Working with children with complex needs?
Support is now just a click away.

A new professional development package is being rolled out to support educators working with children with disability, significant development delay and complex social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Funded by the Queensland Government, Early Years Connect is being developed by Early Childhood Australia, in partnership with C&K and Autism Queensland, to support Queensland educators, teachers and leaders to deliver and embed inclusive and transdisciplinary practices in their services.

The package comprises face-to-face sessions, online modules, topical webinars, blogging opportunities with specialist experts and information sheets.

Registrations are now open for face-to-face sessions, with additional professional learning, support and resources coming in early 2016.

For more information visit www.earlyyearsconnect.com.au
Welcome

Welcome to our Spring edition of QKindy and early childhood.

Since the last edition, the Queensland Government has taken important steps to take our world-class education system further and to have a positive impact on the early education and care sector.

I was pleased to join Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk in releasing Advancing education: An action plan for education in Queensland.

A crucial phase of the plan is supporting children’s learning and development in the early years to ensure they are equipped for life and their start to school.

Most Queensland children are enjoying the best preparation for school by participating in a kindy program.

We want to go further to ensure that all children enjoy the benefits of a quality early education.

We are determined to boost participation of vulnerable children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in quality early childhood programs to more than 95 per cent.

To help achieve this target, we have committed $41.8 million over four years to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access early education, health and support services provided by Queensland’s 10 Children and Family Centres.

Making the transition from kindy to school is a huge milestone in every child’s education.

Right now, Queensland state schools are working to ensure they are ready to welcome and support next year’s Prep students and their families.

Several schools are also taking part in a ground-breaking project examining their early years’ classrooms and teaching practices, to ensure they best support and nurture young minds.

We know young learners thrive on play-based learning and we want to support all Queensland schools to be confident in providing age-appropriate learning experiences in Prep.

I look forward to the results of this project and thank the schools for their contribution. This is an example of how the passionate early childhood workforce makes a difference.

To support and grow jobs in the sector, I have released the new Workforce Action Plan 2016–2019.

A careers campaign, scholarships, mentoring and supporting early childhood educators to work with children and families with complex needs are just some of the strategies.

Continuing to build the confidence and skills of early childhood educators will translate to better outcomes for every child.

Please enjoy this edition of QKindy and early childhood.

The Honourable Kate Jones MP
Minister for Education
Productive partnerships

A streak of strawberry blonde hair flashes across the playground as a group of children in dress-up endeavour to mimic the latest children's film to hit the theatres. Above the rumbling sound of busy children is a distinct voice asking, ‘What’s your name? What’s your name? I’m Isobel!’.

Like most other five-year-olds, Isobel loves to read books, dress up and listen to music.

Unlike most five-year-olds, Isobel goes about her day with her Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) lingering nearby, at times, teetering gingerly on the edge of an outburst.

Three years ago, and close to breaking point, her mother, Katie enrolled Isobel at Eastwood Early Education to support her early learning and development.

‘I love Isobel dearly but also recognise that managing her defiant and difficult behaviours can be extremely trying,’ Katie said.

‘Knowing the constant challenges of caring for a child with ODD and ADHD, I was worried our welcome to Eastwood might be short-lived.

‘Instead we have received incredible support, care and guidance that has helped me see a brighter future for Isobel and our family.’

Eastwood Early Education Director Kay Paton is touched by Katie’s praise but emphasises that it is the role of all educators to meet the unique needs of each child in their care.

‘Providing inclusive education is recognising that all children have unique needs that require our attention, whether they struggle with a particular area of learning or have a formal diagnosis,’ Mrs Paton said.

‘Isobel is a very intelligent, spirited young lady and we are very fond of her.

‘We have worked to meet Isobel’s individual needs over the last few years by forming a close partnership with her and her family.

‘Through this partnership, we have been able to establish consistency and continuity of care for Isobel across her home and service environments.

‘Whether Isobel is at home or here at day care, the same set of expectations, boundaries and outcomes apply, helping to create a secure and positive environment.

