there is still a need to translate evidence into practice and to focus on the most important aspects of teachers’ work by ‘minimising the many distractions’ that occur on a daily basis. A stated outcome achievement for AITSL is ‘a professional, evidence-informed teaching and leadership workforce that understands and improves its own impact on learning’ (p.3). This would be enhanced by the ‘provision of stronger standards-based support for the development of quality teaching and leadership across Australia’s schools and early childhood settings, and through the career life cycle’ (AITSL, 2017, p.7).

The purpose of National Review of Teacher Registration, conducted during 2018, was to improve the Teacher Registration Framework. The review report One Teaching Profession: Teacher Registration in Australia was released in September 2018. Among the tasks the review panel considered were:

- how all elements of the current national registration framework operate, including implementation, consistency, best practice, challenges and barriers
- the extent to which the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (teacher standards) drive teacher quality and how this could be strengthened
- early childhood teacher registration, VET teacher registration, and the transition of initial teacher education students into the profession. (AITSL 2018)

The consultation paper published by the review panel acknowledged the value of all teachers as part of a profession and the aspirations of teachers to continue to grow their own expertise and attract high status in the community, with a better recognition of the impact of teachers on children’s and young people’s learning. The paper acknowledged the importance of the early years of life in laying a foundation for children’s learning and development and the effect of quality teaching, in a range of different service types, on making a difference for current and later outcomes. It called for responses to the following questions:

Should nationally consistent approaches to the registration of early childhood education teachers be considered?

How could a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration support and improve the quality of early childhood teaching in school and non-school settings?

How could the Teacher Standards be applied for early childhood teacher registration?

The teacher standards themselves were excluded from this review. However, it can be expected that some of the responses to the consultation paper and the panel’s recommendations will have consequences that will impact on the review of the APST to follow. This can bring a new opportunity for all teachers’ work to be acknowledged and more recent policy activity related to the early childhood reforms to be incorporated.
Early childhood policy reforms

Since the development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, much has happened in the way of early childhood education and care reforms. While some of these relate to the care and education of children aged from birth to eight years, the focus is primarily on the age group from birth to five years in a range of settings.

The early childhood reforms first introduced in 2008 by the Federal Government and negotiated through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) include

- The National Early Childhood Development Strategy
- The National Quality Framework (NQF) consisting of
  - National Law
  - Regulations enacted in each State and Territory jurisdiction
  - The National Quality Standard (NQS) embedded in the law, that outlines consistent expectations for programmes about quality
  - A national quality rating and assessment process that rates services against the National Quality Standard and the Regulations.
  - The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) which outlines principles, practices and outcomes for early childhood programs.
- Universal access to early childhood education in the year before starting school.
- The National Workforce Development Strategy

Mostly, these reforms have been introduced with acceptance and optimism by the early childhood field (Early Childhood Australia [ECA], 2018; Sims, Sumson, Mulhearn & Greishaber, 2017; Young, 2009), although there are some concerns about aspects of them and their possible vulnerabilities, due to funding commitments tied to political orientations and parliamentary cycles; for example, the periodic short term renewals of the National Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education and recent federal budget decisions impacting on funding negotiated between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories in support of the National Quality Framework (NQF).

One of the major impacts of the reforms has been a new requirement for employment of more early childhood qualified teachers with a consequential increase in specialised preservice training. This issue is elaborated upon later in this paper.

Outline of this paper

In order to inform the direction and content of this paper, a literature search has been undertaken, and an annotated bibliography prepared. The review is desk-based through online access and focusses mainly on research conducted in the past 20 years, although there is reference to significant international studies conducted earlier than this period, because of their influence in shaping arguments for a new public policy focus on early childhood education. Items considered in the review were found in journals, books, reports and conference proceedings, and websites, including primary and secondary sources. Both Australian and international references have been used. A number of original research reports have been examined; however, because of the scope and limited size of the project, much information has been gleaned from secondary sources such as literature reviews and
summaries of research reports compiled by authoritative researchers and writers. As this document has been assembled for a specific purpose – to provide a foundation for arguing for the inclusion of early childhood educators’ work in what is often seen as being a school oriented document - the main documents have been referenced selectively, based on their orientation towards the major themes and arguments.

The key themes that have been explored are
- the importance of the early years and early childhood education
- young children’s learning and development
- quality and effectiveness of early childhood programs (including pedagogy)
- curriculum and pedagogy in the first years of school
- educator competence and qualifications

These themes have been selected because of a contemporary international focus on education policy for the early childhood field, an increased emphasis on research and its ability to inform policy decision-making, and widely accepted agreement that educators’ practice has a significant impact on outcomes for children. Specific attention has been given to the first years of school because of the age range in the project brief being birth to eight years. Early years teachers in South Australia are concerned that the particular needs of children in those first years of school, and traditional approaches to teaching them, are being overlooked in recent research and policy related to the schooling sector. These concerns have been reinforced by the TRBSA Early Childhood Reference Group. While the themes have been grouped under individual headings, there is much consistency between a number of reference papers that bring together many interrelated issues in educating young children.

This paper integrates the themes across a number of chapters, the first of which considers the contextual factors related to current issues and their relationships to the inclusion of early years teachers’ work in the APST. The second chapter focusses on the early childhood field, how it is defined, its extent, and the constitution of its teaching workforce. Chapter 3 foregrounds significant contemporary and recent historic research issues and findings that have an important role to play in influencing how early years teachers’ work is understood and accounted for, while Chapter 4 outlines policy priorities and commitments that govern the work of early years teachers. Chapter 5 discusses the congruence, or lack thereof, between research and policy, and the final chapter makes recommendations regarding the inclusion of early years teachers’ work in the revised APST.
The early years and early years education

The brief for this project specifically refers to the early years as covering the ages of children from birth to 8 years. Herein lies a challenge that relates to historical, social and political factors. In this chapter, some of these factors are explored and linked to current arrangements that govern the early years education workforce and fields of practice.

Often the terms early childhood and the early years have been used interchangeably, leading to some confusion. Over time, in South Australia both terms have been used across a range of disciplines and for a variety of audiences (Benveniste 2013; DECD 2013; Sawyer et al 2014). Currently the South Australian Government uses both early years and early childhood to provide public information about education, learning and care in the prior to school years, with a strong emphasis on the preschool year, differentiating this period from the schooling years commencing with Reception (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2018; Department of Education 2018).

Internationally, the term early childhood has generally referred to the period of life from birth to eight years (b-8) shaped by child development theories and understandings of the potential vulnerability and dependence of children, the unique development that happens in this period, and more recently, the critical nature of development in the very early part of this phase of life (birth to 3 years) that has a profound influence on the remainder of the life span. Typically, these ideas are linked to how we have come to use age as a descriptive marker of growth and development, and ultimately in our social and legal definitions of ‘child’, and the rights and responsibilities that are inherent in those constructs (Hetzel, 2015; Norozi & Moen, 2016).

Morrow, (2011, cited in Hetzel, 2015), reminds us that ‘[h]ow we think about and understand children and childhood matters because our collective views, theories and ideas ultimately affect how societies treat and engage with children in daily life and practice’ (p.4). In determining how we understand young children and their learning, how we help educators shape their teaching, and how we design systems (including standards), we can have a profound effect on children’s lives. In some European countries, notably in parts of Scandinavia, the remit of institutions that cater for young children coincides with a b-8 view of early childhood with children beginning primary schooling around the ages of seven or eight years. However, in many countries the concept of early years from birth to eight education reaches across the administrative prior-to-school and school divide, with possible gaps, invisibilities and assumptions, that may favour one type of institutional arrangement over another, rather than focussing foremost on children as they participate in education (OECD, 2001; OECD, 2006). This has varied across sectors and institutions in Australia over recent times, influencing how children experience discontinuities, and lack of consistency of policies, standards and conditions for educators.
In addition to contradictions regarding how children are positioned and served through social institutions, inconsistencies occur in nomenclature and descriptions of *early years education, early childhood education, and early childhood education and care.*

One source provides the following overarching explanation

> Early childhood education (ECE; also nursery education) is a branch of education theory which relates to the teaching of young children (formally and informally) up until the age of about eight. Infant/toddler education, a subset of early childhood education, denotes the education of children from birth to age two. It emerged as a field of study during the Enlightenment, particularly in European countries with high literacy rates. It continued to grow through the nineteenth century as universal primary education became a norm in the Western world. *(Wikipedia)*

But it is not as straightforward as it may seem. Definitions of *early years education* in the United Kingdom vary between relating to learning for 3-5 year olds (Cambridgeshire County Council (n.d.), and learning, development and care from birth – 5 (Department for Education, 2014), whilst New Zealand uses the term *early childhood education* (ECE) as referring to the ‘range of facilities available for children under five’ (New Zealand Immigration, n.d.). Canada describes *early childhood education and care* as being for children before they start school at approximately five or 6 years of age (Friendly et al, 2018). Similarly, in Scotland,

> [e]arly Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is defined ....as all educational and care arrangements for children from birth to compulsory schooling, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content. As this wide definition indicates, ECEC can take many forms. *(Naumann et al, 2013)*

The OECD (2001, p.14), makes a distinction between defining a period of development and the services that are provided for young children, in stating ‘the term *early childhood education and care* (ECEC) includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content. The early childhood period is commonly defined as birth to age 8’.

In Australia, there are various terms in policy documents that bring into focus different theoretical, political or administrative orientations.

The nationally agreed Early Childhood Development Strategy, published by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2009, has taken the view that early childhood is the period from birth to eight years, giving a rationale that these years ‘have a profound impact on their [children’s] future health, development, learning and wellbeing’ (COAG, 2009, p.6). An example where political priorities and administrative functions have had this broad focus can be seen in the *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework* (DETE, 2001), with its Early Years Band (b-8) linking focus phases of b-3, 3-5, and 5-8 (Year 2 in school), and a forerunner of *Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia,* (DEEWR, 2009). The current *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (VELDF) (VCAA, 2017), provides guidance for a range of professionals working with children from b-8. It has the following introduction and rationale for its choice.
Research over the past few decades has revealed how the human brain is biologically primed for learning from birth. The early childhood period of children’s lives has a profound impact on their learning and development for the long term. From birth to eight years, children’s developing brains undergo rapid change. This is when children have the greatest opportunities to develop neural pathways for learning and are also most vulnerable to negative experiences. Research underscores the imperative for comprehensive and integrated systems that support children’s learning and development, health and wellbeing in partnership with families. Emphasis is placed on continuity of learning for young children as they move between various settings in the early years, including home, early childhood services and school. An informed understanding of the science of early learning and development guides adults on what children need to thrive and the systems that best support this. (VCAA 2016, p. 2)

One exception to the notion of early years education comprising birth to eight can be seen in Western Australia where Kindergarten to Year 2 are described as the early years of schooling (DET, 2011).

Some of the inconsistent and confusing labelling can be attributed to historically separated development and subsequent fragmented administration between and within the school and prior-to-school sectors across Australia. Although in 19th and early 20th century Australia the first kindergartens, nursery schools and child care services were often established in an integrated way with health, nutrition and educative aims, the discrete purposes of child care primarily to meet the needs of women’s access to the workforce, and preschool education, (or kindergarten), for children mostly in the year before school, emerged as the 20th century progressed. This fragmentation has been exacerbated by separate funding arrangements, and complex administrative arrangements across different levels of government. In more recent times, national early childhood reforms have been able to address some of these issues, but there is still much to be done if we are to address inequities in the system for children and families and different expectations and conditions for teachers across the sectors.

One of the recent changes in South Australia, the introduction of the Same First Day policy in Government schools, where children may commence school in Reception at the beginning of the year if they turn 5 years of age by 30 April in that year, highlights the anomalies for children and teachers brought about by policy decisions. In practice this means, for example that two children whose birthdays are one day apart (child 1 – turns 5 on 30 April, child 2 – turns 5 on 1 May) will find themselves in different types of education settings, with different educator: child ratios, teachers who follow different curriculum frameworks, the promotion of different approaches to teaching, and different accountability requirements. One child (in the early childhood centre) is assured of a qualified early childhood teacher providing leadership in guiding the program, whereas the other (in a school) may have this, but is not assured of it. These issues are apparent in other Australian jurisdictions. Appendix 1 summarises preschool and school starting ages for Australian states and territories.

University courses in South Australia have designed undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programs that bridge the gap, preparing teachers to work across the b-8 age group, and focus on designing learning to link with the Graduate Outcomes of the APST. This goes some way towards creating an overview of the b-8 age group, but students are
likely to experience different orientations in settings as they undertake professional experience and ultimately join the teaching workforce. These issues are addressed later in this paper.

Separation of policy, institutional and administrative arrangements govern much of what happens for children in their early lives and creates barriers to learning. Developing resources that share a common language and constructs about children’s learning across the prior-to-school and school divide is important (Perry, Dockett & Harley, 2012), particularly for consistency of pedagogical approaches and as children make transitions between settings. The central role of teachers as catalysts in that learning demands that a resource such as the APST includes and makes visible early years teachers’ work in the APST.

