Putting Children First

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) administers Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) for family day care services and the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long day care services. During 2002/2003 these Quality Assurance Systems covered approximately 4587 services, providing care for approximately 748 053 children. From 1 July 2003, NCAC will commence administration of Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) for outside school hours care services.

Report of the Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer

John Tainton
Chairperson

Denise Taylor
CEO

Inside Child Care in Australia

During 2002/2003 child care has been an important topic on the national agenda. This past year saw raised awareness and public discussion about the importance of the 'early years' in child development. The Australian Government and Opposition released consultation papers and discussion papers respectively focusing on the importance of early childhood.

Australian of the Year Professor Fiona Stanley AC also raised the profile of childhood development, calling on Australians to make the health and well-being of children an important priority on the national agenda.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) announced it would examine the current funding arrangements for child care services and support services. NCAC took part in the consultation process on the redevelopment of the Child Care Support Broadband funding.

NCAC undertook a strategic planning exercise to investigate long-term directions and short-term opportunities for the organisation. September 2002 saw NCAC host a Child Care Environmental Scan. Representatives from various sectors were invited to participate in the Environmental Scan to assist NCAC in its strategic planning process.

The Australian Government expanded on its commitment to Child Care quality with the creation of a third national Quality Assurance system; Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) for outside school hours care services.

The past year has been very challenging for the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) as well as a year of significant achievement. In addition to implementing two new Quality Assurance (QA) systems for long day care centres and family day care schemes, NCAC also commenced the development of OSHCQA

for outside school hours care services which officially commences on 1 July 2003. The impact of this has been tremendous, requiring more staff, more Validators and Moderators, an expanded communications strategy, and on-going quality improvement of the QA systems and the way they are administered.

Developing our Human Resources

Over the year NCAC has seen a growth in staff to handle the implementation of FDCQA and the revised QIAS, as well as the development of OSHCQA. Employee numbers increased in proportion to new responsibilities in 2002/2003 to meet the needs of children's service providers and the efficient, effective administration of the systems.

NCAC staff have risen to the challenges arising from increased workloads and internal changes due to the development and implementation of the QA systems. We would like to thank all staff for their dedication, commitment to quality assurance, and their continued exceptional work in sometimes difficult circumstances.

The calibre of NCAC's team was evident when several Council and staff members were presented with awards for their contributions in the field.

NCAC Chairperson John Tainton and Council Member Judy Atkinson were both honoured with Centenary Medals in recognition of living persons who have made a contribution to Australian society or government. John Tainton was awarded for *service to children through the National Childcare Accreditation Council as Chair and Member*. Judy Atkinson was acknowledged for *service through the Commonwealth and National Childcare Advisory Councils*.

NCAC Validator Program Officer, Jan McFarlane, was awarded an Australia Day Medallion for her outstanding service to children. This award acknowledged her work with and for children throughout her career and her remarkable contribution to the work of NCAC.

Supporting our Validators and Moderators

NCAC's Validator Program Team have had a busy year training peer Validators to conduct Validation Visits at Step 3 in the QA systems. It is vital that there be enough competent Validators trained and able to conduct visits to avoid unnecessary delays for children's services providers waiting for a visit.

Over 235 Validators were trained in 2002-2003. These new Validators, like all NCAC Validators, are supported by the Validator Program Team and the Quality Systems Coordination Team which schedule the visits. They are provided with regular, extensive performance feedback and are supported while on visits by access to a pager service. The "Validator on a Visit" telephone call to the NCAC office is always the top priority.

Likewise, with the commencement of FDCQA Validation Visits, there was a need to train Moderators to conduct Step 4: Moderation. Again, it is important to have sufficient available Moderators to ensure Step 4 is conducted efficiently and that services receive their Accreditation Decision in a reasonable timeframe. During 2002/2003 53 Moderators attended training. These Moderators are supported by the Moderation Program Team which provides feedback and support.

Quality Assurance Milestones

There were several celebratory moments at NCAC in the past year. There was much excitement in December 2002 when the first Family Day Care schemes completed the 5 steps of FDCQA. Thirty schemes were successful and granted Accreditation. Our congratulations to all family day care schemes for the way in which you have embraced Quality Assurance.

NCAC was appointed to administer Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA). NCAC conducted field testing of the draft OSHCQA *Quality Practices Guide* nationally in December 2002, and NCAC Chairperson, John Tainton and Chief Executive Officer, Denise Taylor conducted 58 OSHCQA information sessions in 5 months, for outside school hours care groups across Australia (see page 28 for more information on the development of OSHCQA). The expansion of QA to outside school hours care is a significant achievement for the child care profession. The QA system serves to recognise those working in before school, after school and vacation care services as professionals and will undoubtedly heighten the awareness of families and the community of the important service provided. The federal Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the Hon Larry Anthony MP, launched OSHCQA in June 2003 at Parliament House in Canberra.

Improving our Service

NCAC is committed to quality improvement in relation to its own practices and has been engaged in careful monitoring and evaluation of the new QA systems during 2002/2003.
NCAC has collected feedback from long day care centres, family day care schemes, Validators,

Moderators and peak bodies representing children's service providers throughout the year and has used this feedback to identify areas for improvement. This feedback has shown a need to modify some aspects of FDCQA and the QIAS.

An analysis of *Validation Evaluation Forms* collected from visits to 38 family day care schemes and 238 long day care centres in May-June 2003 revealed that more than 95% of services were satisfied with the professional standard of the Validator. One area highlighted for improvement concerned the *Validation Surveys* for families. This is an area that NCAC will be focusing on in 2003-2004.

QIAS Validation Report 2nd Edition
NCAC received a lot of feedback from long day care centres, Validators and Moderators about the content and format of the QIAS *Validation Report* (1st edition, 2001). This Report was reviewed and amended and the revised QIAS *Validation Report* (2nd edition, 2003) was released in April 2003. The response to this revised *Report* has been positive and NCAC will continue to monitor and evaluate this document.

