



## Early Childhood Teachers' Association Inc.

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### **Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Violence Prevention Committee**

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#### **Early Childhood Teacher's Association (ECTA) response submission for; Review of Child Protection Reporting Laws for the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector**

To The Secretary,

Firstly, thank you for inviting Early Childhood Teacher's Association (ECTA) to be part of the group discussions and attendance at Stakeholders meetings in regard to the Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Laws for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). We appreciate being able to comment and put forward our key points to this reform.

ECTA advocates for the early years and supports all educators within all services of early childhood. It is through our community we can support educators within the industry to have a voice. Our membership includes students, associations, schools, early learning centres, kindergartens, individuals and educators within the early childhood sector.

To support our input ECTA initiated an online survey to all our members relating directly to the "Review of Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Laws for ECEC". The attached survey results received from our members in relation to the below questions form the basis for consideration and are a direct response to whether Mandatory Reporting should be extended to the ECEC Sector with supporting responses of 83% in agreeance, 7% not in agreeance and 10% unsure.

Our proposal feedback for the submission relating to "Questions for Discussion" – (Chapter 8) have been addressed on behalf of the ECTA via our State Coordinating Committee (SCC) and responses are highlighted below.

**8-1 What considerations should be taken into account in determining whether the mandatory reporting requirements under the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)* should be extended to apply to the ECEC sector?**

- From the survey results ECTA members voiced their opinions with a strong result to have mandatory reform 83% in agreeance, 7% not in agreeance and 10% unsure.
- ECTA would like to see consideration given to ensuring Child Protection Mandatory Laws are implemented across ECEC and all agree this is an important step in providing care to children.
- A focus to ensure there is annual training to support all educators to understand what is required of them to ensure a system has both the support and backing of the Government.
- This therefore requires providing time and allocated training to all educators on their alliance with this new reform.
- To take into account that all government departments are on the same page and have some system that links to streamline the process and to ensure that this reform is not tokenistic.
- Our members within the early childhood sector represent a strong voice in care and education for young children. They play a major role in ECEC with educators involved on a day to day basis with children, families and extended support networks.
- The costs involved to ensure the Mandatory Reporting are absorbed at government level and not to impact on the already embedded costs for services currently.
- Therefore if module based units for educating the ECEC sector were created no payment required by educators directly.

**8-2 If the mandatory reporting requirements under the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)* are extended to apply to the ECEC sector, what is the likely impact:**

**(a) on the ECEC sector; and**

**(b) on the ability of Child Safety to detect and respond appropriately to children in need of protection?**

- ECTA sees that with the Mandatory Reporting being extended to the ECEC it would require some proper planning and implementation of information and education processes to include a hotline to support implementation successfully.
- That training is imperative to the success and education programs around identification of specific cases are reinforced.
- That training and extra costs and financial impact would need to be provided by the government.
- Core modules of training are consistently created and monitored for all educators within the sector to complete and pass, ensuring that these detail step by step instructions and information in support of the requirements.
- That a connection/system is in place for Child Safety to detect and respond in conjunction with all services.
- The need for more staffing would be required to screen and investigate cases.
- All Stakeholders taking ownership and awareness of policy changes and impact to services aligning this new reform.

### **8-3 Should mandatory reporting apply to the ECEC sector?**

Our Association believes that Mandatory Reporting is crucial to support young children in all services and organisations involving the early childhood sector and we vote YES.

**If yes to Question 8-3, which particular types of services should mandatory reporting apply to? For example, should it apply to:**

**(a) an approved education and care service under the Education and Care Services National Law, such as:**

**(i) long day care services;**

**(ii) family day care services;**

**(iii) kindergarten services;**

**(iv) outside school hours care services;**

**(b) a Queensland education and care service under the *Education and Care Services Act 2013* (Qld);**

**(c) a stand-alone service under the *Education and Care Services Act 2013* (Qld);**

**(d) any other services (please specify)?**

- Our consensus suggests all of the above services form a collective group supporting early childhood care and education. They would all need to be included in this mandatory reporting structure.
- So therefore ECTA is in favour of all services requiring Mandatory Reporting to ensure that there are no loop holes within the system especially with the transient families and relocations occurring. For example; children that have been noted previously are monitored and all services have a clear understanding of both current and previous case concerns.
- The need to start at this entry level within ECEC before school age to send a united message that children's welfare concerns are crucial for all stakeholders within the sector.

