

Should nationally consistent approaches to the registration of early childhood education teachers be considered?

Goulburn Region Preschool Association, Early Years Manager for 15 Early Childhood Services within the Goulburn Valley in Victoria, support the establishment of a national registration of early childhood education teachers. A nationally consistent approach to registration would provide greater opportunity for early childhood teachers who live on or near the border of state jurisdictions to move from one service to another whilst maintaining a valid teaching registration. It would reduce the need for holding more than one registration if working across jurisdictions as their qualifications and experience would be recognised nationally.

How could a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration support and improve the quality of early childhood teaching in school and non-school settings?

A consistent approach would ensure that nationally recognised standards are met by all early childhood education teachers. This consistent approach would support the recognition of the importance of the role of early childhood education teachers in both community and school based settings. Early childhood education teachers play a vital role in supporting children's development and learning in the years before school. This work is currently not well understood by school teachers, so by creating a national registration, the work that early childhood education teachers do can be better understood and valued more highly. This would ultimately assist school teachers and early childhood education teachers in working more collaboratively in supporting positive transitions to school, and early childhood education teachers expertise of child development would be recognised.

How could the Teacher Standards be applied for early childhood teacher registration?

Since 2015 when early childhood education teachers were required to become registered in Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching adapted the professional standards for teachers to better reflect the settings in which teachers may be teaching, and the learners they are engaging with. The Department of Education provided the opportunity for experienced early childhood education teachers to complete early childhood teacher mentor training. The aim of this being to support provisionally registered teachers to become fully registered. Whilst the process is a valuable one and is supportive to building best practice amongst new teachers, the application of the process has been difficult. With very few registered VIT trained mentors and no compensation for time or travel involved in mentoring provisionally registered teachers, the system is not sustainable, particularly in remote and regional areas. If the same supports could be put in place for early childhood education teachers as are put in place for school teachers who are provisionally registered, the process could be so much more effective.

In addition to the current Teacher Standards, there are a number of valuable documents that could be incorporated into the standards to better reflect the work of early childhood education teachers. The Practice Principles of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, the Early Childhood Australia Code of Conduct, and the principles of Belonging, Being, Becoming from the Early Years Learning Framework of Australia.