



OCCASIONAL PAPER 8

The first decade of the NQF



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

The first 10 years of Australia's National Quality Framework for children's education and care

NQF timeline



Mid-2009	<i>Belonging, Being & Becoming</i> – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia published
December 2009	National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care comes into effect
October 2010	Passing of the <i>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</i>
Mid-2011	<i>My Time, Our Place</i> – Framework for School Age Care in Australia published



Late 2011	Passing of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
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- 1 Educational program and practice
- 2 Children's health and safety
- 3 Physical environment
- 4 Staffing arrangements
- 5 Relationships with children
- 6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- 7 Governance and leadership

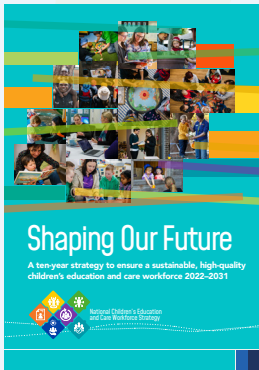
1 January 2012	National Quality Framework comes into effect , including the establishment of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
Mid-2012	State and territory regulatory authorities commence the quality assessment and rating of services
Early 2013	National registers available online, including information about services' quality ratings
January 2014	New staffing requirements increase number of early childhood teachers in services



April 2015	Starting Blocks launched
January 2016	New educator-to-child ratio requirements improve national consistency
October 2017	Changes to the National Law and Regulations, as a result of the 2014 NQF Review
February 2018	Revised National Quality Standard introduced



2019	2019 NQF Review commences
January 2020	New staffing requirements increase number of early childhood teachers and suitably qualified persons in services
April 2020	Quality assessment and rating temporarily suspended due to the impact of COVID-19
June 2021	National Quality Framework Approved Learning Frameworks Update project commences



October 2021	<i>Shaping Our Future</i> – A ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high-quality children's education and care workforce (2022–2031) published
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The NQF came into effect on 1 January 2012

It introduced a new National Quality Standard to improve children's education and care across all regulated service types

How and why the NQF came about

The National Quality Framework (NQF) was established in 2012 to create a more efficient and cohesive approach to regulating early childhood education and care, and outside school hours care in Australia.

Before the NQF

There was no unified national system for regulation and compliance before the NQF was introduced. Requirements such as the safety of a service's physical environment were often duplicated in the state/territory licencing and Australian Government quality assurance processes. Expectations were also inconsistent across states and territories with a complex system of requirements and minimum standards for different service types in different jurisdictions.

These inconsistencies resulted in a high degree of regulatory burden and significant variation in the quality and standard of education and care.

Furthermore, there was a lack of publicly available information about the quality of children's education and care services, which hindered the ability of families and carers to make informed choices about the services they used.

What changed?

In December 2009, Australian, state and territory governments agreed on a new [National Quality Agenda For Early Childhood Education and Care](#).

The NQF introduced a new national quality standard to improve children's education and care across long day care, family day care, preschool/ kindergarten and outside school hours care. State and territory regulatory authorities are tasked with assessing and rating all services approved under the NQF against the quality standard.



The NQF Objectives are to:

- ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services
- improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children attending education and care services
- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care services
- establish a system of national integration and shared responsibility between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth in the administration of the NQF
- improve public knowledge, and access to information, about the quality of education and care services
- reduce the regulatory and administrative burden for education and care services by enabling information to be shared between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth.

The NQF explained

The NQF provides a shared vision for governments and the children’s education and care sector, and an agreed tool for measuring and monitoring service quality. It sets standards for safety and quality so that all children who attend services regulated under the NQF are supported to have the best start in life.

Underpinned by both the [Education and Care Services National Law](#) and the [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#), the NQF includes the:

- [National Quality Standard](#)
- [Quality assessment and rating process](#)
- [Approved learning frameworks](#)

The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets a high national benchmark for children’s education and care services in Australia.

The NQS includes seven quality areas:

- [Educational program and practice](#)
- [Children’s health and safety](#)
- [Physical environment](#)
- [Staffing arrangements](#)
- [Relationships with children](#)
- [Collaborative partnerships with families and communities](#)
- [Governance and leadership](#)

The **assessment and rating process** involves state and territory regulatory authorities assessing children’s education and care services against the seven quality areas. Services are then given one of the following five overall ratings:

- [Excellent](#) (on application to ACECQA for eligible services)
- [Exceeding NQS](#)
- [Meeting NQS](#)
- Working Towards NQS
- Significant Improvement Required.

Under the National Law and Regulations, services are required to base their educational program on an **approved learning framework**. There are two national approved learning frameworks, which focus on addressing the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child:

- [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#)
- [My Time, Our Place: Framework for School-Aged Care in Australia](#)

There is also the following approved learning framework specific to Victoria:

- [Victoria: Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#)

Regulatory authorities administer the NQF in each state and territory.

The regulatory authority is typically the first point of contact for service providers. They are responsible for:

- granting approvals, including provider and service approvals
- quality assessing and rating services
- monitoring and enforcing compliance with the requirements of the National Law and Regulations

- working with ACECQA to promote continuous quality improvement and educate and inform the sector and community about the NQF.

The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is an independent national authority that assists governments in administering the NQF. ACECQA:

- monitors and promotes the consistent application of the NQF across all states and territories
- supports the children’s education and care sector to improve quality outcomes for children
- hosts the National Quality Agenda IT System, and publishes the Guide to the NQF and other resources
- undertakes several functions under the National Law and Regulations, including ongoing research and evaluation, individual and organisation qualification assessments, Excellent rating assessments, and second tier reviews of quality ratings.

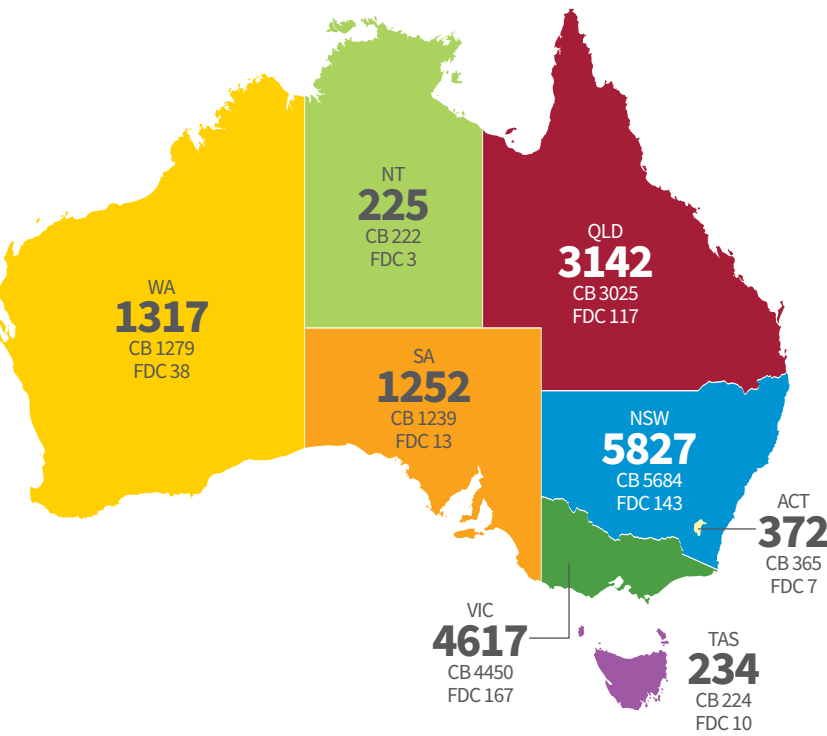
The NQF is jointly governed by the Australian Government and all state and territory governments as a means of driving continuous improvement, realising the efficiency benefits and cost effectiveness of a unified national system with shared accountability.

