

# What is the NQF?

The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a **national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement** for **early childhood education** and care and **outside school hours care** services across **Australia**.

## The NQF

The NQF aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in children's education and care services through a number of components. Select the pins below to find out more.

[https://elearning.acecqa.gov.au/elearning/WFI/M2/assets/m2zVXJhlaHW60cMv\\_BB1cvJsIhy9iRdPA.png](https://elearning.acecqa.gov.au/elearning/WFI/M2/assets/m2zVXJhlaHW60cMv_BB1cvJsIhy9iRdPA.png)

## Why the NQF?

The National Quality Framework (NQF) was the result of an agreement between all Australian governments to work together to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children.

## Prior to NQF 2012:

- regulation of the sector was inconsistent with gaps. Some states and territories had different regulations, and there were different quality systems for service types
- no common early years curriculum
- some parts of the sector focused more on care than education
- no common standards to measure the quality of a service.

## NQF was implemented to :

- set the same quality standards for all service types, across Australia
- focus on both education AND care.

## **NQF objectives**

The successful delivery of the NQF is guided by six objectives and six guiding principles. This ensures that the functions of the NQF are delivered consistently and effectively.

The objectives of the NQF are to:

- ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services
- improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children attending education and care services
- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care services

- establish a system of national integration and shared responsibility between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth in the administration of the National Quality Framework
- improve public knowledge, and access to information about the quality of education and care services
- reduce the regulatory and administrative burden for education and care services by enabling information to be shared between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth.

## **Main objectives that apply to you as an educator:**

### **Ensure health , safety and wellbeing**

The NQF ensures children's health, safety and wellbeing through the Education and Care Services National Law, Regulation and National Quality Standard (NQS).

Health, safety and wellbeing includes, but is not limited to, hygiene, nutrition, safe food practices, incident and injury management, sleep and rest, and risk assessments.

### **Improved Educational Outcomes**

The NQF provides the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings experience quality teaching and learning.

This will look different in various service types however it is recognised that a quality educational program views children as capable and competent learners who have agency and learn best through a play-based approach.

### **Promote continuous improvement**

To support continuous improvement educators and services are encouraged to engage in ongoing self-assessment against the NQS. This will drive continuous improvement and is essential to providing quality outcomes for children.

## **NQF guiding principles**

The National Quality Framework is supported by a set of guiding principles. It is important you understand the guiding principles as they are part of the National Law.

Educators who embed the principles in their work are supporting children to experience high quality education and care.

### **Principle 1**

#### **The rights and best interests of the child are paramount**

The NQF aligns with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

This treaty ensures that children have the right to be heard, to be free from violence, abuse and neglect, to have the opportunity to thrive, to be engaged in civics and citizenship and opportunities to take action and be accountable.

## **Principle 2**

### **Children are successful, competent and capable learners**

The NQF views children as capable learners who actively construct their own understandings and contribute to others' learning.

When children have opportunities to make choices, to attempt tasks, to make decisions for themselves, and to take on increasing responsibilities, they are able to recognise their influence and significance in the world and develop skills in assessing risk.

## **Principle 3**

### **Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework**

The NQF recognises all children's capacity and right to succeed regardless of diverse circumstances, cultural background and abilities.

Inclusion is an approach where diversity is celebrated. It requires educators to hold high expectations for the learning and development of all children, recognising that every child has an individual learning path and will progress in different and equally meaningful ways.

## **Principle 4**

### **Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued**

The NQF is underpinned by a commitment to 'Closing the Gap' and acknowledges Australia is a nation of great diversity, and an ancient land that has been cared for by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians for many thousands of years.

Early childhood education and care services have a shared responsibility to contribute to building a better society and sustainable environment and to support children, families, colleagues, and the local community to understand, respect and value diversity.

## **Principle 5**

### **The role of parents and families is respected and supported**

The NQF acknowledges a view of children in the context of their family and community, and that families are children's first and most influential teachers.

Education and care services can make efforts to seek out partnerships and develop secure respectful relationships to ensure that families are informed, consulted and supported about their child's learning and development.

## **Principle 6**

### **Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services**

In the NQF there is a strong commitment to continuous improvement and striving for best practice underpins this commitment.

While the NQF does not explain what best practice looks like, it encourages education and care services to use a range of current research, theory and understandings about early and middle childhood to guide their actions and relationships with children.

## **Legislative framework**

The National Quality Framework (NQF) operates under an applied law system, comprising of the [Education and Care Services National Law](#) and the [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#).

### **Education and Care Service's National Law**

The [National Law](#) sets the minimum requirements for children's education and care across Australia.

### **Education and Care Services National Regulations**

The [National Regulations](#) describe in detail how the provisions of the law are applied.

The legislative framework forms the foundation and provides the structure of the NQF.

## **National Quality Standard**

The [National Quality Standard](#) is established by the National Regulations and is a significant part of the National Quality Framework. It sets the national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. Watch the video below for information about the evolution of the NQS.

### **Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and practice**

Educational program and practice of educators are child-centred, stimulating and maximise opportunities for enhancing and extending each child's learning and development.

### **Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety**

Children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that safeguards and promotes their health, safety and wellbeing.

### **Quality Area 3 - Physical environment**

Physical environment is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

### **Quality Area 4 – Staffing arrangements**

Qualified and experienced educators, who develop warm, respectful relationships with children, create predictable environments and encourage children's active engagement in the learning program.

### **Quality Area 5 – Relationships with children**

Relationships with children are responsive, respectful and promote children's sense of security and belonging.

### **Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**

Collaborative relationships with families are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children, and community partnerships based on active communication, consultation and collaboration are essential.

### **Quality Area 7 – Governance and leadership**

Effective leadership and governance of the service contributes to quality environments for children's learning and development. Effective leaders establish shared values for the service and set clear direction for the service's continuous improvement.

### **Approved learning frameworks**

Under the National Law and Regulations, services are required to base their educational program on an approved learning framework. Services will use the [Early Years Learning Framework](#) and/or the [Framework for School Age Care](#).

The approved learning frameworks provide guidance to develop quality programs that support children's learning. They also consider the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child and take into account their individual differences.

### **The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)**

Was developed for use with children aged birth to 5 years old. Educators who work in LDC, Preschools/Kindergartens and FDC will use this framework.

The EYLF is based on the concept of 'Belonging, Being and Becoming' and will support educators to develop quality programs that recognise children's interests and celebrate their strengths.

### **Framework for School Age Care (MTOP)**

Is the framework for school age care. It was developed for use with children of school age that attend OSHC services.

My Time, Our Place (MTOP) supports educators to plan experiences and programs that will support children's leisure and play.