The early years education workforce

Given that early years teachers have a profound effect on young children’s learning, and that recognition for their expertise is sought in the APST, it is important to understand the size and scope of the workforce and a picture of the children for whom they provide education and care.

The changes brought about by the National Quality Framework (NQF) have meant raising requirements for employment of qualified staff; in particular, an increase in the number of qualified early childhood teachers that has already occurred and is expected to increase again by 2020 in early childhood services (b-5).

As Krieg and Whitehead (2015) remark, the early years of school have been overlooked or silenced in research. Likewise, in searching for administrative data, it is difficult to find statistics in publicly available documents regarding children aged 5-8 years and teachers in Reception to Year-2 classes. As an example, the National Report on Schooling in Australia 2016 (ACARA, 2018) generally reports on schools according to the three categories of Primary, Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary. Primary schooling is described as comprising pre-year 1, followed by Years 1-6, or, in the case of South Australia, Years 1 -7. Student attendance numbers are reported for one group from 6-15 years of age (the compulsory years) even though, as the report acknowledges, most children may start school between the ages of 4 and a half and 5 and a half years. Consequently, in compiling this report, some estimations of 5-8 year old child numbers have been made. Also, in some instances, child care data may include Out of School Hours Care for children aged from b-12 years, and is not able to be separated into age cohorts.

The main sources of public information that have been used regarding early childhood education and care are the Report on Government Services 2018 by the Productivity Commission, reported annually; the ACECQA Snapshots reported quarterly; and the ACECQA National Partnership Annual Report: National Quality Agenda (2017). While the last national census of the child care workforce was conducted in 2016 (Social Research Centre, 2017), it has not been used because it did not include some preschool education services and more current relevant data is available from the other references mentioned above.
Expenditure on early childhood education and care has increased significantly across the nation in recent years. The total Australian, State and Territory governments’ recurrent and capital expenditure on early childhood education and care services was approximately $9.4 billion in 2016-17, compared with $9.2 billion in 2015-16 (Productivity Commission, 2018). This is inclusive of Outside School Hours Care programs which serves a large number of children aged 5-8 years. In 2017, of children aged 0–12 years, 1,261,041 children (or 31.3 per cent) attended Australian Government Child Care Benefit approved child care services, an increase of 3.3 per cent from 2016. (Note, this does not include sessional preschool program data for children in the year prior to school).

The following points regarding early years education can assist us to understand the range and complexity of the field and the population it serves.

In relation to services:

- The number of early childhood education and care services approved across Australia under the National Quality Framework (NQF) has increased from 13,676 in the 3rd quarter of 2013, to 15,767 in the first quarter of 2018 (ACECQA, 2018).

- More than 7000 providers have been approved to operate education and care services since the commencement of the NQF in 2012. Many of these providers operate more than one service.

- The range of providers include State and Local government (12% school and standalone), private for profit (47%), private not for profit (34%), Independent (3%), Catholic (1%) (ACECQA, 2018, p.7). See Appendix 2 for more information.

- In 2016, there were 11,070 ECEC services in Australia delivering preschool education programs for children in the year before formal schooling (Productivity Commission, 2018). Of these services, 6,827 (61.7 per cent) were delivered from long day care centres and the remainder were delivered from stand-alone preschools or preschools attached to a school.

- South Australia’s share of these is 778, including 349 long day care centres situated with preschools or delivering preschool programs, and 368 where preschool programs are delivered without Long Day Care.

Who do they serve?

- In 2016 in SA there were 123,326 children aged b-5 in the general population and 142,782 from 6-12 years (Productivity Commission, 2018). Given these figures it can be estimated then that there are almost 185,000 children from b-8 living in this State, with a national estimation of 2.8 million in that age group.

- Nationally, around 900,000 families access education and care services for around 1.3 million children (ACECQA, 2017).
In 2016, there were 514,028 children aged 3–5 years enrolled in a preschool program in Australia.

Of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged in the state-specific year before full time schooling, 90.4% were enrolled in a preschool program.

In 2017 in South Australia, 19,454 children (94.2%) were attending preschool in the year before school (Productivity Commission, 2018).

Who are the educators?

It is estimated that there are more than 200,000 staff employed nationally in education and care services (Productivity Commission, 2018).

In 2016 the mix of 129,884 paid primary contact educators employed in Australian Government Child Care Benefit approved child care (ECEC) services consisted of 81.55% having a relevant formal qualification or three or more years relevant experience, with 31.5% holding Certificate III or IV, 31.9% holding a diploma or advanced diploma, and 12.8% holding a bachelor degree or above (Productivity Commission, 2018).

In 2014, there were 18,993 educators delivering preschool programs nationally, of whom 88.2% per cent had teacher qualifications (that is, at least three-year university trained in the field of early childhood) (Productivity Commission, 2018).

In South Australia, there were approximately 1700 teachers delivering preschool education programs (Productivity Commission, 2018).

Nationally, there are 10,516 approved ECEC services that require at least one teacher (ACECQA, 2018 p.6). This includes 778 in South Australia.

What are the future predictions?

The number of early childhood teachers is expected to increase, due to more educators completing early childhood teacher qualifications, and forthcoming implementation of legislative requirements from 2020.

The need for early childhood teachers working in the prior-to-school sector is anticipated to increase by 26.4% to 2022 from 44,500 in 2017, which was an increase of 81.9% from 2012. (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018, p.42).

This compares to a forecast increased need of 7.0% for primary teachers to 2022 (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018, p.42).
The need for ‘child care workers’ and ‘child care managers’ is expected to rise by 18.1% and 21.3% respectively (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018, p.43). Some of these will be qualified early childhood teachers.

Because child care occupations are under a different category from education, it is difficult to conclude how the need for trained teachers in long day care is estimated.

From the above information, even without considering existing high staff turnover rates in child care services, it can confidently be argued that the predicted increase in the early years education workforce is very significant. In summary, describing and comprehending early years education is complex and presents conundrums, especially for those not intimately connected with the day-to-day work. Therefore, it may be easy to develop a facile or superficial understanding and an underestimation of the effect of dismissing its complexity and specificity. There are significant numbers of children in South Australia, and Australia as a whole, in the b-8 age group, who are affected by teachers’ practice and therefore by the way in which the standards for teachers are documented, interpreted and demonstrated. Even though not all early childhood educators are required to be qualified teachers, all of them have a role in educating children, with teachers in early years education having a significant and increasing role as pedagogical leaders. The growing knowledge base that research provides is a crucial component in recognising these issues.
Research about the early years

Over the past five decades a great deal of knowledge has been developed about the crucial nature of the early years of life and the importance of investing in them. Research from a range of fields has confirmed this, but there is still much to learn. Arguments have been made from economic perspectives, calculating the return on investing in programs for young children. New understandings from neuroscience have focussed on the first three years, arguing in support of the lasting effect of getting those years ‘right’. In addition to independent projects, Governments have commissioned research and evaluation studies in an effort to make the best investments for policy decisions, but again the answers are not simple.

In this chapter reference is made to a number of research topics including

- the importance of the early years and early years education
- young children’s learning and development
- quality and effectiveness of early childhood education
- the work of early years educators

Content has been referenced from direct research reports and significant literature searches. Consideration has been given primarily to research from the prior-to-school field because of the scope and visibility of research projects in this field. Some of these studies include the upper cohorts of the b–8 age span, and longitudinal effects on that age group, but only a small number of studies related solely to the first years of formal schooling have been included, for, as Krieg and Whitehead (2015) argue, the first years of school are largely invisible as a specific focus in early years education research. For example, their findings indicate that

A review of the Australian Educational Researcher from April 2000–November 2014 found a total of 366 articles (excluding book reviews) had been published across 52 issues. Of these, only 7.4 % (27 articles) focused on early childhood (birth–5 –11 articles, 5–8 years/early primary—7 articles, and early childhood broadly—9 articles). The education and care of birth–5 year olds [also] dominates the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, the specialist journal in the [Australian] field. (Krieg & Whitehead 2015, p. 322)

It is not apparent that this has changed in the past three years.

The importance of the early years for children’s learning and development

For many years, ideas about the early years of life as having lasting effects on how humans develop and the gaze on children’s development from various perspectives have been put forward by philosophers, theologians and theorists (Gray & MacBlain 2015). While these ideas haven’t always been shared universally, early childhood educators have a strong sense
of them in practice. There is now a growing awareness of the importance of the early years more broadly, informed by scientific evidence. Recent non-invasive neuroscience research methods have confirmed that the first five or eight years have an impact that lasts a lifetime, and children’s wellbeing, good nutrition, health, and exercise are critical to brain development and learning. During this early period children have already developed most of their physical brain with significant growth occurring in infancy. Relationships with carers that provide strong attachment form positive foundations for learning, health, wellbeing and emotional regulation (Edwards, Fleer & Nuttall, 2008; Mustard, 2008; Winter, 2010). Longitudinal studies of successive birth cohort samples have pointed to the crucial influence of early life on subsequent mental and physical health and development (Acheson, 1998, in Mustard, 2003; McCain & Mustard, 1999). While its knowledge base is emerging exponentially, the field of neuroscience is not the only area of research activity pertaining to early development, but it has assisted researchers, policymakers and advocates to consider the arguments for promoting investment in the early years across a range of disciplines.

Sawyer et al (2015) acknowledge the first five years of life is globally recognised as being critical for human development and cite the United Nations Human Rights charter, reminding us that every child has a right to develop a strong foundation during the early years, providing them with a solid platform for ongoing health and development throughout childhood and into adult life’ (p.4). But they clarify that the first 5 years are not deterministic and efforts to support human development must continue along the lifespan. They, along with many others, including the United Nations Children’s Fund (1999), advocate for support for the first years of life being a shared responsibility, including parenting, early childhood education and care, schooling and health services as an integrated network. This shared responsibility is a human rights issue with social and economic implications.

Citing longstanding longitudinal studies, mainly from the United States, and using neuroscience as a catalyst for their arguments, economists have advocated for investing resources in the early years, calculating that economic benefits for all add up to long term returns as much as $17 for every $1 spent in low socio-economic communities (Heckman and Masterov 2007; Karoly, Kilburn & Cannon 2005). Heckman (2006) uses economic efficiency, productivity and social justice arguments for this kind of investment stating that

Early interventions for disadvantaged children promote schooling, raise the quality of the work-force, enhance the productivity of schools and reduce crime, teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. They raise earnings and promote social attachment. Focusing solely on earnings gains, returns to dollars invested are as high as 15-17%. (p.2)

While these arguments have proven useful in focussing greater attention on the early years, it is wise to be cautious about broad generalisations, as contemporary research continues to explore and gain further understandings about the features of early childhood education.
and care that can make a long-term difference as well as respecting children in the here-and-now.

In research commissioned by MCEETYA, Winter (2010, p.26) outlines the following key factors that neuroscience is confirming as being vital in early childhood development:

- The first five years last a lifetime (e.g. Goswami 2008; OECD 2007)
- Good nutrition, health, and exercise are critical (e.g. Hillman et al. and Winter et al., in Howard-Jones, 2008)
- Children are born ready to learn (e.g. Maxwell et al., 2009; Perry, 2000; Shonkoff et al., 2005)
- The best learning happens in nurturing relationships (e.g. Kotulak, 1998; Perry & Pollard, 1997; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Shore, 1997)
- The brain develops through use (e.g. Perry, 2000; Shore, 1997)
- Children’s wellbeing is critical to brain development and learning (e.g. Halfon et al., 2001; Laevers, 1999)
- Children learn through being engaged and doing (e.g. Erk et al., 2003; Rushton et al., 2003)
- Children learn from watching and copying (Blakemore & Frith, 2005; Chong et al., 2008)
- Children’s self-control is critical for learning, responsibility and relationships (e.g. Bodrova in Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2005; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000)
- Children learn language by listening to it and using it (e.g. Hart & Risley 2003; OECD, 2007)
- Children are born ready to use and learn mathematics (e.g. Ferigenson et al., 2004; McCrink & Wynn, in OECD, 2007)

Selected references from the paper are included in brackets after each point.

We can conclude from the range of research cited in Winter’s paper and others, that there is no doubt that the early years are critical to the long-term outcomes for children as the rapidly developing brain is building its architecture and the way it functions. Most importantly, nurturing relationships (attachment and consistent warm, loving behaviour) have been found to be essential for optimal brain development. While this is important in families it is just as crucial in early learning settings and has implications for early childhood educators’ practice.