Accessibility Initiatives
NCAC is also committed to ensuring the accessibility of NCAC information and publications. NCAC has recorded the main publications for each QA system in audio format on compact disk (CD), including the FDCQA *Handbook* and *Quality Practices Guide,* the OSHCQA *Handbook* and *Quality Practices Guide* and,

the QIAS *Handbook* and *Sourcebook.* The audio CDs, recorded in English, are designed to assist people with vision impairment or those who understand spoken English but have difficulty in reading written English.

People with hearing impairments are assisted with captioned versions of the FDCQA, OSHCQA and QIAS videos. The videos explain the QA systems for services and a non-captioned version is sent to each service when it registers with NCAC for the first time. A captioned version can be ordered from NCAC.

Finally, the NCAC website was re-designed to meet Australian Government web accessibility guidelines. The new design incorporates many features to improve the accessibility of the site for visitors with disabilities, low-grade or older technology, poor communications infrastructure or little knowledge of how to use the Internet. Vision Australia Victoria has provided advice and technical assistance to NCAC for the re-design.

Communicating with Stakeholders

NCAC believes that open communication with service providers, families accessing care, representative peak bodies, State and Territory licensing authorities, resource agencies and government is crucial to ensuring the smooth operation of the QA systems.

Families
Families using care are an important part of the QA systems. Many indicators of quality practice in the standards set by NCAC require active consultation with families on policies and procedures within the child care setting. Feedback from families is also considered in making Accreditation Decisions as families are asked to complete a survey at Step 3: Validation, the results of which are incorporated into the composite *Quality Profile Certificate* the service receives with their Decision.

NCAC's *Choosing Quality Child Care* brochure is a key avenue for communicating with families about quality child care. The brochure contains suggestions for families on what to look for in a quality child care setting, what sort of questions to ask of service providers, information on the QA systems, and helpful contact details. The brochures are distributed widely through services, peak organisations and various government bodies such as Australian Tax Offices and local councils. The online brochure order form on NCAC's website has been used frequently by families seeking information on quality care, and these brochures are posted the same/next day of request. The brochure and its accompanying poster were revised and reprinted in June 2003 to accommodate OSHCQA.

NCAC's website search facility has been expanded to allow families to search for child care services in their area.

Service Providers
NCAC's quarterly newsletter, *Putting Children First,* is delivered to all child care services participating in the QA systems. It contains information about the QA systems, how to achieve quality in specific areas, and NCAC administrative issues.

NCAC's website contains all material required for the QA systems. NCAC's website is updated weekly with

new information and the updated register of services participating in the QA systems. From August 2002 to February 2003 information about OSHCQA was added to the site, including the draft *Quality Practices Guide*. From March 2003 to June 2003 as OSHCQA publications became finalised they were added to the site. The *Online Training Module* for OSHCQA was uploaded in June 2003.

Between 11 February 2003 and 30 June 2003 John Tainton and Denise Taylor met with 58 outside school hours care groups in venues across Australia to explain the OSHCQA process.

NCAC receives feedback from services about our performance and about the QA systems on the *Validation Evaluation Form,* through direct correspondence, or through face-to-face meetings with service providers. NCAC welcomes all feedback and encourages service providers to put any concerns in writing to NCAC.

Peak Child Care Bodies, Resource and Advisory Agencies and Licensing Authorities

Peak child care organisations representing services are important to NCAC and communication with these bodies provides NCAC with feedback on our performance and on the administration of the QA systems. NCAC has commenced bi-annual meetings with peak organisations to provide an open channel of communication about issues relating to the QA systems and stakeholders.

One particular challenge this year was to initiate communication with the numerous and diverse organisations nationwide involved in managing or supporting outside school hours care services, for example Police Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYC), Independent schools, State schools, and School Principal's organisations. NCAC has established communication with many of these organisations and is always keen to hear from other bodies that we have not yet formed a relationship with. NCAC has also been in communication with organisations that provide training and advice to outside school hours services. In many cases these organisations have assisted NCAC to organise presentations for service providers about OSHCQA, for which we are very thankful.

NCAC has developed positive relationships with Resource and Advisory Agencies nationwide that support child care services with quality practices. These organisations are vital to supporting services, especially those struggling to meet standards. NCAC thanks the staff and management of the various resource and advisory agencies who have worked hard over this past year to ensure services are supported.

Unfortunately not all States and Territories have licensing standards for all types of child care. NCAC hopes that in years to come licensing will be available nationwide to ensure that there is a minimum standard below which no service can legally operate. The QA systems build on the licensing standards and as such it is important that NCAC communicate openly with State/Territory licensing authorities, to ensure effective coordination of licensing and accreditation processes.

Government

NCAC is funded by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) and reports to FaCS and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on quality issues. The commitment of government to quality child care is vital for the continued success of the QA systems.

Looking Forward

NCAC has had a tremendous year and 2003-2004 promises to be just as challenging. NCAC looks forward to the implementation of OSHCQA as outside school hours care services register with NCAC from 1 July 2003 to 30 September 2003. By early 2004 all family day care schemes in Australia should have progressed through the QA system and many will be planning for their second round. Long day care centres will continue with their progress through the QIAS.

