

## National Early Childhood Development Strategy

At its meeting of 2 July 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a national strategy *Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy*. No new funding has been announced but the strategy incorporates the investment in universal access to early childhood education, the national early childhood education and care quality agenda, the Early Years Learning Framework and other previously announced initiatives.

The National Strategy aims to guide future reforms to support children aged under eight years and their families and to provide a comprehensive approach to building an effective early childhood development system in Australia. The Strategy's vision is that 'all children get the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation'. At the meeting COAG agreed that the broad outcomes for early childhood development are that:

- 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 support the workforce participation choices of families.

As part of the Strategy, COAG has also agreed to a national approach to quality and a unified national regulatory system to replace current licensing and quality assurance processes for early childhood education and care. A Regulation Impact Statement for Early Childhood Education and Care Quality Reforms has been released outlining series of proposed regulatory reforms including:

- a national regulatory approach;
- lower staff to child ratios;
- higher staff qualification requirements; and
- a new ratings system regarding service quality.

COAG has established a consultation process on how the quality and regulatory reforms can be implemented. Public information sessions are being held throughout Australia in July (see table for NSW sessions). Two online surveys will be available on the website of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations ([www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)) until 31 August 2009. Written Submissions are being accepted until 31 August 2009.

### Public Information Sessions on the national quality agenda and regulatory reforms

Location	Date	Time	Venue
Newcastle	Monday 27 July	1.30pm – 4.00pm	TBA
Orange	Wednesday 29 July	9.30am – 12.00pm	TBA
Sydney CBD	Wednesday 29 July	6.00pm – 8.30pm	TBA
Parramatta	Thursday 30 July	10.00am – 12.30pm	TBA

Further information is available at [www.coag.gov.au](http://www.coag.gov.au) and [www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Pages/EarlyChildhoodReforms.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Pages/EarlyChildhoodReforms.aspx)