



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

Educational Program and Practice

An analysis of Quality Area 1 of
the National Quality Standard

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Overview

This occasional paper is the first in a series on the National Quality Framework (NQF). This paper offers detailed insights into education and care service quality ratings for Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice, which focuses on ensuring that educational program and practice is stimulating and engaging, enhances children's learning and development, and meets children's individual learning and development needs.

ACECQA has chosen to focus this first occasional paper on Quality Area 1 because of its vital contribution to child outcomes and because the evidence indicates that services are less likely to meet the National Quality Standard (NQS)¹ in this Area. Additionally, the paper is timely given ACECQA's work in period 2014/15 with Regulatory Authorities and Professional Support Coordinators to deliver national workshops to educators to help them better understand and meet the requirements of Quality Area 1.

The paper provides a brief overview of the NQS, its rating system, quality areas and overall ratings to date. It then examines Quality Area 1 looking at differences across jurisdictions, management types, service sub-types, and socioeconomic and remoteness classifications. Of particular interest are elements 1.2.1 and 1.2.3, which analysis reveals are the least likely of all the 58 elements to be assessed as met.² Here, the discussion includes de-identified excerpts from authorised officers' reports to highlight what can differentiate performance against these elements.

The paper culminates by examining patterns in the distribution of Quality Area 1 ratings and discusses possible explanations for these variations, as well as implications of the report findings and future directions.

The paper is intended to be of interest to people who deliver education and care services, people who provide training and professional development services to the sector, and to officers in the Regulatory Authorities that conduct quality rating.

Unless otherwise stated, the paper draws on data from the National Quality Agenda Information Technology System (NQA ITS) as at 31 December 2015. The NQA ITS is the national IT business system for service providers and Regulatory Authorities operating within the NQF.

¹ A summary of the NQS is provided at Appendix A.

² This excludes services with overall ratings of 'Meeting NQS' or 'Exceeding NQS' as all elements must be 'Met' to achieve these quality ratings.

Background

In 2012, laws came into effect in Australia to create a national system for the regulation of children's education and care services. Prior to this, licensing and quality assurance arrangements for children's education and care services were fragmented and complex. In some cases, services were not regulated for standards at all while others were regulated by both national and state or territory agencies.

The NQF has brought licensing, minimum enforceable standards and quality assessment under a single regulatory model. The NQF is underpinned by the applied Education and Care Services National Law (the National Law) and the Education and Care Services National Regulations (the National Regulations), including the NQS. The NQS sets the benchmark for quality in more than 15,000 early childhood education and care, and outside school hours care services across Australia. It is the primary regulatory tool for rating service quality and driving quality improvement.

The NQS is linked to two nationally-approved learning frameworks that recognise children learn from birth. The frameworks, listed below, outline practices that support and promote children's development and learning:

- *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* ('Early Years Learning Framework' or EYLF)
- *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* ('Framework for School Age Care').

There are also jurisdiction-specific approved learning frameworks that providers use to base their educational programs. These are:

- Curriculum framework for Australian Capital Territory schools preschool to Year 10 (Australian Capital Territory)
- The Tasmanian Curriculum, the Department of Education of Tasmania, 2008 (Tasmania)
- The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Victoria)
- The Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia (Western Australia).

All of the learning frameworks set out practices, principles and learning outcomes of education and care.

The NQS references these principles and outcomes to provide a measure of quality practice and service delivery that supports and promotes children's learning and development.

Approximately 1.1 million children³ attend Australian children's education and care services, with a workforce of around 150,000 educators.^{4,5}

■ ■ ■ How a service rating is determined

The NQS rating system applies to all education and care services that are within scope of the National Law, and is administered by authorised officers appointed by eight state and territory Regulatory Authorities.

Authorised officers from state and territory Regulatory Authorities review a service's compliance history and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) before visiting the service for one to two days or longer for larger services. During the visit, authorised officers spend time reviewing documentation, speaking with providers, managers and educators, and observing and discussing practice. They then complete the NQS rating instrument and determine the rating for each standard, quality area and the overall quality rating. A service's overall rating is based on the assessment of:

- **58 Elements**
- **18 Standards**
- **7 Quality Areas.**

Elements are assessed by authorised officers as either 'Met' or 'Not Met'.

Standards, Quality Areas and the overall quality rating are assessed on a four point scale (**Figure 1**):

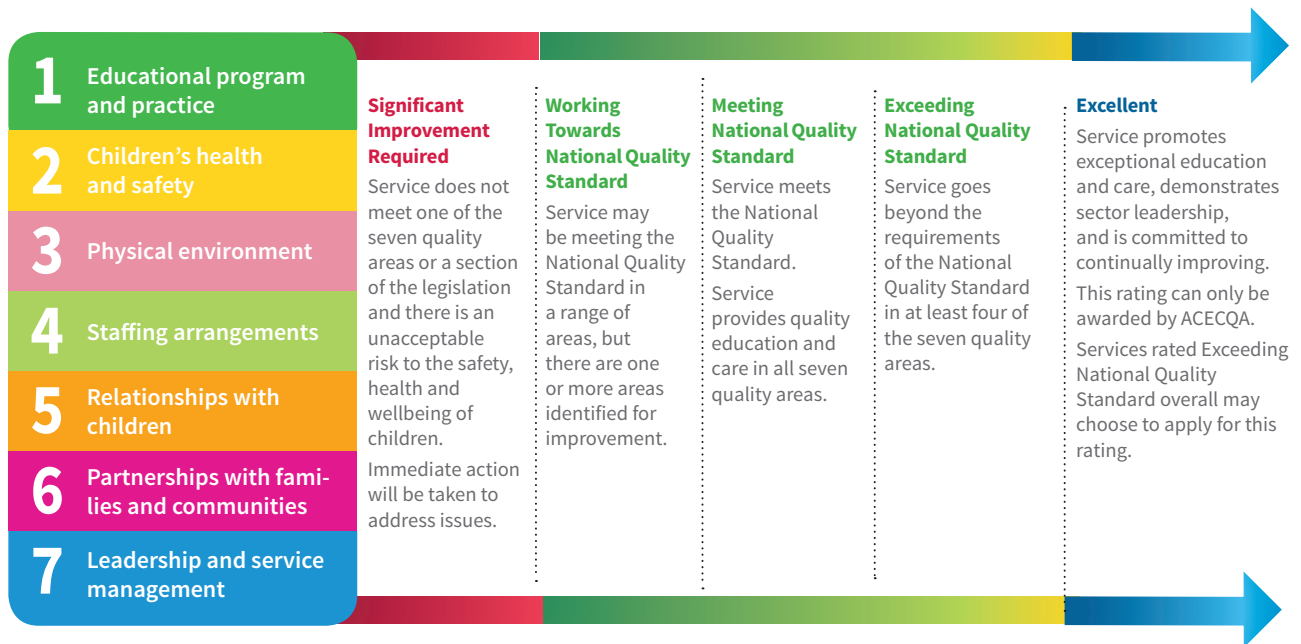
- Exceeding NQS
- Meeting NQS
- Working Towards NQS
- Significant Improvement Required.

³Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2015, Report on Government Services 2015, Chapter 3, Volume B, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

⁴Department of Education 2013 National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census

⁵Note that this figure reports children and staff in Child Care Benefit (CCB)- approved services. Not all approved education and care services (under the Education and Care Services National Law) are CCB approved which means these figures under-count the number of children and staff who are covered by provisions of the NQF.

Figure 1 The NQS rating system



Authorised officers use element level descriptors of meeting and exceeding to aid them in making on-balance judgements of practice at the standard level. If more than half of the standards within a quality area are rated Exceeding NQS and any other standard in that quality area is rated Meeting NQS, the quality area will be rated Exceeding NQS. Services with four or more quality areas rated as Exceeding NQS, including two of the key quality areas – QA1, QA5, QA6 or QA7 – will receive an overall rating of Exceeding NQS.