Based on feedback NCAC has received from services we will embark on several quality improvement plans for the coming year to ensure that NCAC is meeting the needs of our stakeholders.
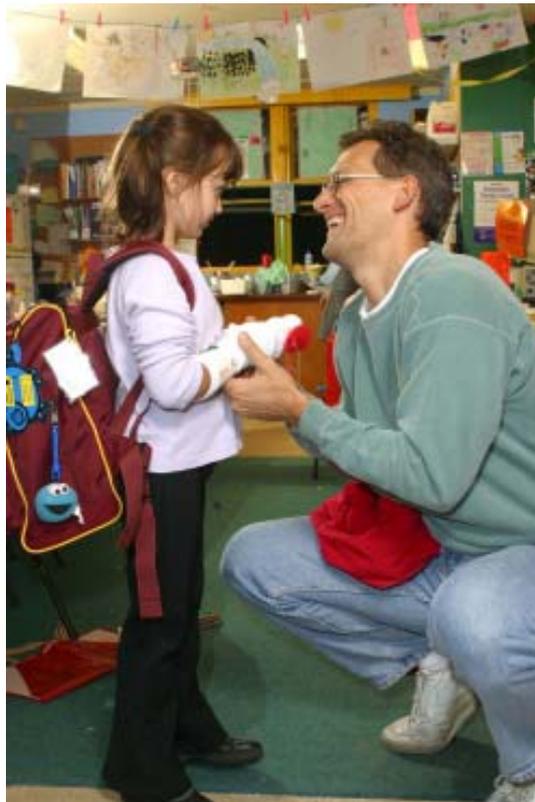
Family Validation Surveys

NCAC has received feedback from services about the *Validation Survey for Families* in FDCQA and QIAS which indicates that some families are having difficulties with certain aspects of the *Surveys*. NCAC is keen to ensure that all families with children in care are able to be surveyed about the quality of care provided in the service. To this end, NCAC is looking to revise the FDCQA and QIAS surveys for families.

FDCQA Re-classification

During the past twelve months NCAC has been monitoring feedback from schemes in relation to the FDCQA *Quality Practices Guide*. Many schemes have noted that the indicators in the *Quality Practices Guide* are not prioritised and this has caused some difficulty working out where to start especially in Principles where there are a large number of indicators.

NCAC has decided to undertake a re-classification of the indicators and has formed a reference group of family day care service providers to assist with this project. The re-classification project will involve grouping the indicators into three levels to help NCAC make more effective Accreditation Decisions. Levelling the indicators will also assist schemes in identifying what is essential to reach the level required for Accreditation - i.e. where to start and what to work on once the Accreditation standard has been achieved. This will assist schemes planning for continuing quality improvement. The three levels would be Satisfactory, Good Quality and High Quality.

Once this re-classification is complete, NCAC will develop the 2nd edition of the FDCQA *Quality Practices Guide.* It is expected that this revised edition will be available to all schemes in mid-2004.

The 2002-2003 *Annual Report*

The *Report* that follows is a summary of NCAC's achievements over the past year. We thank all stakeholders who have supported, and continue to support, NCAC and the QA systems. We look forward to continued success in 2003-2004.

John Tainton
Chairperson

Denise Taylor
CEO

National Childcare Accreditation Council

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 full and part-time staff in Sydney, as well as over 300 peer Validators and 41 Moderators located throughout Australia.

Please visit the NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au) for more information on NCAC and its Council Members.

John Tainton - Chairperson
(Queensland)
appointed to 1 April 2005

Judy Atkinson
(South Australia)
appointed to 2 April 2004

Judy Kynaston
(New South Wales)
appointed to 1 April 2005

Dawn Casey
(Commonwealth
Representative)

Andrea Larkin
(New South Wales)
appointed to 1 April 2004

Helen Hobson
(Queensland)
appointed to 1 April 2005

Jenny Mobbs
(Queensland)
appointed to 2 April 2004

Corporate Governance

The Role of the NCAC Council

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) is responsible for the administration of quality assurance systems for child care services eligible to receive funding from the Australian Government (currently Child Care Benefit). NCAC is accountable to the Australian Government Minister, Children and Youth Affairs, in relation to the administration of the quality assurance systems in accordance with Ministerial guidelines or delegations and regularly reports to the Minister on the major issues related to the administration of the quality assurance systems.

In general, NCAC is responsible for, and has the authority to determine, all matters relating to the policies, practices, management and operations of NCAC. The Council has the final responsibility for the successful operations of the NCAC, which include:

· setting the goals of NCAC, including short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives;
· providing the overall direction of NCAC;
· determining all policies governing the operations of NCAC;
· monitoring the performance of the Chief Executive Officer;
· approving major operating plans, including an annual strategic plan;
· approving the annual budget and long-term budgets;
· reviewing the annual progress and performance of NCAC in meeting its objectives.

NCAC Meetings

NCAC Council meets seven times each year for scheduled meetings. Additional meetings, including teleconference meetings, are held as required.

Composition of the NCAC Council

NCAC consists of a Chairperson and six members appointed by the Australian Government Minister, Children and Youth Affairs.

Remuneration

Remuneration for the Chairperson and Council members is set by the Remuneration Tribunal.

Conflict of Interest

NCAC has in place a policy and procedures for the disclosure and resolution of any matter which may give rise to actual or perceived conflicts between the interests of the Council Member and those of the NCAC.

External Auditor Independence

NCAC Council closely monitors the independence of the external auditors. Policy is in place to restrict the type of non-audit services which can be provided by the external auditors.

Standards

The Chief Executive Officer and the Financial Controller have certified the accuracy and completeness of financial information prepared, in accordance with relevant accounting standards, as provided to the Council.

