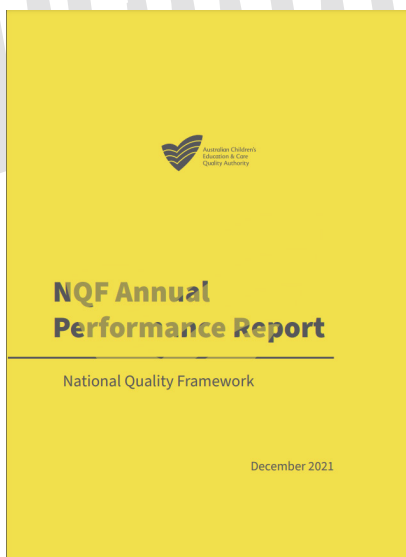


NQF Annual Performance Report Summary 2021



More details available at [acecqa.gov.au/apr](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/apr)

The National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) represents a nationwide commitment to quality education and care for young children.

Key objectives of the NQF include ensuring young children's health, safety and wellbeing, improving their educational and developmental outcomes, and promoting continuous improvement in the quality of education and care services.

Overview of the children's education and care sector

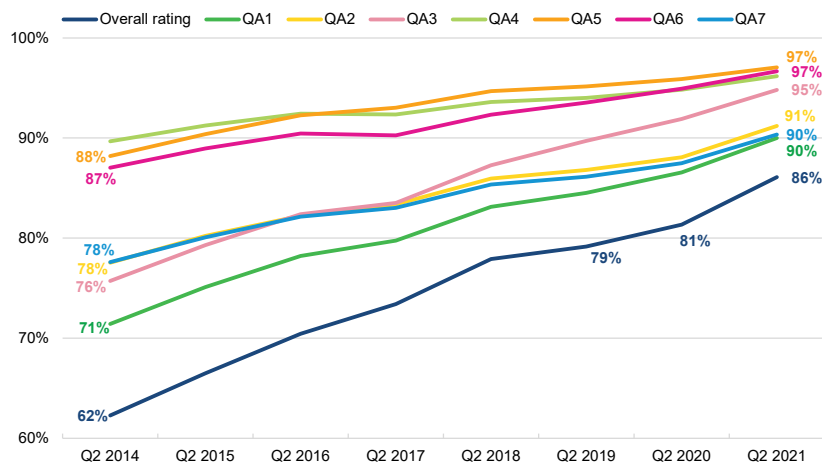
As at 30 June 2021:

- more than 16,500 children's education and care services are approved to operate under the NQF, including:
 - 8332 long day care services (51% of approved services)
 - 4601 outside school hours care services (28%)
 - 3027 preschools/kindergartens (18%)
 - 488 family day care services (3%).

Continuous quality improvement

The proportion of children's education and care services rated Meeting National Quality Standard (NQS) or above by state and territory regulatory authorities has increased every year since the NQF was introduced, both at the overall quality rating level and for each of the seven quality areas.

Figure 1: Proportion of services rated Meeting NQS or above by overall rating and quality area*



* QA1 - Educational program and practice; QA2 - Children's health and safety; QA3 - Physical environment; QA4 - Staffing arrangements; QA5 - Relationships with children; QA6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities; QA7 - Governance and leadership.

Report Snapshot



Chapter 1

Impact of COVID-19

Service providers and staff have demonstrated significant resilience, commitment and innovation during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic



Chapter 2

Children's health and safety

Ensuring children's health and safety is a key objective of the NQF, and continues to be a focus throughout the pandemic



Chapter 3

Educational program and practice

The most challenging elements of quality continue to relate to the assessment and planning cycle, and critical reflection



Chapter 4

Children from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds

There is a consistent gap between the quality of services in the most disadvantaged and most advantaged areas



Chapter 5

Workforce

A new ten-year national workforce strategy was published in October 2021



Chapter 6

Public awareness of service quality

Research conducted with families shows a steady increase in awareness of quality ratings



- Several reports suggest children and families will be severely affected by widening disadvantage and deepening of existing inequalities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Access to high quality education and care will continue to be a key protective factor



- Education and care service providers continue to implement strategies to maintain the health and safety of children, staff and families, and protect against the risk of COVID-19
- Over two-thirds of family day care services are rated Meeting NQS or above for children's health and safety – the highest proportion for more than five years



- As at 30 June 2021, 90% of services are rated Meeting NQS or above for educational program and practice, up from 87% a year ago
- Of all 15 standards of the NQS, assessment and planning remain the most challenging, with the two most challenging of all 40 elements of quality included within the standard



- Children from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable and receive the greatest benefits from attending high quality education and care
- There remains a marked difference in the proportion of services rated Meeting and Exceeding NQS in the most advantaged areas compared to those in the most disadvantaged areas



- Improved educator to child ratios and educator qualifications, stipulated under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, contribute to higher quality education and care
- As at 30 June 2021, 11% of long day care services hold a staffing waiver, with most of these temporary arrangements relating to the early childhood teacher requirements of the National Regulations



- ACECQA's families' research shows that the level of awareness of education and care service quality ratings has increased, from 40% in 2017, to 46% in 2019, to 55% in 2021
- Of those respondents who were aware that services are quality rated, 62% knew the quality rating(s) of the service(s) that they use or intend to use, up from 54% in 2017 and 51% in 2019