In addition, a provider with a service rated Exceeding NQS may apply to ACECQA for an Excellent rating. The application is assessed by ACECQA against three Excellent rating criteria which encompass exceptional education and care that improves outcomes for children and families; demonstrating leadership that contributes to the development of a community, a local area, or the wider education and care sector; and demonstrating commitment to sustained excellent practice through continuous improvement and comprehensive forward planning.

Progress in service quality rating

Since quality rating started in mid-2012, more than 11,000 education and care services have been rated, representing nearly three-quarters (74%) of all currently approved services in Australia.

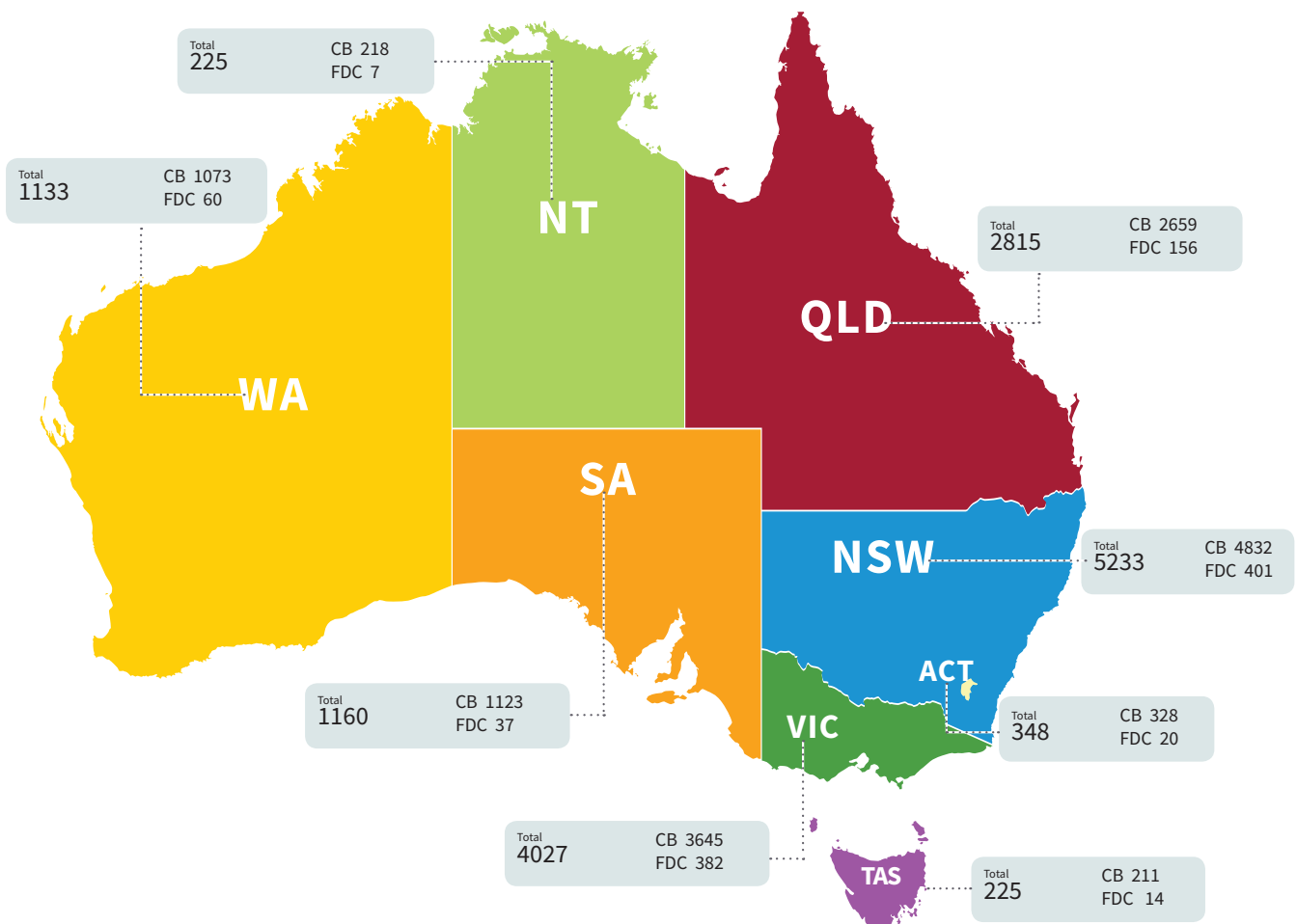
Table 1 and **Figure 2** provide a breakdown of the number of services in each jurisdiction and the number of these that have been rated.

Table 1 Total number of services and number of services with a quality rating by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Number of services	Number of services with quality rating	% services with a quality rating
ACT	348	302	87%
NSW	5,233	3,803	73%
NT	225	173	77%
QLD	2,815	2,297	82%
SA	1,160	531	46%
TAS	225	210	93%
VIC	4,027	3,407	85%
WA	1,133	538	47%
TOTAL	15,166	11,261	74%

Table 1 shows the percentage of quality rated services according to the total number of currently approved services in each jurisdiction. In all but two jurisdictions (South Australia and Western Australia) more than two-thirds of services had been quality rated at 31 December 2015. The relatively slower rate of assessment and rating in these two jurisdictions can be attributed, in part, to the later commencement of the National Law in Western Australia (in August, rather than January 2012) and the establishment of a new Regulatory Authority in South Australia that conducts assessment and rating.

Figure 2 Number of approved services by jurisdiction and service type



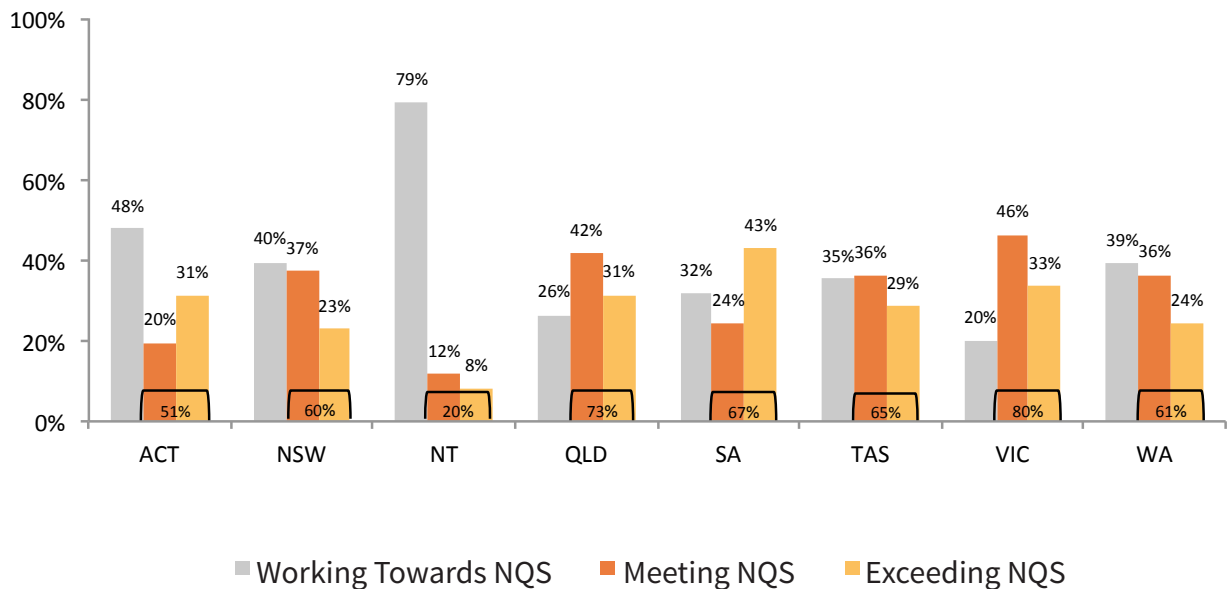
Note: CB = Centre-based care FDC = Family Day Care

Of the total number of services rated, 68% have been assessed as Meeting or Exceeding NQS (Meeting 39%, Exceeding 29%) while 31% were rated as Working Towards NQS. A further 0.4% (44 services) received an Excellent rating while 0.1% (7 services) were rated Significant Improvement Required.