Education Ministers provide ongoing oversight and ultimate decision-making for the NQF, with Education Ministers Meetings offering a forum for collaboration on early childhood education and care, school education, higher education, and international education. ACECQA is one of five ministerial authorities and companies that report to Education Ministers.



The NQF provides assurance and guidance to families and carers. The National Law and Regulations govern the minimum standards and requirements that all providers of regulated services must meet in order to operate

Education and care sector profile, as at 1 July 2022

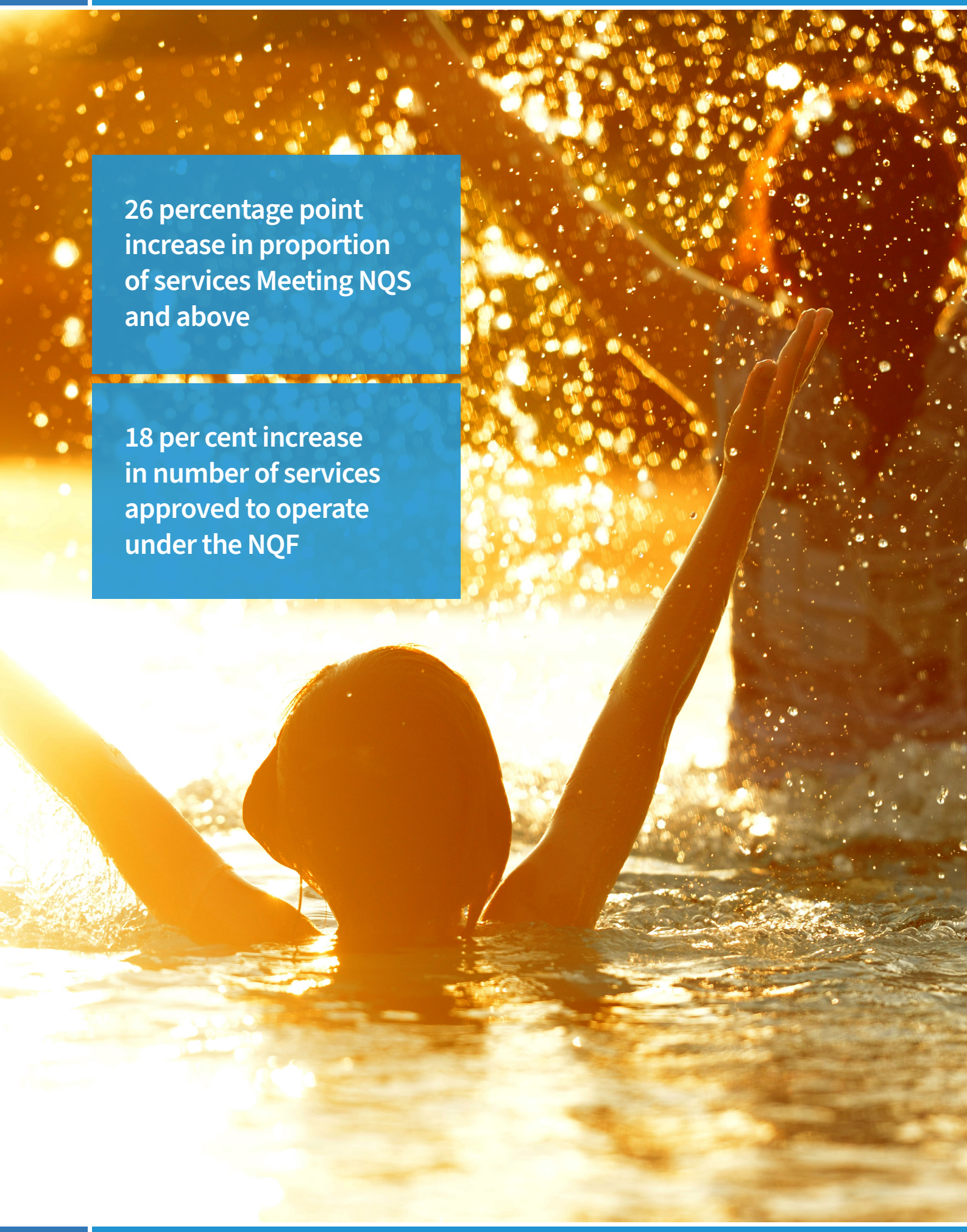


- 1. A centre-based service is an education and care service other than a family day care service. This includes most long day care, preschool and outside school hours care services that are delivered at a centre. It does not include Tasmanian preschools/ kindergartens and most preschools/ kindergartens in Western Australia that are outside the scope of the NQF, as well as other services that aren't regulated under the National Law.
- 2. A family day care service is an education and care service delivered through a network of educators operating from residences and other approved venues. They are sometimes known as family day care schemes and they are administered and supported by central coordination units.

Provider management type	Number of services	Proportion of services
Private for profit	8636	51%
Private not for profit community managed	3418	20%
Private not for profit other organisations	2297	14%
State/Territory and Local Government managed	1206	7%
State/Territory government schools	702	4%
Independent schools	496	3%
Catholic schools	216	1%
Not stated/Other	15	0%
Total	16,986	100%

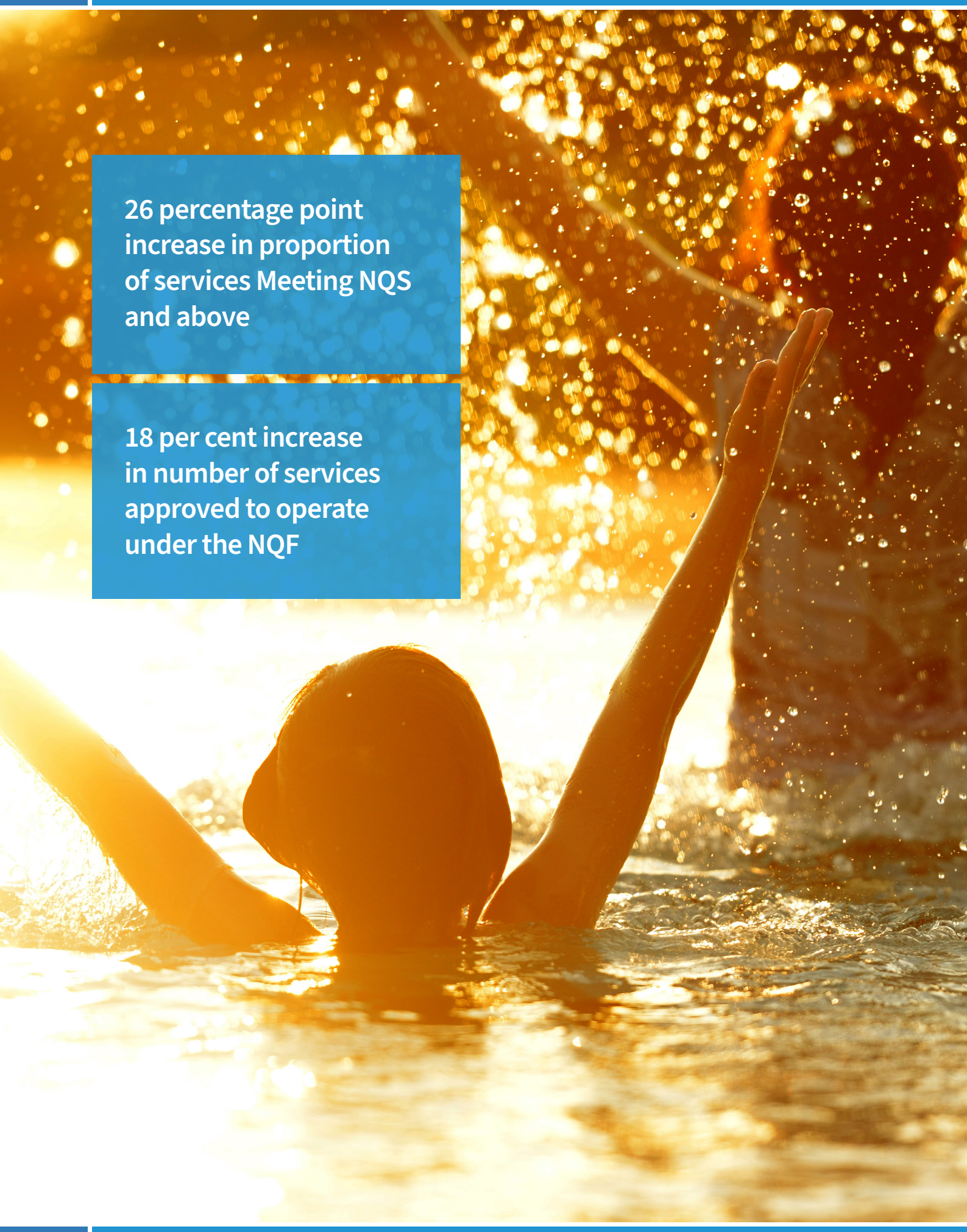
	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS
Centre-based care	0.0%	11.7%	60.7%	27.3%
Family day care	0.2%	39.1%	48.3%	12.1%





