

INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THIS MANUAL

The ELAA *PolicyWorks Manual – National Quality Framework v2* provides information and resources to assist early childhood education and care services develop and update policies and procedures to meet legislative, regulatory and funding requirements. It is available online in a convenient downloadable format. This manual has been fully updated to incorporate the requirements of the new *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law), *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (National Regulations) and the *National Quality Standard* (NQS).

The National Regulations list policies and procedures **required** for all service types (Regulation 168). *PolicyWorks Manual – National Quality Framework v2* contains a sample of each of the policies mandated by legislation. It also contains samples of additional operational policies considered by ELAA to be best practice for education and care services. Within the manual, policies are labelled either *Mandatory* or *Best Practice* for clarity. Individual services will need to decide which of the Best Practice policies to adopt. All sample policies should be amended to reflect individual service philosophy, needs, practices, beliefs and values. Some sample policies (e.g. Delivery and Collection of Children Policy) may also require a service specific decision to be made – this information is highlighted within the document. ELAA recommends that any changes made to the templates be checked against all relevant legislation and regulations to ensure compliance. There may also be other specific policies that services identify as necessary in the context of their particular situation. Information about the policy development process and a standard policy template is included in this manual to develop these where required. Industrial policies are not included in this manual – refer to ELAA's *Early Childhood Management Manual* (ECMM) under Resources in 1.3 below.

The sections of this manual correspond to the seven Quality Areas of the *National Quality Standard*. The Regulatory Overview Table lists the

quality area, standards and elements, detailing related policies, practice requirements and guidance notes. The table also includes reference to related laws, regulations and curriculum framework principles for each Quality Area, standard and element and an indication of which areas to consider in developing a service philosophy. Policies can be arranged alphabetically within each Quality Area. *ACECQA's Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* and *Guide to the National Quality Standard* have been used extensively in the preparation of these policies. This manual has been designed to be used alongside these guides.

1.2 NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* (NQF) commenced on 1 January 2012 with the aim of providing every Australian child with the best start in life through access to high-quality early childhood education and care, and school-age care services. The NQF is designed to assist providers to improve the quality of services and enable families to make informed decisions about the best service for their child.

The National Quality Framework includes¹:

- a national legislative framework that consists of the National Law and National Regulations
- a National Quality Standard
- an assessment and rating system
- a regulatory authority in each state and territory with primary responsibility for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services in their jurisdiction in accordance with the national legislative framework and in relation to the National Quality Standard. In Victoria, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will take on the regulatory role
- the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). This national body is responsible for providing oversight of the system and ensuring consistency of approach.

1 ACECQA website: www.acecqa.gov.au

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) can provide advice, assistance, resources, training and support to early childhood education and care services as they implement the National Quality Agenda. For more information or to become a member ring ELAA on 9489 3500 or 1300 730 119 (rural).

1.3 EARLY LEARNING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA (ELAA, FORMERLY KPV)

ELAA's vision is for excellence in early learning for every child. Our mission is to champion excellence in early learning and ensure that high quality, affordable and accessible services are delivered to all children, that are sustainable into the future and accountable to the community. ELAA represents the voice of parents and of over 1,200 early learning providers.

Our membership includes:

- independent kindergartens
- cluster managed services
- local governments
- integrated services
- long day care services
- schools.

Over the past 21 years, ELAA has worked collaboratively with members, peak bodies, government and other key stakeholders to ensure that Victoria is leading the way in the provision of quality early childhood services to children and that these services are accessible and affordable for families. ELAA's strong relationship with government at both the Federal and State levels ensures that we are an effective voice for the sector and enables us to engage proactively with government to ensure that services are funded realistically to deliver high quality early childhood education to Victorian children.

Our collaborative approach has ensured that ELAA is working alongside organisations such as the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS), Gowrie Victoria, FKA Children's Services, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Australian Education Union, Early Childhood Intervention Association, Noah's Ark and Playgroup Victoria to provide a unified voice for change and development in the early childhood sector. ELAA is a well-respected

organisation within the early childhood education and care sector, ranked highly for its commitment, professionalism and expertise on all matters relating to early childhood services.

MEMBER SUPPORT SERVICES

We actively work with our members to promote and support high quality services through the provision of advice and training for management and staff, professional development opportunities and the development of quality, NQF-compliant resources. The following are some of the services offered by ELAA to its members.

ADVOCACY

As a peak organisation, ELAA informs policy directions for the early childhood services sector and advocates for quality early childhood education and care for all children. ELAA does this in consultation with members, other early childhood service organisations and the expertise and experience of our staff.

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

ELAA members receive access to our telephone and email advisory service. Support from our specialist team of professionals covers a vast range of issues including:

- governance advice on all aspects of managing children's services
- support regarding financial management, financial analysis and budget development and review
- assistance with policy development and constitution reviews
- operational program development and analysis.