Figure 3 provides a breakdown of services by their overall rating level for each jurisdiction. It shows that Victoria had the highest proportion (80%) and the Northern Territory the lowest proportion (20%) of services rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS. Statistical significance testing at the 95% level showed that:

- services in Victoria and Queensland were significantly more likely than services in all other jurisdictions to be quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS
- services in the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia were significantly less likely than services in all other jurisdictions to be quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS
- no statistical difference was found between the overall quality rating of services in Tasmania and all other jurisdictions, or between services in South Australia and all other jurisdictions, in terms of services quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS.

Figure 3 Percentage of quality rated services at each overall rating level by jurisdiction^{6,7}



⁶ Some combined proportions may not total 100%. This is due to rounding, or because a small number of services in some jurisdictions received a 'Significant Improvement Required' or an 'Excellent' rating. These proportions are too small to be visible on the figure so have been excluded.

⁷ Due to rounding, combined Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS figures may not add up to the individual proportions.

Quality Areas

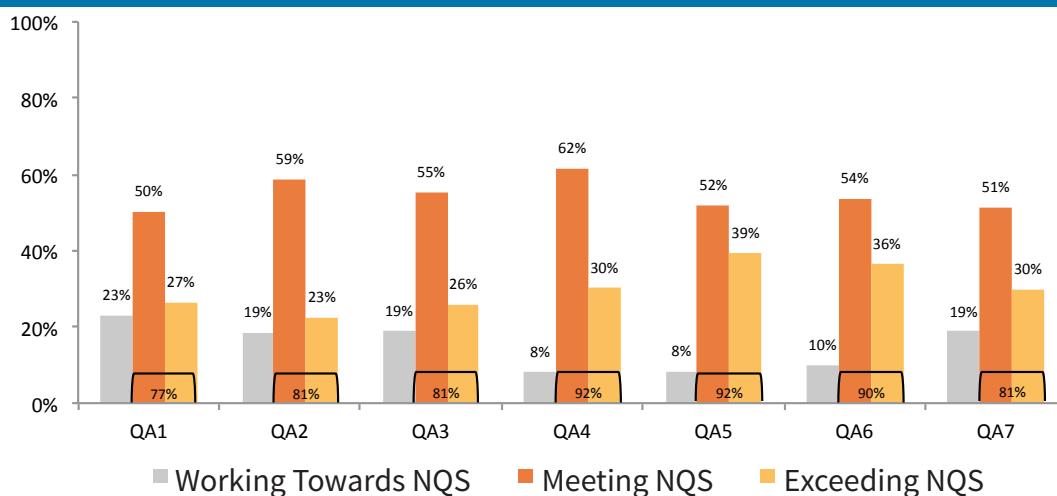
The NQS comprises seven quality areas which are presented in the table below.

Table 2 NQS Quality Areas

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 children and families
QA7	Leadership and service management

Figure 4 compares the seven quality areas according to the proportion of services that have been rated as Working Towards, Meeting or Exceeding NQS. It shows that 77% of services were rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1 (Meeting 50%, Exceeding 27%). In contrast, 92% of services were rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 4 (Meeting 62%, Exceeding 30%) and Quality Area 5 (Meeting 52%, Exceeding 39%), and 90% were rated as Meeting or Exceeding in Quality Area 6 (Meeting 54%, Exceeding 36%).

Figure 4 Percentage of quality rated services at each quality area rating level^{8,9}



⁸ Some proportions may not total 100% due to rounding.

⁹ Due to rounding, combined Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS figures may not add up to the individual proportions.

Educational Program and Practice (Quality Area 1) – differences according to jurisdiction, service sub-type, management type, socioeconomic status, and remoteness classification

Quality Area 1 – Education Program and Practice – focuses on ensuring that educational program and practice is stimulating and engaging, enhances children’s learning and development and meets children’s individual learning and development needs.

The knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests of each child should be incorporated into the program, with continuous assessment of their learning and development.

Quality Area 1 provides a strong focus on enhancing children’s learning and development through the:

- pedagogical practices of educators and coordinators
- development of programs that promote children’s learning across five learning outcomes:
 1. Children have a strong sense of identity
 2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
 3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
 4. Children are confident and involved learners
 5. Children are effective communicators

Quality Area 1 comprises two standards – 1.1 and 1.2. A description of these standards is provided in **Table 3**.

ACECQA recognises that the introduction of the learning frameworks has raised the benchmark for educational programs and practice and as a result, Quality Area 1 is the most challenging of all the quality areas for services to meet. In addition to the guidance materials which were developed when the NQS was first introduced, ACECQA, in collaboration with regulatory authorities, has developed a range of supports including:

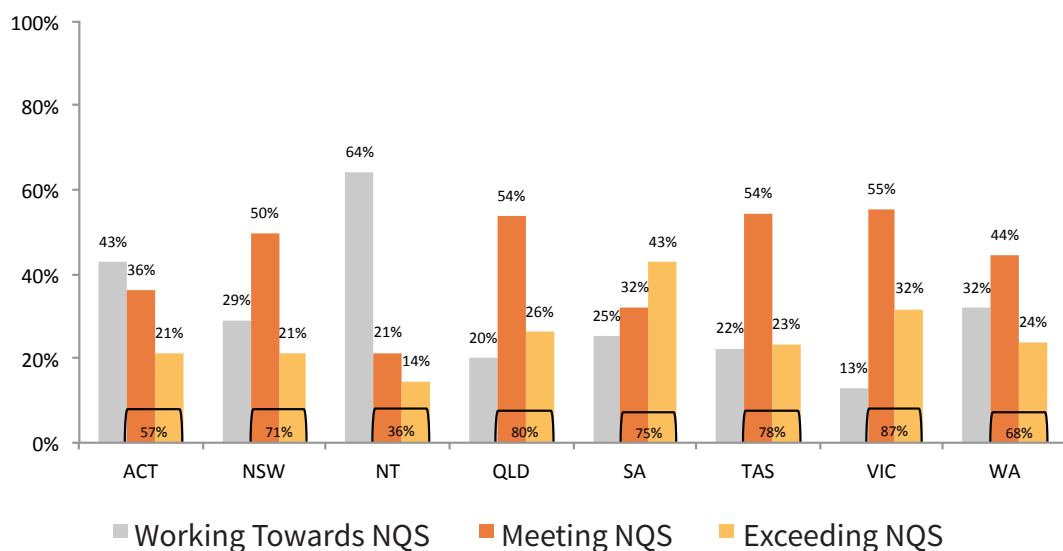
- National Workshops on Quality Area 1 attended by over 4,000 people
- publication of new information sheets such as *Guidelines for documenting children’s learning*, and the *Role of the Educational Leader*
- regular updates from the National Educational Leader on the cycle of planning, documentation and critical reflection
- a podcast series on documenting children’s learning and development.

Quality Area 1 and jurisdictions

Figure 5 compares how services in each jurisdiction have been rated against Quality Area 1. Victoria had the highest proportion (87%) and the Northern Territory the lowest proportion (36%) of services rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1. Significance testing at the 95% level showed that:

- services in Victoria and Queensland were significantly more likely than services in other jurisdictions to be quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1
- services in the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and New South Wales were significantly less likely than services in other jurisdictions to be quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1
- no statistical difference between services in Tasmania and other jurisdictions was found, or between services in South Australia and other jurisdictions, in terms of services quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1.

