



QCEC Early Childhood Education Position Statement

1. Introduction

Early childhood education occupies an increasingly significant position in Australia evidenced by substantial research and scholarship (Shaughnessy & Kleyn, 2012) into the impact of the early years on the quality of children's health, learning and wellbeing. Quality education and care early in life leads to better health, education and employment outcomes later in life.

The National Quality Framework, the result of an agreement with all Australian governments, recognises the early years as being critical for establishing self-worth, resilience, healthy growth and capacity to learn. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians commits all levels of government to improving the quality of early childhood education to ensure all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

The Catholic Church supports parents and young families in the early faith formation of children and acknowledges the importance of quality early childhood education.

Each person's formation takes place within a process that is implemented over many years by several educators, starting with parents. Educating is ... an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them. Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation and of man (sic) who always retains the Creator's hallmark.

Congregation for Catholic Education (2014)

2. Definition

Early childhood education is inclusive of all children from birth to eight years.

3. Rationale

- Families are recognised as the first and primary educators of their children.
- Catholic school authorities, Catholic delegated agencies, schools and kindergartens have a vital role in the provision of early childhood education and faith formation.
- Catholic education settings, open to all children, are nurturing and stimulating environments where educators give witness to Catholic beliefs, values and attitudes.

4. Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission advocates that Catholic school authorities and Catholic delegated authorities involved in the provision of early childhood education services commit to establishing policies, practices and procedures that value:

- the uniqueness and dignity of each child
- families as children's first and most influential educators
- the importance of actively engaging families in their children's education and faith formation
- the diversity and participation of children, their families and the communities to which they belong
- young children's competence, confidence, agency and voice as successful learners
- learning environments that engage young children
- children's spiritual development as integrated with and essential to, their wholeness and wellbeing
- current research on early childhood education and learning,
- all elements of the National Quality Framework and state guidelines, policies and processes as appropriate.

5. Implications

Catholic school authorities, delegated Catholic agencies, schools and kindergartens in Queensland will give consideration to:

- building strong partnerships with families
- creating welcoming environments where all children and families are respected for their diverse history, culture, language and tradition, including religious traditions
- developing collaborative partnerships with those who care for young children within parish and local communities, government and non-government agencies
- valuing and nurturing the spiritual aspects of children's lives and learning
- enhancing the Catholic culture in early childhood education settings
- providing opportunities for children to engage in purposeful, meaningful and play-based learning experiences that enhance, extend and respond to learning
- advocating for early childhood education and its importance in the continuity of learning for young people and their families
- assessing capacity to provide viable early childhood education services.

References

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Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. Melbourne: Curriculum Corporation

Shaughnessy, M.F., & Kley, K.(Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of early childhood education*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

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