‘Isobel’s kindergarten teacher has introduced many other support strategies including visual aids, a “quiet space” for Isobel where she can go and cool down if she needs to, and the constant reminder of clear expectations.

‘We encourage and guide Isobel in the correct way to interact with others and teach the children not to exclude or isolate Isobel because of her varying behaviour.

‘The other children in the class are aware of Isobel’s unique behaviours and accept Isobel for who she is, not different in some way.

‘Isobel’s behaviours change daily, both in the types of behaviours she exhibits and the gravity to which she displays them.’

Mrs Paton explained that the children themselves are a great support to Isobel when she is struggling to moderate her behaviours, but also always remain her friend.

‘Young children are the greatest testament to kindness. They do not judge, simply support,’ Mrs Paton said.

‘We have researched behaviour management ideas to discuss with Katie and we have supported Katie with any strategies she would like to try.’

Mrs Paton said they recently introduced gluten- and sugar-free meals for Isobel to see if this would help her behaviours.

‘So far this has had a positive influence in conjunction with many of our other strategies,’ Ms Paton said.

‘It’s not about sticker charts and extrinsic rewards for compliant behaviour, it’s about a holistic view of Isobel becoming a successful young lady and an engaged learner.

‘Katie is always so lovely, thanking the team for our work with Isobel, but knowing we have had a positive influence on Isobel and helped family life at home is all the thanks we need.’
Research confirms a child’s transition to school is more successful when school settings establish continuity for children and families.

Continuity can help children feel a stronger sense of belonging at school and greater confidence.

Schools can generate continuity by providing experiences, routines and resources that are familiar to, and build on those used in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services.

One of the most powerful ways of supporting a child’s transition to school is to build on the teaching practices used in ECEC services.

ECEC services use play-based teaching approaches to focus on the learning strengths and interests of children and actively engage them in learning.

This approach helps children to develop the foundational skills, knowledge and personal attributes that will support their future learning and development.

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting children in the early years of school to become successful learners through active, purposeful and creative learning experiences that are fun and motivate children.

In line with this commitment, the department is implementing a pilot project to refocus on evidence-based teaching and learning approaches, also known as age-appropriate pedagogies.

The project is based on a review of international research into best practice that indicates children learn best when they are actively engaged in their learning.

The department has funded Griffith University to work with 46 Queensland schools, across three regions, to strengthen their teaching and learning approaches.

The use of effective, age-appropriate pedagogies promotes continuity between ECEC services and schools by supporting young children’s engagement with active learning, leading to better long-term life and learning outcomes.

The aim of the project is to align these learning and teaching approaches with the expectations of the Australian Curriculum in Prep and retain a strong focus on student achievement and success.

The schools participating in the project represent the diversity of Queensland from small, rural and remote schools to larger urban schools.
A dynamic Early Years Network on Brisbane’s north side is helping children to ‘Power into Prep’.

Mitchelton State School is the driving force behind the network that was established after the school took steps to build on its transition to school program.

The school’s first step was to reach out to early childhood education and care services in the area and ask them what they thought were the needs of children and families transitioning to school.

Mitchelton State School Prep Teacher Suzanne Clarke explained that the results were enlightening.

‘The services were so surprised that we were prepared to meet with them and seek their views about how we could work together to meet the needs of the children,’ Mrs Clarke said.

‘Many had an out-of-date perception of what our school was about that resulted from the school dropping off brochures and enrolment information in the past without stopping to talk.

‘Sitting down with the services, it was clear they all wanted to help their children make a successful transition to school and they had great ideas on how that could be achieved.

‘The services were very keen to develop a partnership with the school and host and participate in ongoing visits.

‘It also quickly became apparent that not only did the services want to continue meeting with us regarding transition to school strategies, they wanted to meet with each other to share their understanding and experiences,’ Mrs Clarke said.

Responding to the feedback, Mitchelton State School established the Early Years Learning Network.

Local early childhood education and care services were invited to join the network. As well, community organisations which work with local families have the opportunity to share information at the network’s regular meetings.

