Annual Report

Putting Children First

2001-2002

Chairperson's Report

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) is committed to supporting and improving the quality of child care in Australia and the ethos of its endeavours is embodied in the Council's logo "Putting Children First".

During 2001-2002, this logo had particular significance for NCAC Council members and staff as they worked together on implementing the revised Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long day care centres and the new Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) for family day care schemes.

In July 2001, FDCQA was officially launched in Adelaide by the Hon Senator Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Families and Community Services and Family Day Care Schemes across Australia commenced the registration process to participate in the new system.

From July through October 2001, NCAC staff were extremely busy finalising the publications, videos, online training modules, translated materials and other resources needed to support both of these "new" Quality Assurance (QA) systems. Materials for the relevant QA systems were mailed to each long day care centre and family day care scheme by November 2001.

By December 2001, the NCAC website was updated with materials for both QA systems - all publications, forms, translations, and the online Register of children's services throughout Australia.

In March 2002, NCAC launched its new newsletter, *Putting Children First*, with a special feature on "Quality" which explored the many different perspectives on quality from the point of view of service providers, families and children.

On 25 March 2002, the revised QIAS was launched by the Hon. Larry Anthony Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

In the same month, NCAC also began training and retraining persons to perform the role of Validator in the new QIAS system. Some of these trainees were required to try out their skills almost immediately as in April 2002 the first QIAS Validation Visits occurred under the new system.

The first Validators for FDCQA were trained in June 2002. These Validators are scheduled to begin the first FDCQA Validation Visits in 2002-2003.

The past year has been as eventful for children's services as it has been for NCAC. It has been challenging for everyone involved as there has been a steep learning curve to become familiar with the requirements of the QA systems. NCAC looks forward to the progress of services through the QIAS and FDCQA in 2002-2003.

John Tainton
Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer's Report

This past year has been an extremely challenging one for NCAC staff and Council members. The challenges and deadlines of developing FDCQA and introducing the revised QIAS tested all staff, however the journey towards the implementation of the Quality Assurance (QA) systems has been a rewarding one.

At each point of development input has been sought and welcomed from all sectors – focus groups, child care services, parents, carers, peak child care bodies, Reviewers/Validators and Moderators, and other interested individuals and groups. This period of consultation has engendered in all, a sense of ownership and pride in the delivery of quality child care in both a centre-based and home-based environment.

NCAC publications and resources also underwent many changes to reflect the QA systems for children's services. These include changes to NCAC's *Choosing Quality Child Care* brochure, website and newsletter, now called *Putting Children First*. This new name reflects the core object of the QA Systems administered by the NCAC: to ensure that children in care have stimulating, positive experiences and interactions that foster all aspects of their learning, development and well being.

I would like to extend a thank you to all NCAC staff for their ongoing commitment and dedication to ensuring the development and delivery of the new systems and support for services. Whilst timeframes were tight, staff were able to meet them through team work, dedication and determination.

Denise Taylor
Chief Executive Officer

The National Childcare Accreditation Council

The National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc (NCAC) is an incorporated association established in 1993 by the Commonwealth Government. There are seven Council Members appointed by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Council is supported by a Chief Executive Officer and staff in Sydney as well as over 300 peer Validators and 41 Moderators located throughout Australia.

The NCAC administers the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long day care centres and Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) for family day care schemes. The NCAC is currently working with a sector Working Party on the development of a new Quality Assurance system for Outside School Hours Care Services.

Information on Council Members

John Tainton – Chairperson (Queensland)
John Tainton is a specialist in the management and administration of early childhood care and education services. Mr Tainton has a wide range of experience from past positions he has held, including Executive Director of the Brisbane Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Director of Queensland State Pre-school System and Assistant Director General of Education for Queensland. He is widely known across Australia for the interactive television training sessions he has produced over the past decade in support of child care professionals.

Judy Atkinson (South Australia)
Judy Atkinson has been involved in education and child care since 1975, initially teaching for the SA Education Department where her focus was on early childhood education, equal opportunity and anti bias environments. Judy is the Immediate Past President of the Australian Federation of Child Care Associations and a member of the commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council. Judy operates a number of child care services both her own and employer sponsored centres in South Australia and was the 1998 SA winner and National Finalist of the Telstra Business Women's Award.

Dawn Casey (Commonwealth Representative)
Dawn Casey is the Assistant Secretary, Child Care Services in the Department of Family and Community Services with responsibility for policy and programs to ensure the availability of quality child care for Australian families. Dawn has a strong personal interest in many issues related to the early childhood agenda and has been actively involved in a number of community based organisations for a number of years. Prior to this Dawn served as the Assistant Secretary, People and Strategy in the Department of Transport and Regional Services; as National Account Manager, Business Development, Centrelink; and as Executive Director, Strategic People Management, Child Support Agency.

Pamela Horton (Victoria)
Pamela Horton is Secretary of the Australian Federation of Child Care Associations (AFCCA) and Executive Committee member of the Victorian Private Child Care Association (VPCCA). Ms Horton has worked in the early childhood field since 1963 and owns and operates child care centres in Victoria. She has had extensive experience in small business, is the editor and publisher of a quarterly journal for the VPCCA and is the Community Coordinator for the professional practice in Northern Region 2 for the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Victoria (RMIT).