26 percentage point
increase in proportion
of services Meeting NQS
and above

18 per cent increase
in number of services
approved to operate
under the NQF

A person is swimming in the ocean, with their arms raised high above the water. The person is silhouetted against a bright, sunlit background, creating a high-contrast effect. The water is splashing around the person's arms, and the overall scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The image conveys a sense of freedom, achievement, and joy.

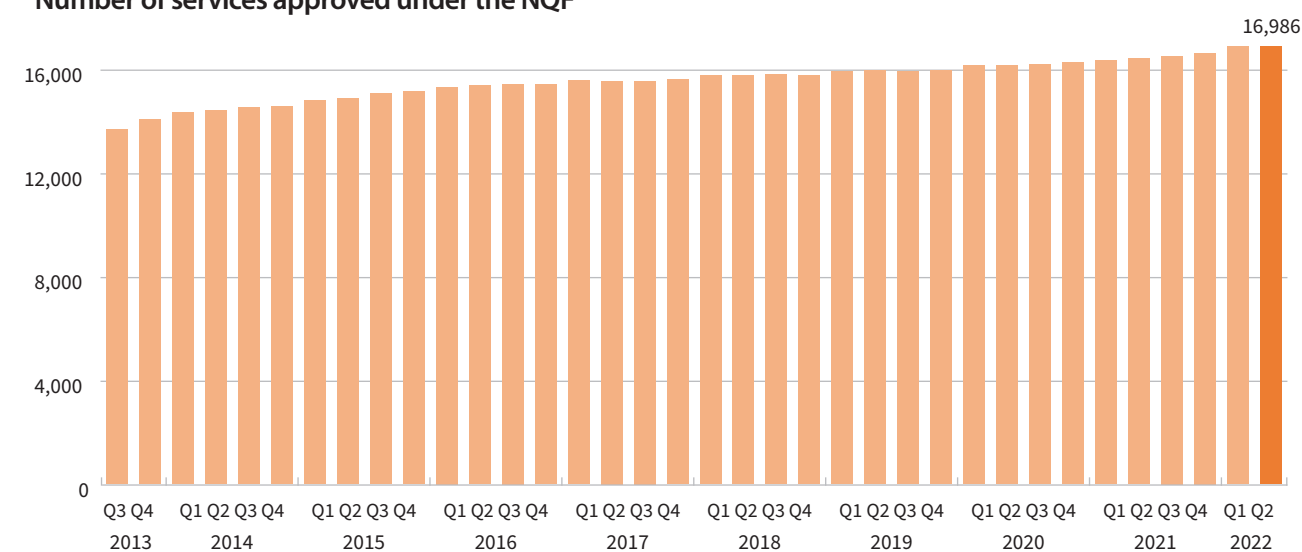
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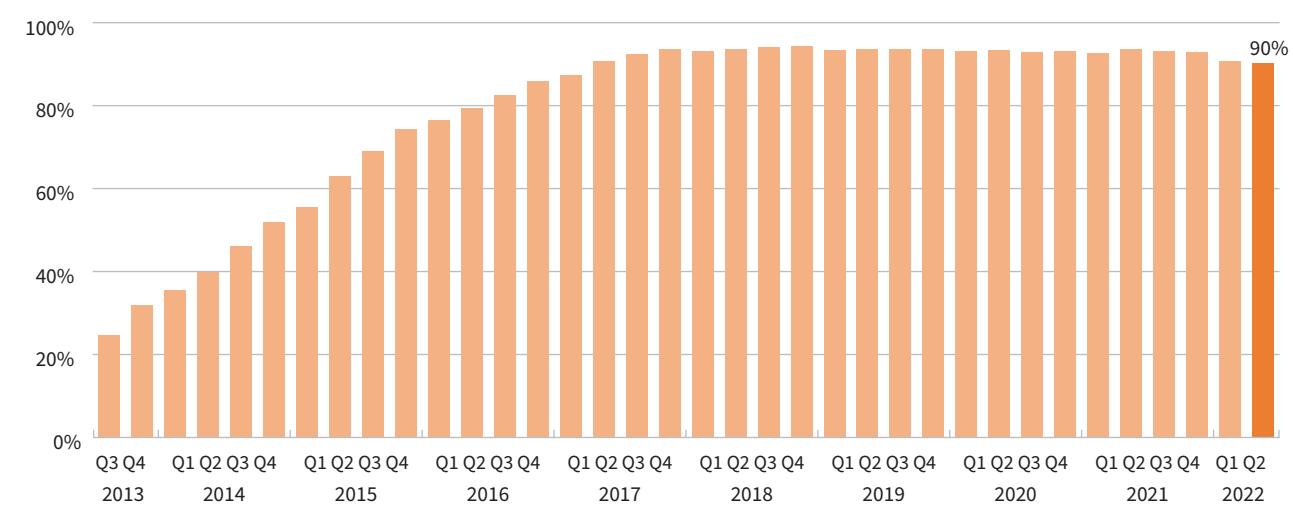
Education and care sector trends

	1 July 2014	1 July 2022
Children's education and care services approved to operate under the NQF	14,435	16,986
Services with a quality rating	5821 (40%)	15,361 (90%)
Services with a quality rating of Meeting NQS or above	3626 (62%)	13,443 (88%)
Providers approved to operate services under the NQF	7327	7270

Number of services approved under the NQF



% of services with a published quality rating



The proportion of services with a quality rating will never reach 100% because some services will only recently have been approved. In general, state and territory regulatory authorities will not assess and rate services which have been operating for less than 9–12 months.

What has the NQF meant for children?



