

A REFRESH ON THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

TOOL FOR EDUCATORS





The National Quality Framework (NQF) was introduced in 2012 to improve the delivery of education and care services across long day care, preschool, family day care and outside school hours care. The framework provides a guide to what “quality” looks like across all aspects of an education and care service, and introduces a set of objectives aimed to support the safety, health and wellbeing of children, as well as improving their educational and developmental outcomes.

The National Quality Framework contains a series of principles. One of these is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued. This means that recognition and respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures must apply across all parts of the NQF.

WHY IS THE NQF IMPORTANT?

We all want the best for our children. We want to see them grow up as strong and healthy as they can be.

The first years of their life are really important to set them on this path. Their brain is developing so quickly! They are also picking up many social skills and values that will stay with them for life.

The early years are important:

- to build a strong cultural identity
- to build resilience
- to help children believe in themselves
- to grow up healthy and strong
- be ready to continue learning when they reach primary school.

While families are children's first teachers, quality education and care services also play a key role. High quality education and care in these first years leads to better health, education and employment outcomes all throughout children's lives.

The National Quality Framework helps to ensure that all education and care services are good quality services that will set children up to achieve their potential.

WHAT IS THE NQF?

The NQF aims to improve the quality of education and care services by setting enforceable minimum standards and requiring quality assessment and rating of services against the National Quality Standard (NQS).

LAW AND REGULATIONS

The Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations outlines the legal obligations of approved providers in managing their services, and sets out the role of the bodies that oversee and support service quality.

The National Law sets a national standard for children's education and care across Australia. The National Regulations provide more detail on the operational requirements for a service. This includes:

- qualifications of educators (regulation 126, section 169);
- adequate supervision of children (section 165);
- ensuring the service and its furniture and equipment are safe, clean and in working order (regulation 103);
- ensuring children have access to water and nutritious food (regulations 78-79, 168(2)(i));
- protection of children from things likely to hurt them and having a safe environment (section 167, regulations 82, 83, 97, 103);
- good health and hygiene practices regarding food (regulation 77); and
- ensuring certain information, such as a service's approval, rating and hours of operation, is displayed at the centre (regulation 173, section 172).



NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

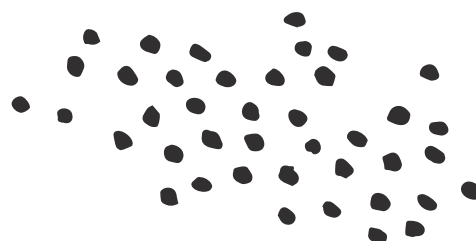
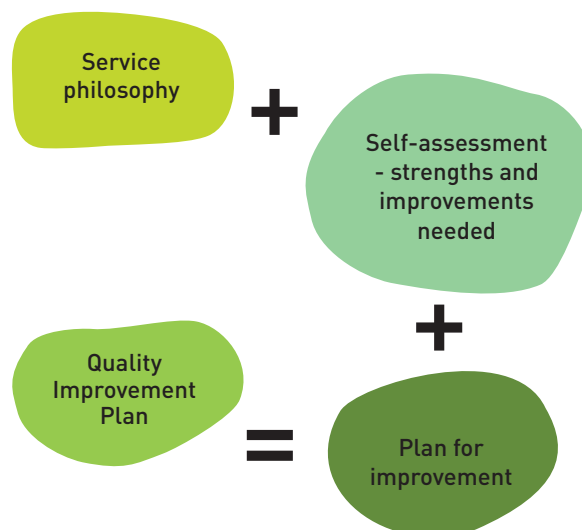
The NQS is part of the Education and Care Services National Regulations. It sets out what quality means for education and care services through seven quality areas. These cover the important elements of an education and care service.