The 5 Steps of Quality Assurance

Step 1: Registration

Statistics are available below for long day care centres participating in the QIAS. Statistics for family day care schemes participating in Family Day Care Quality Assurance have not been included, as the number of services registered has remained at 324 for the majority of the financial year. There were also no significant numbers of schemes who underwent a change in ownership or sponsorship between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003.
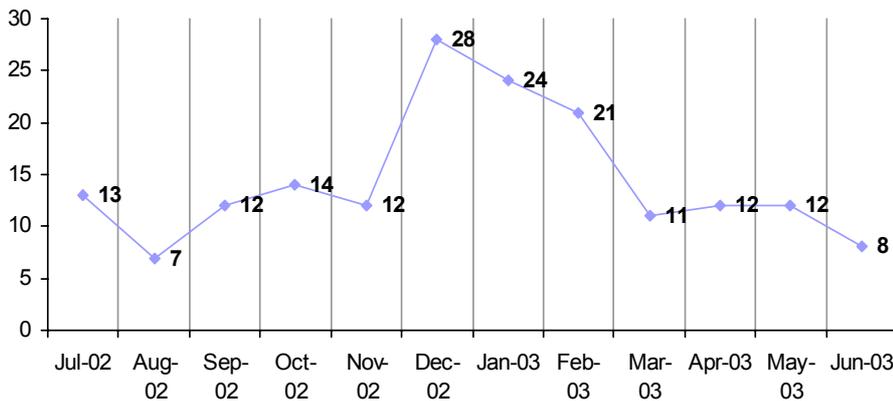

Figure 1. Number of long day care centres who registered to participate in the QIAS for the first time between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003.
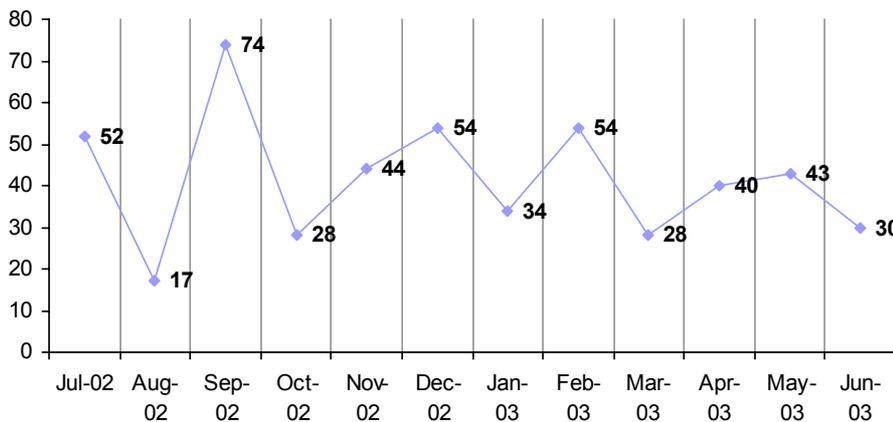

Figure 2. Number of long day care centres currently participating in the QIAS, who underwent a change of ownership between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003.

Step 2: Self-study and Continuing Improvement

Figure 3. *Self-study Reports* **received from family day care schemes participating in FDCQA during 2002/2003.**
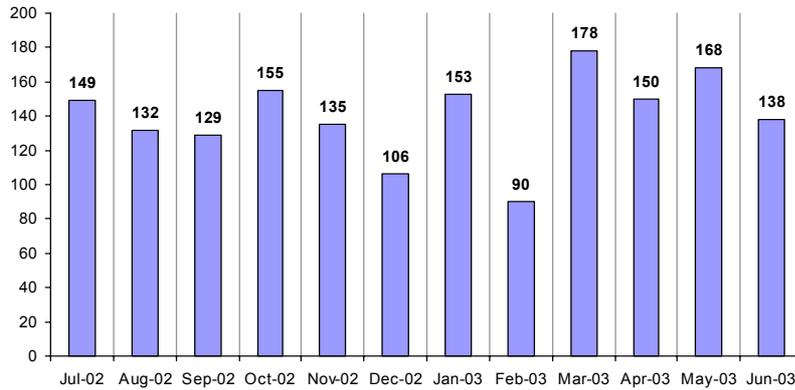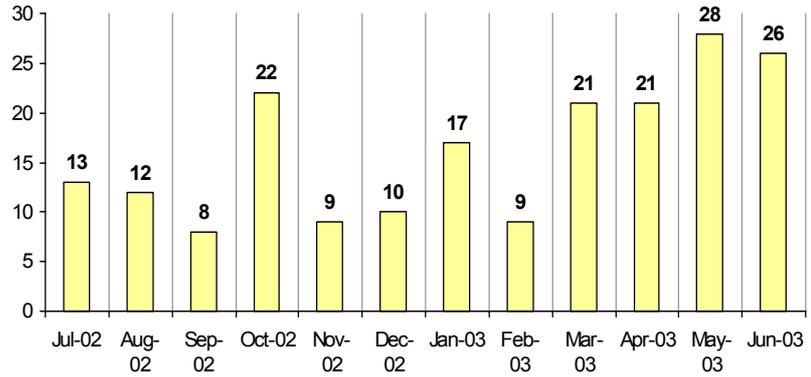

Figure 4. *Self-study Reports* **received from long day care centres participating in the QIAS during 2002/2003.**

