



Ros Cornish

Chief Executive Officer, Lady Gowrie Tasmania, Hobart (Tasmania)



My experience in the early childhood sector is broad and varied, having worked as an educator, tertiary teacher and active participant in professional organisations including Early Childhood Australia, being the current Deputy National President. I was also a member of the Accreditation Decisions Review Committee from 1998 until the committee was recently disbanded in view of the National Quality Framework (NQF). My current role is Chief Executive Officer Lady Gowrie Tasmania which is a leading community-based provider of early childhood education and care services in Tasmania as well as a provider of many other professional and support services for children, families and early childhood professionals.

What opportunities do you think the NQF presents leaders as they strive to provide quality early childhood education for young children?

Having worked in the sector for some 30 years, in these varied roles, and being responsible for over 30 services with 300 employees in Tasmania, the NQF presents a generational opportunity for early childhood services—to recognise the knowledge and professionalism of educators and the complexity of the role in the context of the child, the family and the broader community. Overall, the opportunity of improving outcomes for all children is at the heart of our chosen profession!

What challenges do you think intentional leaders will need to be mindful of, again as they strive to provide quality early childhood education for young children?

The challenge for intentional leaders is to ensure that they are confident and purposeful in their knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the NQF as they have the responsibility and challenge of leading their educators on the collaborative journey of changed or improved practice. This journey may highlight differing values and beliefs, question some assumptions about everyday practices and may require a commitment to changes necessary to respond to the aspirations of the framework. Therefore, leaders must engage with their colleagues to ensure shared understanding and the interrelationship with other aspects of the NQF including the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care—My Time Our Place. This requires strong and courageous leaders!

Do you have any words of advice as to how leaders can approach the NQF to ensure that it benefits the children, families and staff at their centre?

Approaches adopted by leaders at Lady Gowrie Tasmania include:

- acknowledging that leaders cannot do it alone—delegation fosters a sense of ownership, responsibility and openness to new learning
- creating a climate where others feel confident to provide ways for views and thoughts to be expressed
- fostering a belief that what we are doing is creating something different and important for children
- building a sense of enthusiasm and excitement about the changes
- encouraging and supporting reflective action and ongoing professional learning.

An important aspect is that during this period of immense change, leaders should not overload educators with information but support their continual development by 'snack learning'—educators receiving frequent, bite-sized chunks of information.