QCEC Early Childhood Education and Care Position Statement

1. Introduction
The quality of children’s early experiences – cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual has a profound impact on children’s future health, development, learning and wellbeing.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 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. Reforms in early childhood education and care acknowledge the opportunity to improve children’s life-chances, especially for children born into disadvantaged families.

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

*Childhood must today be the object of high-priority action on the part of the Church, the family, and government institutions, both because of the possibilities it [childhood] offers and the vulnerability to which it is exposed ... because it is the first stage of life of one who has been born, childhood constitutes a wonderful opportunity for handing on the faith.*

_Children in the Document of Aparecida, 2007_

Education authorities providing early childhood education and care services will be required to comply with national and state government early childhood education and care legislation, regulations and accreditation processes.

2. Definition
Early childhood education and care are inclusive of all children from birth to eight years.

3. Rationale
- Parents and caregivers are recognised as the first and primary educators of their children.
- Catholic education authorities and schools have a vital role in the provision of early childhood education, care services and early faith development.
- Catholic education and care settings are welcoming, nurturing and stimulating environments where educators give witness to Catholic beliefs, values and attitudes.
4. Position Statement
The Queensland Catholic Education Commission advocates that those Catholic education authorities involved in the provision of early childhood and care services commit to establishing policies, practices and procedures that value:

- the uniqueness and dignity of each child
- parents and families as children’s first and most influential educators
- the importance of actively engaging parents/caregivers in their children’s education
- the diversity and participation of children, their families and the communities to which they belong
- young children’s competence and confidence as successful learners
- spiritual experiences appropriate for young children
- developmentally appropriate learning experiences that engage young children in the curriculum
- current research on early childhood development and learning.

5. Implications
Catholic education authorities and schools in Queensland will give consideration to the following:

- building strong partnerships with parents, caregivers and extended family
- developing collaborative partnerships with those who care for young children within parish and local communities, government and non-government agencies
- creating warm and welcoming environments where all children and families are respected for their diverse history, culture, language and tradition
- providing opportunities for children to engage in purposeful, meaningful and negotiated play-based experiences that enhance and respond to children’s development and learning in all domains – cognitive, physical, social, emotional and spiritual
- assessing capacity to provide viable early childhood education and care services after considering matters such as funding sources, site suitability, governance and management models, employment of qualified staff, curriculum implementation and resource provision.

References