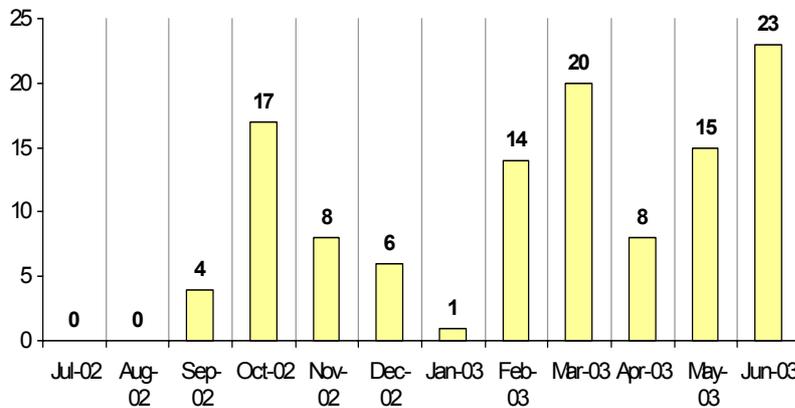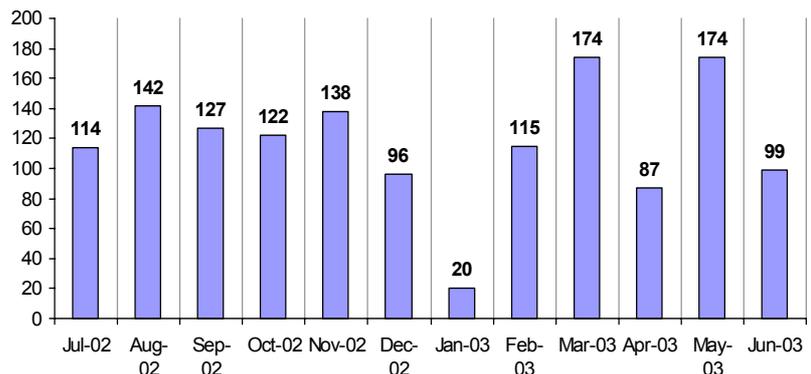

Step 3: Validation

Figure 5. Number of FDCQA Validation Visits scheduled and conducted during 2002/2003.

Figure 6. Number of QIAS Validation Visits scheduled and conducted during 2002/2003
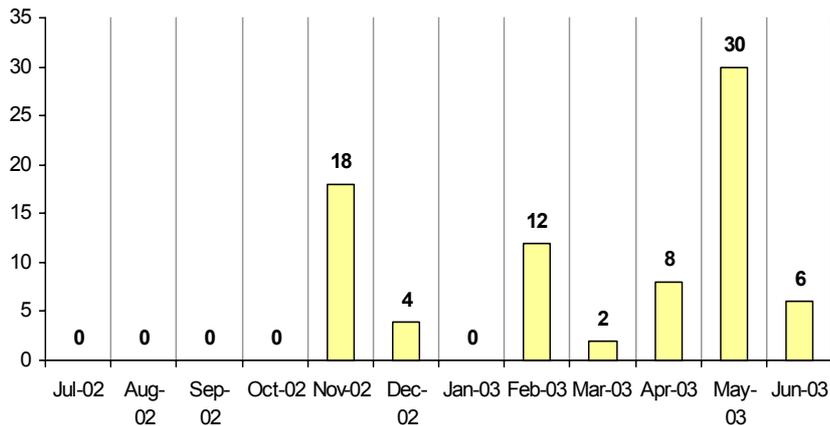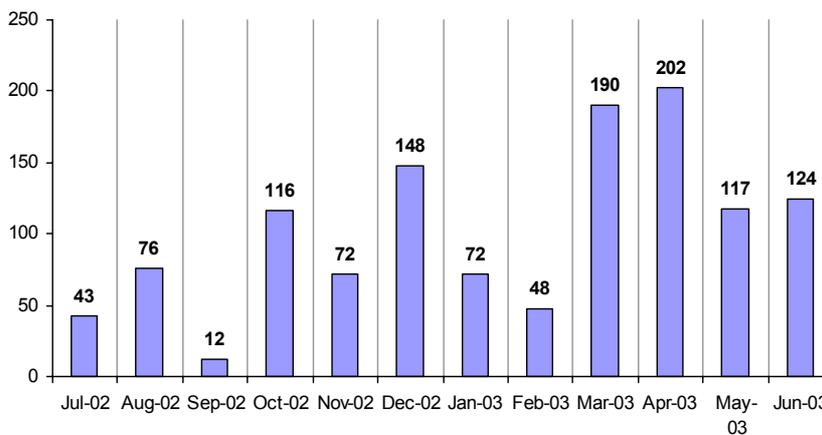
Step 4: Moderation

Figure 7, Number of FDCQA Moderation Sessions held during 2002/2003.

Figure 8. Number of QIAS Moderation Sessions held during 2002/2003.

Step 5: Accreditation Decision

New Schemes/in Self-study, Validation, or awaiting Accreditation Decision 81%

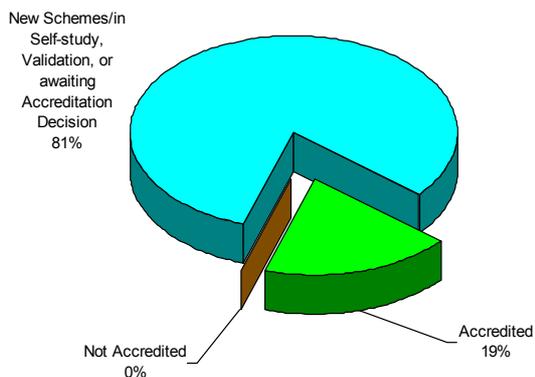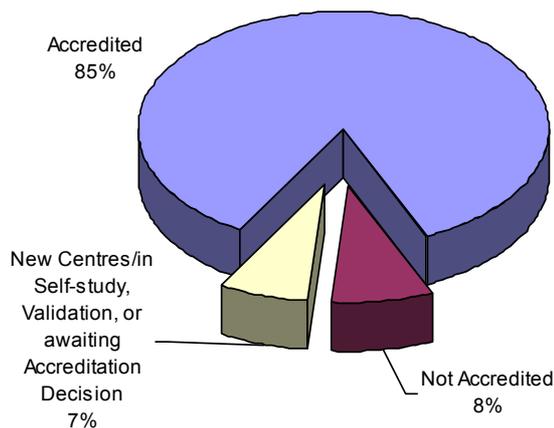Not Accredited 0%

Accredited 19%

Figure 9. Progress of family day care schemes participating in FDCQA as at 30 June 2003.

Figure 10. Progress of long day care centres participating in the QIAS as at 30 June 2003.

