

# NQF Newsletter

March 2014

Centre Support

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## Changes to the NQF?

What could change if the Government reforms the NQF? What's your opinion?

Privacy Laws  
Are you compliant?

Events and training in your area

## Feeling Exhausted?

Be one of the first to get the NEW Cert III or Diploma ECEC qualifications!

**STEM:** 'science, technology, engineering and mathematics' with Little Scientists

Babies and belonging

Learning walls & family input

TEC14:  
The Educators Conference

NEW: 'Amy's Monthly Maths Musings'



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# Changes to the NQF system?

## What could change if the Government reforms the NQF?

On March 11 2014, the federal Assistant Minister for Education Sussan Ley spoke to 720 ABC Perth. Here's some of what the Minister had to say:

"The **assessment is very complicated**. I raised this at a meeting with state and Territory ministers and they all agreed, you know, we need to get a hurry on. They're assessing against about fifty-eight quality indicators. It's far too much. It's about a fifty page report in some states – and I'm sure WA is about that size – and it's **taking a long time for the assessment process** to happen, the report to be written, feedback, et cetera, to be sought and so on and so on.

[You] might have to measure some things but you don't need to get carried away with too much red tape, **documenting up to fifty pages, assessing against over fifty quality areas**.

I'm going to suggest that we **narrow it down**, that we bring it down to seven key indicators and we get on with the job and we give people the confidence – parents and educators the confidence – that the system's working" ([full transcript](#)).

## Areas of concern

What is the wildest claim you've heard from an assessor? Centre Support works with over 3558 services around Australia, so we've heard a few interesting claims made by assessors, including:

- You need to use a specific type of laundry powder.
- Children shouldn't listen to iPods because the music wasn't appropriate.
- You should donate to one childrens hospital over another due to the preference of the assessor.
- You can't use a microwave to heat baby bottles so instead it's okay to use a kettle in a storeroom to boil water, pour into a pot and heat the milk that way instead.

Do the assessors really know the NQS? Is the NQS being implemented consistently? These are two crucial questions in the lead up the 2014 review of the NQF.

We recommend that services write to your local state/territory parliamentary member to outline any issues you're having with the state/territory regulatory authority (e.g. education department). You might also like to use Centre Support's [Step by Step Guide to Assessment and Rating](#) designed to help you navigate your way through the process and tips on how to have decisions of the assessor reviewed.

What's your opinion? Have you had a similar experience? Email us your feedback at [admin@centresupport.com.au](mailto:admin@centresupport.com.au).

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# Are you feeling exhausted?

## NQS: two years in

"Well it's been just over 2 long years since the introduction of the NQF, 18 months since the commencement of assessment and rating of the NQS and over 4 years since the EYLF was introduced.

How have we all coped with the change? It's been exhausting for most of us! Our effort has been HUGE.

## When will you be assessed?

We wait for our turn for assessment and rating... Mmm... when will our turn be? Maybe 'the letter' will arrive today, tomorrow or next year? Perhaps we have been assessed and were rated Working Towards almost 2 years ago, with no sign of when the next assessment will be?

It's a guessing game... that's for sure! So many services have been assessed, but over two-thirds haven't. When will it be our turn? I'd like to plan a holiday but I would like to be there for assessment; such an unpredictable timeline that remains 'top secret'. But why?

Most cannot wait until it's their turn to go through the process and 'have it over and done with'. The fear of Working Towards turns our stomach in knots. The media portrays us as having failed based on the opinion of the assessor.

I am proud of my service. My families and children are very happy. My educators are amazing. My waiting list is huge and we have worked hard. Very hard in fact. How dare they? How annoying after how much we have improved!



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## Who is this person rating us?

How do we know their qualification or the knowledge that the assessor may know or understand? Does he/she understand our contemporary practices? After all we are meeting the elements in ways that are not historical, based on new theories and research. Will the assessor understand?

Does anyone realise the effort we have put into professional development, up-skilling ourselves with Certificate IIIs, Diploma and 3 or 4 years early childhood university qualifications costing us hundreds/thousands dollars of hours of study and practicum at the expense of our family time.

We continue to work hard week by week as a team to assess and reflect on our practices using research and new theoretical discussion on all elements not just the ones that 'need fixing' because a disaster has occurred.

Oh dear... how many discussions do I hear or read about the QIP created by a discussion with educators based on things that need to be fixed or worse still the QIP created on a 'needs basis' by the director in the office.

So, after 2 years of working very hard implementing the EYLF, reflecting and assessing the NQS element by element, celebrating our strengths, identifying our areas of improvement and developing an ongoing improvement plan step by step.... I wonder if the 'powers that be' are truly respecting and valuing the distance we have travelled to improve in ECEC. We should all be commended on the effort so far.

So, just incase you feel underappreciated, undervalued or 'under rated' it is time to celebrate. Congratulations for your continuing passion, dedication and effort!"

Article written by [Valerie Tillett](#), Nominated Supervisor and Centre Support EC Consultant.

## TEC14 QLD



### THE EDUCATORS CONFERENCE



The simple truth about the NQF "Bridging the Gap between theory and practice"  
Save the Date for this innovative, practical and fun Conference by Centre Support

### Register your expression of interest

Registration will commence in late March 2014 with preference to those who have [registered interest early](#). Full pricing options will be available when registration opens. For more info please [click here](#) or [contact us](#).