“Factors driving this attention include a recognition of the role of ECEC in supporting young children’s rights and well-being, commitments to equal opportunities for women in the labour force and clear evidence from fields as diverse as neuroscience and economics that demonstrates the benefits of high-quality early childhood experiences.” (OECD, Starting Strong VI)

High quality children’s education and care sets the foundations for lifelong learning and development. [International and domestic research](#) backs up its benefits to children’s cognitive and non-cognitive development. Children experiencing disadvantage have been shown to benefit most from access to high quality education and care. Over the last few decades, research advances and social changes have converged to increase policy attention on early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Policymakers worldwide recognise how critical quality early education is for establishing self-esteem, resilience, healthy growth and capacity to learn. The NQF was introduced to support high-quality education through:

- ✓ setting consistent requirements that all providers of regulated services must meet to operate
- ✓ setting high quality standards, including in relation to children’s health and safety, and educational program and practice
- ✓ flexible and responsive approved learning frameworks, promoting the value of play-based learning
- ✓ consistent and transparent publicly available information about providers and the quality of their services
- ✓ improved educator-to-child ratios, ensuring children have greater individual care and attention
- ✓ support for educators, teachers and service providers, including opportunities for ongoing professional development
- ✓ setting high standards for staff qualifications and initial teacher education programs.



Continuous improvement

The NQF aims to drive continuous quality improvement in children’s education and care.

The NQF has been reviewed twice in its first decade to ensure it is fit for purpose and continues to meet its objectives. The first review of the NQF took place in 2014 to evaluate the efficacy of the new system and to address identified areas for change. The 2019 NQF Review was completed in mid-2022, with the outcomes to be implemented in 2023.

ACECQA regularly collaborates with governments and the children’s education and care sector to review and analyse the performance of the NQF. Over the last 10 years, a wide range of improvements and enhancements to the NQF have been implemented.

Changes arising from the 2014 NQF Review (a summary of all decisions can be viewed in this [information sheet](#)):

- New coordinator to educator ratio – 1:15 in first year of operation then 1:25
- More autonomy for service providers in deciding who can be a responsible person in each service to reduce red tape
- Safe sleep + rest policies now mandatory

Revised [National Quality Standard](#) introduced in 2018

18 standards

↓

15 standards

↓

58 elements

↓

40 elements

Changes arising from the 2019 NQF Review (a summary of the proposals and final decisions made by Ministers is available on the [2019 NQF Review website](#)):

- Introduction of new requirements for safe transportation of children
- Improved oversight and support within family day care to achieve better compliance and quality across the sector





Drivers of quality improvement

To further examine what drives quality improvement and high ratings, ACECQA commissioned Macquarie University, Queensland University of Technology and Edith Cowen University to lead a [national study](#) of long day care services that had improved their quality ratings.

This is just one of a number of examples of initiatives to actively support quality improvement.

The study showed that genuine and sustained quality improvement at the service level is supported by:

- collaboration and shared responsibility
- leadership at all levels
- service philosophy as the foundation
- stakeholder involvement
- meaningful engagement with assessment and rating.

Excellent rated services

The Excellent rating is the highest rating under the NQF, with services rated Exceeding NQS in all seven quality areas eligible to apply to ACECQA for the rating. The rating recognises innovative, inspiring, resourceful and creative programs, practices and partnerships that improve outcomes for children and families, the local community, and the broader education and care sector.

As at 1 July 2022, ACECQA has received more than 300 applications for the Excellent rating, with the rating having been awarded 137 times. There are 38 services currently rated Excellent from across Australia's diverse geographic and socio-economic regions.

While contextually different, Excellent rated services demonstrate:

- meaningful engagement with children and families to identify and meet their needs
- active involvement of children and families across service operations and in discussions about quality, and what is important in the provision of education and care

- leadership that extends beyond the service, including through mentoring and practice-sharing
- commitment to continual improvement and sustained exceptional practice
- promotion of the value of quality education and care, and the professionals who work in the sector.

Rated
EXCELLENT
by ACECQA



Quality assessment and rating

Children’s education and care services are assessed and rated by their state and territory regulatory authority against the seven quality areas of the NQS.

The proportion of services with a published quality rating will never reach 100% at any one time because a small proportion of services will only recently have been approved to operate. In general, state and territory regulatory authorities will not assess and rate services which have been operating for less than 9–12 months.

When state and territory regulatory authorities schedule service assessments, the goal is to rate quality, drive continuous improvement, and keep information for families and communities accurate and up to date.

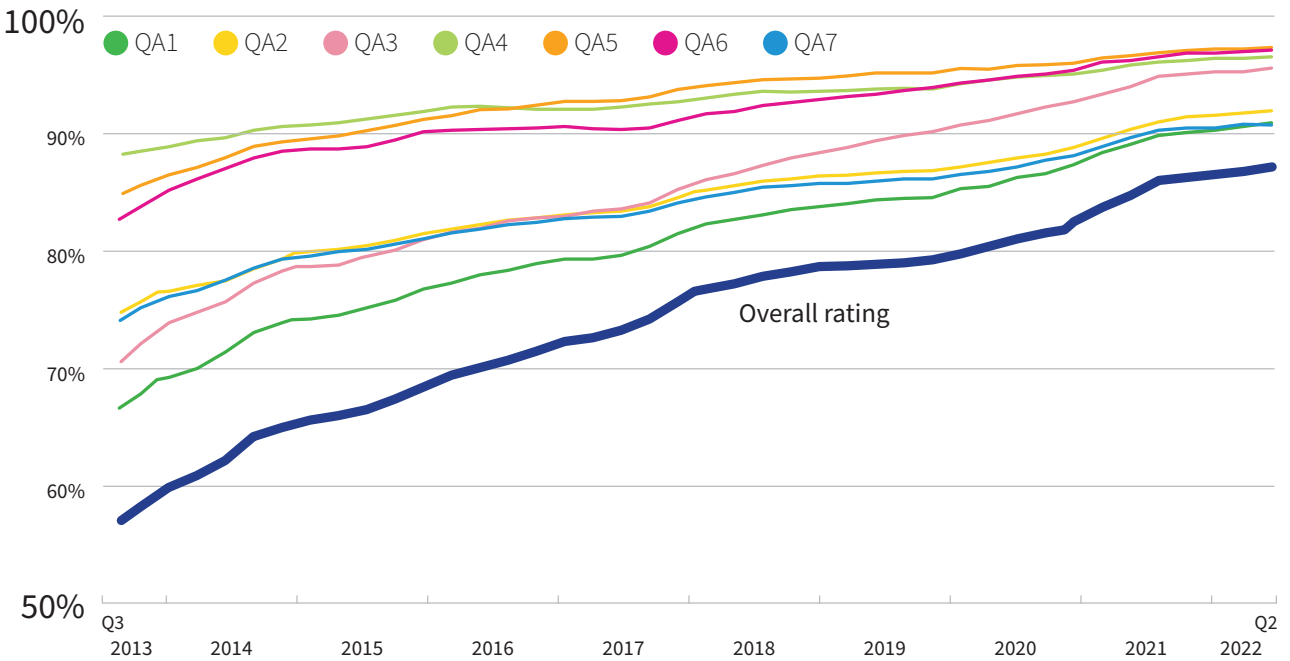
Services with higher quality ratings will generally have a longer period between assessment and rating visits.

Over the last 10 years, the sector has demonstrated sustained improvement in all quality areas, with 88% of services rated Meeting NQS or above as at 1 July 2022.