The role of early years education

While recent neuroscience research on brain development has promoted the importance of early development and learning, greater attention has also been focussed on the provision of early childhood education. As part of this attention, we have seen an increase in society’s recognition of the need for proper early childhood institutions and a growth in shared frameworks for professionals in early childhood development (Pramling Samuelsson, Sheridan & Williams 2006). There is a greater acknowledgement that early years education is the foundation for learning and is successively built upon in later years. The international
Starting Strong review of early childhood education and care (OECD 2001) argues that early childhood is an important phase of education and, like compulsory schooling, it should be recognised as a public good and accessible to all children in the years prior to starting school. It requires increased effort to be placed on ensuring the best possible learning environments for young children that includes new ways of supporting learning for children under 3 years of age (Edwards, Fleer & Nuttall, 2008; Lally, 2009; Oberhumer, 2005). International research is conclusive that children who attend early childhood education do better in later learning than those who do not attend, and that children who participate in high quality programs do better than in low quality services that can have a detrimental effect. Factors that are widely recognised as contributing to program quality and subsequent impacts on children’s outcomes are structural factors such as staff: child ratios, staff qualifications, group size and physical environments, and process factors such as curriculum and pedagogy, including interactions and relationships, and staff development. Structural factors can enable or inhibit process factors. The APST can also be an enabling or inhibiting factor in guiding individual teachers’ practice and therefore, it follows, in impacting on program quality.

Traditionally, there has been a focus on designing and setting up learning environments with educators observing and responding to children, and children having unstructured time for discovery and play. While these aspects of practice have not been abandoned, there is evidence about the importance of educators taking a more active role in stimulating children’s learning, with a balance between child selected activities and educator initiated experiences in order to enable more equitable access to learning and improve children’s outcomes (Edwards, Fleer & Nuttall, 2008; OECD 2001; Siraj, 2014). This has seen the development of frameworks for early learning in many countries (OECD 2006; Wilks et al 2008).

A key element of a high quality program is the curriculum statement or framework and the guidance that it provides for practice (Oberhuemer 2005). Proliferation of learning frameworks has meant, in many cases, ownership of professional practice that has been shaped by research and defined specifically for early learning settings, rather than, for example, watered-down versions of school curricula or child development continua.

New definitions of curriculum and pedagogy have emerged that differentiate learning and teaching in the early years from the later years, where narrower concepts of curriculum and pedagogy have been applied. The EYLF reflects breadth in bringing together some key concepts from research, stating, ‘in the early childhood setting curriculum means all the interactions, experiences, activities routines and events, planned and unplanned that occur on an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development’ (DEEWR 2009, p. 45). Pedagogy is defined as ‘early childhood educators’ professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning’ (DEEWR 2009, p.46).

Australian experiences of early childhood curriculum development at national policy level have largely been positive (Young, 2009), but there are tensions between two different early curriculum traditions elaborated upon by the OECD (2006). The social pedagogy tradition favoured by Nordic and Central European countries combines learning, child
rearing and care without hierarchy, with a preference for influencing the early years of primary school. The program is seen as preparation for the rest of life; families play an integral part; and there is an emphasis on the social aspects of interacting and collaboration to support cognitive development. Continuity is promoted through educators from the different phases of education learning together, developing and sharing specialised knowledge, and making connections between curricula. The main objectives of this tradition emphasise learning dispositions, developing a desire and curiosity for learning, and confidence in learning, rather than pre-specified bodies of knowledge and proficiency. The pre-primary approach, favoured by some countries such as the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom, is more closely aligned to approaches in primary schooling, especially concerning content and pedagogy, and includes the use of standards and specific outcomes related to what children should be able to know and do at the end of their time in the program, with an emphasis on the academic preparatory skills needed for success in school. Many discussions focussed on emphasising school readiness are aligned with this approach.

An examination of the EYLF (DEEWR 2009) demonstrates a mix of both traditions, with the intent leaning towards a social pedagogical orientation. Increasingly, it can be argued that recent research and advice to governments in Australia puts the emphasis firmly on the pre-primary tradition; for example, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) with its assessments of children’s developmental domains upon entry to school, and various early literacy assessments that identify measurable skills, often labelled as pre-literacy and pre-numeracy, with readiness for school content emphasised over other aspects of learning. The recent Lifting our Game research report commissioned by State and Territory Senior Officers (Pascoe & Brennan 2017) clearly favours the pre-primary tradition, illustrated in its subtitle Review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions and through its terms of reference

- Improve children’s school readiness, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable children
- Improve learning and development outcomes across all cohorts of students and Australia’s national performance, as measured by national and international assessments of student achievement
- Improve the preparedness of school leavers to succeed in employment, further training or higher education. (Pascoe and Brennan 2017, p. 96)

While Pascoe and Brennan’s report remarks upon the benefits for children, families and society of early childhood education, and advocates for more of it to include younger children, the report, along with each of the other examples, communicates the subservience and instrumentality of early childhood education in solving the problems of education more broadly.

Whichever tradition dominates the field into the future, it is very important to understand what research is already telling us about the aspects of early childhood programs especially those that make a difference for children in both being and becoming. This is an important consideration for the inclusion of early childhood teachers’ work in the APST.
Quality and effectiveness of early childhood education and care

International research shows positive outcomes (cognitive, learning dispositions, and social-emotional) for children participating in early childhood education and care. A number of studies show that investing in universally available high quality ECEC can bring benefits to governments, as well as to children and families. While the effects are advantageous for all children, they are particularly beneficial for children who are living in disadvantaged circumstances. Studies in the US have found greater benefits for learning for economically disadvantaged children and dual language learners than for more advantaged and English-proficient children, but have also concluded that all children can benefit from early childhood education (Barnett 2017).

A number of research studies have shown mixed results about the effects of programs. Positive effects have been most evident in centres rated as high quality in relation to process factors, supported by structural factors. These include, for example adult: child ratios and group size that enable skilled educators to interact frequently with children. Negative effects such as high stress and antisocial behaviour have been linked with low quality programs, and inconsistencies and lack of continuity for children (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008).

The number of large longitudinal studies of the effects of early childhood education is not extensive, and until recently it has been mostly United States (US) studies that have been highlighted. The best known and most widely cited of these studies include Head Start, the Abecedarian Study, and the Perry Preschool Project (High/Scope), and are included in the following overview.
Table 1: Summary of findings from U.S. early childhood longitudinal studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Age of children</th>
<th>Size and Scope</th>
<th>Findings related to learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HeadStart – began in 1965 (Integrated education, health, nutrition and parenting programs) Full-day, full year.</td>
<td>3 – 5 year olds</td>
<td>5000 children from program entry to 1st grade in mostly (but not all) high quality programs and staff with mixed qualifications. Program emphasis on language literacy and maths, also included social skills.</td>
<td>Positive impact on aspects of language, literacy and maths, with mixed results, some impact on social-emotional domain. Children did better with more highly qualified staff. Lasting effects into 1st grade not conclusive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abecedarian – began in 1972 Full-day, full year.</td>
<td>6 weeks to 5 years</td>
<td>111 children “high risk” from low-income families. Intensive program with emphasis on language development, and all developmental domains. Staff:child ratios 1:3 for infants and 1:6 for older children in small groups.</td>
<td>Less special education, grade repetition. Higher levels of IQ, high school and college graduation. Positive reading and maths outcomes. Effects maintained at ages 8, 12 through to 21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry Preschool, High/Scope – began in 1962 Half-day, school year.</td>
<td>3-4 year olds</td>
<td>Initially involved 123 children in a program for “high risk” children, and expanded. Emphasis on curriculum including learning areas and active learning, interactions, scaffolding, discovery and participatory learning with developmental indicators.</td>
<td>Less special education. High levels of achievement at age 14 and school completion, Stable income, lower levels of welfare. Lower levels of crime to age 40.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago – 1985 Half day, school year</td>
<td>3-4 year olds</td>
<td>1539 children. Emphasis on high quality programs with broad curriculum, universal access. Focus on well-remunerated and trained educators. Program also involves families and older children to approx. age 8.</td>
<td>Higher school graduation. Lower levels of grade repetition and juvenile arrest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma 1998 Full day, school year</td>
<td>4 year olds</td>
<td>Universal access with program spending more time on literacy, maths and science. Focus on small groups and ratios for quality, and specialised qualifications of teachers.</td>
<td>Positive effects into first years of school re greater engagement in learning. Further study to trace longer term effects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Each of these programs showed positive effects for participant children, most with a relationship between an emphasis on academic skills and later achievement in mathematics and reading (Campbell and Ramey 1995, cited in Barnett 2017), as well as longer term social and economic effects. Research from Argentina also shows positive impacts on mathematics up to age 8 that can be attributed to attendance at high quality early education (Berlinski, Galiani, & Gertler, 2006) following that country’s expansion of universal preschool education between 1993 and 1999. Longitudinal studies from the United Kingdom (Siraj &
Taggart, 2013) and from New Zealand (Wylie and Hodgen, 2007; Horwood and McLeod 2016) add to the research base, confirming the long term benefits of attendance at high quality early childhood education from the age of 3 years. Data from the OECD (2017) demonstrates consistently in most participating countries that students completing PISA at age 15 who had attended ECEC settings outperformed students who had not. The nationally collected Australian Early Development Census data shows that children who do not attend early childhood education are 50% more likely to start school with a developmental vulnerability and children who are developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school are three times more likely to perform poorly in aspects of NAPLAN tests in years 3, 5 and 7 (Australian Early Development Census, 2015).

In their significant literature review about the outcomes of early education and care Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, (2008) summarise the effects of particular practices in high quality programs thus:

Cognitive gains from preschool programs were larger when programs focused on intentional and individualized teaching and small group learning. Programs with these features produced long-term cognitive effects equivalent to one half or more of the achievement gap through the end of high school. (p.7)

Gaining better understandings of longer term effectiveness of early childhood education lies in identifying aspects of curriculum and pedagogy (process factors of quality) that make a difference. Large-scale research projects conducted in the United Kingdom, such as the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE)/Effective Provision of Preschool and Primary Education (EPPPE 3-11), New Zealand’s Competent Children, Competent Learners project, and E4Kids in Australia, can expand understandings because they elaborate on particular practices that contribute to high quality programs and rely on the specialised knowledge and skills of early childhood teachers.

The implications are that children are viewed as competent learners and citizens from birth with rights, and the setting welcomes all differences that come from the uniqueness of each child (Rinaldi,2013). Specific features of high quality programs can be summarised as follows.

Regarding curriculum:
- Evidence-informed curriculum frameworks provide guidance for practice, and regulation is in place for quality improvement (Pre-kindergarten Task Force, 2017).
- Teacher knowledge and understanding of the curriculum is just as important in the early years as it is at any other stage of education, as is knowledge about how young children learn. Educators require deep knowledge of the science of child development, and the learning capabilities and processes of infants, toddlers and preschool aged children (Sylva et al, 2004; Torii, Fox and Cloney, 2017).
- The setting has clear educational goals (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002).
- There is a balance so that both the scientific and the aesthetic are part of children’s experiences (Nuttbrown, 2012).
- Both the intellectual aspects of the curriculum and the social/behavioural aspects are present together (Siraj &Taggart, 2013; Sylva et al, 2004).
Discipline-specific skills are embedded in play based programs (Pre-kindergarten Task Force, 2017; Tayler, 2016).

Children’s dispositions, including attitudes of perseverance, curiosity, confidence, and social competence, are an important part of an early childhood curriculum (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008).

Building trust, confidence and independence, social and emotional well-being, supporting and extending language and communication, supporting learning and critical thinking, and assessing learning and language are all important elements of a high quality early childhood program (Siraj, Kingston & Mellhuish, 2015).

Regarding the environment:

A supportive environment is in place for children to work together where the learning resources are available and accessible to children (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008).

Provision of a print rich environment provides lots of books and written material and children can select from a variety of learning activities (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008; Wylie and Hodgen, 2007).

Engaging programs are implemented where children are able to complete their activities (Wylie and Hodgen, 2007).

Regarding relationships:

The closeness, warmth and quality of relationships between teachers and children are crucial (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008; Sylva et al, 2004; Tayler, 2016; Wylie and Hodgen, 2007).

Teachers show respect to children, listening to what they say, responding sympathetically, and using language and reasoning (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008).

Teachers join children in their play, offering materials, information or encouragement to facilitate play (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008).

When staff are responsive to the individual needs of children, children make more progress (Wylie and Hodgen, 2007).

Regarding interactions:

The nature, quality and consistency of interactions between teachers and children makes a difference (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008; Sylva et al, 2004; Tayler, 2016).

Staff respond quickly and directly to children, adapting their responses to individual children (Sylva et al, 2004; Wylie and Hodgen, 2007).

High quality instructional support interactions occur within a play environment, and challenging opportunities are provided for children with a balance between child and adult initiated experiences (Pre-kindergarten Task Force, 2017; Sylva et al, 2004; Tayler, 2016).

Teachers provide support, focused attention, physical proximity, and verbal encouragement as appropriate, are alert to signs of stress in children’s behaviour, and guide children in expressing their emotions (Sylva et al, 2004; Tayler, 2016; Wylie and Hodgen, 2007).

