

**MAINTAIN THE RATIOS  
CAMPAIGN**

# Quality improvements for Australia must not decrease quality in NSW.

**COMMUNITY  
CHILD CARE  
CO-OPERATIVE**  
LTD. (NSW)



## Improvements in ratios must be upheld!

Community Child Care Co-operative has concerns about two changes that will affect NSW children's services from 2012 under the National Quality Framework. We believe they undermine the improvements to ratios contained in the Framework for children in NSW.

We ask for your support in addressing these two measures contained in the framework:

1. Under 18 year olds being counted as primary contact staff; and
2. Calculation of ratios in mixed age groups.

### Children caring for children.

As part of the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* that every Government in Australia has signed, childcare staff between 16 and 18 are now counted as "educators" and may be counted in the educator to child ratios.

Under the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004, to which Children's Services are currently subject:

*"A licensee of a centre based or mobile children's service must not employ a person as a member of the primary contact staff of the service unless the person is at least 18 years of age."*

The National Quality Standard, however says:  
"Educators under the age of 18:

- *may be counted in the educator to child ratios*
- *are not permitted to work alone in a service*
- *must be supervised by an adult with a Diploma qualification or above (or actively engaged and working towards the qualification)."*

**No person under the age of 18 should be considered as an 'educator' under the National Quality Framework. We must have our current requirements grandfathered. This would mean that services can't count staff under the age of 18 when calculating ratios.**

### Mixed age group ratios in the NQF undermine ratio improvements.

Also part of the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* that every Government in Australia has signed, is a "Ready Reckoner" for calculating the ratios for **mixed age groups**.

Under the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004, to which Children's Services are currently subject:

*"If a centre based or mobile children's service is being provided to a group of children who are not all in the same age bracket, the licensee of the service must ensure that the ratio of primary contact staff to children in the group is the ratio specified in subclause (1) for the age bracket in which the youngest child in the group belongs".*

In other words, if you have a mixed age group, including babies, you have to staff to the lowest existing ratio, which is currently 1:5, changing to 1:4 in January next year. The National Quality Standard, however says:

*For "Mixed age groups" the educator to child ratio should be calculated using a "Proportional formula based on the above ratios".*

# MAINTAIN THE RATIOS CAMPAIGN

To assist in this calculation a ready reckoner has been provided in the National Quality Standard. We have reproduced this below.

## Ready Reckoner

Age of child	Ratio under National Standard (proposed)	Number of children in the group	Proportion of educator required (based on ratio)
Birth–24 months	1 to 4	1 child	25%
		2	50%
		3	75%
		4	100%
25–35 months	1 to 5	1 child	20%
		2	40%
		3	60%
		4	80%
		5	100%
36 months–school age	1 to 11	1 child	9%
		2	18%
		3	27%
		4	36%
		5	45%
		6	55%
		7	64%
		8	73%
		9	82%
		10	91%
11	100%		

Using this reckoner, a service calculates a percentage of an educator required for the number of a children in a group, on the basis of the ratio required for the ages of each child in that group.

For example one staff member could be caring for 8 children, 1 baby, 1 toddler plus 6 preschoolers or they could be caring for 7 children, 2 babies and 5 preschoolers.

This is clearly not the 1:4 ratio for babies we thought we had achieved!

Why does this exist and how did this manage to go through? **It is not in the best interest of quality care!**

Somehow, in the negotiations between the states, it was agreed that rather than basing ratios for mixed age groups on the age of the youngest child, it would be done using the proportional formula which allocates a percentage of an educator to the children in the group.

It is unclear whether the NSW Government:

- failed to note this element which clearly undermines the NSW Government's intent in implementing a 1:4 ratio in NSW; or

- tried and failed to have the better NSW standard grandfathered.

**Ratios must be calculated on the age of the youngest child in the group. Existing NSW requirements for mixed age ratios must be grandfathered.**

Community Child Care Co-operative believes that the age change and the change to calculating mixed age group ratios will lead to a significant drop in the quality of care in NSW children's services.

**These two elements must be reversed and there must be grandfathering of existing NSW provisions to maintain the quality of care in NSW.**

National quality **improvements** that lead to a drop in quality of care for the state with the largest number of children using childcare are not **improvements** at all.

**Community Child Care urges you to join with us in fighting to preserve the quality of care for children in NSW.**

**To send an email to Linda Burney, Kristina Keneally and Kate Ellis requesting these elements of the new National Quality Standards be changed go to:**

**[www.ccccnsw.org.au/nqf](http://www.ccccnsw.org.au/nqf)**

**We must act now to protect the standards that are better in NSW than in the other states.**

**COMMUNITY CHILD CARE CO-OPERATIVE**  
LTD. (NSW)

Building 21, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville NSW 2204

**Phone** (02) 8922 6444 **Fax** (02) 8922 6445

**Web** [www.ccccnsw.org.au](http://www.ccccnsw.org.au)

ABN 81 174 903 921