Judy Kynaston (New South Wales)
Judy Kynaston has a Dip T (EC) and a Grad Dip Ed Studies (EC). She is currently the Executive Director of Country Children's Services Association of NSW and the NSW National Vice President of the Australian Early Childhood Association. Judy has extensive experience in a range of service types including, pre-school, long day care, family day care and the early years of school. She is committed to the provision of high quality services for all children and would like to see a quality system like the QIAS and FDCQA for all children's services.

Andrea Larkin (New South Wales)
Andrea Larkin is the Principal of a Sydney based consultancy practice, specialising in strategy development, change management, organisational and professional development and quality management services. Her clients include government departments, corporations, the community services sector and individuals. Andrea is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management, The Quality Society of Australasia, and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Andrea is a graduate in Social Studies (First Class Honours) of the University of Queensland, majoring in Child Health. Her career includes public sector senior executive appointments as Regional Director of Health in the North Coast of NSW and the Peninsula and Torres Strait in far north Queensland.

Jenny Mobbs (Queensland)
Jenny Mobbs is Executive Director of the Lady Gowrie Child Centre in Brisbane. Jenny has been a lecturer in early childhood at University for over 15 years in Queensland and South Australia. She is a member of many early childhood and child care organisations including the AECA Queensland branch, the Family Day Care Association of Queensland where she is City Vice President and is currently State Delegate to the National Family Day Care Council Ltd. She was a moderator with NCAC for six years and has over the past 8 years managed over 30 early childhood services throughout Queensland. Jenny has a commitment to quality early childhood services including as a teacher, academic, numerous presentations at conferences and publications.

What are the Quality Assurance Systems?

The broad objective of the Quality Assurance (QA) Systems is to ensure that children in child care services have stimulating, positive experiences and interactions that foster all aspects of their development. The QA Systems do this by setting child care quality standards and assisting services to implement strategies to improve their quality of care.

What are the 5 steps of the QA Systems?

Step 1: Registration

All long day care centres and family day care schemes eligible for Child Care Benefit are required to register with the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) to participate in the QIAS or FDCQA. Services registering with the NCAC for the first time receive a *Certificate of Registration* along with a registration kit containing all the necessary documents for the service to progress through the relevant QA System.

Step 2: Self-study and Continuing Improvement

Each service makes a self-assessment on a cyclical basis of the quality of its practice by consulting with all staff and families at their service. Each long day care centre evaluates the quality of its practice against standards outlined in the *QIAS Source Book* (2001) for each of the 10 Quality Areas and 35 Principles. Similarly, family day care schemes evaluate their practices against standards outlined in the *FDCQA Quality Practices Guide* (2001) for each of the 6 Quality Elements and 32 Principles. The results of this self-assessment are summarised in the *Self-study Report* and submitted to the NCAC by the due date. The *Self-study Report* includes the service's ratings of its own performance against all Principles as well as a Continuing Improvement Plan for each of the 10 Quality Areas or 6 Quality Elements. Accredited services are required to submit a *Self-study Report* to the NCAC every two-and-a-half years.

Step 3: Validation

Peer Validators visit each service to validate its quality practices against a *Validation Report*. The *Validation Report* is based on the standards outlined in the QIAS *Source Book* or the FDCQA *Quality Practices Guide*. Wherever possible, the NCAC uses the preferred specialist knowledge areas indicated by the service in its *Self-study Report* when allocating a Validator to visit the centre. The Validator observes the service's care practices, sights any necessary documentation and completes the *Validation Report*. Validators also collect the *Validation Surveys* completed by staff, carers and families during the weeks prior to the Validation Visit, and returns them to the NCAC together with the *Validation Report*.

Step 4: Moderation

The process of Moderation helps to ensure that all services participating in the QA Systems are treated consistently on a national basis. Moderators assess the quality of the service's practice, guided by information from the *Self-study Report*, the *Validation Surveys* and the *Validation Report*. Moderators also consider information from the service's *Validation Evaluation Form*, when available

Step 5: Accreditation Decision

The Accreditation Decision is the final step in the QA Systems. To be accredited, a service must achieve a rating on the composite *Quality Profile* of Satisfactory or higher in all 10 Quality Areas for QIAS or 6 Quality Elements for FDCQA.

The NCAC advises each service of its Accreditation Decision in writing, by post. This information is not available from the NCAC by any other means until at least five days after posting date. This ensures that only specified, authorised service representatives are the first to receive Accreditation Decision information.

Accredited services are required to prominently display the *Certificate of Accreditation* in the service. Services are also provided with a second certificate showing the composite *Quality Profile* and the names of staff and care providers who participated in the QA process. This *Quality Profile Certificate* is for display at the service's discretion.

An accredited service is required to continue its self-study and continuing improvement cycle (QIAS and FDCQA Step 2) until its next *Self-study Report* is due for submission. The accreditation period is 2.5 years between submission of *Self-study Reports*.

