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Media Release

IMPROVING SERVICES for 190,000 CHILDREN

The need to introduce a minimum qualification for all staff in preschools and child care centres will be one of many points for debate in a discussion paper released by the Minister for Community Services Linda Burney today.

The discussion paper forms part of the statewide review of the current Children's Services Regulation and will determine the future standards for children's services.

"Around 190,000 children receive various forms of early childhood education in NSW. The early years are crucial in childhood development so it's vital that we take this opportunity to review and improve the services we provide," Ms Burney said.

"Consultation is critical and I encourage anyone with an interest in the future of our children to take part in the review," Ms Burney said at the launch at SDN Marrickville Child & Family Centre.

Ms Burney said the discussion paper tackles questions that examine what will make the biggest difference for children, what is important for parents, and what is important for the industry.

"The quality of the staff in children's services is vital to the development and education of children who are in their care. The research on children's services points to a strong link between the level of staff education and the quality of outcomes for children.

"That's why it's important we consider whether there is any room for improvement. Should we introduce a minimum qualification requirement, or ensure that there is a qualified teacher in all centres, not just those with 30 or more children? These are the types of questions that deserve thorough discussion by the sector as well as by parents and the wider community."

The discussion paper also poses questions on staff-to-child ratios, group sizes, as well as compliance, penalties and enforcement in children's services. It examines ways in which children's services can be more accountable and transparent, such as increasing the information provided to parents, for example, after an accident at a service.

"The discussion paper and review are part of the Department of Community Services' commitment to the continuous improvement and strengthening of the children's service sector. With my background in education, this is something I am hugely supportive of," Ms Burney said.

Community Services regulates, licenses and funds early childhood services including preschools, child care centres, mobile services, family day care, home based services and occasional care. The wide-ranging services aim to provide early education and support in different settings that are safe and well regulated.

To access the paper, visit www.community.nsw.gov.au/review.

Media contact: Phyllis Sakinofsky 9228 4455 / 0406 164 034