Teachers ask children open-ended questions, giving them opportunities to come up with a range of different answers, to encourage thinking and creativity. Through sustained and reciprocal interactions, educators foster children’s communication skills,
extend their thinking, develop their ability to manage emotions and relationships and instil the skills and confidence to be effective learners (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008; Siraj, 2014; Sylva et al 2004; Torii, Fox and Cloney 2017).

• Adult-led activities include ‘promoting understanding of everyday concepts by analysing, creating and integrating previous knowledge, connecting to the child’s real world, having back and forth exchanges where scaffolding, giving encouragement and affirmation feature, probing children’s thinking and providing information, and modelling language through frequent conversations, open-ended questions and advance vocabulary and language, repetitions and extensions and self and parallel talk’ (Tayler 2016, p.7).

Regarding parents and families:

• Greater cognitive and learning disposition gains for children, and reduced antisocial/worried behaviour, can occur in centres that encourage parents to be engaged in their children’s learning, with a focus on educational aims (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008, p.6).

• Supporting young children’s early development and learning requires ECEC staff to form a partnership with parents, which implies a two-way process of knowledge and information flowing freely both ways (OECD, 2015).

A FOCUS ON THE FIRST YEARS OF SCHOOL

The previous section of this paper has outlined the positive effects of participation in high quality early education immediately prior to starting school, particularly from the age of 3 years. A number of research reports show that benefits extend markedly into the first years of school. Bringing together what we know about the importance of the birth to eight phase of life and research findings, there is sufficient evidence to consider the relevance of how transitions and continuity occur for children in this phase, and what practices might be of use in ensuring that high quality teaching and learning follows into the early years of school.

A number of researchers warn that the gains from high quality early childhood education and care are at risk of diminishing if programs are of low quality and there is no continuation of individualised attention to learning. They argue strongly that teaching and learning in the first year of school must build upon what has gone before, rather than repeating what has already been learnt (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr 2008; Pre-kindergarten Task Force, 2017). The Pre-Kindergarten Task Force (2017) observes that failure to follow through puts children in danger of being in “learning dead zones” and elaborates thus:

Children’s early learning trajectories depend on the quality of their learning experiences not only before and during their pre-k year, but also following the pre-k year. Classroom experiences early in elementary school can serve as charging stations for sustaining and amplifying pre-k learning gains. One good bet for powering up later learning is elementary school classrooms that provide individualization and differentiation in instructional content and strategies. (p.25)

One Australian initiative that seeks to address these issues, and is being observed with growing interest, is the development of Age Appropriate Pedagogies by the Queensland Government. A literature review (Flückiger, Dunn & Wheeley, 2016) that considers a range of programs in the first years of school, informs this work and assists to ‘refocus on
evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning in the early years of school’ (Department for Education and Training [DET], 2016, p.3.) and support successful transitions to school. Key to the success of this initiative are the following practices

**Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Requiring physical and embodied engagement across all areas of learning. Whether this is indoors or outdoors, activity is essential in order to activate children’s full potential. Their focus, concentration, motivation and self-regulation are enhanced through moving, doing, and interacting within a range of learning environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentic</td>
<td>Ensuring that children have voice in their learning. Their ideas and interests initiate, support and extend learning possibilities in order to build on their real-world understandings and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Being social and co-constructed. Children and educators work together to identify ways of learning and understanding through sustained shared thinking and action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Inviting children to consider “What if?” They encourage investigation, inquiry and artistry to explore new possibilities and ways of thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Making conscious for both learner and educator the relationships between the learning purpose and processes employed and the skills and understandings these processes support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language rich and dialogic</td>
<td>Ensuring that learning occurs in environments where rich language is modelled and employed by both children and educators. Meaningful dialogues between children, as well as between children and educators, are created to support thinking, learning, engagement and imagination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner focused</td>
<td>Recognising that all children learn in different ways and that learning is a highly individual process. They also acknowledge differences in children’s physical, intellectual, cultural, social and personal experiences and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Acknowledging the important role that personal, written, oral and digital stories play in all our lives. They support both the production and comprehension of narratives through active processes, especially play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playful</td>
<td>Encouraging children to make connections through imagination and creativity to explore alternate worlds and ways of thinking. These worlds, not bounded by reality, offer the freedom children need to innovate and enact new possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive</td>
<td>Incorporating a willingness to be flexible, to ensure that learning is always child, context, content and discipline appropriate. To achieve this, educators will balance opportunities for structure and spontaneity, open-ended and specific tasks, and child-led and educator-led learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolded</td>
<td>Including such actions as modelling, encouraging, questioning, adding challenges, and giving feedback, provide the support needed to extend children’s existing capabilities. Effective scaffolding by both educators and other children provides active structures to support new learning; it is then progressively withdrawn as learners gain increasing mastery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1: Pedagogies for the first years of school**

(Flückiger, Dunn and Wheeley, 2016)
The characteristics and descriptions of the above practices can be seen to have similarities to those recommended for use in high quality early childhood education and care programs as well as building on from them.

Research findings from the implementation of *Age Appropriate Pedagogies* show the importance of teachers’ deep understanding of the concepts involved, leadership, consistency of practice, and a strengthened knowledge of curriculum expectations. Children showed higher level of sustained engagement and motivation, more agency and alignment of their learning with their preferences. Both leaders and teachers found that they could meet the requirements of the Australian Curriculum and had the flexibility to adopt the recommended pedagogies (DET, 2016, pp.12-15).

In addition to focussing on the prior-to-school area, the Australian E4 Kids research measured process quality factors in the first 3 years of school. Findings from the project indicated that both early childhood settings and school classrooms performed similarly in the area of emotional support. In contrast, early childhood settings showed less instructional support and organisation support for learning and engagement of children than that shown in school classrooms. They demonstrated greater ‘regard for the child’s perspective’ whereas classrooms were stronger in relation to concept development (Tayler, 2016).

**CHILDREN AGED BIRTH TO THREE YEARS**

The rate of enrolment of children under 3 years of age in early childhood education and care is increasing in almost every country with a growth of 8 % (from 26-34%) from 2005-2014 (OECD 2017, p.27).

While there is broad recognition that learning begins from birth and the powerful impact of early brain development, there is still a need for large scale research about what this might look like in practice and what practices have the best outcomes for children in group care programs. Despite this need, there is enough research to provide guidance and alert policy makers to issues that require attention.

Lally (2009) makes the following comment

> Unfortunately, much of infant-toddler care today looks like glorified baby-sitting or watered-down preschool. The former approach endorses a style of care that treats very young children as if they only need safe and healthy environments, in which bonding with special caregivers and attention to learning are unnecessary. The latter approach operates on the belief that an adult-directed curriculum should be followed with babies and that intellect and language advances need to be stimulated by planned lessons programmed throughout the day. Both of these approaches ignore what we have come to understand about what infants and toddlers need to help them grow and learn. (p. 47)

This observation was made some time ago, but it can be argued that it is still an issue of significance. Critical to infant and toddler outcomes are relationships with a sensitive educator who can provide a secure base for children to explore their world, develop language and peer interactions through play (Sosinsky et al, 2016). Primary caregiving and
continuity of care are two important aspects of infant toddler programs which have an important impact on social, cultural, language and cognitive development (McMullen and Dixon, 2009, cited in Sosinsky et al, 2016).

Recommendations from the Productivity Commission’s review of Childcare and Early Childhood Learning (Productivity Commission, 2014) include the following

Requirements for educators in centre-based services should be amended by governments such that:
• all educators working with children aged birth to 35 months are, as a minimum, required to hold or be working towards at least a certificate III or equivalent and be under the supervision of at least a diploma qualified educator
• services may determine the number of diploma qualified educators sufficient to supervise and support certificate III qualified educators, as is currently the case in family day care services
• the number of children for which an early childhood teacher must be employed is assessed on the basis of the number of children in a service aged over 35 months. (p. 56)

This recommendation has not been acted upon and has been strongly disputed by educators and academics, in a number of responses to the review. One such response (Cheeseman & Degotardi, 2014) outlines two significant studies. The first demonstrates that children who experienced high quality early childhood education and care averaged over the first 5 years of life were reported by their teachers to have significantly higher cognitive achievements and significantly lower levels of externalising behaviours at age 15 (Vandell, Belsky, Burchinal, Steinberg, & Vandergrift, 2010). The second study found that high quality infant-toddler care was associated with developmental gains that endured, regardless of the quality of the subsequent preschool program (Li, Farkas, Duncan, Burchinal & Vandell, 2013).

It is indisputable that across early childhood programs the quality of the program and the outcomes for children are related to the qualifications of the educators. Given the repository of new knowledge about children’s very early development and learning beginning from birth, and a contemporary focus on learning and teaching, curriculum and pedagogy, there is an argument for highly trained teachers with specialised knowledge to work with this age group. This occurs in some child care centres, but is not required. Consequently, the APST must be inclusive of the specialised work of early childhood teachers working with children under 3 because of their work locations, regardless of regulated requirements. This is also vitally important because of concerns about the range of quality in programs focussed on these very early years; for example, the quality of the language interactions. One recent Australian study found that in the lowest 25 per cent of services observed, ‘fewer than 11 words were spoken to children per minute, while in the top 25 per cent of services, over 40 words per minute were spoken’ (Degotardi & Torr, 2016, cited in Torrii et al 2017). The researchers also report that many educators do not feel confident about their skills in this area.

**Impacts of early childhood teachers**

It is now widely agreed that degree qualified teachers are essential in prior-to-school settings. As one of the structural factors that makes a difference to children’s outcomes in early childhood education and care, specialised knowledge in turn contributes to the
improvement of process quality, and higher quality ratings in general (Sylva et al, 2004; Karoly et al, 2005; Tayler, 2016; Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). The Effective Provision of Preschool Education study[EPPE,] (Sylva et al 2004), found that having highly qualified teachers is one of the most influential factors linked to better outcomes in literacy and social development at age 5, and having a high proportion of trained teachers tend to promote better intellectual outcomes. This effect can be magnified if the leader also is highly qualified.

An Australian research study about the impact of attendance at preschool education on later NAPLAN results found evidence that children who participated in a preschool program with a specialist early childhood degree or diploma qualified teacher performed better in Year 3 NAPLAN testing for reading, numeracy and spelling and gained the most from attendance. Educators participating in the study possessed a range of qualifications including early childhood teaching degree, another teaching degree, advanced diploma, diploma or associate diploma in children’s services or early childhood teaching, another degree (such as nursing), certificate in children’ services or early childhood teaching. The estimated effect of having a degree -qualified teacher in a field other than early childhood, was not statistically significant. (Warren & Haisken De-New, 2013).

Given this important finding, what can be said about the competence and expectations of early childhood teachers?

One way of viewing competence (as distinct from competencies as traditionally used in child care vocational training to achieve sufficient skill) is ‘the ability of an individual to use and combine his or her knowledge skills, personal and ethical competences according to the varying requirements posed by a particular context, a situation or a problem’ (European Commission, 2005a, p.11 cited in Urban et al, 2011). Three domains of teacher competence are identified: ‘working with fellow human beings, working with knowledge – technology-information, and working with and in society’. In general, competence is viewed as an individual orientation, a view that would be consistent with the APST and how they are used to assess and develop teachers’ skills. Including early childhood teachers in the APST demands consideration of the distinctiveness of early childhood settings and their operation. Early childhood teachers’ daily work is more collaborative in nature than the work of teachers in primary school classrooms, in that they are rarely, if ever, the sole practitioner. They work in a team with a range of education qualifications within a room, and further afield within a centre and beyond, often as part of a multidisciplinary team with a focus on one or more children. Because of the way that teams work, the nature of competence goes beyond the individual and ‘develops in reciprocal relationships between individuals, teams, institutions and the wider socio- political context. A ‘competent system’ requires possibilities for all staff to engage in joint learning and critical reflection’, (del Bario Saiz et al, 2012). A question arises then about how the APST might better reflect the contexts in which teachers work, and especially in the case of early childhood teachers, the relationship of the APST with other frameworks that are aimed at assisting improvement in a competent system of the centre in which they work.

The domains of competence outlined above are particularly relevant to early childhood teachers whose work with children extends to daily interactions with children’s families,
developing partnerships and taking joint and reciprocal responsibilities through sharing knowledge about individual children and early learning generally, and determining what action to take. The arguments for engaging parents and families in education and care are strong, particularly when children are young. The roles of early childhood teachers include both informal and formal engagement, often encouraging parents to move to greater participation in the running of the services (OECD, 2001). Research in the United Kingdom has concluded that the majority of parents express a strong desire for well-qualified and competent teachers in early childhood settings (Nutbrown 2012).