Services that do not meet the standards required for accreditation are required to submit another *Self-study Report* six months from the date of the NCAC Decision.

Provisional accreditation may be granted in instances where accreditation requirements can be met by minor adjustments. Provisionally accredited services are required to verify corrective action within three months or be registered as not accredited and submit another *Self-study Report* in a further 3 months. Provisional accreditation may be offered by the NCAC, services cannot apply for provisional accreditation.

The NCAC is responsible for maintaining a public register of the accreditation status and contact details for each service registered to participate in FDCQA and the QIAS.

The NCAC has worked closely with the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) in developing measurement processes for Accreditation Decisions. Accreditation Decisions are determined directly from the composite *Quality Profiles* computed for centres or schemes within measurement and policy frameworks described in the *QIAS Sourcebook* (2001) and *FDCQA Quality Practices Guide* (2001). To be accredited, a service must achieve a composite rating of "satisfactory" or higher in all Quality Areas (*QIAS Handbook* (2001), page 10) or Elements (*FDCQA Handbook* (2001) page 9).

The data required to compile a quality profile for services is collected from six different perspectives. In preparing composite *Quality Profiles* for services, NCAC's policy is to combine the six perspectives according to the following weightings (assigned loadings):

Self-study Report ……………………………………………… prepared by service management;	20%
Validation Survey ……………………………………………… completed by the director; coordination unit staff;	10%
Validation Survey ……………………………………………… completed by staff/carers;	10%
Validation Survey ……………………………………………… completed by families;	10%
Validation Report ……………………………………………… completed by a peer Validator; and	40%
Moderation Ratings ……………………………………………… completed by independent moderators	10%
Total ……………………………………………………	**100%**

The standards provided to services participating in the QA Systems guide quality improvement. These standards also provide the NCAC with a reliable framework for monitoring standards of care and making reliable and valid Accreditation Decisions.

National Childcare Accreditation Council Organisational Structure

(July 2001 – June 2002)

The Honourable Larry Anthony MP
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

Chairperson
John Tainton
Members
Judy Atkinson
Dawn Casey
Pamela Horton
Judy Kynaston
Andrea Larkin
Jenny Mobbs

Chief Executive Officer
Denise Taylor

Administration

* Reception
* NCAC Publications
* Advice for parents on quality child care

Communications

* NCAC website
* *Putting Children First* newsletter
* Copyright
* Media

Finance & Registrations

* Accounts Payable and Receivable
* Applications to change ownership or register a service for FDCQA or QIAS

Policy & Advice

* Support and advice to services and families
* Policy advice to Council
* Complaints Handling

Moderation Program

* Moderator recruitment, training and support
* Moderation Process

Quality Systems Coordination

* Receipt and processing of *Self-study Reports, Validation Reports* and *Validation Surveys*
* Validation Visits
* Processing Accreditation Decisions

Validator Program

* Validator recruitment, training and support

Development and Implementation of Revised Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)

During 2001-2002 the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) continued to develop materials and processes for the revised QIAS. Below is a time-line illustrating the development and distribution of resources to long day care centres, and the implementation of the QIAS.

- July/August 2001 – the NCAC finalised the new publications that support the QIAS: the *QIAS Source Book* (1st edition) 2001, the QIAS *Handbook* (2nd edition) 2001 and the QIAS *Self-study Report* (2nd edition) 2001.

- September 2001 – the NCAC produced a video for services to introduce the revised QIAS. The video covered the 5 Steps in the QIAS; the *Source Book*; Self-study and Continuing Improvement; the *Self-study Report*; *Validation Surveys*; the *Validation Report*; and the Accreditation Decision.

- October 2001 – the NCAC distributed a package of information to all long day care centres registered to participate in the QIAS that included: copies of the *QIAS Handbook, Source Book* and *Self-study Report*. These three publications were also made available on the NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au) in portable document format (pdf) versions, which can be downloaded free of charge for personal use.

- November 2001 – the introductory video was distributed to all long day care centres. The NCAC also created an interactive QIAS *Online Training Module* on the NCAC website. This *Online Training Module* provides training on the processes of the QIAS and a direct link to the QIAS documents available on the website. The main QIAS publications were sent to AusInfo and can be purchased from Australian Government Information Shops nationwide.

- January – March 2002 – the NCAC database was updated to accommodate the processes of the new system. Support documents for each step of the system were created and made available on the NCAC website.

- March 2002 – training for QIAS Validators commenced. From March to June 2002, three-day re-training courses were conducted for Reviewers, trained under the previous QIAS, to enable them to develop the competencies required of Validators in the revised QIAS. During June 2002 five-day competency based training courses were conducted for new Validators.

- March 2002 – the first *Self-study Reports* from long day care centres were received at the NCAC.

- April 2002 – a two-day training course was conducted for Moderators, who had trained under the previous QIAS, to enable them to develop the competencies required for Moderation in the revised QIAS. In April 2002 the first Validation Visits took place.