The main purpose of the network is to support children’s transition to school by improving learning opportunities for kindergarten and Prep children, providing professional development opportunities, sharing information about parent requirements and developing a positive, proactive and collegial relationship within the network.

Ms Clarke said that while it was early days the network has already taken great steps toward achieving these goals. ‘The network meets each quarter with all network members having input into the agenda,’ she said.

‘We have had a number of guest speakers from the department to discuss issues, such as fostering partnerships with community groups, the Australian Early Development Census data and how to use the findings, and the Supporting successful transitions—School decision-making tool.

‘I know members really appreciated hearing from the department on future directions in early childhood and having the opportunity to provide input and share their thoughts. The network is not about the school talking at other members. Instead, it is about everyone having the opportunity to share and be heard.

‘Our network members also appreciate the change in our school’s mindset in that our focus is not on whether every child is ready for school but whether our school is ready for every child.

In addition to the meetings, we have also developed a calendar of events to support children’s transition to school which has included connecting the school’s Elder in residence with the network members; visits to and from early childhood education and care services, and the school; and a tour by the school choir to the services.

‘The early childhood services helped promote attendance at our “Power into Prep” morning and, importantly, encouraged parents to participate knowing our school would value their opinions and thoughts,’ Mrs Clarke said.

More information

For information and ideas on supporting successful transitions to school visit www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool
Queensland’s expertise in delivering integrated early childhood services is in the international spotlight thanks to the Department of Education and Training’s work on the School Readiness Project in Vietnam.

Funded by the World Bank and led by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, the project is part of the $100 million USD school readiness initiative focused on supporting those children most vulnerable to not succeeding in a school environment.

The four-year initiative will increase the number of early childhood education programs, reduce participation costs for vulnerable groups and support professional development of teachers with a focus on child-centred practice.

The Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training sought the department’s involvement after learning of the success of Queensland’s Early Years Centres and Children and Family Centres.

The department is working with the project team to develop and pilot a community-based early childhood development model for children from birth to three years in four provinces in Vietnam.

Exporting early childhood expertise

Director of the department’s Children and Family Programs team, Penny Creamer, spent a month in Vietnam working on the project earlier this year.

‘It was a fascinating and rewarding experience that highlighted both similarities and differences between our countries regarding early childhood development,’ Ms Creamer said.

Vietnam has a population of more than 90 million with 63 per cent of the population younger than 35 and 13 per cent from one of 53 minority ethnic groups.

In a 2012 measurement of early development, similar to the Australian Early Development Census, more than half of Vietnamese five-year-old children were found to be vulnerable in one or more developmental domains or at risk of vulnerability.

‘Similar to Australia, the percentage of vulnerability was higher for some cohorts, in Vietnam it is children from an ethnic minority background, especially in communication skills and general knowledge,’ Ms Creamer said.

‘In developing a proposed service delivery model our focus was on how the model could best meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families.'
Working with a national consultant we identified what was already in place and discussed future options.

These discussions revealed the project team’s enthusiasm for sharing knowledge and experiences.

My Vietnamese colleagues were excited to hear about our integrated services, particularly our Early Years Centres and Children and Family Centres, that pull together early childhood education and care, child and maternal health, and family support into a one-stop-shop for families with young children.

There was also a lot of interest in the role of playgroups in engaging parents early to support their child’s early learning and the involvement of fathers in their child’s development.

It was rewarding to see our work in integrated service delivery through an international lens and recognise what we have achieved in a relatively short period of time.

I also found it fascinating learning about existing preschool programs in Vietnam, with 96.4 per cent of the nation’s 1,300,000 five-year-olds enrolled.

While in Vietnam I undertook two field visits to the proposed preschools where the new services will be co-located, which included the urban area of Da Nang and the rural, mountain community of Lao Cai.

The project team has developed a concept paper to inform the development of the community-based early childhood education model.

The next step is to pilot the model and produce materials to support the operation, including how to control and maintain the day-to-day management of a community-based early childhood education model.

Queensland will also host a study tour for representatives from the Vietnamese project team later in the year.

