

**EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION COUNCIL NSW/ACT
SUBMISSION
NATIONAL REVIEW OF TEACHER REGISTRATION**

The Early Childhood Teacher Education Council (ECTEC) NSW/ACT welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *National Review of Teacher Registration*. The Council comprises leaders in early childhood teacher education degree programs in the higher education sector in New South Wales and the ACT. Members are from all 13 higher education institutions that offer early childhood initial teacher education programs in these two jurisdictions (see p. 6 of this submission for a full list of members and their respective institutions). Established in 2010, members meet to discuss current issues related to the delivery of pre-service and post-initial early childhood teacher education, and to advocate and inform national policy on key issues relating to early childhood education and the early childhood workforce.

Our submission focuses primarily on *Discussion Area 2: Should early childhood teachers be part of a national approach to teacher registration?*

Submission summary

The Early Childhood Teacher Education Council (ECTEC) NSW/ACT supports in principle, the national expansion of teacher registration to include early childhood teachers working in prior-to-school contexts. Such an approach has potential to support teacher quality and promote the status of the profession. To achieve its intended outcomes, the full inclusion of early childhood teachers nationally needs to be undertaken with a genuine respect and upholding of the uniqueness of early childhood education as a discipline in its own right. To this end further authentic consultation with the early childhood education sector is required.

Teacher Standards require revision to more fully reflect the expertise, roles and responsibilities of early childhood teachers working across early education contexts (i.e., prior-to-school and the early years of school). How ensuing Standards are to be utilised for assessment in initial early childhood teacher education programs needs to be considered. Conversely, there is potential for revised Standards to be used to inform program quality assurance.

Consistent with a national approach to teacher registration we support the extension of LANTITE testing to graduates of Birth-5 programs but call for this testing to be administered by statutory authorities such as NESA (NSW) and the TQI (ACT). Recognition of early childhood specialisations in Birth-12 programs is also required.

Challenges specific to the prior-to-school sector, such as limited supervision and mentoring of graduate teachers, and inequitable access to quality professional development, also require attention and resourcing if the aims of national teacher registration are to be met.

1. Scope of the national review – Early childhood teachers

‘Early childhood’ is understood internationally as the period from birth to eight years of age. Consistent with this definition, we use the term ‘early childhood teachers’ in this submission to refer to university qualified teachers working with children from birth to eight years. This may be in a prior-to-school service (with children birth to five years) or school (with children five – eight years).

National teacher registration needs to be underpinned by a commitment to an equitable and inclusive approach to the registration of qualified teachers, working with approved (accredited) curricula in approved education settings, regardless of the age of children or students. This includes prior-to-school and school settings.

Currently in NSW all university qualified teachers are required to be registered with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). However, and as we discuss below, there are significant inequities for early childhood teachers employed in the prior-to-school sector. In the ACT, degree qualified early childhood teachers working outside the primary school system are unable to register with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI), creating an inequity with teachers employed by schools – including early childhood teachers – who are required to be registered.

2. The ECTEC (NSW/ACT) supports in principle, a national approach to the registration of early childhood teachers practicing in approved ECE services and schools.

As noted in the Consultation paper, high quality early childhood education and early childhood teachers positively impact children’s wellbeing and development outcomes in the short and longer term. Teacher registration has the potential to support and promote a high quality teacher workforce, and we therefore in principle, support nationally consistent registration for early childhood teachers. A national approach to teacher registration also has the potential to: (i) raise the professional status of early childhood teachers within the education sector and more broadly in the general community; and (ii) allow early childhood teachers to seamlessly move across jurisdictions and between education settings (e.g., long day care, preschool and school).

As the Consultation Paper for this Review notes, however, when national agreement on the Framework for Teacher Registration was reached in 2011, early childhood teachers “were not explicitly considered” (p. 5). Attention now needs to be paid to registration requirements and processes to ensure that the system recognises and supports early childhood education as a discipline in its own right. It is imperative that early childhood teachers are not made to fit a system that was designed specifically for primary and high school teachers. A national system of teacher registration needs to support the high quality and professional development of early childhood teachers in authentic ways. Without thoughtful and specific attention to these concerns, there is the risk that teacher registration will pose a regulatory burden that is of limited benefit to early childhood teachers and the children and families they work with.

Scope for early childhood teachers, directors, providers, academics and other stakeholders to inform this review process has been limited. We therefore call for more rigorous consultation with the early childhood sector to follow this review.