- June 2002 – the data from the first 98 services to progress through the revised QIAS was analysed by the Australian Council for Education Research and used to develop the NCAC database protocols used to calculate Accreditation Decisions. The first Accreditation Decisions were processed in July 2002.

Development and Implementation of Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA)

NCAC commenced the administration of FDCQA on 1 July 2001, as determined by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Below is a time-line illustrating the development and distribution of resources to family day care schemes, and the implementation of the FDCQA.

- From 1 July 2001 to 30 September 2001 - all family day care schemes were required to register with NCAC. The process involved completing a registration form and sending it to NCAC with the appropriate fee.

- August - September 2001 – the NCAC finalised the new publications that support FDCQA: the FDCQA *Quality Practices Guide* (1st edition) 2001, the FDCQA *Handbook* (1st edition) 2001, the FDCQA *Workbook* (1st edition) 2001 and the FDCQA *Self-study Report* (1st edition) 2001.

- September 2001 – the NCAC produced a video to introduce family day care schemes to FDCQA. The video covered the 5 Steps in FDCQA; the *Quality Practices Guide*; Self-study and Continuing Improvement; the *Self-study Report*; *Validation Surveys*; the *Validation Report* and the Accreditation Decision.

- In December 2001 NCAC distributed a package of information to all family day care schemes registered to participate in the FDCQA. The package included the FDCQA *Quality Practices Guide*, the FDCQA *Handbook*, the FDCQA *Workbook,* the FDCQA *Self-study Report* and the *FDQCA video*. The main publications were also made available on the NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au) in portable document format (pdf) versions, which can be downloaded free of charge for personal use.

- December 2001 – the NCAC created an interactive FDCQA *Online Training Module* on the NCAC website. This *Online Training Module* provides training on the processes of the FDCQA and a direct link to the FDCQA documents available on the website. The main FDCQA publications were sent to AusInfo and can be purchased from Australian Government Information Shops nationwide.

- January to June 2002 – the NCAC database was updated to accommodate the processes of the system. Support documents for each step of the system were created and made available on the NCAC website.

- June 2002 – the NCAC commenced five-day competency based training for FDCQA Validators. The first *Self-study Reports* from family day care schemes were due in July 2002, however, several were submitted in late June.

History of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) 1994-2001

The original QIAS commenced in January 1994. During the seven years that the system was in operation, the number of child care services registered with the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) steadily increased and the quality of care provided by those services improved significantly.

Figure 1 provides an indication of the trends that have occurred since the QIAS was first introduced in 1994 through to 2001.

**Figure 1: History of Progress of All Centres in the QIAS 1995 – 2001**
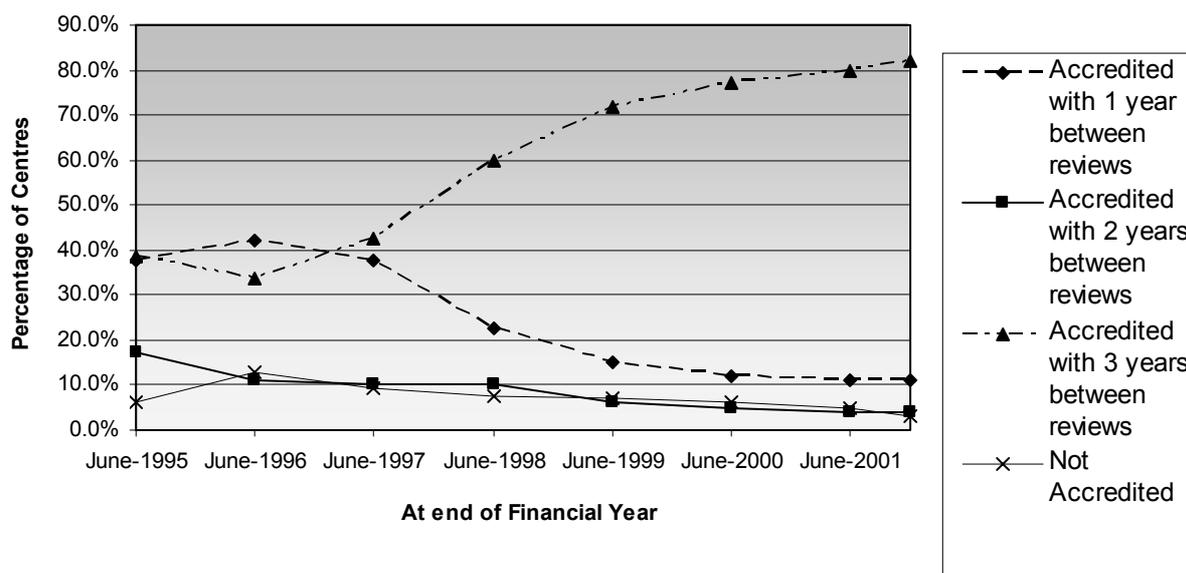
Table 1

	June 1995	June 1996	June 1997	June 1998	June 1999	June 2000	June 2001	Dec 2001
Total No. of Centres through the 5 Steps	251	1288	3082	3576	3853	3,863	3,914	3,911
In self-study, Review, Moderation or awaiting Council Decision	3340	2658	1052	672	290	146	144	167
TOTAL CENTRES	3591	3946	4134	4248	4143	4,030	4,058	4080

From 1 January 2002 the new QIAS standards and processes came into effect. All centres meeting these standards will now receive a standard 2.5 years accreditation. Centres that have not met the standards for accreditation are considered "Not Accredited". All centres previously accredited under the old system have now had their status transferred to the new system. Therefore, centres that had achieved 1, 2 or 3 years between reviews are now classified as "Accredited".