Some of the criteria of high quality programs yielding positive outcomes for children are outlined in previous sections of this chapter. Two research projects from the United Kingdom and Europe add to this be providing insights from educators’ perspectives:

In answer to the question, “what do early years teachers need to know?” Nutbrown (2012) summarises responses as:

- A thorough understanding of child development and play
- An understanding of early years appropriate pedagogy and how it can be applied most effectively – for individuals and groups
- Must include caring as well as educating – brought together
- Understanding language development and how to encourage and support it from birth
- Understanding of special needs and disability
- Understanding of the importance of play in children’s lives and learning
- Safeguarding and child protection, health and safety, nutrition, basic first aid, understanding legal frameworks and obligations
- Inclusion and diversity
- Focusing in birth to seven age range
- Importance of observations and assessments
- Experience in a range of settings
- How to work effectively with families

In a project funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation early childhood practitioners from ten European countries identified the following fundamental and essential competences for educators in addressing diversity and equality issues:

- willing to accept diversity in society and respecting other ways of being
- being non-judgemental
- having an open mind
- having empathy and understanding
- showing flexibility and adaptability
- being sensitive (aware of children’s and parents’ needs) and responsive (act on this awareness)
- supporting a sense of belonging
- having enthusiasm: being engaged and motivated
- being creative in order to find alternative solutions and approaches
• showing warmth and being loving. (del Bario Saiz et al, 2012, p.4)

These points bring together views about knowledge and personal and professional qualities which can demonstrate some of the finer points of competence in context. Many recent policy decisions in Australian early years education have been informed by contemporary research. Making the APST more inclusive of early years teachers’ work must include guidance for early years pedagogy, informed by research findings from both prior-to-school and early years of school settings, because of the crucial impact that teachers have on making a difference for children’s outcomes.
4. POLICY MATTERS

Early Childhood Reform Agenda

In Australia, the early years policy and provision fields have historically been divided and fragmented. Traditionally, funding and administration of child care has largely been the responsibility of the federal government, with States and Territories mainly responsible for preschool education for children in the year prior to formal school, and separate regulation of some aspects of child care. This is further complicated by different administrative arrangements occurring between States and Territories. The geneses of early childhood services through philanthropic and non-government movements occurred in quite a different environment from the first years of school which are largely the responsibility of State Governments, the Catholic Education and Independent sectors, with funding contributed by both Federal and State Governments. In addition, the child care sector is characterised by a large proportion of it being provided by small and corporate business sectors, and newly revised child care benefit entitlements being tied to parents’ workforce participation (DET, 2018a).

The early childhood reforms introduced in 2008 by the Federal Government and negotiated through the COAG made up the largest and most comprehensive Early Childhood Reform Agenda ever to take place in Australia and are founded on the following principles:

- children are important
- it takes a village to raise a child
- what happens in early childhood education and care affects later development
- quality early childhood development and family support programs can make a positive difference,

with a focus on the outcomes of

- children are born and remain healthy
- children’s environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate and safe
- children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning.
- children benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children.
- children are engaged in and benefiting from educational opportunities.
- families are confident and have the capabilities to support their children’s development.
- quality early childhood development services that support the workforce participation choices of families.

The components of the reform agenda include

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy, providing an umbrella framework with a vision of ‘All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves"
and the nation' is a strategy to improve child outcomes and contribute to the social cohesion, health, wellbeing and productivity of Australia.

Its priority areas are
• making mother, child and family health services stronger
• giving help to children at risk
• helping parents and communities understand the importance of early childhood development
• improving schools and early childhood centres that give services to young children and families
• giving help and training to workers in early childhood services so they can support families better
• collecting facts and figures about childhood services to help make better plans for the future (COAG, 2009)

The National Quality Framework, consisting of
• National Laws
• Regulations enacted in each State and Territory jurisdiction
• The National Quality Standard embedded in the law, that outlines consistent expectations for programmes about quality (Appendix 3)
• A national quality rating and assessment process that rates services against the National Quality Standard and the Regulations (Appendix 4)
• Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) which outlines principles, practices and outcomes for early childhood programs (Appendix 5).

Universal access to early childhood education in the year before starting school, providing access to a quality preschool program for all children in the year before full-time school with the program to be delivered by an early childhood teacher that meets National Quality Framework requirements, for 15 hours per week or 600 hours a year, depending on the service type (DET, 2018b).

The National Workforce Development Strategy 2012-2016, aiming to guide governments and the sector to:
• deliver a sustainable, highly qualified and professional workforce
• foster a flexible and responsive workforce capable of identifying and delivering services in response to the needs of children and families
• support ECEC staff to work in a more integrated way with the broader early childhood development (ECD) workforce including the range of professionals that work with children and their families across health and family services.
The five priority areas of the strategy are expressed as

![Diagram of the five priority areas of the National Early Childhood development workforce strategy (SCSEEC 2012)](image)

**Figure 2: The five priority areas of the National Early Childhood development workforce strategy (SCSEEC 2012)**

The workforce strategy acknowledges messages from research about the importance of ensuring professional educators, arguing:

A skilled workforce is essential to delivering high-quality ECEC services and to achieving the best outcomes for children and their families. There is increasing recognition that the work of caring for and educating young children is complex and requires enhanced qualifications and ongoing professional development. Programs delivered by qualified educators are particularly effective in improving outcomes for vulnerable children. (SCSEEC 2012, p. 4)

Of significance to this project focussing on the inclusion of early years teachers in the APST, the strategy includes several statements outlining the need for recognition of early childhood education and care professionals as having specialised skills and knowledge related to young children as distinct from older children, the importance of early childhood educators being able to work collaboratively in multi-disciplinary teams particularly in integrated children’s services, enhanced capabilities of educators to work with the whole range of children and families, and enhanced professional development.

Furthermore, the strategy emphasises the need to

- Engage with AITSL to explore how the National Professional Standards for Teachers could be extended to early childhood teachers (p. 9).
- Support an increased focus on pedagogy and pedagogical leadership in all training provided to the ECEC sector, in recognition that improved educator practice will mean better outcomes for children (p. 13).

While the strategy is hopeful that ‘ACECQA’s work with other bodies, such as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), will bring a national approach to the
development of professional standards in the ECEC sector’ (p. 8), it does not indicate whether ECEC standards should be discrete or included within existing standards.

Since the publication of the National Workforce Strategy there have been increases in the qualification levels of educators and more teachers have been employed in ECEC centres, as required under the National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2018). Concerns have been raised regarding the need for a second workforce strategy, given the expiration of the first, and ongoing unfinished tasks.

Pascoe and Brennan, in their recent review, *Lifting our Game* (2017), commissioned by Senior Officers of States and Territories, stress the importance of a new workforce strategy, relating it to quality improvement, and recommend

The strategy should consider, at a minimum, opportunities to improve
- service leadership capability
- pre-service training quality and content
- ongoing professional development of the workforce
- responsiveness of pre-service training and ongoing professional development providers to the sector
- consistency and applicability of workforce registration and professional standards
- workforce attraction, stability and retention, including medium and long-term career paths
- the impact of remuneration and conditions on workforce stability and retention, and quality of practice
- workforce diversity, including Indigenous communities
- the status of the profession
- responses to localised issues, including in regional and remote areas

In addition to advocacy for the need to continue planned workforce development, guided by a new national strategy, the important issue of establishing an integrated national early childhood workforce census rather than the exclusive child-care census in 2016 has been raised with the Federal Minister for Education who has given assurance that the census will continue, although it is not clear if this is to be negotiated to include stand-alone preschools (Birmingham 2018).
The following diagram shows an overview of the policy context of the workforce strategy, exposing potential vulnerabilities if strategic planning does not occur.

Figure 3: Policy context for early childhood education and care workforce reforms. (from SCSEECE 2012)

Further details of the legislative requirements for employing teachers can be seen at Appendix 7.

**Curriculum and pedagogy across the early years**

One of the significant aspects of the national Early Childhood Reform Agenda was its focus on pedagogy. This significance was borne out in practice by the publication and implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework over two years prior to the NQS itself, and the assessment and rating process. The framework with a focus on children from birth to five years and their transitions to school is intended for use by all early childhood educators working in both child care and education services.

For some jurisdictions, the EYLF was the first early childhood learning framework to be introduced, but in South Australia there had been previous learning and curriculum framework such as Planning for Learning (CSO, 1991), Foundation Areas of Learning (DECS, 1996), and the Early Years Band (birth – Year 2) of the SACSA Framework (DETE, 2001). While Foundation Areas of Learning and the SACSA Framework were only mandated for government preschools, there was also a very high voluntary uptake from child care centres. In addition, the development of resources and innovative programs such as Learning Together and supported playgroups have provided a statewide focus on children’s learning and development from birth, and equipping educators to reflect on their pedagogy through professional development.
During the development of the EYLF the issue of age applicability arose, within professional circles discussions favouring a b-8 coverage (Mulhearn, 2016), and informed by a literature review that provided insights into international curriculum frameworks for working with children b-8 years (Wilks et al, 2008). However, this was not to be and the first years of school were included in the Australian Curriculum which was developed not long after the EYLF. In response to issues raised by early years teachers about needing to learn about and work with both curriculum frameworks, a resource (Connor, 2011) was published jointly by ECA and ACARA explaining how the two curriculum frameworks are aligned. It is clear that both support the achievement of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008), with the EYLF having a major emphasis on pedagogy, and the Australian Curriculum focussing more on content. It is argued that the Australian Curriculum builds on the EYLF and in terms of practice means

- respecting the nature of learners at particular stages in their learning lives
- recognising that there is a set of foundational dispositions, knowledge and skills that underpin future learning success
- acknowledging the diversity of starting points that learners bring to next-stage learning
- allowing teachers to connect their pedagogical practices in the first years of school to those used in prior-to-school contexts (Connor 2011, p. 15).

Appendix 8 provides an example of links that can be made between the EYLF and the Australian Curriculum. In South Australia, there are numerous examples where teachers are working with both frameworks, in team teaching situations and in special education classes, often using the pedagogical approaches in the EYLF in teaching components of content from the Australian Curriculum. They are demonstrating that aspects of pedagogy, such as those promoted in the Principles and Practices of the EYLF, are common across settings serving children birth to age eight. These aspects of teachers’ work relate clearly to key components of the APST.

**Early childhood teacher education and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**

Since 2011, changes have occurred in higher education that have meant teacher education courses inclusive of training early years teachers must reference the APST. One of the required components of Initial Teacher Education program accreditation is evidence of how the Graduate Teacher level of the APST is met. The Graduate Teacher Standards, which are the Graduate career stage of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, ‘must make explicit the knowledge, skills and attributes expected of graduates of nationally accredited programs’ (AITSL, 2015, p.4). With the emergence of the National Quality Standard and universal access to early childhood education, this has meant a growth in early childhood teacher graduates who are required to be assessed against the standards as part of their professional experience placements.

In addition to accreditation by teacher registration authorities, preservice early childhood teacher education courses are approved by ACECQA using early years specific criteria. Courses that prepare teachers to work with children in the prior-to-school sector may be specifically focussed on the b-5 age group and not necessarily accredited for teacher
registration purposes; they may qualify teachers to work with children from b-8, as is the approach taken by South Australian universities, and in some cases, they cover the age range from birth to twelve years. The adequacy of covering such a wide age range in one course is open to question, especially in relation to preparing teachers with specialised skills and knowledge (Fenech & Hadley 2018). Moreover, there is also a risk in relation to how the APST can be adequately reflected in the course content and how well they are interpreted in practice in early years settings. A brief overview of some of the key issues for pre-service courses is provided in the following table.

Table 2: Key issues in ECEC initial teacher training courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification type and range</th>
<th>Key benefits – indicative</th>
<th>Key risks – indicative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 year undergraduate degree b-5</td>
<td>Sole focus on b-5 with high level of specialised knowledge. Not required to address APST.</td>
<td>Sets ECEC training apart from teaching profession. Not able to be registered. Lower status and perception of the work of teachers, and not as “real teachers”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year undergraduate (b-5)</td>
<td>Sole focus on b-5 with high level of specialised knowledge. Could be registered as a specific separate category. If not approved for registration, course may not address APST.</td>
<td>Sets ECEC training apart from teaching profession. Lower status and perception of the work of teachers/educators because of special category of registration or accreditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year undergraduate (b-8)</td>
<td>Embeds ECEC teachers within the broader teaching profession. Focus across both ECEC and school sectors. Focus can be balanced, equitable and integrated. Develops knowledge about both curricula and specific features of human development Benefits for employment in rural and remote location where some positions are part-time. Graduates can be registered. Addresses APST.</td>
<td>Not seen by some as adequately covering upper primary focus. Focus may not be balanced, equitable and integrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year undergraduate (b-12, or early childhood and primary combined)</td>
<td>Includes early childhood teachers as part of a broader teaching profession. Addresses APST. Graduates can be registered.</td>
<td>Challenge to achieve balance to cover all age groups in available time, and ECEC, especially focus on under 3s, likely to be inadequately covered. May evolve into watered down curriculum regarding working with younger children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year undergraduate (b-12 with b-5 specialisation)</td>
<td>Includes early childhood teachers as part of a broader teaching profession. Addresses APST. Graduates can be registered.</td>
<td>Challenge to achieve enough coverage in specialisation to cover all age groups in available time, especially focus on under 3s, likely to be inadequately covered. May result in heavier workload for ECEC students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Fenech and Hadley’s (2018) preliminary study, findings suggest a shift away from specialised early childhood initial teacher training courses towards more generic provision,
particularly in the eastern States. Of particular interest were the perceptions of leaders in early childhood training programs in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory that the reduction of specialised early childhood content and reduced profession experience with the b-5 age group gave rise to concerns about graduate quality. While aspects of this research continue and are expected to provide greater clarity, there are already visible implications for both preservice training and continuing professional standards and status that must be considered in any review of the APST.