More than 32,000 quality assessment and ratings have been undertaken by state and territory regulatory authorities

Meaningful engagement with the assessment and rating process is a key driver for quality improvement, informing ongoing learning, critical reflection and practice change

Proportion of services rated Meeting NQS or above



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.

The NQF: a single system that supports diversity

84% of services in the most disadvantaged areas of Australia are rated Meeting NQS or above as at 1 July 2022

The NQF is a unified regulatory system that is adaptable to children’s, families’ and communities’ diverse circumstances and contexts. The NQF is recognised internationally for its commitment to inclusion, equity and diversity, and in particular its focus on children’s connection to their family and community.

Socio-economic status

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to experience developmental vulnerabilities and consequently benefit most from high quality education and care.

ACECQA has investigated whether there are differences in the overall quality ratings of children’s education and care services located in high and low socio-economic status areas using the [Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\)](#). The [analysis suggests there are some differences](#). Services in relatively disadvantaged areas are slightly more likely

to be rated Working Towards NQS and notably less likely to be rated Exceeding NQS than those in relatively advantaged areas.

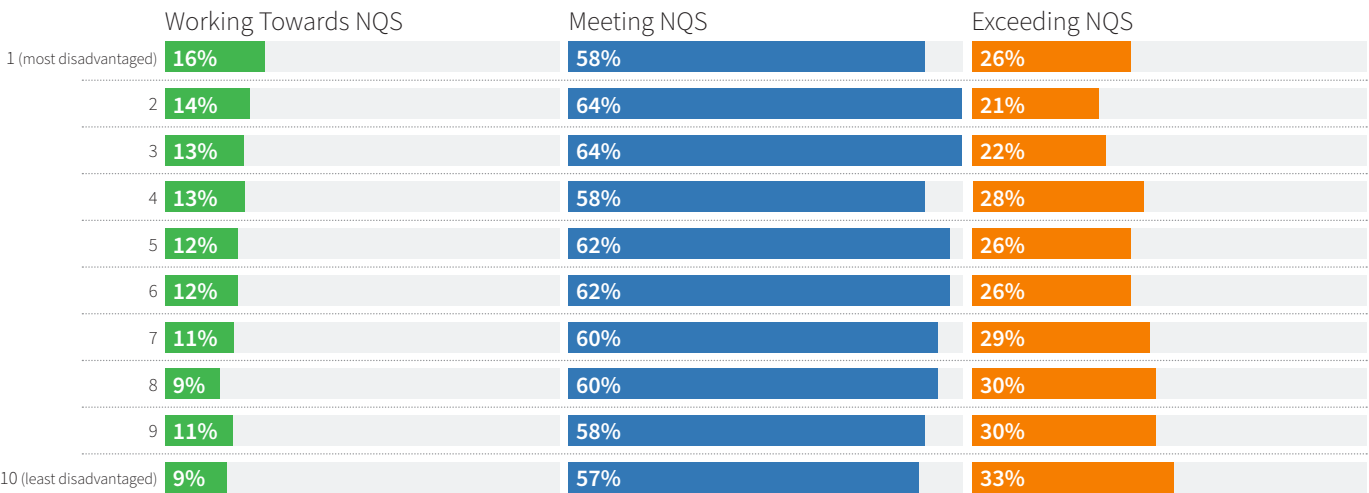
Geographic remoteness

ACECQA also monitors whether there are differences in the overall quality ratings of services located in urban, rural and remote areas using the [Accessibility and Remoteness Index for Australia \(ARIA+\)](#). The [analysis suggests that there are differences](#) in the distribution of quality ratings – particularly in relation to Exceeding NQS. Services located in geographically remote areas are more likely to be rated Working Towards NQS and less likely to be rated Exceeding NQS than services in more populated areas.

Children from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds

Children from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to access education and care programs due to a range of inhibiting factors. At a family level, this can include affordability, lack of availability and limited understanding of the benefits. These barriers have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with loss of financial security and increased social stresses for many families.

Overall quality ratings by socio-economic status area deciles



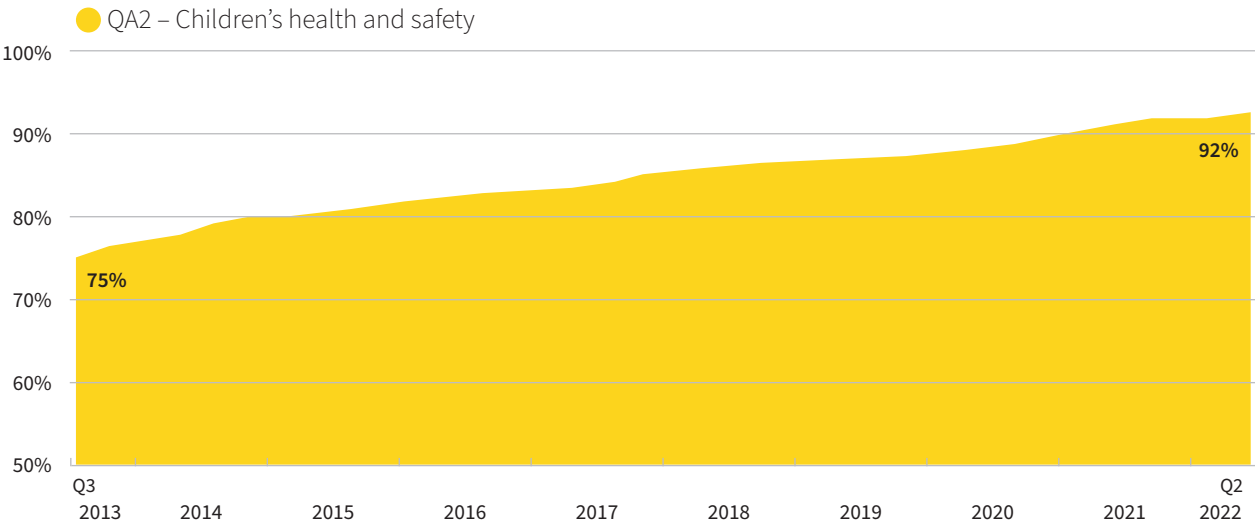
Safety, health and wellbeing

The proportion of children’s education and care services rated Meeting NQS or above for Quality Area 2 has increased every year – from 75% in 2013 to 92% in 2022



Quality Area 2 of the NQS aims to safeguard and promote children’s health and safety, minimise risks, and protect children from harm and hazard. It enshrines children’s right to experience quality education and care in an environment where each child’s competence, confidence and independence is fostered.

The NQF has brought licensing, minimum enforceable standards and quality assessment and rating under a single regulatory model. The National Law and National Regulations prescribe a range of operational requirements for providers of children’s education and care services, as well as approval processes, the quality assessment and rating system, and the enforcement powers of state and territory regulatory authorities.