With the commencement of the revised QIAS, over 90% of the 4136 registered centres participating in the QIAS became accredited for the standard period of 2.5 years. Figure 2 provides a statistical analysis of centres participating in the QIAS as at June 2002.

Figure 2: Progress of All Centres in the QIAS as at June 2002*
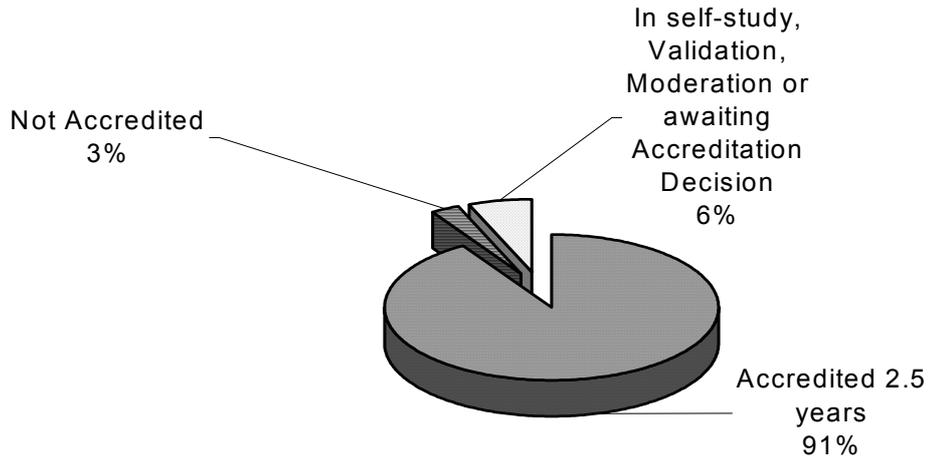
The 5 Steps of Quality Assurance

Figure 3 outlines the number of services registered to participate in Quality Assurance (QA) Systems (Step 1: Registration)
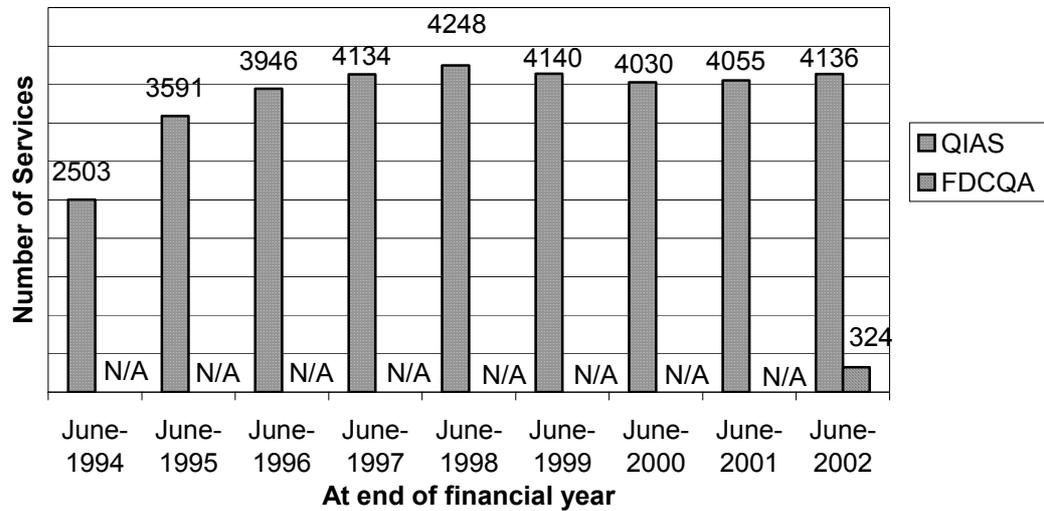
N/A : Not Applicable for FDCQA

During 2001/2002:

Table 2

	Step 2: Self-study and Continuing Improvement	Step 3: Validation	Step 4: Moderation	Step 5: Accreditation Decision
QIAS *Self-study Reports* received FDCQA *Self-study Reports* received	552 3			
QIAS Review Visits (old system) completed QIAS Validation Visits complete		48 175		
QIAS Moderation Panels (old system) completed QIAS Moderation Sessions completed			3 11	
QIAS Accreditation Decisions processed (old system) *				202

* No Accreditation Decisions processed for revised QIAS as at June 2002

Evaluation of the Quality Assurance Systems

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) conducts an analysis of service satisfaction with the Validation Visit (Step 3) each year using service responses to the *Validation Evaluation Form.* The 2001/2002 analysis was based on 143 evaluation responses from long day care centres who underwent a Validation Visit in May and June 2002.

