

## **Submission to Statutory Review of the Teacher Registration Act 2012 (WA)**

The Schools of Early Learning endorse the requirement that Teachers in educational positions in early education and care services are registered as Teachers. We see this as beneficial to the teacher in maintaining their professional standards and standing, beneficial to services in their confidence that a teacher meets the requirements for registration and beneficial to our industry in teachers meeting the same standards as are required for work in school settings.

We note that early education and care services attract three groups of teachers: new graduates who have not secured a position in a school setting, people who can be granted a 'Limited Authority to Teach' and teachers who are ideologically driven to focus on children, childhood and children's learning.

New graduates are, despite their university qualification and practicum experience, challenged by early education and care settings where learning occurs in everything the children are doing: from arrival to departure and through care routines, play-based learning and intentional teaching situations. Our experience is that it takes approximately two years for a teacher to understand the early education and care setting and requirements, leaving them only one more year to demonstrate proficiency in our contexts in order to achieve Full Registration.

***We believe that the period allowed to achieve Full Registration should therefore be extended from three to four years.***

The Limited Authority to Teach category provides flexibility for schools in employing teachers who cannot meet the qualifications requirements for Full Registration. While this flexibility would be beneficial to early education and care services, we are concerned that the descriptors for this category are not always accepted for the position of Early Childhood Teacher by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

***We recommend an alignment of the ACECQA qualifications and TRB Registration requirements to ensure that all teachers working as Early Childhood Teachers in early education and care can be Registered and that it is also made clear to teachers that some categories of Registration will not enable them to work as teachers in early education and care settings e.g. high school teachers.***

We believe children are learning from birth and some services employ teachers with 0-5 qualifications in our babies and toddlers programmes. Teachers at these levels are involved in "the delivery of an educational programme designed to implement a prescribed curriculum and the assessment of student participation in such an educational programme". Educators use the curriculum *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. While it can be argued that educators working with babies and toddlers are "employed or engaged to provide care at a child care centre but not employed or engaged to teach at that centre", the Early Years Learning Framework requires all educators in early education and care settings to facilitate play-based learning and employ intentional teaching strategies. Moreover, in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the concept of 'teaching' is being challenged. Early childhood educators have always focused on early childhood development and learning. Innovative curricula such as Big Picture Education, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and the International Baccalaureate also recognise the need to focus on 'learning' rather than 'teaching'.

***We believe the emphasis on "teaching" should be replaced by "facilitating learning".***

There are challenges for an educator working in an early education and care setting in demonstrating Proficiency in order to achieve Full Registration or in Re-registration. The emphasis in early childhood education and care is on observing children's learning and development and the processes of learning rather than on delivering content and assessing children's assimilation of it. This means that, at best, the competencies require translation and interpretation and the support of skilful mentors and Educational Leaders who are well versed with the competencies to help teachers find evidence to demonstrate them. Someone working as the only teacher in an early education and care service is seriously disadvantaged by the current requirements. This disadvantage is compounded when the educator is working with babies and toddlers.

There are also challenges for experienced educators to maintain Registration as their work moves them into Educational Leadership positions. All early childhood educators work collaboratively with other adults in teams, and these responsibilities increase as educators move into Leadership positions. The AITSL Leadership Framework can be easily contextualised to early childhood education and care settings but again, demonstrating the competencies required for Re-registration requires interpretation.

We note that a great deal of work had been done in the 2003-2004 period to develop a Competency Framework and that Early Childhood Australia and other early childhood associations made modifications to it for use in early childhood settings. This may provide a basis for a tool that is more relevant for educators in early education and care settings.

***We recommend a review of the competencies to ensure they can be achieved by educators in early education and care settings.***

***If the AITSL standards are to be used as the benchmarks for Registration, we believe more work is required to provide exemplars in early education and care settings.***

The unique circumstances of early education and care services require specialist knowledge and understanding. We question whether this expertise is accessible in the current Board membership.

***We recommend that a position on the Board be created for a teacher in an early education and care setting.***