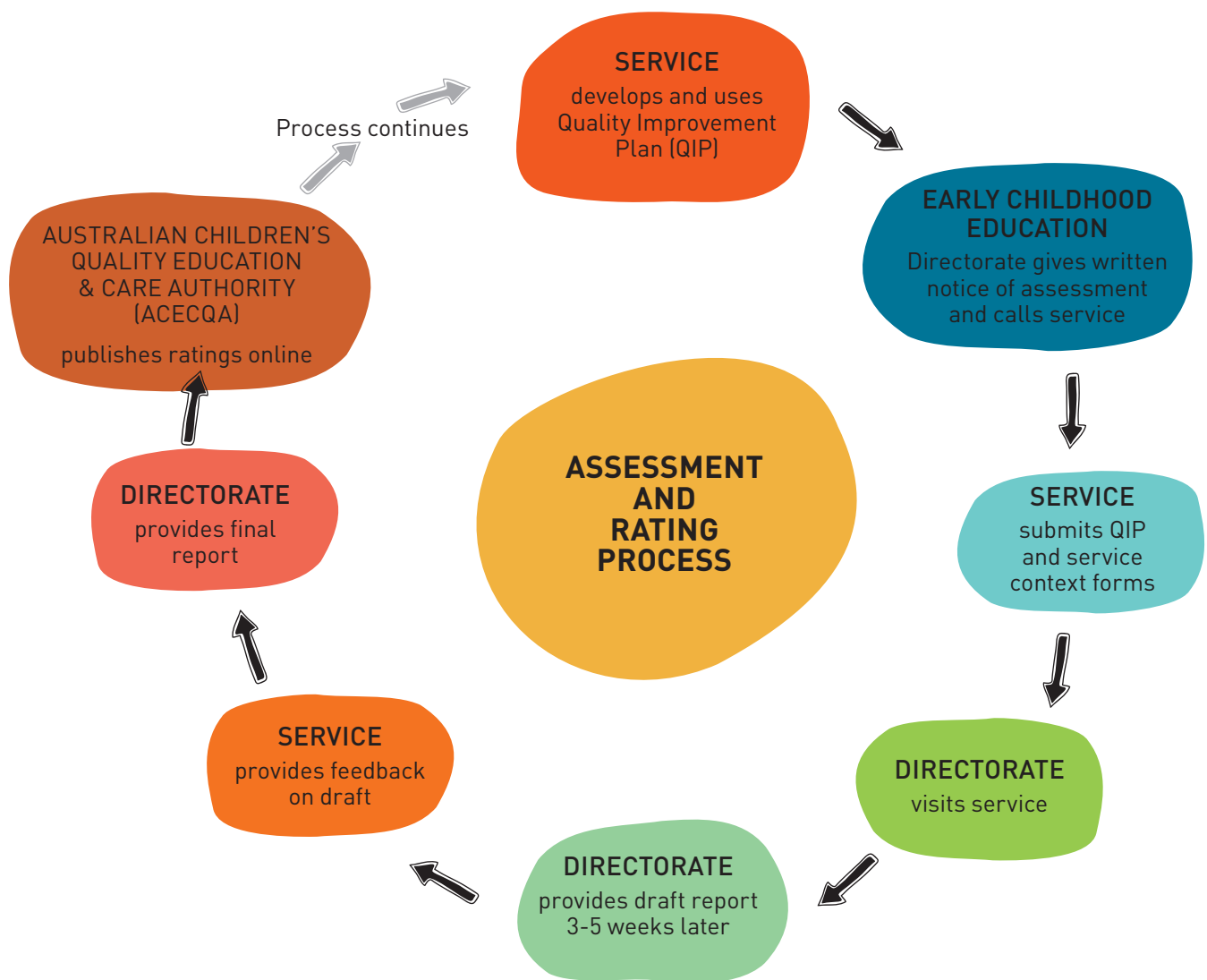
QA1	Educational program and practice – <i>How learning happens</i>
QA2	Children's health and safety – <i>Supporting children to grow up strong</i>
QA3	Physical environment – <i>Creating a healthy space</i>
QA4	Staffing arrangements – <i>Skilled staff and educators</i>
QA5	Relationships with children – <i>Nurturing relationships</i>
QA6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities – <i>Working with families and communities</i>
QA7	Governance and leadership – <i>Good decision-making processes</i>

ASSESSMENT AND RATING OF SERVICE QUALITY

In NSW, services are assessed on these 7 Quality Areas by the NSW Regulatory Authority, which is the Early Childhood Education Directorate within the NSW Department of Education. The assessment process aims to promote ongoing quality improvement in services and to make information on quality available to help families make informed decisions on which service best meets their needs.