The results of this analysis indicate that more than 95% of services were satisfied with the professional standard of Validators. 46% of services that expressed an opinion about the QIAS responded positively. A full analysis of this evaluation is available on the NCAC website: www.ncac.gov.au.

As no FDCQA Validation Visits took place between July 2001 and June 2002, the NCAC will report on scheme satisfaction with Step 3 of FDCQA in 2002/2003.

Validators – Training & Support

From March 2002 the National Childcare Accreditation Council commenced training of Validators for the revised Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) and Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA).

From March to June 2002, three-day competency based training courses were conducted for QIAS Reviewers, to enable them to develop the competencies required for the revised QIAS. During June 2002 training was conducted for new QIAS and FDCQA Validators.

Validators are experienced early childhood professionals who are released from their service to undertake Validation Visits of long day care centres or family day care schemes. To become a Validator, applicants must meet NCAC selection criteria and complete the application process, which includes a written application and interview. (Details of the selection criteria and application process are available on the NCAC website: www.ncac.gov.au).

Validators undertake an intensive, five-day competency based training course conducted by the NCAC. During the course, Validators build on the abilities and knowledge they already have to develop the skills necessary to undertake Validation Visits. The training covers:
- Understanding of the QIAS and/or FDCQA
- Preparing for and conducting the Validation Visit
- Communication during the Validation Visit
- Code of Ethics and the Validator Code of Conduct

During 2001/2002 166 Reviewers were retrained as QIAS Validators in 11 training sessions held in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra and Brisbane. 10 QIAS Validator applicants completed training. 9 of these applicants met all of the competencies and became QIAS Validators. 7 FDCQA Validator applicants completed training. All 7 met the competencies and became FDCQA Validators.

Provision of Support
The last Review Visit took place on 29 August 2001 and the first Validation Visit took place on 22 April 2002. Reviewers and Validators accessed support from Validator Program staff, during and outside of office hours. A pager service is used to support Validators outside of office hours. **16** pager calls were returned.

Performance Feedback
Priority is given to providing extensive feedback to Validators upon completion of their first Validation Visit. These telephone calls provide Validators with performance feedback from Validation Evaluation Forms, Moderator feedback, and direct feedback on comment and ratings provided in recent *Validation Reports*.

Reviewer Withdrawal
73 Reviewers were withdrawn in 2001/2002. Of these 73, **34** were withdrawn as they no longer worked in a long day care centre and **18** because they did not reply to an invitation to be retrained as a QIAS Validator.

Validator Registration
A Validator Registration System has now been implemented. All participants who demonstrated their competency at QIAS Validator Retraining and QIAS and FDCQA Validator Training are now granted provisional registration as a Validator.

Moderators – Training and Support

Moderators are experienced early childhood professionals who undertake Moderation Sessions for the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC). To become a Moderator, applicants must meet NCAC selection criteria and complete the application process. (Details of the selection criteria and application process are available on the NCAC website: www.ncac.gov.au)

During 2001/2002 28 Moderators attended training on the revised QIAS .The first sessions on the revised QIAS were held in Sydney on 25, 26 and 27 June and 11 Moderators took part in these sessions. These sessions also provided an opportunity to support Moderators during their first sessions, share ideas between Moderators and deal with issues as they arose.

Moderator training on the revised QIAS is conducted by the NCAC and covers:
- an overview of the 5 steps of the revised QIAS
- the role of the Moderator under the revised QIAS. This session highlights the purpose of Step 4: Moderation and the responsibilities of Moderators.
- steps in the Moderation process. These steps include reading and analysing all Moderation documents, deciding on ratings for Principles and writing the *Continuing Improvement Guide*.
- administrative procedures relating to receiving and returning documents for Moderation Sessions. The Moderator Contract of Agreement is also covered.
- the carrying out of assessment tasks. Moderators must complete a multiple choice test and a Mock Moderation exercise.

Complaints about Quality Practices in Child Care Services

The Quality Assurance (QA) Systems encourage positive two-way communication between child care services and families regarding issues such as the children's program and management practices. Families are now more aware of their right to comment on the practice of services and, as a result, the NCAC has received a significant increase in the number of enquiries and complaints from families about long day and family day care services. The NCAC also receives complaints about services from staff and members of the public who may have some involvement with the service.

When the NCAC is contacted regarding a concern about the quality practices of a child care service, the complainant is provided with support and information to address the issue with the service concerned. Child care services participating in the QIAS or FDCQA are required to have a clearly outlined complaints and grievance procedure in place.

In cases where concerns about a long day care centre participating in QIAS, or a family day care scheme participating in FDCQA, cannot be resolved directly with the service, the NCAC asks the complainant to outline the complaint in writing. Written complaints which relate to QIAS Quality Areas and FDCQA Quality Elements are addressed by the NCAC. The NCAC explores all aspects of the complaint to gain a clear view of the issues involved. The service that is the subject of the complaint is required to respond to issues raised by the complainant relating to quality practices or to the accreditation process in the service.

