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## Continuous improvement and the Assessment and Rating Process

Fundamental to the assessment and rating process is the expectation that services will improve what they do through a continuous improvement process.

Central to this is the requirement for services to have an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process.

All services must have a quality improvement plan.

### Next assessment and ratings

The results of next assessment and ratings show services are demonstrating a commitment to ongoing quality improvement. By the end of 2016 in Victoria, 60% of services that had received a next assessment and rating visit achieved a higher rating. For the 40% of services with no change in their overall rating, over 65% of these improved their performance against the NQS.

The [QARD 2016 Annual Report](#) presents a case study by an OSHC service in Yallourn North demonstrating commitment to ongoing quality improvement.

**Services and educators who are committed to continuous improvement are always thinking about how their great practice and successful strategies can become better and better.**

### Promoting continuous improvement

The [Guide to the National Quality Standard](#) refers to the process of continuous quality improvement as a '...positive organisational culture [in] an environment of trust and openness where management and staff members are motivated to continuously improve the service for the benefit of children and their families' (ACECQA, September 2013, p. 168).

Promoting continuous improvement in your service requires deep reflection. It also requires a '[lively culture of professional enquiry](#)' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13) where educators can think and rethink, imagine and reimagine and make shared decisions about what improvement looks like for them.

**The reality of attaining a Meeting or Exceeding rating is that**

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## New OSHC guide available for school councils and the sector



A [Guide to Outside School Hours Care \(OSHC\) Provision: Support for school councils to establish and operate an OSHC service](#) is now available on the Department's website.

The Guide is primarily for use by school councils in government schools, and contains information that all those working in the OSHC sector may find useful.

The Guide, developed in partnership with Community Child Care Association and in consultation with government schools and regional staff, brings together information from across different areas of the Department in the one place.

"I think the Guide is a great resource for school councils considering or developing an OSHC service. I like the links and references, and the list of things to do and consider throughout the journey of setting up and having an OSHC service are tremendous.

School Councils will feel supported throughout the process because there is a clear road-map of Department advice when big decisions are to be made." Principal, Tatura Primary School

The Guide provides an overview of the regulations for early childhood education and care services under the National Quality Framework, legal requirements and operational guidance.

Whether school council managed or third party operated, the Guide supports schools to provide a quality OSHC service for children and their families.

### More information

[View the Guide](#) on our website.

## Continuous improvement

*Continued from page one*

**the culture of continuous improvement must continue to be nurtured and cultivated.**



For services to be rated Exceeding NQS under Standard 7.2, the self-assessment and quality improvement process must include genuine opportunities for family members and children to offer feedback or input into the decision making at the service. Effective management is also important, requiring constant review of a changing environment.

For more information see the article by Catharine Hydon [Continuous Improvement: The New Normal](#).

EARNING AN  
EXCELLENT  
RATING

## Balnarring Preschool earns Excellent rating



Rated  
EXCELLENT  
by ACECQA



Congratulations to Balnarring Preschool, situated in Balnarring on the Mornington Peninsula, in the South Eastern Victoria Region for being awarded the Excellent rating on 6 July 2017.

It is the 9th Victorian service to be awarded an Excellent rating since 2015.

Balnarring Preschool offers three and four year old kindergarten programs based on the concept of 'learning through play'.

The service believes that an important part of childhood is being outdoors and exploring nature. The service was recognised for its exceptional commitment to providing high quality programs that support children to connect with the natural environment through its Beach and Bush programs.



The service demonstrated outstanding commitment to embedding excellent practice and to developing initiatives and collaborative partnerships with local organisations and groups to support children's wellbeing, development and connection with the community.

Balnarring Preschool was acknowledged for its respectful engagement with, and promotion of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The service demonstrated exceptional collaborative partnerships with community organisations such as the local primary school, the early learning centre and local Elders. This led to supporting children's cultural competence and providing opportunities for children, families and the local community to connect with the land and develop strong and empowering Indigenous perspectives.

Approved providers with a service that has received an overall rating of 'Exceeding National Quality Standard' are eligible to apply to ACECQA for the Excellent rating.

Further information is available at: [www.acecqa.gov.au/excellent-rating](http://www.acecqa.gov.au/excellent-rating)

# Reportable Conduct Scheme commenced with new reporting requirement for some services



As a result of the Betrayal of Trust report from the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations, the Victorian Government introduced a range of measures to better protect children.

The measures also position Victoria to respond effectively to anticipated recommendations of the Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

These include:

- [The Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- [Organisational Duty of Care](#)

The Child Safe Standards were introduced in January 2016 and the Reportable Conduct Scheme is being phased in from 1 July 2017. They are administered by the Commission for Children and Young People (Commission).

Most Early Childhood Education and Care services will need to comply with the Reportable Conduct Scheme from January 2019. However, some services will be brought in earlier as they are part of an organisation that operates a service that is included in the first or second phase, including **for example**:



## Phase 1: From 1 July 2017

- Any early childhood education and care service operated by a school
- Department of Health and Human Services-funded services

## Phase 2: From 1 January 2018

- Kindergartens run by an organisation which provides non-residential disability services or is a disability service provider within the meaning of the Disability Act 2006

## Videos explaining the Scheme

The Commission has created two videos that explain the scheme:

[Introducing the Reportable Conduct Scheme:](#)

[Treating child safety seriously](#)



## For more information and guidance:

Organisations covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme should contact the Commission for clarification, guidance and to discuss any concerns.

Telephone: (03) 8601 5281 or

email [childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au](mailto:childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au).

Further information about the Reportable Conduct Scheme is available on the [Commission's website](#)

## Reminder about IRIS alerts



Some services have recently started receiving Code Amber IRIS Alerts from the Department after reported suspicious activity.

The Department's IRIS (Incident Reporting Information System) is an important internal communication tool.

IRIS Alerts are distributed to key staff across the department to convey information relating to a wide range of categories including alleged criminal activity, critical incidents, severe weather events and emergencies.

**IRIS Alerts forwarded to schools and early childhood facilities are for internal communication purposes only. They are not to be further distributed to parents or the wider community.**

**This is because information they contain is unsubstantiated and the format of the alert is unsuitable for external communication, providing the possibility to generate undue anxiety or confusion outside the Department.**



### **Code Amber Alerts**

One category of IRIS Alerts is known as IRIS Code Amber Alerts and these relate to the reporting of unwelcome persons or vehicles.

Although unsubstantiated, regions promptly forward these IRIS Code Amber Alerts to schools and early childhood facilities within a defined area from the point of origin.

These provide a heads up to a potential threat or risk within the area. These reports are also made to police who formally investigate them.



### **Reporting obligations**

While schools can use IRIS to report incidents to the Department, services must make notifications via NQA ITS. A list of notifications and timeframes is available on [our website](#).

# Supervisor certificate approvals being phased out 1 October



From 1 October 2017, [changes to the NQF will come into effect](#) and supervisor certificates will no longer be required. In the lead up to 1 October, services can use the service supervisor certificate.

A person covered by the service supervisor certificate does not need to apply to the regulatory authority for an individual supervisor certificate.

This means you do not need to provide evidence to the regulatory authority of your qualification and experience, and do not need to pay the \$30 application fee.

If you wish to submit a new service approval prior to 1 October 2017, your nominated supervisor will be required to hold their own supervisor certificate. Please contact the Regulatory Authority if you require advice.

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