This paper is not specifically about the design and approval of initial teacher training courses, nor is it focussed on proposals for teacher registration, but unless early years teachers are included appropriately in the APST the concerns outlined above may become more widespread and continue to erode any professional gains, program quality, and equality already achieved.

It has been demonstrated through the work of the TRB’s Early Childhood Reference Group, and a group of educators in the Department of Education Gawler Portfolio that the APST are not inclusive of many dimensions of early years practice. One of these dimensions is the use of language: for example, the term students is used in Standard 1 - Know students and how they learn, indicating a school-centric perspective, and immediately portraying very young children’s and babies’ learning as akin to that which is arranged for older children in school settings. The professional experience of this researcher, and anecdotal comments from student placement supervisors and professional experience liaison staff indicate that pre-service students on placement may have difficulty demonstrating their teaching responses to the standards. This can occur because of the use of exclusive or inappropriate language as outlined above. It can also be more specific; for example, in Standard 3 – Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning: 3.2 Plan structure and sequence learning programs can be inclusive of early years settings, but the indicator at Graduate level – Plan lesson sequences using knowledge of student learning, content and effective teaching strategies does not relate to early childhood and care services as quality programs are not planned as a set of sequenced lessons. Language such as that used in the indicator can create risks by undermining sound pedagogical practices, especially where a mentor teacher and/or the student may not confidently understand the standards, and additional work has to be done to demonstrate how the standards are interpreted in practice. This issue continues for teachers after graduation when they are needed to report again the standards to move from provisional to full registration. It can be magnified in situations in which an early childhood teacher is to be assessed by a leader who is not familiar with quality early years pedagogical principles and practice, for example: in primary school, preschool to year 7, or birth – year 12 settings.

Future moves for teacher registration and the inclusion of the work of early childhood educators in the APST need to consider the complexity of the field. Policy directions emphasise the complementary roles of parents/families and teachers. Progress has been made in working with community, and collaborating as part of multi-disciplinary teams is a key role of teachers and leaders in early childhood. Pedagogical emphasis remains on both play and intentional teaching. Working with children and their families to support smooth transitions is a crucial role for every educator. While there are some different policy settings for working with children from b-5 and the first years of school, it has been demonstrated in
practice that educators can work across these potential barriers by identifying common principles for a child focus and making links between discrete policy documents including curriculum frameworks. As much of the content of teacher professional standards pertains to curriculum, pedagogy and professionalism, explicit inclusion of early years teachers’ work in the APST can provide further support in bridging gaps.
Teacher Registration

As mentioned earlier, this project does not include making recommendations about teacher registration. If, following the current Review of Teacher Registration, there is a national move to include early childhood teachers in registration or accreditation then it will be imperative to make the APST more inclusive. Currently, registration arrangements differ between State and Territory jurisdictions, in some cases with specific accreditation for early childhood teachers and in others, such as in South Australia, with general registration for all teachers regardless of the level of education in which they work. There is no specific requirement currently under the National Quality Framework for early childhood teachers to be registered.

Table 3: Registration requirements for early childhood teachers in Australia
(adapted from ACECQA 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Teacher registration/accreditation requirements</th>
<th>Teacher regulatory authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>No registration requirements for ECTs in NQF settings that are not attached to an ACT school.</td>
<td>ACT Teacher Quality Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>From 18 July 2016 ECTs working in approved centre-based settings must be accredited</td>
<td>New South Wales Education Standards Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Registration is not required for all ECTs. However, preschools are attached to schools, and as such require registration as a condition of employment.</td>
<td>Teacher Registration Authority of the Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>The Queensland College of Teachers does not require registration for ECTs in NQF settings. Some employers require teacher registration as a condition of employment.</td>
<td>The Queensland College of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Since 1976 all ECTs have been required to be registered. From 1 January 2014, all ECTs must be registered, including those working in NQF settings.</td>
<td>Teachers Registration Board of South Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Tasmanian kindergartens are part of Tasmanian schools and as such kindergarten teachers are required to hold teacher registration. Registration is not required for ECTs in NQF settings that are not kindergartens or schools.</td>
<td>Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Since 30 September 2015 all ECTs employed or engaged in the role of an ECT in an early childhood and care service or Victorian Children’s Centre must be registered.</td>
<td>Victorian Institute of Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Since 6 December 2012 all ECTs must be registered.</td>
<td>Teachers Registration Board of Western Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some Teacher Registration Authorities (NESA 2018) have developed specific resources to assist early childhood educators to demonstrate and document practice against the APST. The following chapter considers particular issues related to research, policy and practice and the expectations inherent in the APST.
5. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POLICY PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The rapid changes brought about since 2008 by the National Early Childhood Reform Agenda and a specific interest in pedagogy in the first years of school bring into prominence a number of issues that impinge on including early years teachers in the APST as a policy initiative. These include a growing recognition of the professionalism of the early childhood education and care workforce, constrained by its pay, working conditions and employment barriers, greater community engagement with the importance of children’s early development and learning, a specific focus on quality improvement, and increased regulation of early childhood providers.

Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry’s (1997) three components of contexts, texts and consequences are useful as a basis for considering the policy issues regarding regulation of the teaching profession in Australia. These components can be elaborated thus:

- **Context**: the antecedents and pressure leading to a policy position
- **Text**: statement or framework for action
- **Consequences**: how the statement or framework is enacted, in whose interests? What are the compromises? With what does this align?

They are useful because they challenge common assumptions that policy is limited to a statement or text, and, in its interpretation, a text can have unanticipated outcomes for the people it concerns, and against its original purpose.

**Context**

It has been established that the early childhood education and care workforce is significant in its growth and its purpose. It can be expected that both of these factors will gain further prominence in the years to come (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018). The amount of funding that has been invested by successive governments in early childhood education and care indicates some recognition of how its importance is viewed, but Australia still falls well short of the OECD average expenditure of 0.8% of GDP with approximately 0.5%, compared to countries such as Denmark and Sweden with almost 2% (OECD 2017). This puts Australia in the lowest six of thirty-five OECD countries surveyed in 2013. Coupled with this is the uncertainty and vulnerability of the sector brought about by short term funding agreements and changing administrative responsibilities between education and social services. A range of historical origins and diversity of provision in a market economy in Australia and elsewhere can add to division and vulnerability (Cheeseman, Sumison & Press, 2014; Moss 2012; Lloyd & Penn 2013; Penn 2014). Most recently, developments associated with the funding and provision of universal access to preschool education and legal requirements for the employment of teachers in child care services have changed the landscape of teachers’ work environments across Australia, without an accompanying general acknowledgement from outside the early childhood field.
While there is undeniable research evidence for the need for more highly qualified teachers in early years education and the policy imperative in Australia to recruit more early childhood teachers, there is evidence that they are not always recognised as ‘real teachers’ (Lloyd & Hallett, 2010; Sezgin & Erdogan 2015, cited in McKinlay, Irvine & Farrell, 2018, p. 33), nor included overtly as a group of teachers forming part of a more inclusive profession. Attempts at inclusion may be assumed by the use of generic statements about education, sometimes incorrectly stated (DECD 2017), or exclusionary by omission, uncovered with an in-depth examination of statements (Australian Curriculum Studies Association Incorporated (ACSA), 2018). For example, the historical developments of schooling and early childhood education may be assumed to be the same, or the use of the terms ‘schools’ and ‘students’ may be used to include early childhood education and care. While often these representations may be well intentioned, they are often misinformed or misunderstood.

Representations such as these serve as warning signs that becoming more recognised as part of the larger teaching profession brings potential risks, especially related to issues of professional practice. Internationally, research has underlined the importance of early years education and continues to explore and provide more evidence about aspects of quality practice.

One of the policy lessons from the Starting Strong review of early childhood (OECD 2001) is the promotion of a strong and equal partnership with the education system to support a lifelong approach to learning. A partnership can provide the opportunity to bring together the diverse perspectives and methods of both ECEC and schools, focusing on the strengths of both approaches.

But this lesson is presented with the following qualification:

The needs of young children are wide, however, and there is a risk that increased co-operation between schools and ECEC could lead to a school-like approach to the organisation of early childhood provision. Downward pressure on ECEC to adopt the content and methods of the primary school has a detrimental effect on young children’s learning. Therefore, it is important that early childhood is viewed not only as a preparation for the next stage of education (or even adulthood), but also as a distinctive period where children live out their lives. Stronger co-operation with schools is a positive development as long as the specific character and traditions of quality early childhood practice are preserved. (OECD 2001, p. 129)

Concerns have been expressed in both the Australian and international contexts about the downward pressures on early years teachers from systems, school administrators and other teachers. One of the topics of concern has been the erosion of play-based pedagogies in both the prior-to-school sector and the first years of school, with a return to whole-class, direct teaching of high stakes skills, to the exclusion of a broader focus informed by research (Barblett, Knaus & Barratt-Pugh, 2016). A recent OFSTED (2017) report from the United Kingdom, focussed on the Reception year, provides evidence to confirm this concern when it promotes a narrow focus on the curriculum for that year as the starting point for learning in primary school, and differentiates between play as a soft option and whole class direct teaching for the essentials of the curriculum. Findings indicate that some Head Teachers in high performing schools did not believe in the notion of ‘free play’ and saw play without boundaries as ‘too rosy’. Teachers reported that they sometimes directed children’s play
The report is clear about its orientation to a focus on school readiness in stating ‘[i]ncreasing numbers of two-year-olds now attend provision, including in schools, so that many more of them are “primed to succeed” by the time they enter Reception’ (p. 14). This orientation differs markedly from the observations of a British Government commissioned report (Nutbrown, 2012) and a major oft-quoted longitudinal study conducted in the same country (Sylva et al 2004) which argues

EPPE concludes that in most effective centres ‘play’ environments were used to provide the basis of instructive learning. However, the most effective pedagogy combines both ‘teaching’ and providing freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities. Effective pedagogy for young children is less formal than for primary school but its curricular aims can be both academic as well as social and emotional (p.6).

This is an example of the divide that can occur between powerful research and policy, often dependent on where decision-making responsibilities lie and the political pressures to deliver on short-term educational outcomes. A focus on short-term readiness and getting young children to a certain standard prior to commencing school is also prevalent in Australian policy documents. The recently released Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (2018) makes the following statement

Creating strong foundations for learning is essential if Australia wants to give every student the best chance to excel. Currently, children begin school with significantly different levels of foundational skills, knowledge and emotional readiness. These differences often lead to disparities in learning outcomes throughout schooling. Narrowing these gaps through high quality early childhood learning is an equitable and cost-effective way to improve each child’s learning outcomes. It will also make the task of accelerating individual student growth easier for schools. (Gonski et al p.16)

The focus of the review is not about early childhood education, but while it begins by acknowledging the importance of the early years, it continues by giving rise to the idea of implied subservience of early years educators, having an instrumental role in fulfilling the goals of schooling and lightening the load of schools. This prompts a second reading of the OECD policy lesson outlined earlier in this paper about a ‘strong and equal partnership’.

Text

The text under consideration in this paper is the document Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL 2011). As a policy statement, it impacts on all graduates of pre-service higher education teacher training programs, and all registered teachers. It consists of a preamble statement, three domains of teaching, the standards themselves, with each having a set of focus areas and descriptors, corresponding to four levels of competence. It is acknowledged that the Standards were developed in a period of significant reforms in the early childhood field, following the publication of the EYLF and prior to the final agreements about the NQS. The context has now changed greatly. During 2017 feedback was provided to the TRBSA by a number of early years stakeholders from a range of settings about the current version of the document and how it included or excluded early years teachers. Work has also been done by a group of teachers in South Australia in identifying what the standards can look like in practice in an early childhood
setting. It is noted that some other jurisdictions have created resources to assist early childhood teachers interpret the standards. It is not clear whether similar documents have been developed for other levels of education. It is not the intention in this section to duplicate those collective inputs, but rather to point out some key issues in the document.