Figure 5 Percentage of quality rated services at each Quality Area 1 rating level by jurisdiction^{10,11}



¹⁰ Some proportions may not total 100% due to rounding.

¹¹ Due to rounding, combined Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS figures may not add up to the individual proportions.

There are a number of factors that may explain variation in quality rating results across jurisdictions. These factors include differences in:

- a) the proportion of services that have been quality rated
- b) prioritising which services will be quality rated first
- c) the profile of service and provider types
- d) legislated standards across early childhood and school age care services
- e) the history of regulation of education and care services
- f) the history of state and territory subsidies targeting particular child outcomes, in addition to Australian Government subsidies
- g) historical and legacy factors in how sub-sectors have developed and been supported by state and territory governments in areas such as professional development.

The following offers a brief examination of how some of these factors can contribute to different patterns of quality rating along jurisdictional boundaries.

Prioritising which services will be quality rated first

The education and care services that have been quality rated by Regulatory Authorities are not a randomly selected sample. Decisions to prioritise services for quality assessment and rating were made for a variety of reasons, including, where relevant, the date of the service's last National Childcare Accreditation Council accreditation and its last licence renewal or visit date, opportunities to mitigate risks associated with particular services, or the level of preparedness of a provider. Factors such as regulatory workforce capacity have also influenced some prioritisation within jurisdictions.

While nearly three-quarters of services have been quality rated, the sample of services used in this analysis may not be a truly representative cross-section of services.

Differences in service and provider profiles

The distribution of the state subsidised preschool/kindergarten service model varies significantly across jurisdictions, with Tasmania and Western Australia being the stand out cases because their major investment in school operated preschool/kindergarten is formally out of scope of the NQF.

An interesting case study is provided by the Northern Territory, which has a relatively large government operated preschool sector however, these services are significantly under-represented among the sample of services that have been quality rated.

Differences in legislated standards

Legal framework factors such as grandfathered provisions in the National Law also cause variation in standards, and this could be expected to flow through to quality. One example is outside school hours care (OSHC), where service educator qualification requirements differ across jurisdictions. For example, in New South Wales there is no minimum educator qualification requirement for school age care. There are also variations in educator to child ratios, and in the number of early childhood teachers required at each service. Some of this variation is diminishing, as savings clauses sunset, but to date it is likely to have contributed to varying patterns of quality according to jurisdiction.

Historical and other contextual factors

There are many unique legacy and historical variations across jurisdiction. For example, some jurisdictions have invested more in the long day care model in addition to Australian Government subsidies. This investment has included contracting early childhood provision at higher than the minimum legislated standard. Where these programs and extra subsidies have been in place for longer periods they could be expected to result in variations in quality ratings that follow state and territory boundaries.

ACECQA continues to monitor these patterns and more conclusive findings of underlying drivers of quality rating variation could be expected when a higher proportion of services have been quality rated nationally.

Quality Area 1 and service sub-type

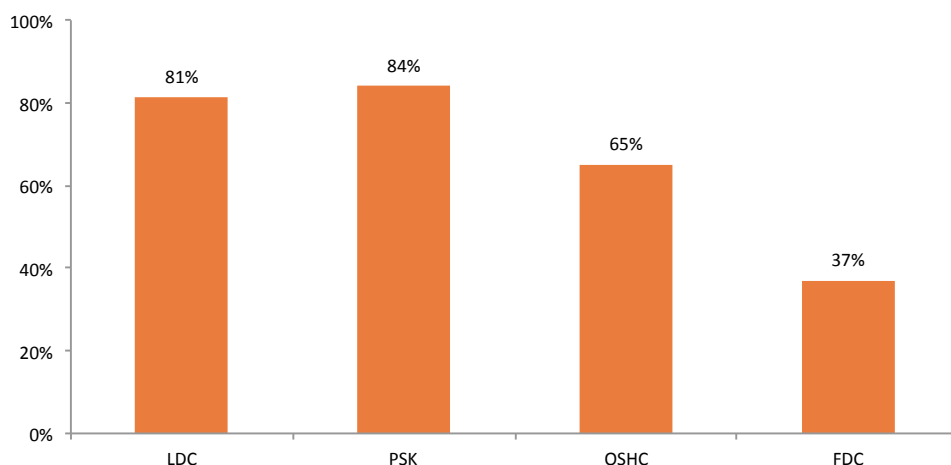
Under the NQF, service providers are granted approval from Regulatory Authorities to operate either a centre-based or family day care service. Although providers are not obliged to define the type of service any further, when applying for service approval, providers of centre-based services are asked to indicate the specific nature of education and care their service provides by selecting from a range of options. More than one option may be selected. The options are:

- long day care (LDC)
- preschool/kindergarten (Stand alone or Part of school)
- outside school hours care (Before school care, After school care or Vacation care) (OSHC).

Some services offer a combination of services or 'multiple programs' from the one venue (typically LDC offering another service such as OSHC)¹². Services may also vary their service mix from time to time to suit the needs of families without indicating this to Regulatory Authorities. These services are counted in **Figure 6** using an ordered method¹³.

The proportion of services that have been quality rated within each service sub-type is presented in **Figure 6**. Preschools/kindergartens (PSK) and long day care (LDC) services are significantly more likely to be quality rated than family day care (FDC) and outside school hours care (OSHC) services.

Figure 6 Percentage of services with a quality rating by service sub-type¹⁴



¹² NQA ITS data collected on service sub-types is self-reported by providers when applying for service approval. Providers may choose multiple service sub-types when self-reporting. Reporting on service sub-types is not mandatory and therefore, may not be current.

¹³ The counting method applies a hierarchy to order services that offer more than one service type to enable a totalling of service sub-types to add up to 100 per cent. That is; services which provide FDC in addition to any other service type are classified as FDC services; services which provide LDC in addition to Preschool/Kindergarten or OSHC services are classified as LDC services; services which provide Preschool/Kindergarten services as well as OSHC services are classified as Preschool/Kindergarten services; services which provide OSHC services only are classified as OSHC services.

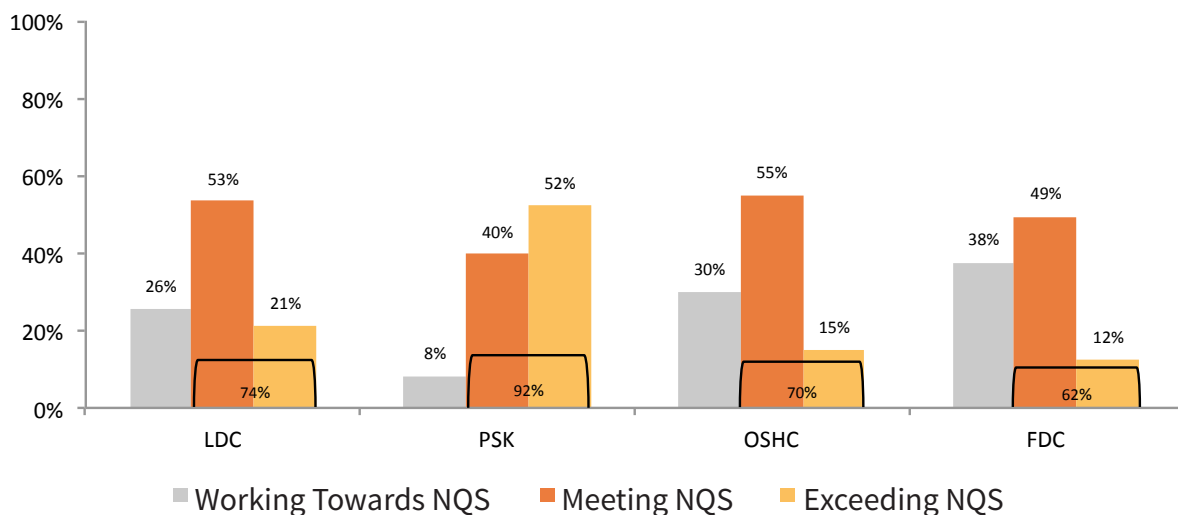
¹⁴ For information, a small number (n=10) of services provide a service type other than the four main options

Figure 7 compares how services in each service sub-type have been rated against Quality Area 1. Preschool/Kindergarten had the highest proportion of services rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1 (92%), much higher than the overall proportion nationally (77%). Meanwhile, family day care had the lowest proportion (62%).