3. Registration requirements and processes we believe need to be addressed are:

(i) Revised Australian Professional Teaching Standards

The Australian Professional Teaching Standards were developed for teachers working in schools and do not adequately cover the breadth or depth of professional practice of early childhood teachers working in prior-to-school settings. Early childhood teachers refer to the National Quality Standards (as per the National Quality Framework overseen by ACECQA) and not the Teacher Standards to guide their professional practice and development. Teaching Standards that are more aligned to the National Quality Standards would better reflect the professional roles and responsibilities of early childhood teachers working in prior-to-school settings and the early years of primary school. That said, we oppose any move to create a dual system of teacher registration, based on a separate set of standards for teachers in schools and another for teachers in prior-to-school services. We welcome the opportunity to comment further on a revised and more inclusive APST in the forthcoming review of the Teacher Standards.

(ii) Availability and equitable access to supervision and mentoring, and quality professional development

For teacher registration to achieve its intended aims, graduate early childhood teachers need to be supported in their transition from provisional to full (proficient) registration. The demands of the role, ongoing changes in regulatory requirements,

and new approaches to early childhood pedagogy also require that all teachers be supported in their professional development. This support of early childhood teachers in the context of teacher registration needs to be two-pronged: supervision and mentoring, and quality professional development. Professional development should be confined to those opportunities that focus on pedagogical practices, curriculum development, engagement with families and communities, and management and leadership, and exclude technical training such as updated first aid qualifications or regulatory compliance related tasks. We would also like to see a more aspirational approach taken, with teachers required and supported to participate in practitioner inquiry research that generates knowledge and informs practice.

Currently, significant barriers prohibit equitable access to such support for early childhood teachers in NSW and the ACT. For example,

- Early childhood teachers working in government preschools (i.e., all preschools in the ACT; approximately 100 in NSW) and schools (i.e., with children in the K-2 years) have access to onsite supervision and mentoring, while other early childhood teachers working in non-government preschools or long day care typically do not.
- Early childhood teachers employed in rural/regional areas, in stand-alone services, and in services where they are the only teacher employed, have less access than early childhood teachers working for large providers of early childhood services and teachers working in schools to support/mentoring and professional development.

4. Considerations for initial early childhood teacher preparation programs

It is critical that the development of national teacher registration for early childhood teachers considers implications for initial early childhood teacher preparation programs in terms of quality, duration and assessment. If graduate early childhood teachers are to be provisionally registered, then there will be a need for quality assurance that ensures programs comprehensively provide preservice teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills consistent with (revised) Teacher Standards. Since the introduction of teacher registration, higher education institutions in NSW and the ACT have experienced undue pressure to shift their provisioning away from birth – 8 programs to birth - 5 and birth - 12 programs. The breadth of curriculum to be covered in a four-year birth – 12 program, coupled with primary specialisations, seriously compromises the attention able to be devoted to the early years, both in unit content and days allocated for professional experience in prior-to-school settings.

Consistency in approaches to the assessment of (revised) Teacher Standards in teacher preparation programs, for example, in professional experience placements, also needs to be considered. As a matter of equity we see the value of including a Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) in all early childhood education courses (currently they are a requirement of Birth – 12 and Birth – 8 but not Birth – 5 courses). Current TPA requirements, however, are school-centric and require revision (e.g., allow scope for practitioner-inquiry) if they are to support and appropriately assess the practice of an early childhood teacher intending to work in a prior-school setting.

We do not support “earlier engagement with the teacher registration process, for example, through a form of pre-registration during study” (Consultation Paper, p. 12). Teacher registration should be confined to graduate teachers.

5. Eligibility for teacher registration

Regardless of the education setting, teachers should meet the same preservice requirements for the purposes of teacher registration. It is crucial that early childhood teachers working in prior-to-school education settings undergo teacher registration on equal standing with primary and high school teachers. In NSW and the ACT, this requires:

- the introduction of an early childhood specialisation for Birth-12 teacher education programs; and
- successful completion of LANTITE tests for all early childhood education teaching graduates, that is, graduates of Birth-5 programs as well as Birth-8 and Birth-12 programs. LANTITE, however, ought to be pre-registration requirement, not a requirement for completion of a university teaching qualification. As such, responsibility for LANTITE should lie with statutory authorities such as NESAs and the TQI. The conflation of LANTITE with university graduation requirements is fraught.

6. ECTEC (NSW/ACT) contact

Dr Marianne Fenech (Chair)
marianne.fenech@sydney.edu.au

NSW/ACT ECTEC Members 2018

University	Representative
Australian Catholic University	Dr Sarah Heinrich Joerdens
Avondale College of Higher Education	Sandra Ludlow
Charles Sturt University	Associate Professor Sandie Wong
Macquarie University	Dr Fay Hadley
Southern Cross University	Dr Wendy Boyd
TAFE NSW	Michelle Newell
University of Canberra	Dr Kym Simoncini
University of New England	Dr Sue Elliott
University of Newcastle	Dr I-Fang Lee
University of Notre Dame	Dr Cynthia à Beckett / Dr Linda Bellen
University of Sydney	Dr Marianne Fenech
University of Wollongong	Dr Jane Warren
Western Sydney University	Dr Kumara Ward