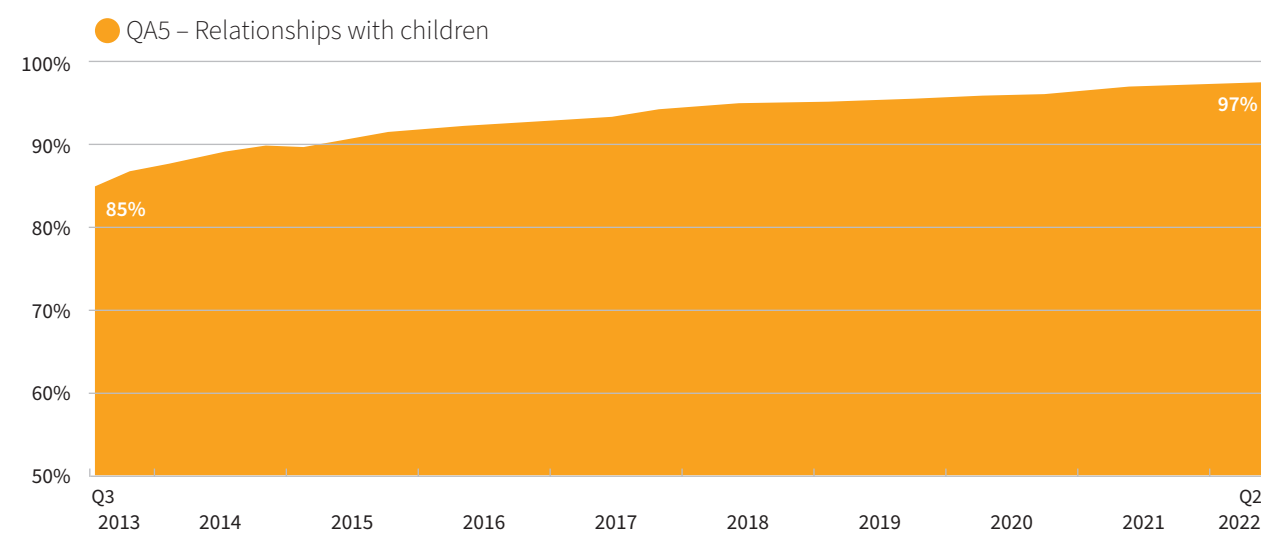
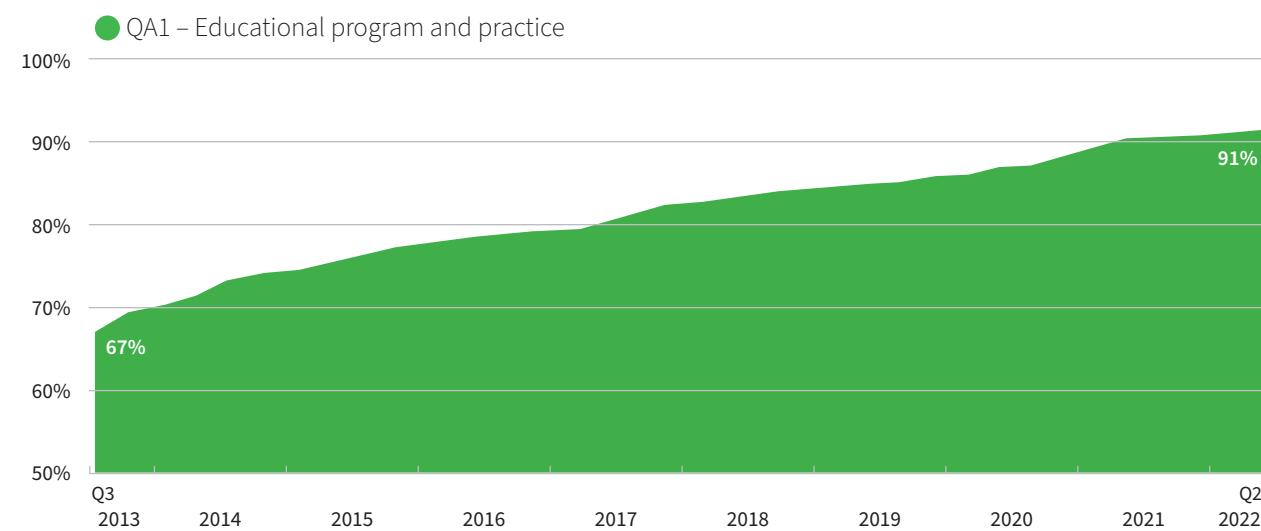


Educational and developmental outcomes

The NQF aims to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children attending approved services. This is promoted by two closely related quality areas that focus on process quality.

Quality Area 1 aims to ensure educational programs and practice are child-centred, stimulating and maximise opportunities for each child's learning and development.

Quality Area 5 aims to promote relationships with children that are responsive, respectful and promote children's sense of security and belonging. Such relationships free children to explore the environment and engage in play and learning.



As at 1 July 2022, 91% of services meet or exceed NQS Quality Area 1 and 97% meet or exceed NQS Quality Area 5 – the highest proportions since the introduction of the NQF in 2012



Public awareness and knowledge of the NQF

Improving public knowledge and access to information about the quality of children’s education and care services is a key objective of the NQF.

ACECQA’s 2014 [Families Research pilot study](#) identified most families relied on word of mouth and subjective information when choosing a service, with little to no awareness about the NQF and service quality ratings. Since then, ACECQA and other sector stakeholders have commissioned several research projects and undertaken different initiatives to attempt to remedy the gap in public knowledge.

The [Families Qualitative Research Project](#) (2018) and reports from [The Front Project](#) have investigated awareness of the NQF among families, aiming at increasing the extent to which the NQS ratings are used to make informed decisions about education and care services.

The findings have shed light on crucial factors at play when choosing a service, raised important issues around how stressful the service selection can be, and revealed that many believe the system has room for improvement, citing access, affordability and choice as key issues.

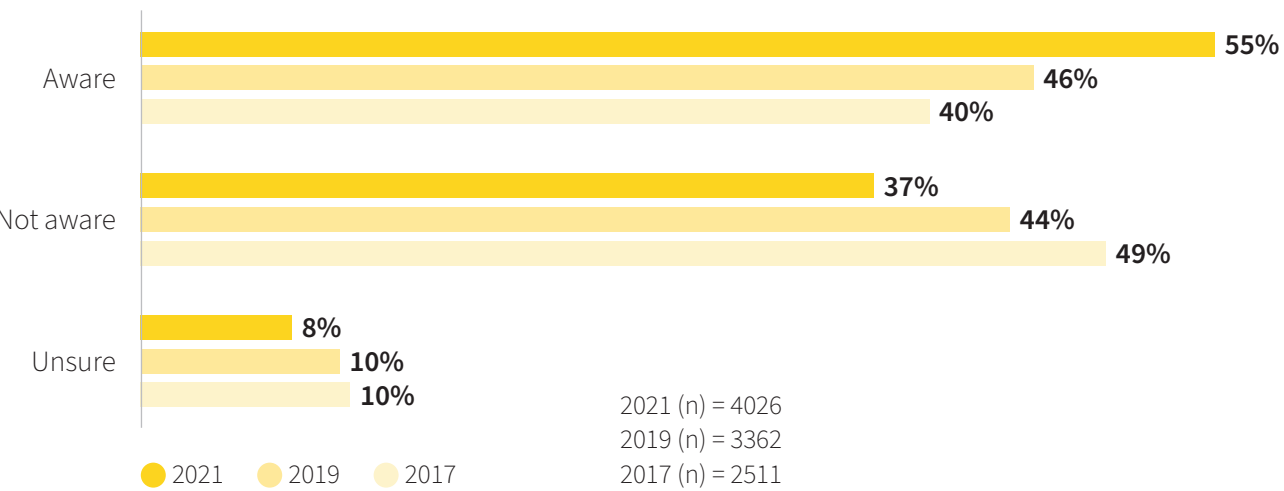
84% of respondents who were aware of the quality ratings of the services they use found the quality rating information helpful or very helpful¹
¹ 2021 NQF Annual Performance Report

Feedback gained through the consultation process of the 2019 NQF Review indicated that increased promotion and dissemination of information regarding the quality rating system is needed to make this knowledge more accessible for families.