Significance testing at the 95% level showed that preschools/kindergartens were significantly more likely than other service sub-types to be quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1.

This finding may reflect the long term historical focus of preschool/kindergarten providers on educational program and practice. For example, standards that required the presence of early childhood teachers could be expected to have a flow on benefit to the delivery of educational programs. In addition, some jurisdictions have seen greater investment on the part of providers and governments in educational program and practice within the preschool/kindergarten model.

Figure 7 Percentage of quality rated services at each Quality Area 1 rating level by service sub-type^{15,16,17}



¹⁵ Some proportions may not total 100% due to rounding.

¹⁶ Due to rounding, combined Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS figures may not add up to the individual proportions

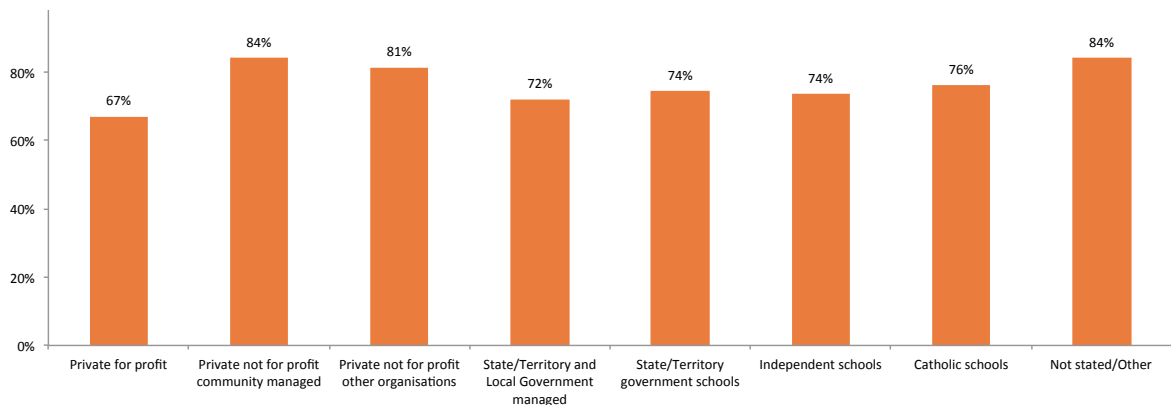
¹⁷ For information, a small number (n=10) of services provide a service type other than the four main options

Quality Area 1 and provider management type

ACECQA's Quarter 3 2015 *NQF Snapshot* for the first time included reporting on provider management type. This type of reporting was developed for a range of purposes, for example, to help governments and other agencies that support children's education and care providers better tailor their training, communications and professional development services. In the longer term this type of information will also assist evaluation of how the NQF is working for children and families across different parts of the sector.

Education and care providers can be classified according to the eight different provider management types as defined in the Australian Bureau of Statistics National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection Data Collection Guidelines.¹⁸ The proportion of services that have been quality rated within each of the provider management types is presented in **Figure 8**¹⁹. The figure shows that 'Private not for profit community managed' services were statistically the most likely to have been quality rated.

Figure 8 Percentage of services with a quality rating by provider management type



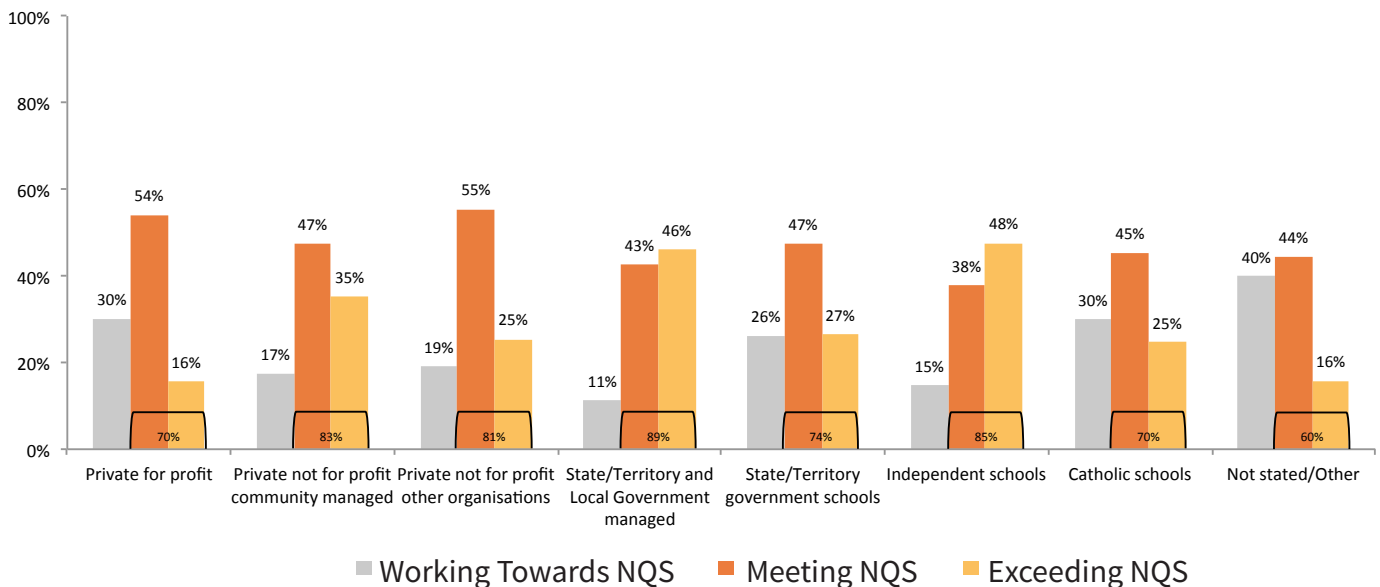
¹⁸ Providers are asked to specify their 'Provider Management Type' (or 'Sector Classification') as part of their application for provider approval following the ABS' (2014) National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection Data Collection Guidelines.

¹⁹ Actual numbers of services for each provider management type are provided in Appendix Table B.

Figure 9 compares how services in each provider management type have been rated against Quality Area 1. Significance testing at the 95% level showed that 'State/Territory and Local Government managed' services were more likely than all other provider management types to be quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1.

This finding may be partly attributable to the type of service operated by these providers. Half of all 'State/Territory and Local Government managed' services are preschools/kindergartens, which, as mentioned above, were significantly more likely than other service sub-types to be quality rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1. In contrast, preschools/kindergartens make up only 1% of 'Private for profit' services.