Ms Creamer said she is looking forward to the pilot stage of the project.

‘It is humbling to contribute to this vital work in Vietnam knowing that investment in early childhood development is a crucial step in addressing inequality, breaking the poverty cycle and improving outcomes later in life.’
Better together: Helping children enjoy a positive start to school

Starting school is an exciting and significant time in every child’s life. A successful transition to school starts well before a child’s first day and ends when they feel welcome, safe and confident in their new school environment.

As part of the Queensland Government’s ongoing focus on supporting successful transitions to school, Queensland state schools are getting ready to welcome children starting Prep in 2016, and their families.

By working together, families, early childhood education and care services, schools and communities can support children’s transition experience and encourage a lifelong love of learning.

Here are some of the helpful tips from the chatterbox.

- **Be ready to support your child.**
  Share your positive feelings about school.

- **Get involved before Prep starts.**
  Why wait! Contact your child’s new school to discuss the transition to Prep.

- **Confidence counts.**
  Assist your child to have the confidence to know how to get help.

- **Listen to your child’s thoughts about starting school.**

Every state school has been sent new resources to support engagement with their transition partners. One of these resources is an interactive chatterbox with fun activities and tips for parents and children.

Services can download and share the chatterbox with families encouraging them to support their child to enjoy a positive start to school.

For more information about starting school or to view other transition to school resources visit [www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool](http://www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool)
Make time to talk, rest and play.
Share a starting school storybook with your child.

Make time to play with your child.
Together, visit your child’s new school then draw or paint a picture of it and talk about what you saw.

Celebrate this significant milestone!
Together with your child, take a photo at school and put it on your fridge.

Encourage your child’s independence through practising new routines.
Pack a lunch box, take it to the park and share it together.

Make a map from home to school.
Take a trip to your child’s new school then make a map of the path.

Getting dressed.
Practise putting your socks and shoes on and off three times.
Green time vs screen time

Queensland families are being encouraged to switch ‘screen time’ to ‘green time’.

Nature Play QLD is an initiative of the Queensland Government to see unstructured outdoor play, or nature play, become a normal part of all Queensland children’s lives.

Playing in nature is proven to significantly improve all aspects of child development, including growth in resilience, self-confidence and creativity.

Nature Play QLD is working with parents, educators and communities to ensure children’s time indoors is balanced with outdoor play and learning experiences.

The community organisation offers a series of free resources, programs and activities, as well as ideas on how adults can support their child’s play, to inspire outdoor play and children’s love of nature.

Importance of nature play

Playing in nature:

- improves physical and cognitive development
- helps children to enjoy more creative play, self-confidence and sense of initiative
- improves concentration, classroom behavior, enthusiasm and ability to learn
- fosters higher self-esteem and good self-discipline
- makes children feel more capable and confident
- supports social and emotional development
- reduces sedentary behaviour and helps to properly develop immune systems among other health benefits
- curbs depression, stress and anxiety and supports positive mental wellbeing.

How to encourage nature play

Visit www.natureplayqld.org.au for information on:

- Passport to an Amazing Childhood Program – order a free nature play passport and access an online ‘mission control’ offering hundreds of nature-based outdoor activities to help get children back outdoors.
- Licence to Play – a fun program to build children’s love of nature play and parents’ confidence in their child’s outdoor play ability.
- Little Adventure Days – facilitated nature play for early childhood services and schools.
- 99 Things to Do Before You’re 3 – a great list of activities for babies and toddlers based on developmental milestones.
- Family Nature Clubs – join one near you or start your own to make a regular date with other families outdoors.
Kindy kids celebrate literacy success

The Premier’s Reading Challenge aims to encourage and develop children’s love of reading.

This year, in the challenge’s tenth year, early childhood services were invited to join in for the first time. More than 400 early childhood services participated, adding thousands of young readers to the experience.

One of these services, Harty Street Community Kindergarten and Preschool in Coorparoo, joined the challenge and counted the number of books experienced by the children between 22–28 August.