Accredited 85%

New Centres/in Self-study, Validation, or awaiting Accreditation Decision 7%

Not Accredited 8%

Financial Overview

Budget of 2002 - 2003

During 2002-2003, 85% of the NCAC's total income came from funding provided by the Australian Government. The majority of the remaining 15% was derived from annual registration fees.
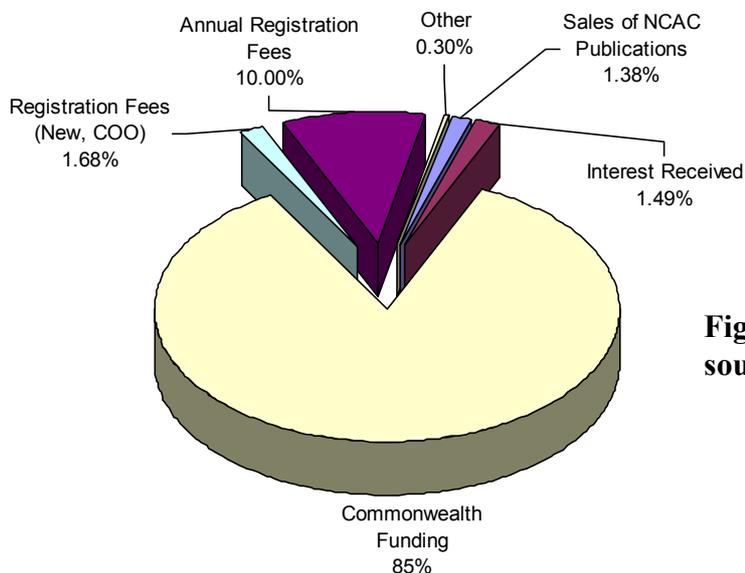

Figure 11: Breakdown of NCAC income sources for 2002/2003.

The allocation of these funds goes directly towards the administration of the QA systems. Figure 12 provides an indication of how NCAC's resources were spread over the 5 steps of the QA Systems in 2002-2003.
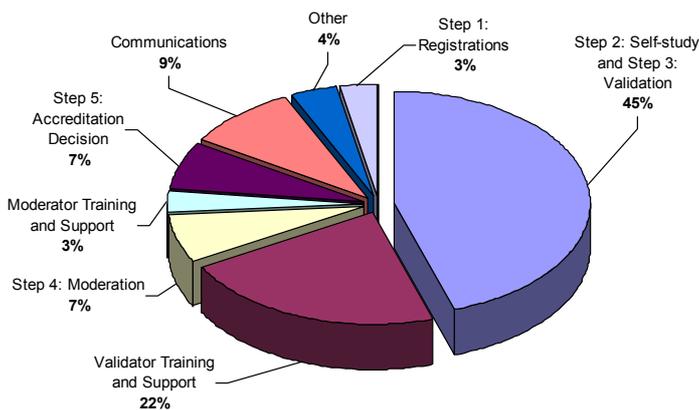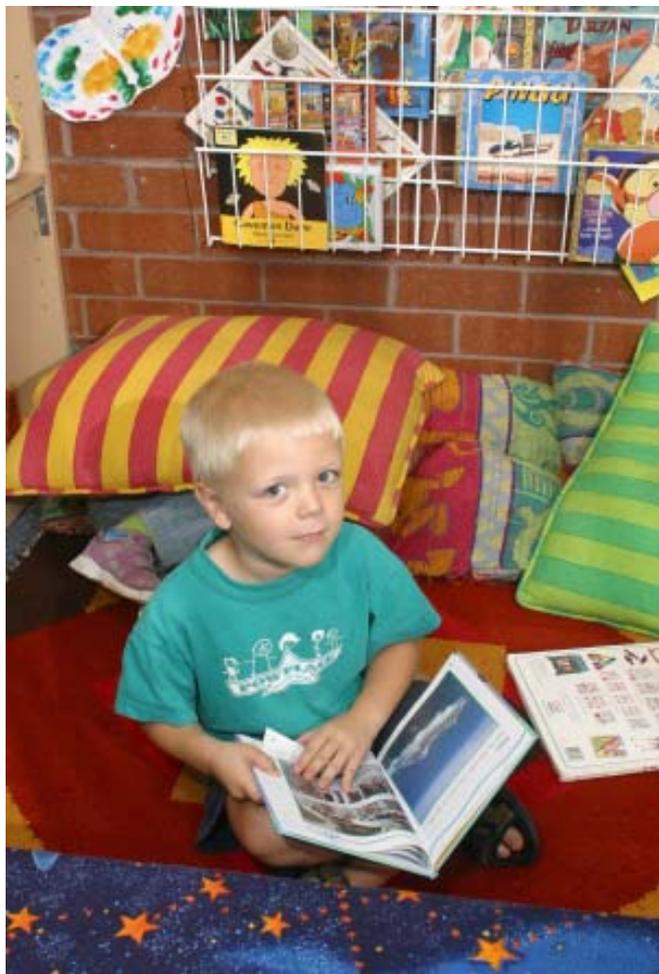

Figure 12: Actual Net Expenditure for QA Processes in 2002 - 2003

Evaluation of the Quality Assurance Systems

NCAC conducts an analysis of service satisfaction with the Validation Visit (Step 3) each year using service responses to the *Validation Evaluation Form.* The 2002/2003 analysis was based on evaluation responses from 38 family day care schemes and 238 long day care centres, who underwent a Validation Visit in May and June 2003.

Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA)
NCAC looked at schemes' overall level of satisfaction with the professional standard of the Validator's conduct and performance. On average, over a range of measures regarding Validator performance, more than 95% of schemes indicated that they were satisfied with the professional standard of the Validator assigned to their scheme.

Significantly, schemes were impressed with the calibre of the Validator selected for their Validation Visit, as indicated by positive responses to questions about: the Validator being on time (99%); courteous (100%); prepared (96%); knowledgeable (97%); professional (97 %); and objective (96%).

Of the 38 responses, 84% of schemes indicated that the Validator had enough time to observe the scheme; those schemes responding in the negative suggested that more/ all carers should be included in the Validation Visit. In addition, 16% believed there was not enough time for the Validator to complete all the required tasks.