Figure 9 Percentage of quality rated services at each Quality Area 1 rating level by provider management type^{20,21}



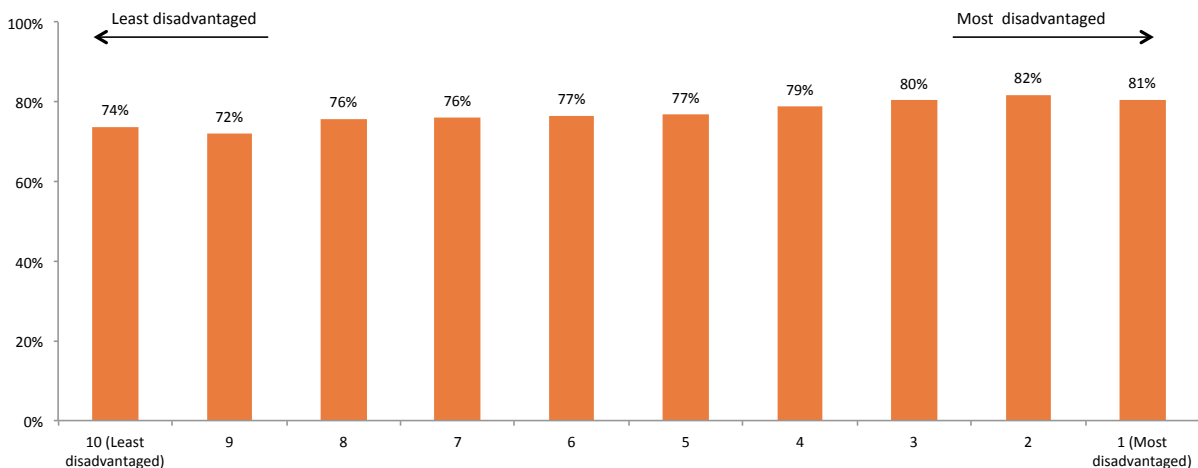
²⁰ Some proportions may not total 100% due to rounding.

²¹ Due to rounding, combined Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS figures may not add up to the individual proportions.

Quality Area 1 and SEIFA ranking

The Socioeconomic Index for Areas (SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage) is a tool that draws on census data to score socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage in localities across Australia. SEIFA deciles classify these scores into ten equally sized groups, from 1 (most disadvantaged) to 10 (least disadvantaged)²². **Figure 10** presents the proportion of services that have been quality rated according to the SEIFA ranking of the community in which they are located.^{23,24} The figure shows that more than 70% of services in each of the SEIFA deciles have been quality rated. Services in more disadvantaged communities are slightly more likely than those in less disadvantaged communities to have been quality rated.

Figure 10 Percentage of services with a quality rating by SEIFA decile



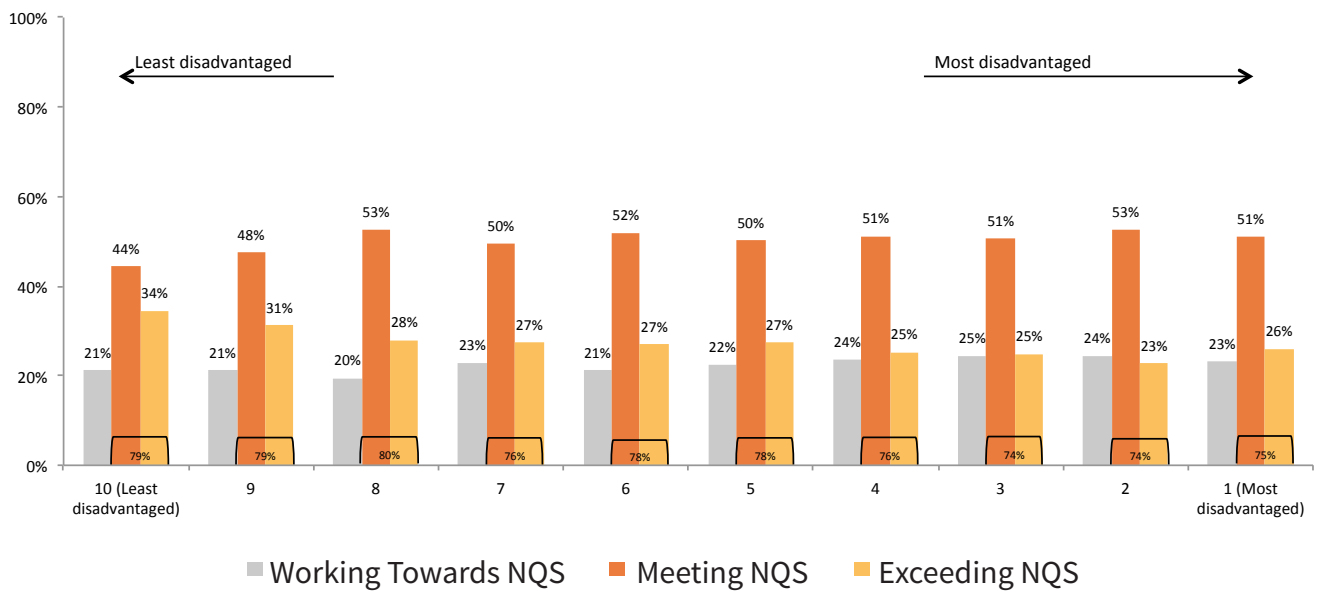
²² Census data that contribute to the SEIFA index include household income, employment status, occupation, community or non-community housing, and other indicators of advantage and disadvantage.

²³ Actual numbers of services within each of the SEIFA ranked communities are presented in Appendix B.

²⁴ Family Day Care services are not included in these analyses as SEIFA classifications are based on the location of the service coordinator who may provide services across multiple locations.

Figure 11 compares the distribution of Quality Area 1 ratings by SEIFA decile. It shows minimal variation with around three-quarters of services in most communities receiving a rating of Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1.

Figure 11 Percentage of quality rated services at each Quality Area 1 rating level by SEIFA decile^{25,26}



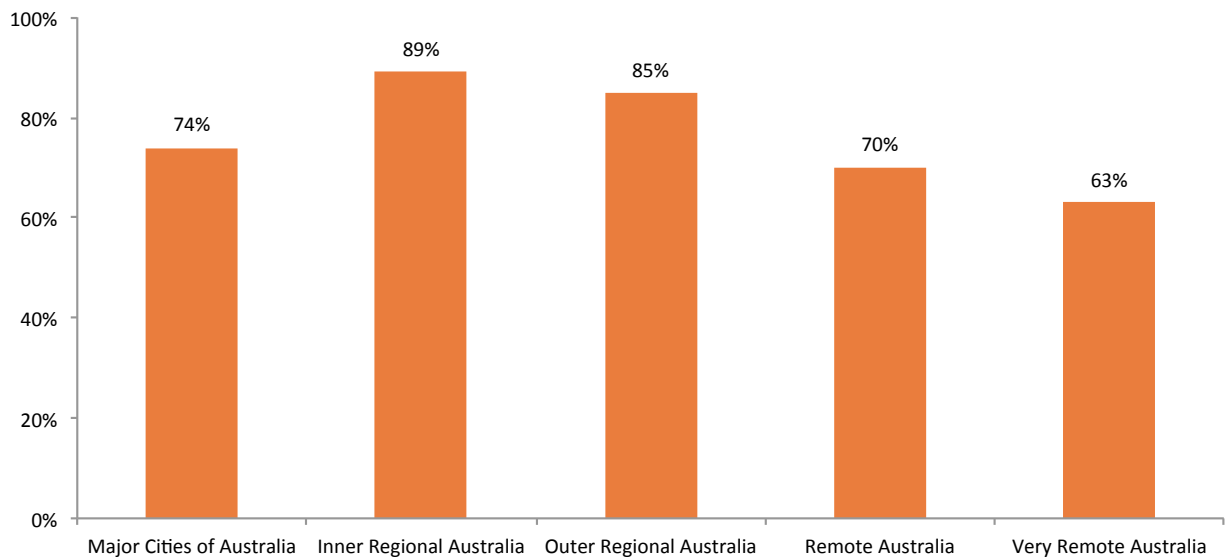
²⁵ Some proportions may not total 100% due to rounding.

²⁶ Due to rounding, combined Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS figures may not add up to the individual proportions.

Quality Area 1 and remoteness

Figure 12 presents the proportion of services that have been quality rated according to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+).^{27,28} The figure shows that 89% of all services in 'Inner Regional Australia' have been rated, compared to 63% in 'Very Remote Australia'.