An important point in providing feedback is to underline the issues of language use, when there are common terms and when terms are necessarily different between sectors. In the Preamble, it is noted that the language of schooling predominates. Terms such as schools, school systems, students, student attainment, student achievement, all serve to exclude young children and early childhood teachers. The emphasis is placed on students becoming successful learners, without any reference to children already being seen as being competent learners, who are encouraged and supported to build new learning from what they already know, understand and can do, having developed it from a variety of environments. It also implies that children are not yet citizens, in direct contrast to the EYLF which acknowledges children as citizens from birth as consistent with international views of children, and their rights (DEEWR 2009, United Nations 1989). The statement acknowledges that the standards ‘present a common understanding and language between teachers, teacher educators, teacher organisations, professional associations and the public’. It is noted that there is an absence of reference to early childhood related professionals that could be included in a new version.

It can be argued that the three domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement are inclusive of all teachers and are general enough to relate to early childhood teachers. Each of these domains are highlighted in research finding and policy requirements for ECEC services, outlined in the NQF. They also relate to the ECA Code of Ethics (Appendix 8), developed by the profession for the profession, and used widely across Australia.

In relation to the standards, language and concepts more closely related to schooling is visible in many, but not all standards. For example, Standard 1 could be more inclusive by reframing it as ‘Know learners and their ways of learning’. This could be done without excluding other teachers. Additionally, it could be argued that learners require much more than ‘supportive and safe learning environments’ (Standard 4) and the use of the word ‘families’ would be more inclusive of both the people who use early childhood services and of teachers’ work.

It is in the Focus Areas and Descriptors that the exclusion is most obvious. Once again it is the use of language which is one aspect of this, but it is also the way in which roles and practices are described that minimise attention to early childhood. The current challenge for early childhood teachers in demonstrating the specifics of their work in meeting the standards, as described in Chapter 4 of this paper, can be overcome by greater inclusion in the text.
**Consequences**

Echoing the policy lessons from Starting Strong (OECD 2001) regarding strong and equal partnerships, the national Review of Teacher Registration argues

> Australian teachers want to be part of a high-status profession that values excellence and has the confidence of the community. They also want to be valued for their commitment to growing their expertise and increasing their impact on the learning of the young people in their care (AITSL, 2018, p. 1.)

Of course, this can be said of early childhood teachers.

It also states

> Within the sector, there is an increasing overlap between early childhood and school settings. Early childhood teachers may be employed in early childhood education centres that are situated on school campuses or in a primary school setting where they are likely to have interaction with primary-aged children (p. 10).

It is unclear what is meant by this statement, particularly by ‘increasing overlap’. It could be seen merely as increasing co-location, or as greater consistency of practice from B-8, or it could be seen through different eyes as a means to exert greater pressure on the early childhood field to prepare children for school and adopt more prevalent school-based practices. It could concern more integration of services, greater recognition and sharing of ideas, practices and knowledge, or it could be viewed as conforming and assimilating into a more dominant environment. It could mean that the idea of specialisation is obsolete. There are indications that all are possibilities.

How the early childhood workforce is constructed and understood, and understands itself, is influenced by a range of policy initiatives. Since the publication of the APST, national requirements for all approved providers of early childhood education and care services are included within the NQF and enshrined in law in all Australian jurisdictions. Mandated requirements related to practice have made new demands on services and, by implication, individual teachers.

It can be predicted that adding another layer of regulation such as the APST could be seen as an additional imposition by some, yet by others as a beneficial guide to professional practice if the standards are inclusive. McKinlay, Irvine & Farrell (2018) argue that professionalising the workforce is an important issue for early childhood teachers, especially those working in long day care. Ortlipp, Arthur and Woodrow (2011) cite Osgood (2006) who argues that educators [including teachers] are often ‘seduced’ by mechanisms of control because of the pay-off of an increase in professional status. They remark on the long struggle of early childhood educators for professional recognition in Australia and elsewhere. Low pay, instability of employment, lack of public recognition and understanding of their jobs, have led to instability of individuals’ professional identity. This in turn has resulted in instability and discontinuity of the workforce more generally. It is possible that having a national reference point such as inclusive APST can act as a common language to describe all teachers’ professional practice, can inform broader groups of educators (such as
those in early childhood and higher education), and in turn the general community can have a better understanding of teachers’ roles.

While all areas of the NQS relate to the professional practices of education and care, it is Quality Area 1 in which the program and practice elements are located. Recent data about the NQF Assessment and Ratings show that Quality Area 1 is the area which is most problematic for services and is continuing to rate lower than other areas. The following figure shows the most recent summary of the data in which each of the quality areas are cross referenced against the ratings.

![Quality Areas Summary](image.png)

**Figure 4: A national overview of the NQF assessments and rating as at May 2018. (ACECQA 2018)**

Since 2013 there have been improvements in the ratings for QA 1 with 83% of services nationally meeting or exceeding the Standard. This quality area covers aspects such as making purposeful and deliberate curriculum decisions related to each child’s context with a view to impacting on children’s outcomes, planning and reflecting on pedagogy, using pedagogical strategies that are specialised for the age group, and working effectively with families regarding their children’s learning. Current data for South Australia shows 20% of centres are rated at Working Towards, 34% at Meeting the Standard, and 46% at Exceeding the Standard in this Quality Area (ACECQA, 2018, p. 20). While there is still a larger percentage than the national result assessed as working towards the standard, the percentage of services exceeding the standard is much higher. The attribution of this is not clear and further analysis would be useful.

Any initiatives such as the review of the APST must ‘consider the LDC ecosystem as a whole’ (McKinlay et al, 2018, p.40) and a resulting framework must deliver congruence with current research findings and policy requirements. The following chapter makes recommendations that can help to achieve that aim.
6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the increasing numbers of teachers working in early years settings and actively engaged in curriculum and pedagogy, it is crucial that their practice in the context of the settings in which they work is recognised in the APST at all levels of the standards. This could be done in ways that do not exclude other teachers’ work.

The following recommendations are grouped with regard to general matters, language and concepts in the standards, congruence with related policy requirements, research evidence, practice matters, and consultation.

Inclusion of early years teachers

The purpose of this paper is to provide an environmental scan that underpins a rationale for inclusion of early years teachers in the APST. In considering research and policy, and the APST current and growing potential to impact on teachers’ practice, there is a strong argument for inclusion of early years teachers. Traditionally in Australia and internationally, early years is mostly considered to be from B-8, particularly by the profession. There are separate arrangements for the administration of education services for children within the B-8 age range, but the fundamental importance of this period of life, and the continuity and consistency required for children making transitions between settings, make it a crucial consideration, and provide a way of strengthening practice. Early childhood teachers working in preschool and child care settings want their status as teachers and belonging to part of a larger profession to be recognised. They also want acknowledgement that they use specialised knowledge and pedagogies to improve short and long-term outcomes for children.

Any commitment to realising the wide-ranging and socially-just benefits that could entail from public investment in ECEC provision requires a sustained commitment to developing a skilled workforce which understands the needs of children at multiple levels, and can deliver a high quality curriculum to children with differing needs and to support families to do the same (Siraj et al, 2017, p.30)

The inclusion of early years teachers in the APST is one strategy that can support a skilled workforce to develop further.

Recommendations

1. The revised Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are inclusive of early years teachers working with children from b-8 in education and care settings.

2. The language used is inclusive of early years (b-8) teachers work and recognises the settings in which they work.

Content and Structure of the Standards
As outlined earlier in this paper, early years teachers’ professional orientation is similar to that of teachers of older children and young people. They are charged with enabling the achievement of optimum outcomes for children. They work with curriculum frameworks and guidelines; pedagogies are a mark of their profession. It is in the details of defining, describing and enacting curriculum and pedagogy that there are distinct and legitimate differences. Early years teachers are expected to have close and reciprocal relationships with both children and families with whom they work, manage their daily teaching as part of a team, collaborate regularly in multidisciplinary workgroups, support smooth transitions for children across a range of settings including starting primary school, and develop learning programs for children who are attending for intermittent hours during the week. While many of these responsibilities are shared with other educators, they remain fundamental aspects of early childhood teachers’ work and occur in a range of settings that combine education and care. Early childhood teachers’ daily practice is undertaken in a team environment in which they may often be the designated pedagogical leader.

Currently, the focus areas and descriptors do not adequately reflect the key responsibilities of early years teachers. This means that teachers may have to work harder to demonstrate their ability to meet the standards, especially when an assessor does not have a comprehensive understanding of early years pedagogy, and how practices of care and relationships, for example, are an essential part of that pedagogy. What is required are better descriptions that allows for inclusion. It is possible to make these more explicit without limiting teaching to a purely technical pursuit, and without creating restrictions that devalue the specialisation. This can be done by providing examples that are applicable to teaching at each level of education. To develop a framework that provides additional and specific descriptors only for early years teachers would be to fail in their inclusion in the APST and would miss the opportunity to develop a valid equal partnership with school education.

**Recommendations**

3. The general structure and components of the APST framework remain the same

4. That the three Domains of Teaching remain as
   - Professional Knowledge
   - Professional Practice
   - Professional Engagement

5. The APST reflect ways of expressing the focus areas for each standard that are inclusive of early years teachers (b-8), and create congruent connections between practices in the prior-to-school and the early years of school.

6. The descriptors are expressed in more specific terms that apply to each level of education, for example, the early years (b-8), the primary years, the middle years and the senior years.
Congruence with research findings, policy requirements and practice conventions

The early years education and care sector has undergone significant change in the last ten years, and is still developing. Preschool and child care services in various forms must comply with the legal requirements of the National Quality Framework, including use of the EYLF and prescribed frameworks. International research has informed the development of these policies. The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics also informs early years teachers’ work.

The NQF addresses the quality of a service as a whole. The APST serve as a reflective tool for the development and assessment of an individual teacher. While they are different frameworks for different purposes, the APST can assist an individual teacher to reflect on their practice and contribute to the quality of the service and the profession as whole. If the revised APST are consistent with the NQF, the use of a common language and consistent, but not uniform, practice are likely to ensue, and the profession can be strengthened. If the APST are not consistent with other legal requirements, then there is a real risk of undermining the reforms that have, in the main, been welcomed by many. Ultimately this may result in confusion for teachers, contribute to further instability of the workforce and may have detrimental effects for children.

Recommendations

7. The concepts and descriptors in the APST are informed by international research, and acknowledge the specialised knowledge that is required to work with young children 2-8.

8. The concepts and descriptors in the APST are congruent with the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard as they are enshrined in the national law and regulations, and the ECA Code of Ethics.

Consultation

It is anticipated that any consultation during the review of the APST will hear the views of both the teaching profession and the general public. While many early years teachers will be aware of the review, some who are not currently required to be registered may not know. It will be important for any consultant to understand pertinent issues in a contemporary context. Previous efforts of the TRBSA to have early childhood teachers included in the standards demonstrate that this was only partially successful. On this occasion, the context has changed.

Recommendation

10. During the consultation period, specific opportunities are afforded for early years stakeholders to focus on the issues for this part of the teaching workforce and these opportunities are convened by consultants who have familiarity and contemporary understanding of the concepts, language and issues in the early years field.
REFERENCES


Department for Education and Child Development. [DECS]. (2017). About the Department (Note: the text referred to on this webpage has been changed and is no longer available.)