Service Co-Director Suzy Hartley said their reading window coincided with Book Week and each group had a day to dress up as their favourite characters and bring a book to read with their friends.

‘In the lead up to Book Week the children in my class had been looking at how facial expressions, body language and voice convey emotions and feelings,’ Ms Hartley said.

‘Then they used those skills to act out their favourite stories and we made some props and costumes for a special performance.’

Ms Hartley said children also learned from reading recipes for cooking activities or finding answers on an iPad.

‘The children see reading is for enjoyment and can help you learn too. We had a space station set up in our home corner and we were reading space stories earlier in the year,’ she said.

‘The children had so many questions and I was able to answer them all. One little girl said, “you know everything” and I replied, “that’s because I read!” It’s wonderful to see them gain this understanding of the benefits of reading.’

Parents were also encouraged to read with their children as well as part of the Premier’s Reading Challenge.

Harty Street parent Ben Croft said his daughter enjoys reading time and he enjoys the interesting things she picks up on when they read together.

‘The Premier’s Reading Challenge is another way to promote reading that creates excitement and positive reinforcement. It is great to get this started from a really young age,’ he said.

Laura Fanning is another parent who enjoyed taking part in the challenge as it provided an extra reminder that daily reading is good for her family.

“We read books that reflect her interests and it’s our quiet time together. We talk about the pictures, she asks questions and she’s proud that she can recognise the letters,’ she said.

‘I see our stories coming through in her play—role playing and drawing—and her understanding of language is developing.’

Now participants are looking forward to the Premier’s Reading Challenge celebration weeks between 9–20 November and Harty Street kindy is planning to use their ‘school day’ to add to the proceedings.

‘The children that head to Prep next year will dress up in their uniforms and we are hoping to have a local principal or Prep teacher present the children with their reading challenge certificates,’ Ms Hartley said.

‘Parents often ask what they can do to help get children ready for school and I simply tell them “read”. Not just to get from the start of a book to the end as fast as possible, but to make it enjoyable and encourage their questions.’
The long-term benefits of quality early childhood education are undisputed, as is the significant role early educators play in providing quality early learning experiences.

Improving the capacity of Queensland’s early childhood and education and care workforce is the focus of the newly launched Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan (WAP) 2016–2019.

The new WAP will deliver a range of programs to build the skills, qualifications and experience of the ECEC workforce.
Being valued

The Inspire the future, choose a career in early childhood campaign promotes the value and professionalism of the early childhood workforce.

The campaign includes a range of marketing and advertising strategies and features two short online videos. An ‘inspire the future’ resource pack will be sent to every Queensland secondary school to promote early childhood careers to students.

The campaign will also target career changers by highlighting the diverse opportunities in the sector including leadership, management and support roles.

To view the campaign, visit earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/inspirethefuture

Options for the professional registration for early childhood teachers (ECTs) are also being explored to further support the recognition of the early childhood teaching profession.

Qualifications

A key priority of the WAP is ensuring an ongoing supply of suitably qualified educators is available to meet future demand in Queensland.

Subsidies for approved certificate and diploma qualifications will be available to eligible students, and a range of targeted initiatives will provide additional support for educators, particularly Indigenous educators, studying for their qualifications in rural and remote services.

Skills

The new WAP will provide targeted skills development, professional development and networking to support educators to respond to the demands of their roles and to address skills gaps.

Peak sector organisations and other stakeholders will contribute to the development and implementation of these initiatives, focussing on key priority areas such as working with children and families with complex needs.

Early Years Connect is the first initiative to be released providing a professional development package for educators working with vulnerable children and families with complex needs. It includes a one-stop-shop of online resources for educators as well as face-to-face professional development and networking programs to be implemented across Queensland.

More information

To find out more about the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan 2016-2019 visit www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/WAP
From 1 January 2016, the National Quality Framework (NQF) reaches another milestone with the next phase of changes to educator-to-child ratios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range*</th>
<th>New ratio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>children older than 24 months and younger than 36 months of age</td>
<td>1:5</td>
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<tr>
<td>children aged 36 months or older (not including children who are over preschool age, which means a child enrolled in schooling (Prep onwards) and attending any time in the same calendar year)</td>
<td>1:11</td>
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*A separate ratio no longer applies for children 30 to 36 months or for children aged four years and older.