Figure 12 Percentage of services with a quality rating by remoteness classification



²⁷ The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Remoteness Structure uses the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+) to develop a standard classification and index of remoteness, based on road distances between populated localities and general Service Centres (not Early Childhood Education and Care services). The index can be used in policy development, implementation and evaluation to assist in targeting of programs to the various regions of Australia.

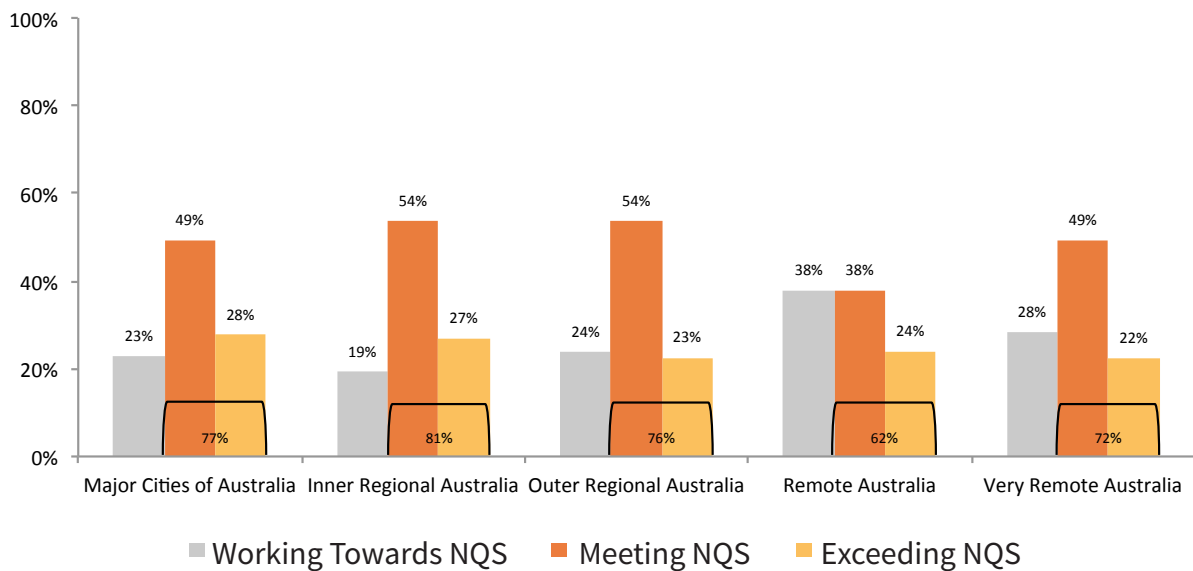
²⁸ Actual numbers of services in each ARIA classification are presented in Appendix Table D.



Figure 13 compares the distribution of Quality Area 1 ratings according to remoteness classification. As can be seen, 81% of services in 'Inner Regional Australia' were rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1, compared to only 62% of services in 'Remote Australia'. Interestingly, services in 'Remote Australia' (rather than services in 'Very Remote Australia') were significantly less likely to be rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1 compared to services in all other areas. Services in 'Inner regional Australia', on the other hand, were significantly more likely to be rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS on Quality Area 1 compared to services in all other areas.

These data suggest that services in remote areas could be better supported to improve quality around educational program and practice.

Figure 13 Percentage of quality rated services at each Quality Area 1 rating level by remoteness classification^{29, 30}



²⁸ Some proportions may not total 100% due to rounding.

³⁰ Due to rounding, combined Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS figures may not add up to the individual proportions.

Quality Area 1 - Standards and elements

Standards

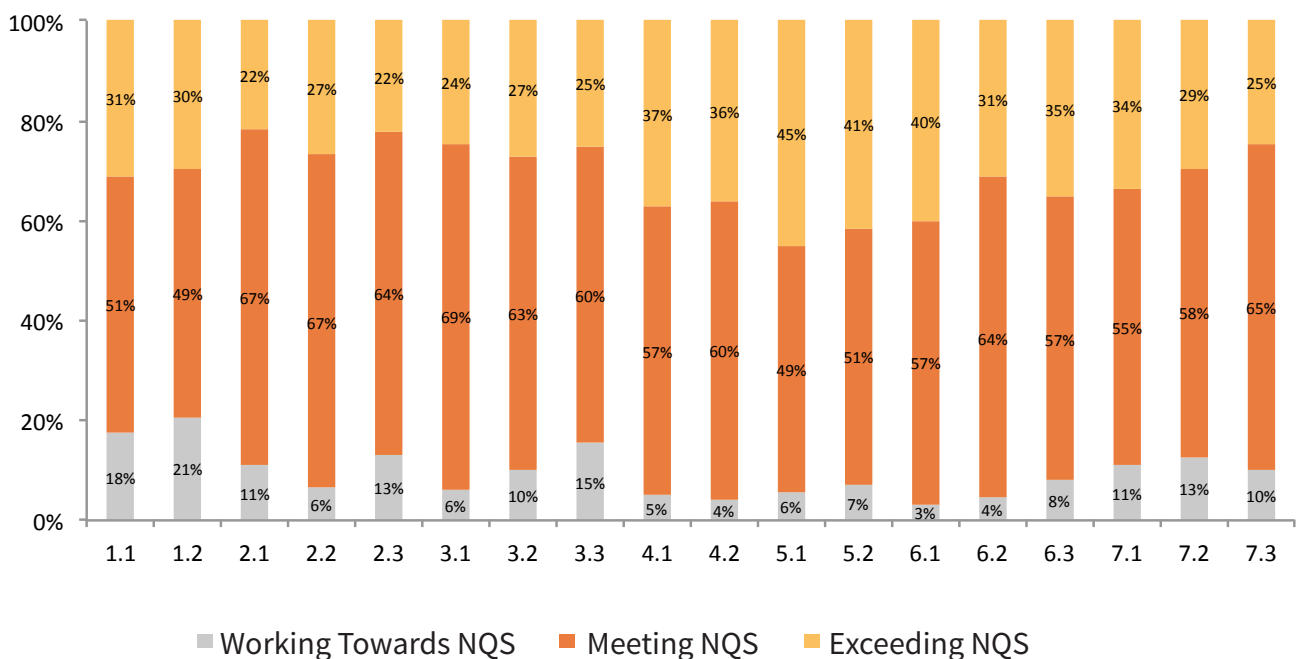
Quality Area 1 comprises two standards:

- 1.1 – which focuses on use of an approved learning framework to inform the curriculum
- 1.2 – which focuses on critical reflection, and the cycle of planning, documenting and evaluating.

A description of these standards and their associated elements is provided in **Table 3**.

Analysis of data shown in **Figure 14** indicates that these two standards are consistently the most challenging for services to meet. As can be seen, 82% of services were rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS Standard 1.1 and 79% were rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS Standard 1.2.

Figure 14 Percentage of quality rated services at each standard rating level



■ ■ ■ Elements

As can be seen in Table 3, Standard 1.1 comprises six elements and Standard 1.2 comprises three elements. All elements must be assessed as Met for a service to be rated as Meeting NQS or Exceeding NQS in a given standard. In turn, both standards must be rated as Meeting NQS or Exceeding NQS for the service to be rated as Meeting NQS or Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1.



Table 3 Quality Area 1 standards and elements

Standard 1.1 An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.

- 1.1.1** Curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators
- 1.1.2** Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program
- 1.1.3** The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning
- 1.1.4** The documentation about each child's program and progress is available to families
- 1.1.5** Every child is supported to participate in the program
- 1.1.6** Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and to influence events and their world

Standard 1.2 Educators and coordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.