When a complaint involves issues that relate to State/Territory licensing regulations or child protection, the NCAC informs the relevant licensing or child protection authority and requests a follow up report.

The majority of written (formal) complaints are resolved following investigation by the NCAC and, where relevant, State/Territory licensing authorities. In instances where the NCAC is unable to resolve a complaint, the service's accreditation status may be removed and the service is required to repeat the QIAS or FDCQA process within a designated timeframe. For more information about NCAC Complaints Handling please refer to NCAC's website (www.ncac.gov.au).

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the numbers of written and telephone complaints the NCAC has received regarding the quality of care provided at registered services.

Table 6: Complaints received by the NCAC in relation to registered child care services

	1997/ 1998	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/2002	
					QIAS	FDCQA
Telephone Complaints	61*	76*	119*	191**	291**	19**
Written Complaints received	11	22	55	63	50	2
Written Complaints now resolved					33	1
Written Complaints still to be resolved					17	1
Total	72	98	174	254	341	21

* excluding telephone complaints later followed up in writing

** including telephone complaints later received in writing

Financial Overview

Budget of 2001-2002

During 2001-2002, 77.94% of the NCAC's total income came from Commonwealth Funding. The majority of the remaining 22.06% was derived from registration fees and the sale of QIAS and FDCQA publications.

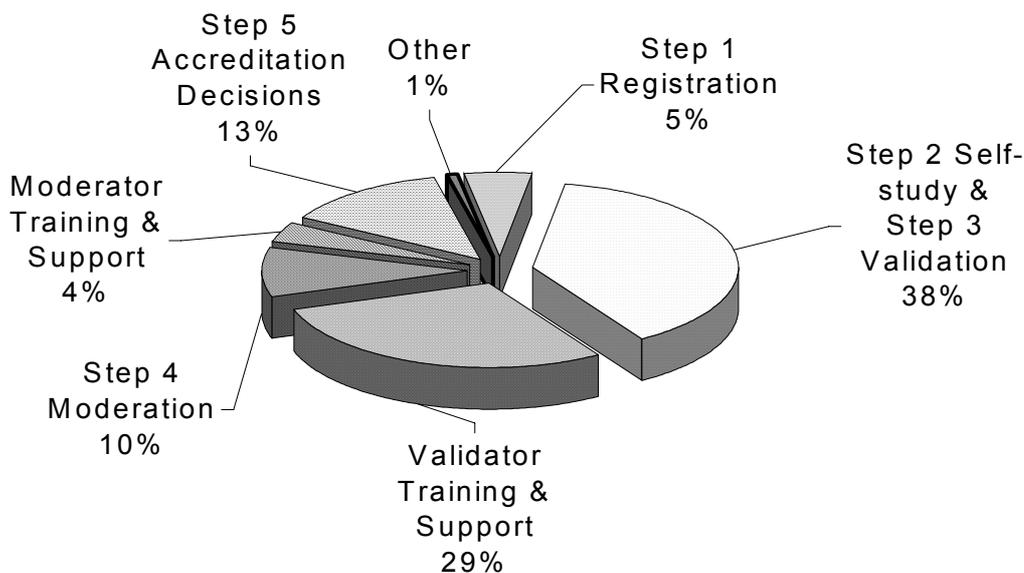Figure 1 shows a breakdown of NCAC income sources for 2001-2002.

Figure 1: NCAC Income for 2001-2002

Registration Fees
12%

Sales of NCAC Publications
2%

Interest Received
2%

Registration Fees (New, COO)
6%

Commonwealth Funding
78%
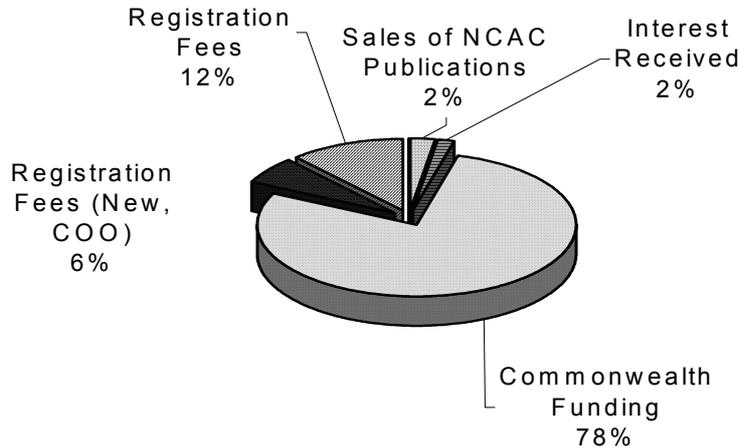
In order to effectively allocate resources the NCAC is required to adequately budget and forecast expenditure for each new financial year. As 2001-2002 saw the introduction of a revised QIAS and FDCQA, it was necessary to allocate funds towards the development of new QIAS and FDCQA publications and resources, particularly those documents relating to Steps 2 and 3.