As one of nine Queensland education and care services with an Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority excellent rating, Condy Park Preschool and Kindergarten is well prepared to meet the new ratio requirements.

Condy Park Preschool and Kindergarten in Pialba is licensed for 75 children per day, six classes in three rooms. Approximately 140 children attend each week.

Director and Service Manager Kathryn Forgan-Flynn said Condy Park currently provided three team members in each room.

‘We have a qualified early childhood teacher and two diploma-qualified assistants per room,’ Ms Forgan-Flynn said.

‘On occasion, we may employ an additional person to support a particular child.

‘The new ratios will create a very small increase in hours for part-time assistants, as we are fortunate to have a non-contact director and part-time administrator.

‘To ensure adequate supervision, the priority for all team members is to be “present” with our children, to be focused on supporting their interests and needs, and to ensure that our environment is flexible to accommodate the changing focuses and needs of children as they move through their day.’

Ms Forgan-Flynn said she expected all team members to be actively engaged or observing children by placing themselves around the service and following the children as they move either inside or outside.

‘The key is that team members share information with each other which is imperative to quality supervision,’ she said.

‘With the layout of our premises, we know those spots that cannot be easily seen and through communication we ensure that someone is able to supervise these areas.

‘We see parent drop-off and pick-up as a perfect opportunity to connect with our families and it is imperative that we can also support our children with the transition into kindy for the day, and that is why you need the three people on hand at these times.

‘Relationships take time, respect, trust and understanding—this is pivotal to building quality relationships with all our children.

‘Having consistent team members who are assigned to their room to build the knowledge of those particular children allows this to take place.

‘We also only have a small number of relief team members who move across the centre and thus all children know and feel secure with.

‘Our strategic plan outlines that we must maintain two training positions on staff at all times, this is based in the belief that apart from this all our team are highly experienced and qualified and that we should share this with our profession—it also makes great business sense in long-term planning.

‘It is also covered in our operational planning that we are above ratios to ensure the quality of time spent with our children.

‘It has allowed us to build those quality relationships within our community and to connect with our families,’ Ms Forgan-Flynn said.

For more information on ratios, visit www.dete.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/office/national/podcast.html
The start of summer marks the beginning of the storm and bushfire season in Queensland.

Now is the time to ensure your service is prepared for potential natural disasters.

The Get Ready Queensland website at www.getready.qld.gov.au has helpful information and advice on how services can prepare for an emergency.

It is important to remember that approved providers are required to notify the department within 24 hours if an incident occurs that requires a service closure or reduction in the number of children attending. This includes service closures due to natural disasters.

In addition to the current process of notifying the department, approved providers can now notify families and the department of service closures due to a natural disaster via a new secure online portal.

The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Emergency Closure portal is accessible 24 hours a day from a computer, smart phone or tablet.

Any service closures logged through the portal will be displayed on the department’s natural disasters and closed education facilities website to keep families and the community informed in ‘real time’.

Approved providers have been emailed information on how to register for the portal. Services should record their registration details as they will be required to log in and use the portal in times of natural disaster.

The portal’s website has a helpful step-by-step guide as well as answers to frequently asked questions to assist services to register.

To check which services are closed visit the natural disasters and closed education facilities website at www.deta.qld.gov.au/natural-disasters

More information

To notify the department of a service closure:

- go to the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Emergency Closure portal at closures.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au
- contact your local regional office
- email ECECEmergencyClosures@dete.qld.gov.au
Protecting young children from preventable disease

Immunisation is simple, safe and the single most effective way of protecting children against vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunisation not only protects individuals vaccinated, but potentially others too, particularly vulnerable members of the community who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons or are too young to be vaccinated.