EMPLOYER SUPPORT

ELAA's specialist industrial advisors understand the complexities of the industrial system and employer responsibilities and assist with information, advice and support on a wide range of industrial issues including:

- awards and enterprise agreements
- wage rates
- occupational health and safety including WorkCover obligations and claims management
- negotiation of enterprise agreements

- assistance with conciliation when the matter is not covered by VMIA
- negotiations with key stakeholders including unions
- all aspects of recruitment from position descriptions to letters of employment
- performance management services
- managing workplace conflict
- general staffing issues – workplace counselling, grievance and disciplinary processes.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

ELAA runs a series of seminars, training sessions and conferences each year for early childhood professionals. These events produce a number of exciting opportunities for networking, sharing experiences, learning from early childhood experts and from each other. The ELAA professional learning program provides participants with opportunities to gain specific skills in a range of management and operational areas from committee governance and strategic planning to financial management and employer responsibilities. There are also downloadable self-guided training packages available on the ELAA website www.elaa.org.au.

CONSULTANCY

ELAA has a long history of providing targeted consultancy services to the early childhood sector. Our qualified and experienced staff have successfully tailored projects for cluster managers, independent committees of management, local councils and other not-for-profit organisations. Our consultants have a broad range of early childhood skills and experience including training and education, management, governance, community development, industrial relations, research and evaluation and event management, and can tailor consultancy packages to meet individual service needs.

RESOURCES

The ELAA *Early Childhood Management Manual* is an A to Z manual designed for committees of Incorporated Associations who manage early childhood services and employ staff.

The ELAA website provides members-only information management support and resources that can be ordered or downloaded for immediate use.

ELAA manuals and publications provide crucial information and templates for use by managers and committees.

McARTHUR JOBS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Jobs in Early Childhood sponsored by McArthur provides a valuable service to members. This online jobs board is a cost-effective way for employers to advertise employment opportunities in the Victorian early childhood education sector and is free for ELAA members.

FUNDRAISING AND MARKETING SUPPORT

ELAA understands how vital marketing and fundraising is to services across Victoria and offers ongoing support in a number of ways:

- assistance with strategies to promote services and the importance of early childhood education
- *Fundraising Made Simple* is a downloadable resource that provides fundraising ideas and information
- the *Caring for Kids* raffle provides services with the opportunity to raise money in their extended communities and market their service at the same time. This award-winning raffle takes place every year in Term 2 and has been inducted into the Fundraising Institute of Australia's Hall of Fame.

INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES

Copies of the various awards and industrial agreements applicable to the provision of early childhood services are available to ELAA members or can be accessed at www.fairwork.gov.au

These include the following or their successor awards or agreements:

- *Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants Agreement 2009* (VECTAA)
- *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2010*
- *Children's Services Award 2010*
- *Clerks – Private Sector Award 2010*
- *Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2010*

Industrial Bulletins and *Wages Bulletins* are also produced regularly for ELAA members.

LATEST SECTOR UPDATES

Preschool Matters is ELAA's information-packed quarterly magazine. It includes the latest news in the early childhood sector, kindergarten management advice, information on industrial relations' issues and other topics related to the early childhood sector. Members receive two copies of *Preschool Matters* each term.

ELAA's e-News is sent regularly to subscribers. The ELAA e-News provides up-to-date information about the sector and ELAA events. Registration to ELAA e-News is free, go to www.elaa.org.au and click on the links.

Monthly updates are mailed to members and include information on events, fundraising, marketing and training opportunities and happenings in the early childhood sector. In addition to industrial bulletins, information on changes to legislation, new policies and procedures, lectures and seminars these include information about our preferred partners – Allianz, AustralianSuper, Insurance House, McArthur, Officeworks and Victoria Teachers Mutual Bank.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The Early Childhood Education Conference is a yearly event presented by ELAA in partnership with Gowrie Victoria and a committee of early childhood professionals. The conference provides a quality practice-based annual event for the many early childhood teachers, early years professionals, volunteer committees, employers (both cluster managers and stand-alone) and parents who work in partnership to provide quality early childhood education for over 100,000 children every year at over 1,600 Victorian sites in the years before school. This annual event is held in Melbourne during term 2.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

ELAA established the Early Childhood Education Foundation in 1997 to address concerns that many children were not attending kindergarten due to family financial hardship. ELAA believes early childhood education is a vital step in a child's life and the foundation provides financial contributions towards a child's kindergarten fees. For more information on eligibility and how to apply for funding to the foundation visit www.elaa.org.au.

DISCLAIMER

ELAA has made every effort to ensure that the information provided in this manual is accurate and current at the date of its publication. ELAA expressly disclaims any liability or responsibility for any errors or omissions from this publication. Legislation, regulation and standards change regularly and it is the responsibility of the service relying on this manual to seek advice about and ensure the currency and application of the information contained in this publication.

The information provided in this manual and the policies contained herein are advisory in nature only and it is the responsibility of services adopting the policy templates to ensure they meet the specific needs of their service.

ELAA has made the sample policies available as downloadable Microsoft Word documents to enable the service to tailor the sample policies to suit their service's needs. ELAA has made every effort to ensure that the documents were virus-free at the time of loading onto the website, but cannot guarantee that the documents are virus-free. Services are advised to check the document for viruses prior to downloading. ELAA does not accept any liability for any damage or loss to the service as a result of using this document, or for any errors or omissions in the contents of the documents as a result of incompatible versions, or viruses.