

## **Examining the Professional Standards for Outside School Hours Care Educators**

### Author

Cartmel, Jennifer, Hurst, Bruce

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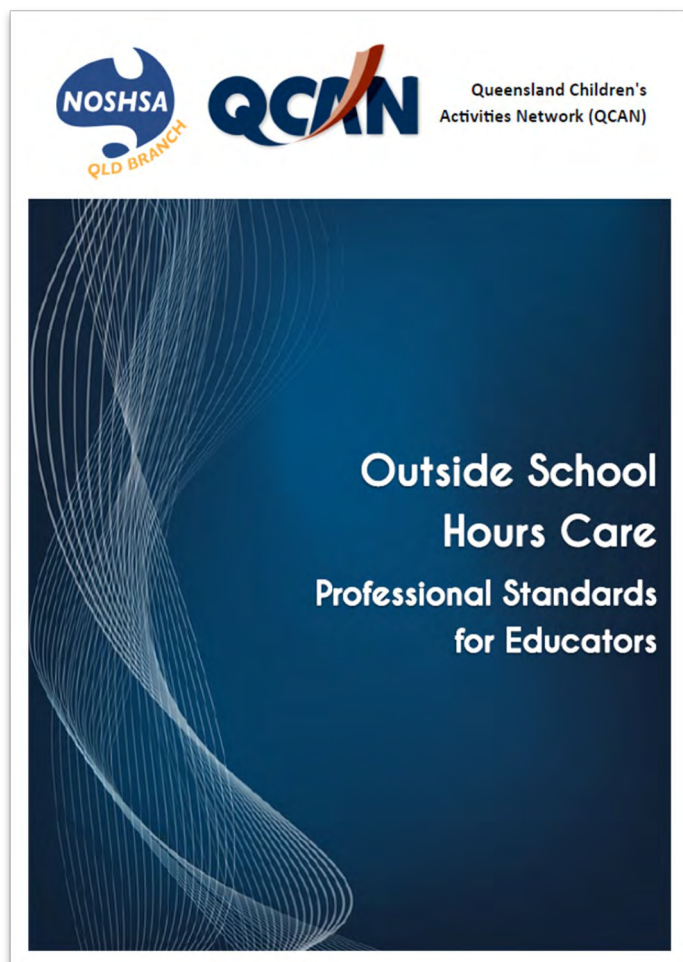
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# Examining the Professional Standards for Outside School Hours Care Educators

## - Dr Jennifer Cartmel & Dr Bruce Hurst



### Background

The Professional Standards for Educators (The Standards) were developed by the Queensland Children's Activity Network (QCAN), who are the peak representative body for SAC in the state of Queensland. QCAN developed The Standards to try and capture what professional practice looked like for SAC practitioners at 4 different stages of their career, commencing with 'Foundation' for new practitioners and culminating with 'Lead' for service leaders. They were developed in consultation with Queensland practitioners to better represent contemporary professional practices in an Australian context. The Standards aim to provide a clearer, shared understanding of

what professional practice in SAC looks like and therefore promote improved practices with children. In 2018, the Standards were introduced to Queensland educators through a professional development program.

Griffith University is conducting a small, qualitative research project to gain an insight into how the Standards are influencing practice within the sector. The project was based on a methodology proposed by Guskey (2016), which uses a combination of qualitative methods to try and provide a deep understanding of the effects of participation in professional development. In the first phase of the research, all training participants (83) participated in a survey on the day of the training to share their first impressions (Guskey, 2016). In the second phase, approximately 12 months after the training, a smaller sample of 10 practitioners participated in an online semi-structured interview to provide insights into their initial engagement with The Standards.

### Chain One Findings

Survey forms were completed by participants, most of whom were employed in leadership roles as service coordinators for a single service, or as area managers for large providers with responsibility for multiple services. Their most popular response (54) can be summarised as wanting to 'stay up to date'. The second most common response from participants was they wanted to know how to implement the Standards. The overwhelming majority (83) of responses identified a role for the Standards in their service that would contribute to practice improvements. This suggests that these participants might see the standards as an effective benchmark capable of clarifying what 'good' practice looks like, and something that educators can be measured against.

## Chain Two Findings

Interviews were conducted via the web application Zoom. Participants came from all over Queensland and were selected on the basis that they acted in leadership roles and therefore had greater capacity to implement The Standards. Each interview was analysed to identify the major topics of concern to participants. This analysis shows that there were 2 multi-faceted hierarchies in operation in some OSHC settings that influence how services engage with the Standards. In one hierarchy, service leaders appear to position themselves above educators by exempting themselves from judgment via The Standards. The other hierarchy suggested that many service leaders position short-term educators as 'less' than long-term educators, justifying a lack of engagement on the basis that these short-term educators will inevitably move on. Hierarchies aren't unusual in workplaces, but these two seem to reflect the uniqueness of OSHC in Australia where relationships between services and schools can be complex and a high percentage of educators are part of our teams for a relatively short time.

## Conclusion

QCAN developed The Professional Standards for Educators on the basis that they had benefit for educators and children in SAC by providing clear benchmarks for workers of different levels to

achieve. The hierarchies described here are both of concern because they act as barriers to implementation of the Standards that result in under-utilisation by both service leaders and short-term staff. It seems reasonable to expect that hierarchies such as these could also impede the uptake of other professional development programs and not just The Standards. There is no suggestion that these hierarchies operate in all SAC settings. However, it would be interesting for educators to reflect on the relationships in their own settings and consider whether there are factors that impact on their capacity to provide high quality SAC experiences for children. This research suggests that service leaders need to think deeply about they promote high quality practices in a complex work environment.

## References

Guskey, T. R. (2016). Gauge impact with 5 levels of data. SMEC2016 Organising Committee, 6.

Queensland Children's Activities Network (QCAN). (n.d.). Outside School Hours Care professional standards for educators. Ipswich, Australia: QCAN

NOTE: More details about the methodology, analysis, findings and conclusion will be forthcoming in peer reviewed academic publications

Domains	Standards
Professional Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Understand children and how they develop</li><li>2. Know the Framework and how it informs the program and curriculum decision making</li></ol>
Professional Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Design and deliver an effective program for all children</li><li>4. Create and maintain supportive and safe environments</li><li>5. Evaluate, assess and provide relevant feedback on children's experiences</li></ol>
Professional engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Engage in professional learning</li><li>7. Engage professionally with colleagues, families and the community</li></ol>