The majority of comments relating to how Step 3: Validation could be improved were about the *Validation Surveys*. Most schemes commented that families were unsure of some questions and that the language used in the *Surveys* was difficult to understand.

Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)
NCAC looked at centres' overall level of satisfaction with professional standard of the Validator's conduct and performance. On average, over a range of measures regarding Validator performance, more than 95% of services indicated that they were satisfied with the professional standard of the Validator assigned to their centre.

Centres responses signify that most were impressed with the calibre of the Validator selected for their Validation Visit, indicated by the positive responses to questions about: the Validator being on time (95%); courteous (97%); prepared (100%); knowledgeable (99%); professional (98 %); and objective (93%).

91% of centres stated that the Validator had enough time to observe the centre and 94% believed the Validator had enough time to complete the required tasks.

Validators -Training and Support

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 2002/2003, **156** QIAS Validator applicants completed the initial five-day training course. **155** of these applicants met all of the competencies and became QIAS Validators. **79** FDCQA Validator applicants completed the initial five-day training course. **76** applicants met the competencies and became FDCQA Validators.

Provision of Support
Validators are able to access support from NCAC's Validator Program Team, during and outside of office hours. A pager service is used to support Validators outside of office hours. **84** pager calls were returned between July 2002 and June 2003.

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*. The Validator Program Team provided a total of **249** Performance Feedback Telephone calls during 2002/2003.

As there were no retraining sessions held for active QIAS and FDCQA Validators in 2002/2003, feedback telephone calls for these Validators will be conducted from September 2003.

Validator Withdrawal
29 Validators were withdrawn in 2002/2003. Of these, 28 were QIAS Validators and 1 was a FDCQA Validator. Of the 28 QIAS Validators withdrawn, 9 were withdrawn as they had left long day care and 6 as they had been out of long day care for more than 12 months.

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).

Moderator training on FDCQA and the QIAS is conducted by the NCAC and covers:

- An overview of the 5 steps of the QA Systems
- The role of the Moderator under the QA Systems. 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.
- Moderators must complete a multiple choice test and related exercises.

During 2002/2003, **38** Moderators attended training on FDCQA and **15** on the QIAS. All of these applicants met all of the competencies and became NCAC Moderators.

Complaints about Quality Practices in Child Care Services

The 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, NCAC has received a significant increase in the number of enquiries and complaints from families about long day and family day care services. NCAC also receives complaints about services from staff and members of the public who may have some involvement with the service.

For more information about NCAC Complaints Handling please refer to NCAC's website (www.ncac.gov.au).

Table 1 provides statistics regarding the numbers of written and telephone complaints the NCAC has received in relation to the quality of care provided at registered services.

	2002/2003	
	QIAS	**FDCQA**
Telephone Complaints	425	37
New Written Complaints received	70	5
Written Complaints still to be resolved	17	1

Table 1: Complaints received by the NCAC in relation to registered child care services

Communications Strategies

Putting Children First

 NCAC's *Putting Children First* newsletter has been published quarterly since September 1994 (originally under the title *Accreditation Update*) and is an important source of information for service providers, resource agencies, Validators, Moderators and child care professionals. *Putting Children First,* was delivered to services in September 2002, December 2002, March 2003 and June 2003.

Some of the *Putting Children First* highlights in 2002-2003 include:

- OSHCQA Draft Quality Areas and Principles (published September 2002)
- *Diversity in Children's Services* – an article by Vida Khoshkhesal on the importance of diversity (published September 2002)
- *Enrolment and Orientation* – the first step towards real family partnerships in children's services – an article by Rebecca Watson (published December 2002)
- *FDCQA Validation Visit Experiences* – as the first Validation Visits for FDCQA were happening, NCAC asked a coordination unit, carer and FDCQA Validator to share their experiences (published December 2002)
- *Profiles of Family Day Care Schemes* – an insight into the experiences of schemes recently

achieving Accreditation (published March 2003)
- *A Collaborative Approach to Achieving and Maintaining Quality* – an article on the importance of developing solid partnerships between management, staff, carers and families. (published March 2003)
- *Keeping it safe in children's services* – Information on Occupational Health and Safety for all children's services staff and management (published June 2003)
- *Getting Started with OSHCQA* – practical advice on how to commence the self-study process for outside school hours care services (published June 2003)
- *What is typical practice* – NCAC's Validation Team provided an insight into recognising typical practice in QIAS (published June 2003)
- *Infectious diseases* – information on how to spot the signs and how to prevent outbreaks occurring. (published June 2003)

A survey of *Putting Children First* readers was conducted in April 2003 which asked questions about the NCAC newsletter and website (www.ncac.gov.au). The results of the 1336 surveys received have been finalised in a report: *Putting Children First and NCAC Website Reader's Survey April 2003* which is published on the NCAC website. This report contains a comparative analysis with the 2000 survey and shows a very favourable response to both the website and newsletter.

Figure 13 illustrates the distribution of the sixth edition of *Putting Children First* in June 2003. Contacts: includes Universities, TAFEs and other individuals and organisations on the NCAC's newsletter mailing list.
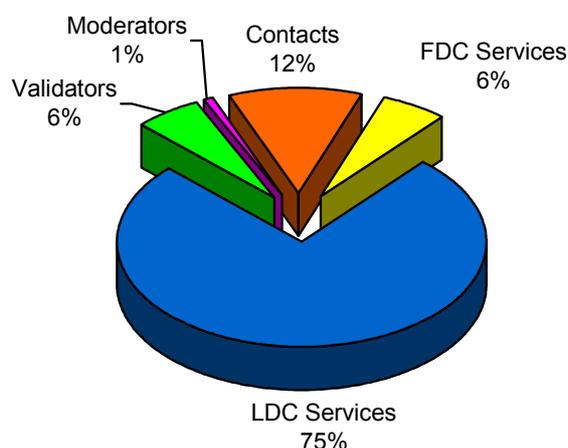

Moderators 1%
Contacts 12%
FDC Services 6%
Validators 6%
LDC Services 75%

Figure 13*: Putting Children First* **June 2003 Distribution**

The NCAC News section in *Putting Children First* continues to provide services with 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).