Research conducted by ACECQA has consistently shown that public knowledge and awareness of the NQS remains low. Nevertheless, the level of [awareness of quality ratings has increased](#) from 40% in 2017, to 46% in 2019, to 55% in 2021.

The research also shows that while families may not always be aware of service quality ratings, the factors they consider when choosing a service are encompassed within the NQS.

Public awareness of the NQF’s quality assessment and rating system



Your first step into early childhood education & care

HOME | FIND CHILD CARE | FEES ESTIMATOR | AT A SERVICE | TIPS FOR PARENTS | YOUR CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT | AT HOME | VIDEOS | NEWS | COVID-19

[Starting Blocks](#) provides trusted information for parents-to-be, new parents and carers, and families of toddlers and children. From February 2022, it replaced the Australian Government’s Child Care Finder website. It is a starting point to:

- learn about children’s developmental milestones
- understand what to expect from a children’s education and care service
- find services and learn about their quality ratings, fees and vacancies
- get tips on what can be done at home to encourage learning and development.

Starting Blocks user statistics:

Total users to date: **2.1m+**

Total pageviews to date: **6.5m+**

The average monthly user number increase – **2858** in 2015/16 to **48,950** in 2021/22

The average monthly pageviews number increase – **10,048** in 2015/16 to **131,563** in 2021/22

The peak engagement with StartingBlocks.gov.au occurred on 14 February 2022 after the rollout of the new website enhancements (**24,733 users**).

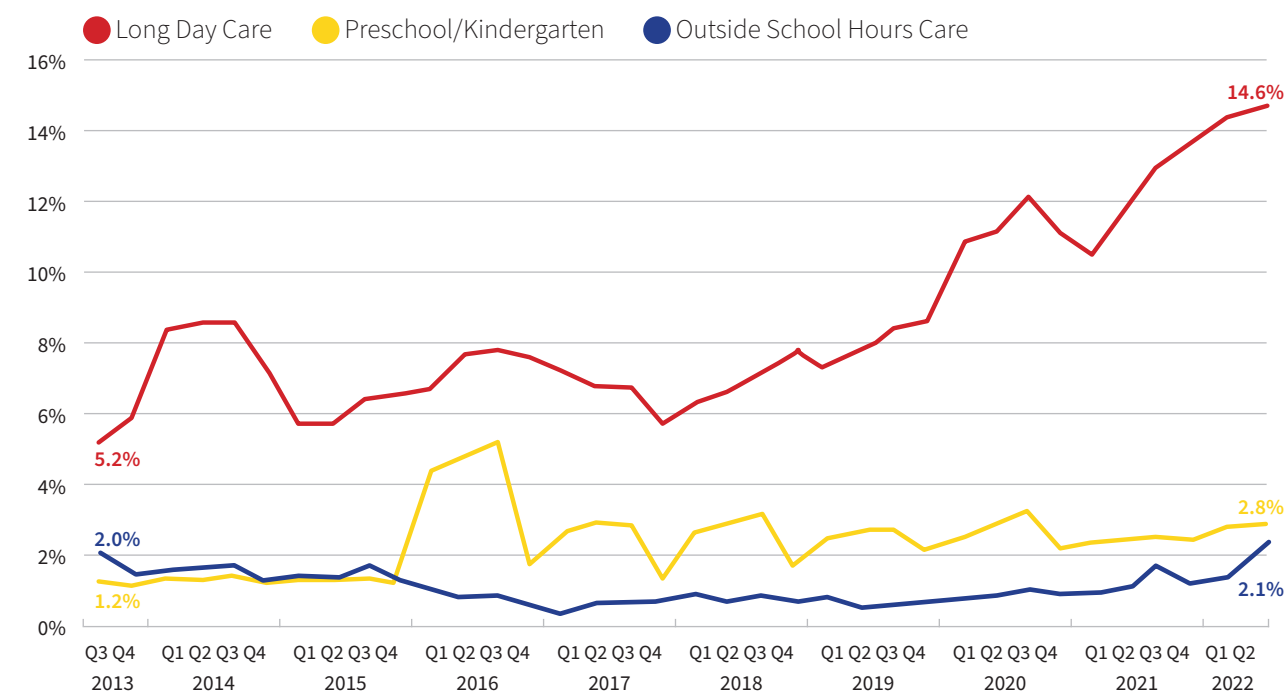
Workforce

Highly skilled and experienced teachers and educators are integral to the NQF and the delivery of high quality education and care. Over the last 10 years, the sector workforce has been impacted by two diverging trends, which create challenges to the availability of a suitably qualified workforce. Requirements for staffing and qualifications have progressively increased under the NQF, while enrolments in vocational and tertiary courses have declined.

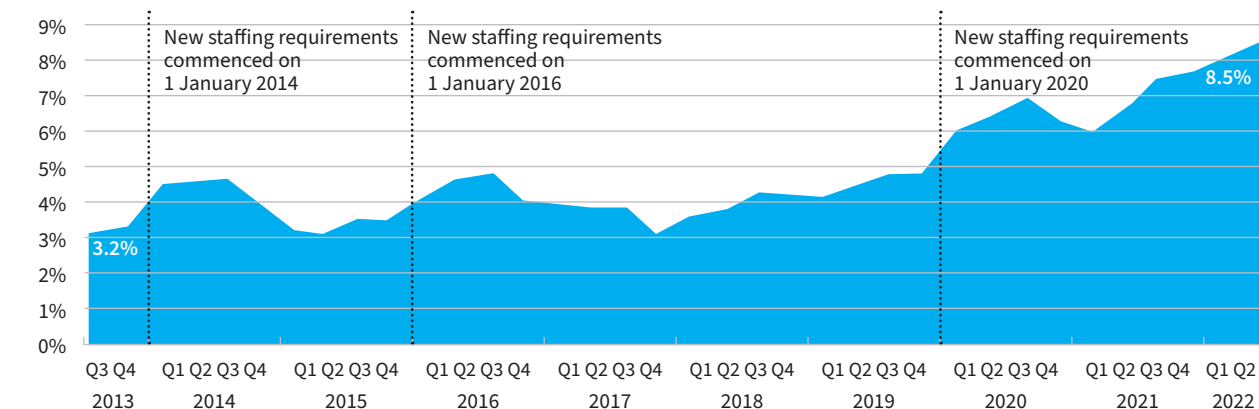
Staffing waivers

If an approved provider can demonstrate difficulty meeting staffing requirements at a children's education and care service, they can under certain circumstances apply to their state and territory regulatory authority to be assessed for a waiver.

Proportion of centre-based services with a staffing waiver



Proportion of all services with a staffing waiver



*Description of the [2014 requirements](#), [2016 requirements](#) and [2020 requirements](#).



Most staffing waivers are temporary arrangements to address short term staffing challenges, particularly in relation to early childhood teacher requirements.

The recent high proportions of services with staffing waivers follow the introduction of new staffing requirements on 1 January 2020 and reflect the impact of COVID-19, including disruption to international borders and skilled migration.