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# Little Scientists

## Background

[Little Scientists](#) is a not-for-profit initiative designed to facilitate children's curiosity for science, mathematics and technology through age-appropriate, fun and playful experiments in their early years.



Its overarching goal is to improve access to high quality education for all children from an early age and to ensure the competitiveness of the country's workforce in the future, especially in scientific, engineering and technical occupations. The initiative was launched in Germany by a number of companies (including Siemens, McKinsey and SAP's Dietmar-Hopp-Foundation) in 2006 and is co-funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

It has become the largest early education initiative in Germany, with more than 1 Million children from 27,000 (out of approximately 40,000) education and care services participating in the program. This would not have been possible without the great support of more than 200 local network partners throughout the country. The program has been introduced to other countries, including Austria, the Netherlands and Thailand (where the Thai Royal Princess is the patron).

'Little Scientists' has started operations in Australia at the beginning of 2013, with [FROEBEL Australia](#), a not-for-profit provider of bilingual children's services, selected as the exclusive partner to establish the initiative nationally. A pilot phase in 2013 brought together 64 teachers and educators from 40 different education and care services in NSW to the first Australian 'Little Scientists' workshops.

## Partnership with Centre Support

Local network partners in ACT, NSW and WA have attended Little Scientists Trainer Workshops in February 2014 and are preparing for the roll-out in their regions. [Centre Support](#) is currently establishing two local networks, one in Newcastle and one in Perth and is "proud to partner with Little Scientists to continue supporting services with innovative curriculum development tools to bring crucial scientific learning to the forefront of early childhood education and care in Australia [[Matthew Stapleton](#), Owner and Director Centre Support]".

## How it works

The hands on, one-day 'Little Scientists' workshops are an important element of the program and cover topics such as 'Water', 'Air', 'Carbon Dioxide', 'Magnets' and 'Mathematics' as a platform to train teachers and educators. Once completed, teachers can then implement the activities with the children in their care.

All workshops are built around using existing, everyday materials, to make experimenting and exploring at the education and care services as accessible as possible.

Another important element is the 'Little Scientists' Research Cycle. This approach to exploration will remain relevant from preschool through to university age and beyond. The Research Cycle entails six steps:

1. Ask questions about nature
2. Collect ideas and hypotheses with the children
3. Try things out and conduct experiments with the children
4. Observe and describe
5. Document results
6. Discuss results with the children

## Links to NQF and EYLF

The 'Little Scientists' program not only encourages scientific exploration, but also aids in the development of fine motor skills, self-confidence, social skills and language skills, it is an excellent tool for teachers and educators to meet a range of requirements of the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

Furthermore, the reservations teachers and educators may have towards scientific, technological and mathematical topics can be reduced and their interest in these topics sparked.

Offering a comprehensive and sustained professional development opportunity for teachers and educators in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related areas, the program develops teachers and educators who will help nurture the next generations of STEM graduates and develop STEM literacy in young people who move on to do other things.

## Getting involved

If you would like to participate in the program and support the future of science, technology and mathematics in Australia by helping to make 'Little Scientists' available for all children in Australia, please contact the Little Scientists Project Manager Christine Schneyer via email [christine@littlescientists.org.au](mailto:christine@littlescientists.org.au) or by calling 02 8080 0065.

## Hear From 'Little Scientists' Trainers who attended Water Trainer Workshop

"Attending the Little Scientists Water workshop as someone who in the past had found science a mystery was an enlightening experience.

The workshop demonstrated how easily science can be integrated into the childcare curriculum with simple fun activities and experiments. It was great to see that no special equipment was used. Recycled and common household materials were all that was needed.

In the training we put ourselves into the shoes of the child. I very quickly realised that children do not have preconceptions of science as scary.

So after initial hesitation everyone joined in and experienced the pure fun of experimentation. One of the best things for educators is that 'Little Scientists' fits perfectly to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

EYLF learning outcomes are achieved by the children through participation. Co-construction of learning, the pedagogy behind the water workshop is also one of the theories relating to EYLF practice.

The 'Little Scientists' program also includes training for educators in documenting the Research Cycle, a great way to also improve EYLF documentation skills.

'Little Scientists' Trainer, [Kay Ralph](#) (left: below)  
Centre Support's Perth Early Childhood Consultant



"I was privileged to attend a 'Little Scientists' training session on "Water" with my colleague Kay Ralph. What a fantastic initiative to support educators to promote learning concepts about science.

I found the session very inspiring. I was able to take on the perspective of being the learner and relating the science concepts to everyday experiences. The content of the course provided me with new insights and confidence to integrate science into an early childhood curriculum.

The Little Scientists initiative integrates well with the Early Years Learning Framework and My Time Our Place documents. This helps us in promoting educator skills and knowledge and better outcomes for our children and the community. I would highly recommend this training to all educational leaders and educators. As a new 'Little Scientists' trainer I look forward to inspiring others and promoting science concepts throughout our profession."

'Little Scientists' Trainer, [Valerie Tillett](#) (right: above)  
Centre Support's Central Coast/Newcastle/Hunter Early Childhood Consultant