Figure 2 provides an indication of how NCAC's resources were spread over the 5 steps of the QIAS and FDCQA in 2001/2002.

Figure 2: Actual Net Expenditure for QIAS/FDCQA Processes 2001-2002

Step 5 Accreditation Decisions
13%

Other
1%

Step 1 Registration
5%

Step 2 Self-study & Step 3 Validation
38%

Moderator Training & Support
4%

Step 4 Moderation
10%

Validator Training & Support
29%

Communications Strategies

Putting Children First newsletter development

In January 2002 the NCAC relaunched its newsletter under the title *Putting Children First*. The new format includes information relevant to both FDCQA and QIAS. The newsletter has been published quarterly since September 1994 (originally under the title *Accreditation Update*). The newsletter is an important source of information for service providers, resource agencies, Validators, Moderators and child care professionals.
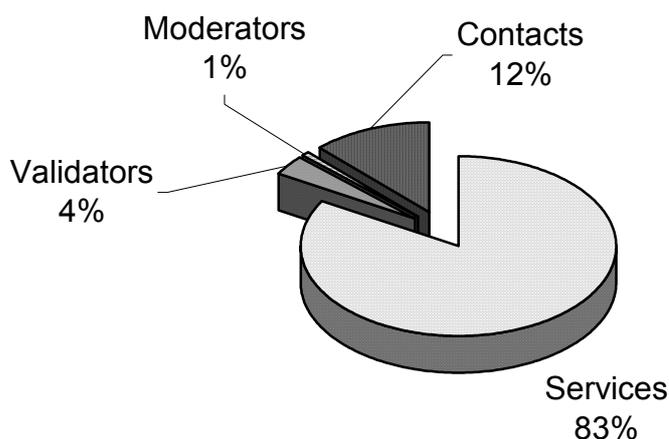
Putting Children First Issue One – March 2002 featured articles by:
* Vivian King on the vital role of carers in ensuring the provision of quality child care
* LeNeve Groves on the necessity of including the perspectives of children, parents and early childhood professionals in concepts of quality
* Dr Elizabeth Mellor on quality child care in an international context

Children, parents, carers and child care professionals from both family day care schemes and long day care centres across Australia also shared their unique perspectives on "Quality Child Care".

Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of the first edition of *Putting Children First* in March 2002.

Figure 7: Distribution of *Putting Children First* for March 2002

Contacts: includes Universities, TAFEs and other individuals and organisations on the NCAC's newsletter mailing list

***Putting Children First* Issue Two - June 2002 featured articles on:**
* Keeping records as evidence of Quality Practices
* Collecting evidence in family day care
* Tips for completing the *Self-study Report* and *Continuing Improvement Plans*

The NCAC also interviewed a long day care centre and a QIAS Validator about their recent experiences with the new Validation Visit.

The *NCAC News* section in *Putting Children* First has also provided the NCAC with an opportunity to distribute information relevant to the administrative aspects of the QA Systems. This includes information regarding Validator Training, fee structures, access to NCAC Publications in community languages, and website updates.

Past copies of *Putting Children First* are available on the NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au). To be included on the mailing list, please contact NCAC by e-mail: qualitycare@ncac.gov.au or telephone 1300 136 554 or 02 8260 1900 and advise whether you prefer to receive an electronic or paper copy.

Translation Support

Translated versions of the *Handbooks* for the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) and Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) are available on the NCAC's website, or by request, in: Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, Indonesian, Khmer, Korean, Polish, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese. Callers who need translation support are able to contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

During Step 3, *Validation Surveys* for completion by families and carers are also provided to services in the above languages.

Support Documents for services progressing through QIAS and FDCQA

Services are assisted in their progress through QIAS and FDCQA by documents providing information on each of the 5 steps.

All support documents are posted with NCAC correspondence as services progress through the steps of the QA Systems. The documents are also available on the NCAC website or will be posted on request.

Brochures and Posters

NCAC's brochure *Choosing Quality Child Care* is designed to provide information for parents about child care services. The document provides information about the QIAS and FDCQA and information to assist parents selecting a service for their child/children.

Following a successful photo shoot in both long day care centres and a family day care scheme in November 2001, the NCAC was able to develop both a brochure cover and a poster with images reflecting the uniqueness and diversity of both long day care centres and family day care schemes.

In February 2002, 200 000 brochures and 15 000 posters were printed and distributed to services with an order form. All brochures and posters requested by services are provided free of charge.

NCAC Website

During 2001/2002 the NCAC website was updated to include information on FDCQA and the revised QIAS.

Publications and documents are also available in pdf (portable document format) on the website.

In October 2001, the website *Service Search Facility* was extended to include the names of family day care schemes registered to participate in FDCQA. These were placed on a temporary page until they could be integrated into the search facility.

In November/December 2001 the *Online Training Modules* for long day care centres and family day care schemes were placed on the website. To date, the NCAC has received positive feedback from users, including students and child care providers, regarding the *Training Module's* content and accessibility.