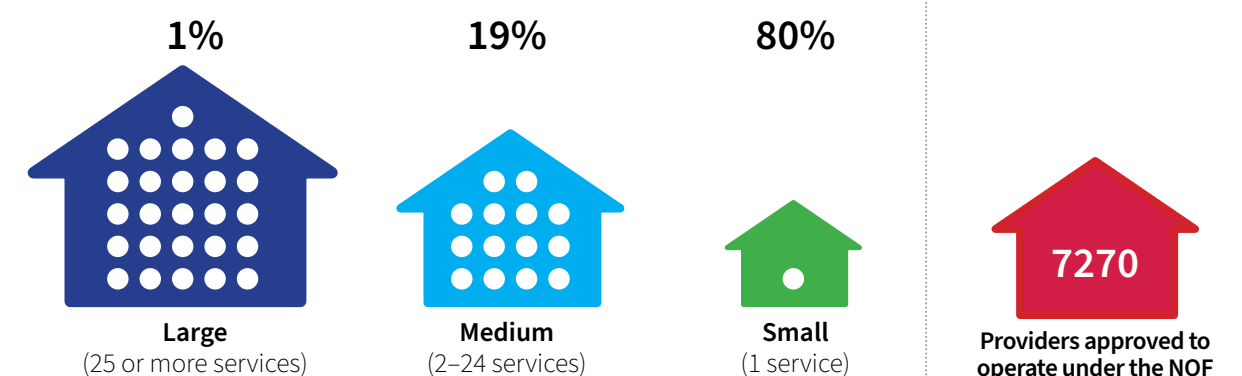
Attracting, developing and retaining a high quality children's education and care workforce continues to be a significant and increasing challenge across the sector.

While the overall number of qualified educators is growing, there are still significant shortages particularly for long day care service providers and those in remote, regional and low and high socio-economic areas.

Most approved providers under the NQF operate a single children's education and care service.

Single service providers often do not have access to the same supports and resources as larger organisations, which may impact the effectiveness of recruitment processes as well as access to ongoing support, professional learning and development opportunities for educators and teachers.

Proportion of approved providers by size



Future directions

Looking beyond the first decade of the NQF, there are a range of projects and strategies in place to ensure the NQF remains fit for purpose, achieves its objectives and supports Australia's approved services to provide high quality education and care to children and young people into the future. Several of the projects and strategies relate to the NQF's ongoing objective to reduce regulatory and administrative burden.

Joined-Up Approvals

The Joined-up Approvals project will cut red tape for new education and care providers by combining approval processes so provider and service applications are assessed simultaneously by state and territory regulatory authorities (against the Education and Care Services National Law) and the Australian Government (against the Family Assistance Law). The combined application process will occur through the National Quality Agenda IT System.

The project is an important initiative under the Australian Government's deregulation agenda and will benefit children and families through stronger and more nationally consistent controls on market entry.

The project will be implemented by mid-2023 and include an online assessment platform and management system to assess the knowledge of new market entrants, as well as a shared risk framework used by all governments to assess fitness and propriety.

National Quality Agenda IT System improvements

The National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) is the primary business tool for state and territory regulatory authorities, and education and care service providers approved under the NQF. ACECQA, with the support of and in collaboration

with all governments, is undertaking an upgrade of the NQA ITS that will see a move to a modern cloud-based platform. This will achieve improved functionality for all users, enhanced security and system efficiencies.

The implementation of the NQA ITS strategy will ensure the system remains fit for purpose for all users into the future. Key components include:

- improved operational usability, and enhanced reporting and analytics
- new functionality to facilitate integration of external software and business systems
- enhanced capacity and custom builds, responding to the unique and diverse needs of different operating environments.

2019 NQF Review

The 2019 NQF Review has aimed to ensure the NQF continues to meet its objectives by focusing on 21 issues, broadly spread across three topic areas: accessibility of information, administrative and regulatory burdens, and unacceptable hazards or risks to children.

The outcomes of the Review comprise changes to the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations, as well as additional guidance for the sector to enhance children's health, safety and wellbeing. These were developed based on feedback from public consultations and written submissions, as well as a cost benefit analysis considering the impacts of proposed changes.

Most changes are expected to commence from mid-2023.

In collaboration with all governments, ACECQA is leading the implementation of the outcomes of the Review. This includes a focus on providing guidance and other supports to assist providers and their services in the change management process.



Approved Learning Frameworks Update

In late 2020 Education Ministers commissioned an update of the two national Approved Learning Frameworks (ALFs) – *Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* and *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia*.

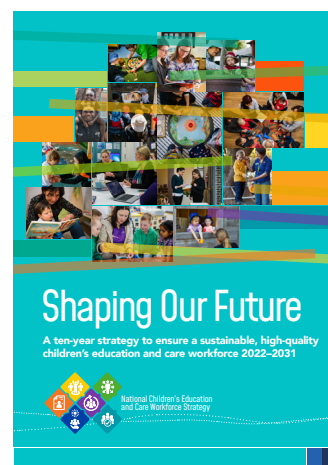
Both frameworks have proved integral to the success of the NQF over the last decade. The purpose of the update is to ensure they continue to reflect contemporary developments in practice and knowledge, and support all educators to promote the wellbeing, learning and development of each child.

A national consortium led by Macquarie University, Queensland University of Technology and Edith Cowan University was engaged by ACECQA, on behalf of all governments, to undertake the update.

Opportunities to enhance both frameworks identified through the update process include: strengthening the connection between the ALFs and the National Quality Standard in areas such as transitions; broadening concepts of sustainability; and strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing, and inclusion throughout the frameworks.

Subject to ministerial approval, advice about the commencement of any changes to the ALFs is expected to be provided to the sector in the latter part of 2022. The advice will also address the approach to transitioning to the updated national ALFs to support their successful implementation.

National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy (2022–2031)



In December 2019, at the same time as finalising the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Education Ministers endorsed the development of a new ten-year national workforce strategy as a joint partnership between

all governments, the children's education and care sector, and other key stakeholders.

Published in September 2021, [Shaping Our Future – A ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high quality children's education and care workforce 2022–2031](#) was developed through a co-design process with Australian governments and national sector stakeholders, coordinated by ACECQA. It is a ten-year commitment between all governments, the children's education and care sector, and other key stakeholders to address the complex and longstanding workforce challenges experienced by the sector.

Australian governments and national sector stakeholders have since collaborated to develop an implementation and evaluation plan detailing the steps that will be taken to progress the national actions in the short, medium and long term, and how progress will be monitored and evaluated over the next decade. The implementation and evaluation plan is expected to be finalised in the second half of 2022.

Ongoing research and evaluation

[ACECQA's research and evaluation strategy](#) (2021–24) sets out our approach to ongoing research and evaluation under the NQF, including:

- **Internal production** of a broad range of regular and ad hoc reports (e.g. quarterly NQF Snapshots; NQF Annual Performance Reports), accessible via the [Research and Reports page](#) of the ACECQA website
- **Commissioning** research from third parties, when a specific need or priority arises (e.g. [Quality improvement research](#); [Families research](#))
- **Collaboration and partnerships** with governments and sector stakeholders.

The strategy is underpinned by the [NQF Evaluation Framework](#). The framework, informed and agreed by all governments, has been developed as a guide for determining how and to what extent the NQF is meeting its objectives.

Partner bodies, such as the [Australian Education Research Organisation \(AERO\)](#) and the [Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership \(AITSL\)](#), also continue to contribute important research, evidence and guidance, particularly in relation to continuity with the school sector.

Linking data on children's education and care service quality with data held by other agencies about outcomes for children and families continues to be critical to comprehensively answer questions about the NQF's contribution to children's development and education.

This would provide powerful evidence of the relative impact of higher and lower quality children's education and care, and whether the impact differs for certain groups of children and families.





Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) acknowledges the Gadigal peoples, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Lands on which ACECQA is located. We also acknowledge and extend our respects to Elders, past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of all Lands across Australia.

We recognise and celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, including their role in the education and care of children. We recognise the rich and diverse cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the valuable contribution this diversity brings.

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