Translation Support
Translated versions of the *Handbooks* for the QIAS, FDCQA and OSHCQA are available on the NCAC's website, or by request, in:
Arabic, Bosnian (OSHCQA unavailable), Chinese, Indonesian, Khmer (OSHCQA unavailable), Korean, Polish, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese. During Step 3, *Validation Surveys* for completion by families and carers are also provided to services in the above languages

Telephone callers to NCAC who need translation support are able to contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

Support Documents for services progressing through QA systems
Services are assisted in their progress through QA systems 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. NCAC will develop support documents for OSHCQA Steps 2 – 5 in the 2003 – 2004 financial year.

Brochures and Posters
NCAC's brochure *Choosing Quality Child Care* was updated in June 2003 and is designed to provide information for families about child care services. The document provides information about the QA systems as well as information to assist families selecting a service for their child/children. The brochure and its

accompanying poster were revised and reprinted in June 2003 to accommodate OSHCQA.

Following a successful photo shoot in long day care, family day care and outside school hours care services in April 2003, NCAC was able to update the *Choosing Quality Child Care Brochure* and poster with images reflecting the uniqueness and diversity of services.

In June 2002, 500,000 brochures and over 10,000 posters were printed. Copies of the brochure will be distributed in OSHCQA Registration Packs and will be available for parents online and by request

Choosing Quality Child Care brochures and posters have been delivered to services, organisations and individuals on request throughout the year. The online brochure order form has been used frequently by families seeking information on quality care, and these brochures are posted the same/next day of request. Family day care schemes and long day care centres were advised of the availability of the new brochure and poster in the June edition of *Putting Children First*.

NCAC Website
NCAC's website is updated weekly with new information. From August 2002 to February 2003 information about OSHCQA was added to the site, including the draft *Quality Practices Guide*. From March 2003 to June 2003 as OSHCQA publications were finalised they were added to the site. The online training module for OSHCQA was uploaded in June 2003.

A comprehensive website management strategy is in place to ensure that each page on the site is reviewed every three months and the website search facility has been updated regularly with service details.

Development of Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance

Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) was designed to provide outside school hours care services with guidelines for self-improvement and evaluation. The standards of quality care are intended to guide staff practices that best promote positive outcomes for children. This is achieved when management, staff and families work together to assess the current state of their out of school hours care programs, set goals for program improvement and have their quality standards validated.

OSHCQA processes were developed through consultation with the sector and through a cost-impact analysis. OSHCQA involves the participation and compliance of outside school hours care services with principles of quality that are verified through a combination of self-assessment and external validation. OSHCQA also requires services to develop a quality improvement plan and to implement it successfully.

In 2001, an OSHCQA Working Party comprising of representatives of the National Outside School Hours Services Association (NOSHSA) and the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) was formed to support the development of a national Quality Assurance system for outside school hours care. In June 2001, the inaugural meeting of the OSHCQA Working Party was held in Brisbane.

In April 2002, representatives of private operators, through the Australian Federation of Child Care Associations (AFCCA) and the Australian Confederation of Child Care Inc (ACCC), were introduced to the working party. The working party also included consultation with representatives from other stakeholder organisations.

The OSHCQA Working Party, in consultation with selected sector representatives, developed a draft guide identifying quality practice indicators for outside school hours care. The draft guide evolved into the draft OSHCQA *Quality Practices Guide* (2002). This document was available for consultation from August 2002 to December 2002. During this period descriptors of quality in the draft *Quality Practices Guide* were field tested in 38 services throughout Australia.

Data collected from the field test were analysed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to confirm the integrity of the set of standards. Some adjustments were made on the basis of this analysis and feedback gained through consultations led to some further refinements to produce a *Quality Practices Guide* which has conceptual and research validity. The Working Party handed over the *Quality Practices Guide* to NCAC in December 2002 to prepare for implementation in July 2003.

National Childcare Accreditation Council

NCAC made initial contact with all outside school hours care services in November 2002, advising that OSHCQA would be commencing in July 2003.

NCAC Chairperson, John Tainton and Chief Executive Officer, Denise Taylor met with 58 outside school hours care groups in venues across Australia between 11 February 2003 and 30 June 2003 to explain the OSHCQA process.

From August 2002 to February 2003 information about OSHCQA was added to the NCAC website, including the draft *Quality Practices Guide*. As publications were finalised they were added to the site.

An interim *Quality Assurance Update* was sent to all outside school hours care services in April 2003 advising on the progress of the development of OSHCQA. Also during April and May 2003 an internal audit of the NCAC website was conducted to ensure that the content was appropriate and inclusive of outside school hours care services.

Registration information was sent to all known outside school hours care services in May 2003, inviting them to register with NCAC from 1 July 2003. A support document for Step 1 was developed along with a form for return at registration.

In June 2003 the OSHCQA *Quality Practices Guide, Handbook, Self-study Report* and *Workbook* were published. These materials were made available in PDF on the NCAC website. Also in June, an OSHCQA introductory training video, hosted by Andrew Daddo was developed, the video will be distributed to services as they register with NCAC.

Since this time, translations of the OSHCQA *Handbook* in 11 community languages have been placed on the NCAC website, audio CDs of the *Quality Practices Guide* and *Handbook* were reproduced for accessibility, the *Online Training Module* for OSHCQA was uploaded to the website and the *Choosing Quality Child Care* brochures, posters and the *Customer Service Charter* were revised and reprinted in June 2003 to accommodate OSHCQA.

The Hon Larry Anthony, MP, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs officially launched OSHCQA at Parliament House in Canberra on 26 June 2003. OSHCQA will officially commence on 1 July 2003.