The process involves an assessment by the service of its own quality, strengths and areas for improvement, captured in a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).





QIPs must be updated at least once a year and be available on request by the Regulatory Authority or families of a child enrolled or looking to enrol at the service.

Services are given a rating for each of the seven quality areas, summarised by an overall rating.

THE POSSIBLE SERVICE RATINGS ARE

EXCELLENT	Service promotes exceptional education and care, demonstrates sector leadership and is committed to continually improving. Awarded through application to the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).
EXCEEDING NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	Service goes beyond NQS requirements in at least four of the seven areas, with at least two of these being Quality Areas 1, 5, 6, or 7.
MEETING NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	Service provides quality education and care in all seven quality areas.
WORKING TOWARDS NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	Service provides a safe program, but there are one or more areas identified for improvement. This means that the service does not meet one or more elements or relevant regulations for the standard.
SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED	Service does not meet one of the seven quality areas or a section of the legislation in a way that the regulatory authority considers there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children. The regulatory authority will take immediate action.

You can see how your service is rated on the [ACECQA](#) website and on the [Starting Blocks](#) website. The quality ratings must also be displayed at the service. You can also ask to see your service's QIP, which identifies areas for improvement and includes a statement of philosophy for the service.

THE EARLY YEARS FRAMEWORK

Under the National Law and Regulations, services must base their educational program on the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). This should focus on addressing the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, while taking into account individual differences.

The EYLF describes principles and practices, as well as the outcomes that children should be achieving, to help educators develop quality programs. SNAICC has developed a series of fact sheets which help bring these to life. These are found on the [Early Childhood Resource Hub](#).

It promotes five learning outcomes for children:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

It recognises that children are all very different and learn in different ways. It supports educators and staff to respond to each child's individual needs and support their development and wellbeing through play-based learning activities. It supports educators to see children as capable and independent.



HOW THE NQF CONNECTS TO YOUR SERVICE PRACTICE

The NQF assists you to improve in your practice across all areas to support better outcomes for children you work with. Critical reflection or 'deadly ideas' is an important tool to help you to do this; to think about what you do well and what you could strengthen in your work with children at the service. Critical reflection just means regularly asking questions of yourself and your actions to better understand why things happened in a certain way and how this might inform future

planning and actions. It is central to making changes and improvements to support children's learning and outcomes and is applied across all quality areas.

Working through the planning cycle and your service Quality Improvement Plan provide great opportunities to think about how you are applying each of the quality areas.

What do you do in your service to make sure that you are applying the NQF in the best ways that you can?

There are some external factsheets that have been developed with Aboriginal children in mind. These are the [Promoting, exploring and sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures factsheets](#) and the [Introduction to EYLF Fact Sheets](#).



RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATORS

Educators and staff are responsible for supporting the development and wellbeing of children attending their service through their practise and interactions with children. They also have a legal responsibility to ensure their actions do not contravene the National Law and Regulations.

Some common offences are included in the list below.

- Inappropriate discipline (s166);
- Destroying or damaging notices or documents (s209);
- False or misleading information about prohibition notice (s188A);
- Obstructing or failing to assist an authorised officer (s207, 208);
- Hinder or obstruct regulatory authority (s218);
- Fail to comply with notice or requirement to provide information, documents and evidence (s217); and
- Impersonating an authorised officer (s210).

MORE INFORMATION

The ACECQA has developed [The Guide to the National Quality Framework](#) to assist understanding of all elements of the NQF. As an educator, this is your central resource on providing education and care for children. In particular, the chapter on the NQS:

- includes questions to help you think about your practice across each quality area;
- indicates what assessors may be looking to observe, to discuss with educators and staff, and the documents that they may like to see; and
- provides guidance on what is required for exceeding the NQS under each standard.

The [National Law and Regulations](#) has more information.

Links to other relevant resources are available in Deadly Resources for Quality Services.