## Appendix 1

### Preschool and school starting ages across Australian jurisdictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Preschool program name</th>
<th>Age of entry to preschool</th>
<th>Foundation (first year of schooling)</th>
<th>Month and minimum age for commencement of Foundation year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>4 by 30 April</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>5 by 30 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Generally 4 and 5</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>5 by 31 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>4 by 30 June</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 30 June</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>4 by 30 April</td>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>5 by 30 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 1 January</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>5 by 1 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 30 April</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>5 by 30 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 30 June</td>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2018)
Appendix 2

Provision of early childhood education and care in Australia

Table 2: Number and proportion of approved services by provider management type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider management type</th>
<th>Number of services</th>
<th>Proportion of services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>7466</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private not for profit community managed</td>
<td>3516</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private not for profit other organisations</td>
<td>2126</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Territory and Local Government managed</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Territory government schools</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent schools</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic schools</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated/Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,766</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: This includes services approved under the NQF and does include formal school education.
### Appendix 3

**Summary of the National Quality Standard (revised 2018)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QA1</td>
<td><strong>Educational program and practice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Program</td>
<td>The educational program enhances each child’s learning and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Approved learning framework</td>
<td>Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child’s learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Child-centred</td>
<td>Each child’s current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 Program learning opportunities</td>
<td>All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Practice</td>
<td>Educators facilitate and extend each child’s learning and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Intentional teaching</td>
<td>Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Responsive teaching and scaffolding</td>
<td>Educators respond to children’s ideas and play and extend children’s learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Child directed learning</td>
<td>Each child’s agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Assessment and planning</td>
<td>Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 Assessment and planning cycle</td>
<td>Each child’s learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2 Critical reflection</td>
<td>Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.3 Information for families</td>
<td>Families are informed about the program and their child’s progress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QA2</th>
<th><strong>Children’s health and safety</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Health</td>
<td>Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Wellbeing and comfort</td>
<td>Each child’s wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s need for sleep, rest and relaxation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Health practices and procedures</td>
<td>Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Healthy lifestyle</td>
<td>Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Safety</td>
<td>Each child is protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Supervision</td>
<td>At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Incident and emergency management</td>
<td>Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Child protection</td>
<td>Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QA3</th>
<th><strong>Physical environment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Design</td>
<td>The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Fit for purpose</td>
<td>Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Use</td>
<td>Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well-maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Use</td>
<td>The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Inclusive environment</td>
<td>Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child’s participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Resources support play-based learning</td>
<td>Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 Environmentally responsible</td>
<td>The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Descriptor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA4</strong></td>
<td>Staffing arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Staffing arrangements</td>
<td>Staffing arrangements enhance children’s learning and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 Organisation of educators</td>
<td>The organisation of educators across the service supports children’s learning and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Continuity of staff</td>
<td>Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Professionalism</td>
<td>Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Professional collaboration</td>
<td>Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other; recognising each other’s strengths and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Professional standards</td>
<td>Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA5</strong></td>
<td>Relationships with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Relationships between educators and children</td>
<td>Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Positive educator to child interactions</td>
<td>Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Dignity and rights of the child</td>
<td>The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Relationships between children</td>
<td>Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Collaborative learning</td>
<td>Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Self-regulation</td>
<td>Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA6</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative partnerships with families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Supportive relationships with families</td>
<td>Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1 Engagement with the service</td>
<td>Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2 Parent views are respected</td>
<td>The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child’s learning and wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.3 Families are supported</td>
<td>Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Collaborative partnerships</td>
<td>Collaborative partnerships enhance children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1 Transitions</td>
<td>Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2 Access and participation</td>
<td>Effective partnerships support children’s access, inclusion and participation in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.3 Community engagement</td>
<td>The service builds relationships and engages with its community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QA7</strong></td>
<td>Governance and Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Governance</td>
<td>Governance supports the operation of a quality service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1 Service philosophy and purpose</td>
<td>A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service’s operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.2 Management systems</td>
<td>Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.3 Roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Leadership</td>
<td>Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1 Continuous improvement</td>
<td>There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2 Educational leadership</td>
<td>The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.3 Development of professionals</td>
<td>Educators, co-ordinators and staff members’ performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Overview of NQS ratings

Appendix 5

Key Components of Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

(DEEWR 2009 Belonging Being and Becoming: the early years learning framework for Australia p. 10)
Appendix 6

National Quality Standard: legal requirements for employment of early childhood teachers – relevant excerpts

Education and Care Services National Regulations
Current version for 1 February 2018 to date (accessed 28 June 2018 at 17:18)
Chapter 4 Part 4.4 Division 2

130 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—fewer than 25 approved places
(1) If the approved number of places for children preschool age or under at a centre-based service is fewer than 25, the service must have access to an early childhood teacher working with the service for at least 20 per cent of the time that the service provides education and care.
(2) To comply with subregulation (1), the early childhood teacher may be working with the service by means of information communication technology.
(3) For the purposes of this regulation the period that an early childhood teacher works with a centre-based service may be calculated on a quarterly basis.

131 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—25 or more approved places but fewer than 25 children
(1) This regulation applies if the approved number of places for children preschool age or under at a centre-based service is 25 or more but the service is educating or caring for fewer than 25 children.
(2) The service must comply with regulation 130 during any period that it educates and cares for fewer than 25 children.

132 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—25 to 59 children
(1) If a centre-based service provides education and care to 25 or more but less than 60 children preschool age or under on a given day, an early childhood teacher must be in attendance at the service—
   (a) for at least 6 hours on that day, if the service operates for 50 or more hours a week; or
   (b) for 60 per cent of the operating hours of the service on that day, if the service operates for less than 50 hours a week.
(2) A centre-based service is not required to comply with subregulation (1) if—
   (a) the approved number of places for children preschool age or under at the service is 25 or more but less than 60; and
   (b) the service employs or engages a full-time or full-time equivalent early childhood teacher at the service

133 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—60 to 80 children
(1) If a centre-based service provides education and care to 60 or more but not more than 80 children preschool age or under on a given day—
   (a) an early childhood teacher must be in attendance at the service—
      (i) for at least 6 hours on that day, if the service operates for 50 or more hours a week; or
(ii) for 60 per cent of the operating hours of the service on that day, if the service operates for less than 50 hours a week; and
(b) a second early childhood teacher or another suitably qualified person must be in attendance at the service—
(i) for at least 3 hours on that day, if the service operates for 50 or more hours a week; or
(ii) for 30 per cent of the operating hours of the service on that day, if the service operates for less than 50 hours a week.

(2) A centre-based service is not required to comply with subregulation (1) if—
(a) the approved number of places for children preschool age or under at the service is 60 or more but not more than 80; and
(b) the service employs or engages—
(i) a full-time or full-time equivalent early childhood teacher at the service; and
(ii) a second early childhood teacher or a suitably qualified person for half of the full-time or full-time equivalent hours at the service.

134 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—more than 80 children

(1) If a centre-based service provides education and care to more than 80 children preschool age or under on a given day—
(a) an early childhood teacher must be in attendance at the service—
(i) for at least 6 hours on that day, if the service operates for 50 or more hours a week; or
(ii) for 60 per cent of the operating hours of the service on that day, if the service operates for less than 50 hours a week; and
(b) a second early childhood teacher or another suitably qualified person must be in attendance at the service—
(i) for at least 6 hours on that day, if the service operates for 50 or more hours a week; or
(ii) for 60 per cent of the operating hours of the service on that day, if the service operates for less than 50 hours a week.

(2) A centre-based service is not required to comply with subregulation (1) if—
(a) the approved number of places for children preschool age or under at a centre-based service is more than 80; and
(b) the service employs or engages—
(i) a full-time or full-time equivalent early childhood teacher at the service; and
(ii) a second full-time or full-time equivalent early childhood teacher or suitably qualified person.

Chapter 7 Part 7.1

Part 7.1 General transitional and saving provisions
Division 2 Staffing arrangements

241 Persons taken to hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification
(1) A person is taken to hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification for the purposes of these Regulations if, immediately before the scheme commencement day, the person—
(a) was—
(i) recognised under the former education and care services law, or for the purposes of a preschool funding program, of any participating jurisdiction as an early childhood teacher; and
(ii) employed or engaged in a declared approved service as an early childhood teacher; or
(b) held a qualification that is published under regulation 137(2) in the list of former qualifications approved as early childhood teacher qualifications; or
(c) was registered or accredited as an early childhood teacher in accordance with the requirements of any participating jurisdiction; or
(d) was employed to deliver a pre-preparatory learning program (within the meaning of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 of Queensland); or
(e) was registered as a teacher under the Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004 of South Australia and was employed to deliver a preschool program; or
(f) was registered as a teacher under the Teachers Registration Act 2000 of Tasmania and was employed to deliver a preschool program at a school established or registered under the Education Act 1994 of Tasmania; or
(g) was registered as a teacher under the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 of Queensland and held a qualification that is published under regulation 137(2) in the list of former qualifications approved as diploma level qualifications.
(2) If, immediately before the scheme commencement day, a person was enrolled in a course for a qualification that is published under regulation 137(2) in the list of former qualifications approved as early childhood teacher qualifications, the person is taken to hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification for the purposes of these Regulations on the completion of the course.
(3) If, immediately before the scheme commencement day, a person who was registered as a teacher under the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 of Queensland was enrolled in a course for a qualification that is published under regulation 137(2) in the list of former qualifications approved as diploma level qualifications, the person is taken to hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification for the purposes of these regulations—
(a) while the person is actively working towards the approved diploma level qualification; and
(b) if the person completes the approved diploma level qualification, on completion of that qualification.
(4) If a person who, immediately before the scheme commencement day, was registered as a teacher under the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 of Queensland commences actively working towards an approved diploma level qualification on or before 31 December 2013, the person is taken to hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification for the purposes of these regulations—
(a) while the person is actively working towards the approved diploma level qualification; and
(b) if the person completes the approved diploma level qualification, on completion of that qualification.
(5) If, immediately before the scheme commencement day, the recognition, registration, accreditation or qualification as an early childhood teacher of a person referred to in subregulation (1) was subject to restrictions imposed by or under an education law of a participating jurisdiction, the person is taken to be an early childhood teacher under that subregulation subject to the same restrictions.
(6) Subregulation (1)(c) does not apply if immediately before the scheme commencement day the person was registered or accredited as an early childhood teacher or equivalent on the basis that the person was working towards an early childhood teacher qualification or equivalent.

(7) For the purposes of subregulations (3) and (4), the person is **actively working towards** an approved diploma level qualification if the person—

(a) is enrolled in the course for the qualification; and

(b) provides the approved provider with documentary evidence from the provider of the course that—

(i) the person has commenced the course; and

(ii) is making satisfactory progress towards completion of the course; and

(iii) is meeting the requirements for maintaining the enrolment.

242 **Persons taken to be early childhood teachers**

(1) This regulation applies on and after 1 January 2014 and before 1 January 2020 to a participating jurisdiction other than Victoria.

(2) A relevant regulation applies to an education and care service as if a reference in regulations 130 to 134 to an early childhood teacher included a reference to a person who—

(a) is actively working towards an approved early childhood teaching qualification; and

(b) provides the approved provider with documentary evidence that—

(i) the person has completed at least 50 per cent of the course; or

(ii) holds an approved diploma level education and care qualification.

(3) In this regulation—

**relevant regulation** means regulation 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 266, 267, 279, 293, 294, 303, 304, 330, 331, 332, 333, 348, 349, 362, 363 or 379.

**Subdivision 1 Centre-based services**

324 **Early childhood teachers—preschools**

(1) This regulation applies in place of regulation 126 for preschools.

(2) (Repealed)

(3) On and after 1 January 2014, the first and second educators required to meet the educator to child ratio for preschool aged children in a government preschool (other than a prescribed preschool) must be early childhood teachers.

(4) On and after 1 January 2014, the first and third educators required to meet the educator to child ratio for preschool aged children in a prescribed preschool must be early childhood teachers.

332 **Early childhood teacher—60 or more but fewer than 81 children**

(1) This regulation applies to a centre-based service that—

(a) provides education and care to 60 or more but fewer than 81 children; and

(b) is not a preschool.

(2) (Repealed)

(3) The requirements in regulation 133(1)(b) do not apply to the service before 1 January 2020.
333 Early childhood teacher in attendance—more than 80 children

(1) This regulation applies to a centre-based service that—
(a) provides education and care to more than 80 children; and
(b) is not a preschool.
(2) (Repealed)
(3) The requirements in regulation 134(1)(b) do not apply to the service before 1 January 2020.
### An example of possible links between the EYLF and the AC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EYLF Outcomes</th>
<th>Melbourne Declaration Goals</th>
<th>Discipline/Learning area</th>
<th>General capability</th>
<th>Cross-curriculum priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 1: Children are confident and involved learners</td>
<td>Goal 2: Confident individuals: embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions.</td>
<td>Science: Foundation Year Content Descriptions</td>
<td>Critical and creative thinking: Students develop creative and critical thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, ideas and possibilities and use them in combination when seeking new pathways and solutions.</td>
<td>Sustainability: ... young people ... build capacities for thinking, valuing and acting necessary to create a more sustainable future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KC 1: Children develop dispositions such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Science Understanding: • Living things have basic needs ... • Objects are made of materials that have observable properties • Daily and seasonal changes ... affect everyday life • The way things move depends on a variety of factors ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KC 2: Children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Science as human endeavour: • Nature and development of science: Science involves exploring and observing the world using the senses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence examples: create and use representation to organise, record and communicate mathematical ideas and concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Science inquiry Skills: • Questioning and predicting • Planning and conducting • Processing and analysing data and information • Communicating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribute constructively to mathematical discussions and arguments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics: Foundation Year Content Descriptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KC 3: Children transfer and adapt what they have learned ...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Statistics and Probability: • Data representation and interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KC 4: Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency strands: • Understanding • Fluency • Problem solving • Reasoning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8

ECA Code of Ethics – core principles

- Each child has unique interests and strengths and the capacity to contribute to their communities.
- Children are citizens from birth with civil, cultural, linguistic, social and economic rights.
- Effective learning and teaching is characterised by professional decisions that draw on specialised knowledge and multiple perspectives.
- Partnerships with families and communities support shared responsibility for children’s learning, development and wellbeing.
- Democratic, fair and inclusive practices promote equity and a strong sense of belonging.
- Respectful, responsive and reciprocal relationships are central to children’s education and care.
- Play and leisure are essential for children’s learning, development and wellbeing.
- Research, inquiry and practice-based evidence inform quality education and care.