Queensland Government’s early childhood education and care vaccination legislation

Amendments to the Public Health Act 2005 aim to better protect young and vulnerable Queenslanders from vaccine-preventable diseases. Queensland Health Minister Cameron Dick said the legislation would provide legal protection for approved early childhood education and care (ECEC) services if they make decisions about the enrolment or attendance of children based on their immunisation status.

‘Children who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons, or children who are on a recognised vaccination catch-up schedule under the legislation, will not be disadvantaged,’ Mr Dick said.

‘Every year, there are tragic cases that highlight the importance of ensuring everyone in your family is fully immunised. Conditions like whooping cough, while usually mild for adults, can have tragic consequences for very young children.

‘ECEC services will still have the discretion to admit children who are not up to date with their immunisations. The legislation gives power to those local ECEC services to make those decisions.’

Queensland Health officials stress that under the new laws from 2016, a service’s decision to refuse to enrol or limit the attendance of an unvaccinated child will not be discriminatory.

Under-five-year-olds in Queensland targeted in $1.5 million vaccination initiative

Building on a strong commitment to raising vaccination rates across the state, the Queensland Government has unveiled the vaccination initiative ‘Immunise to 95’ to achieve a rate of 95 per cent of children who are up to date with their vaccinations.

‘Up to 35,000 children under five in Queensland are either not vaccinated or behind schedule. Our focus is on making sure those kids who’ve missed out on the benefits of vaccination get a chance to catch up,’ Mr Dick said.

Starting from October 2015, 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)—the Queensland Government’s health hotline—will follow up every child aged five years and under in Queensland who is not up to date with their vaccinations.

Families may then be contacted and connected with their local GPs or vaccination clinics to assist them to get up to date by 1 January 2016. The Queensland Government will work with the Australian Medical Association Queensland, local councils, GPs and local hospital and health services. Support will also be provided through the specialist vaccination clinic located at the Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital.

Australian Government’s ‘no jab, no pay policy’

The federal government is also introducing changes to immunisation-related family assistance for parents—subject to the passage of legislation.

From 1 January 2016, Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end-of-year supplement will no longer be paid to parents of children who are not fully immunised, or who do not have a valid exemption for approved medical reasons. ‘Conscientious objections’ to immunisation will no longer be a valid exemption category. For more information on these changes, visit www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/immunising-your-children

What Queensland families need to do

‘My message to parents is very simple and clear: If you vaccinate your child on time and according to the schedule, you have given your child the best possible protection from vaccine-preventable disease and you don’t have to worry about the impact of the incoming state or federal legislation,’ Mr Dick said.

To monitor when vaccinations are due, visit the National Immunisation Program Schedule Queensland at www.qld.gov.au/vaccinate

To help busy parents keep track of upcoming vaccinations for their children, Queensland Health has developed the VacciDate app. The VacciDate app helps parents keep a record of each child’s immunisations and provides reminders when vaccinations and appointments are due. The app is available to download free from Google Play and iTunes stores.

For more information on immunisation, visit www.qld.gov.au/vaccinate or call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).
Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens

Kindergarten services will be supported to better assist children with disability to participate in kindergarten with the Queensland Government providing funding of $14.2 million over four years. From 2016, kindergarten services will be able to access increased funding levels as well as additional funding support for children with particularly complex needs associated with one or more disability. The new program will take effect from 27 January 2016 and is open to sessional kindergarten services. For more information, visit det.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/service/grants/disability-grant.html or phone the DISQK team on 3328 6720.

Keep up to date with the latest news in early childhood education and care

Your regional office support team

The Department of Education and Training’s authorised officers are here to help all services meet their legislative requirements.

- Need information about maintaining your Quality Improvement Plan?
- Preparing for assessment and rating?
- Looking to establish a new service?
- Have a question about the national requirements?
- Need to know more about the Education and Care Services Act 2013?

Contact your nearest regional office for assistance.

**Central Queensland**
Rockhampton 4932 4022
rockhampton.ecec@dete.qld.gov.au

Mackay 4842 8354
mackay.ecec@dete.qld.gov.au

**Darling Downs/South West Queensland**
Toowoomba 4616 3791
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