### **8-4 If yes to Question 8-3, why should mandatory reporting apply to the ECEC sector?**

- ECTA members support that as educators in the industry we have the knowledge of the child, family and currency about the current child protection act. Mandatory Reporting will only consolidate this effectively.
- That ECEC provides extended care for children. The confidence is already built in the industry across all sectors, educators care.
- It connects with our industry directly.
- Children's safety is the utmost importance.
- The same standard provided across the ECEC sector and beyond. Ensuring all educators work together, one process, one goal.
- Concerns are documented and acted upon. That the child and family are provided with assistance before the abuse escalates.
- ECEC educators have a duty of care to report any concern they have regarding the welfare and safety of children.

- ECEC build relationships with children and families within their care.
- Child protection is at the forefront of all educators' minds and children need advocates to provide care and safety, supporting children's voice in the early years.
- The survey resulted in Mandatory Reporting needing to apply to the ECEC sector 83% in agreeance, 7% disagreed and 11% undecided.

**8-5 If yes to Question 8-3, which particular professionals, office holders and workers within the early childhood education and care sector should be required to report?**

**For example, should it apply to:**

- (a) approved providers;**
- (b) supervisors;**
- (c) educators;**
- (d) other staff members;**
- (e) volunteers?**

- ECTA supports all stakeholders listed. An introductory level/process system would benefit all workers.
- However a clearly articulated program of training courses to support workers understanding of their direct position and clarification of their role, in particular to Mandatory Reporting.
- From the survey results 88% responded to all professionals should be required to report.
- The ECTA survey included which other workers should be required to report and it was evident in the results that all services and agencies under the umbrella of care and education of children that are involved with children. These included; carers, nannies, playgroups, crèches, coaches and instructors, occasional care centre, mobile services, grandparents, special education units, and any services relating to in home care.

**8-6 If no to Question 8-3, why should mandatory reporting not apply to the ECEC sector? Please give reasons.**

- With survey results indicating Mandatory Reporting not applying to the ECEC sector there were only 7% of members not in favour.

Other key focal points indicated in the reform documentation ECTA would like to see consideration given include from the reform paper document;

- (2.31) That the importance that extended this line of the law supports children in the future.
- (2.33) Ensuring these connections are made mandatory to ensure a seamless system in the future to protect children and families at all levels.
- (2.36) A review of services policies and procedures will need to reflect the new laws if they are to be in place and all services need to have detailed training to support all educators within their services. This is then a major part of this reform that the support is supplied by the government with the funding and the necessary structure in place to ensure that this mandatory reporting reform has both the stability and the

infrastructure to not only ensure that educators are aware of their role but to engage the wider community as part of the awareness.

- (2.42) - Since the National Laws that have been introduced since 2013 have ensured that educators qualifications require a minimum for staffing requirements for all ECEC services, higher education and educator –to-child ratios it only supports and back up the need to ensure that the Mandatory Law Reform needs to be included as part of their role.
- (2.64) Some follow up regarding the connection between Blue Card holder and Mandatory Laws need to be included.
- (2.66) If the Blue card is capturing the other sectors that are otherwise caring for children or providing education and care then it stands to highlight that many sectors both commercial and government support young children in a diverse range of support. Therefore children are at risk at all times within the care they receive. Mandatory reporting needs to connect all areas across all sectors and all organisations that care for children statewide not only individual groups. All need to be aligned to ACEQA and regulatory bodies require a unique system that can be accessed to both document and report. Failing this, systems that “talk” to one another. This is crucial for the success of this reform and one that needs the structure to support all educators within their field. This industry is time pour in the current operational structures within each service provider.
- (3.11) A system of reporting structure will be required to help support educators to understand what and when to report. This could be created as a computer technology that would be required to be developed. Again time is a major factor so click and choose options to track each individual case (registry). To ensure that children are being monitored effectively.

We respect the voice of early childhood educators within our association that have provided their feedback as part of standing up for what is a crucial role within the industry and all other stakeholders that are involved with young children directly.

Kind Regards

On behalf of State Coordinating Committee for ECTA



Kim Walters  
President Early Childhood Teachers' Association