- 1.2.1** Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation
- 1.2.2** Educators respond to children's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning
- 1.2.3** Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program



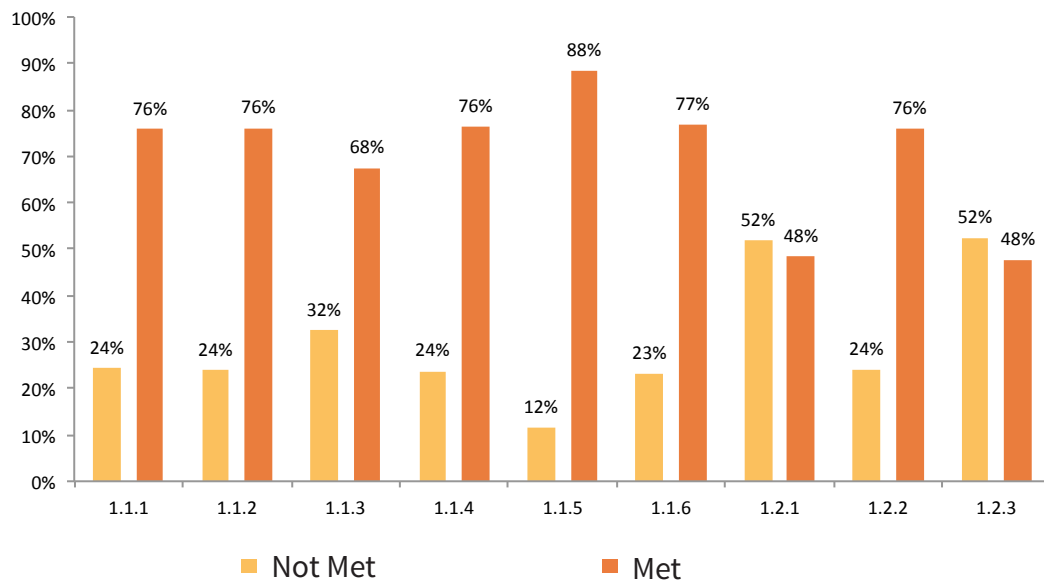
As can be seen in **Figure 15**, of the nine elements that comprise Standard 1.1 and Standard 1.2, the element most likely to be assessed as Met is:

- 1.1.5 (88%).

Figure 15 also shows that the least likely of the elements to be assessed as Met are:

- 1.2.1 (52%)
- 1.2.3 (52%).

Figure 15 Percentage of Quality Area 1 elements assessed as Not Met or Met for services rated Working Towards or Significant Improvement Required³¹



Given the requirement for services to meet all the elements of Quality Area 1 to meet NQS, it is useful to explore why some services are falling short and others are meeting the elements. It is particularly pertinent to examine elements 1.2.1 and 1.2.3 as these are the elements that services are least likely to meet.

The remainder of the paper discusses elements 1.2.1 and 1.2.3, including what authorised officers look for when assessing the elements. It draws on de-identified accounts from authorised officers' assessment reports to highlight both practice that does not meet the NQS and higher quality practice for these elements.

³¹ Only services receiving an overall quality rating of 'Significant Improvement Required' or 'Working Towards NQS' are counted in these figures as services with an overall quality rating of 'Meeting NQS', 'Exceeding NQS' or 'Excellent' must have all elements rated as 'Met'

Case studies

Element 1.2.1

Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.

Rationale

This element is critical because the cycle of planning is a process that allows educators to make purposeful contributions to children's continued learning and development. The *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework (2010)* supports a model of decision making as an ongoing cycle of information gathering, questioning, planning, acting and reflecting.

As described in the *Early Years Learning Framework (2009:17)* and in *My Time Our Place (2011:16)*, assessment of each child's learning and development is essential because it allows educators to:

- plan effectively
- communicate about children's learning and progress
- determine the extent to which all children are progressing
- identify children who may need additional support
- evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities
- reflect on pedagogy and practice that will suit individual children.

Educators can use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret the information they gather to assess children's learning. They use their professional knowledge to identify appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts individual children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understanding.

When visiting a service, authorised officers will look for instances of educators:

- observing and recording children's learning and behaviour to inform their educational planning
- using their knowledge of the children's current learning and development to evaluate and reflect on programming.

They may discuss:

- the effectiveness of the processes used to capture and record information about children's strengths, interests, relationships and learning over a period of time
- how educators analyse the information that is gathered about individuals and groups of children to make judgements about each child's progress towards specific learning outcomes.

Authorised officers may also seek:

- evidence that information gathered in children's documentation demonstrates the children's learning and development in the service
- evidence of the cycle of planning, documenting and evaluating
- evidence that children's ideas, interests and points of view are heard and respected in planning for and assessing learning experiences
- examples of children's representation of their learning and work that is documented and displayed in sensitive and respectful ways
- information about planned experiences that is recorded in a way that children and families can appreciate and understand and that is displayed for them to view
- opportunities for families and children to comment on or provide feedback about the program.

The reports from authorised officers highlight why some services have been assessed as having met element 1.2.1 while others have not met the element. Examples and excerpts included in the following tables represent a cross section of jurisdictions and sub-service types.

Services meeting element 1.2.1

The information provided below are only examples of evidence collected by the authorised officer when assessing a service against element 1.2.1. It is not a 'checklist' of standard practice which should be applied at all services. The examples are listed under the following headings:

Observation – the assessor observes what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are doing (for example, engaging in and facilitating learning and development, friendly and respectful interactions).

Discussion – the assessor and approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educators or staff members engage in a discussion about why and how particular practices occur at the service.

Documentation – the assessor refers to documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments and evaluations).

Observation

At an OSHC service, the authorised officer observed that the *development of the program was an interactive process as educators responded to children's ideas*. The interests that were expressed by children through group sessions were used to decide and plan activities. The educators then reflected on these activities to develop *potential ideas* for the next program. These ideas were discussed with parents as a source of feedback.

At an OSHC service, the authorised officer observed children accessing learning books which contained *photographs depicting children's learning involvement, children's reflections and educator's discussions in relation to this learning and outcomes*. Examples of this learning included *first aid training as a part of collaborative learning and an animal visit day with resulting discussions*.

Discussion

At a LDC service, the Educational Leader explained to the authorised officer that the service uses a program *allowing educators more time to spend with the children and less time documenting by using photographic observations*. The Educational Leader went on to explain that the service's programming cycle is based on a six step process – gathering information, programming, observing, photographic record, learning stories and analysis of learning.

Documentation

At a preschool/kindergarten service, the authorised officer noted that the cycle of planning occurred over two weeks. In the first week, families were asked about their child's interests or what they would like to see the children experiencing at the preschool. Educators then added their observations to this information and planned experiences for the child. The plan is implemented, recorded and evaluated in week 2 of the cycle. The documentation collated included *photographs, samples of work and learning stories with an interpretation of the link between the learning and development and the EYLF*.

At a preschool/kindergarten service, the authorised officer noted the service had *comprehensive folders on each child, noting strengths, areas for extensions of learning and evaluations and reflections*. They also noted evidence that the information gathered in these portfolios demonstrated children's learning and development at the service. The authorised officer sighted that the *children's art work was attractively displayed throughout the room, either framed or mounted on backing paper. A large group mural depicting Jack and the Beanstalk was a highlight*.

■ ■ ■ Services not meeting element 1.2.1

The information provided below are only examples of evidence collected by authorised officers when assessing a service against element 1.2.1. The examples are listed under the following headings:

Observation – the assessor observes what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are doing (for example, engaging in and facilitating learning and development, friendly and respectful interactions).

Discussion – the assessor and approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educators or staff members engage in a discussion about why and how particular practices occur at the service.

Documentation – the assessor refers to documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments and evaluations).

Observation

At a FDC service, the authorised officer observed that each of the five educators that visited used different ways to record individual children's participation; however this did not reflect ongoing assessments of children's learning.

Discussion

At a FDC service, the authorised officer discussed how educators followed up and extended children's learning. However, the information discussed with the educator was not recorded in their program and evaluation was not occurring consistently for all children.

At a LDC service, authorised officers discussed with educators the lack of a planning cycle at the service. One educator stated *that they did not get any feedback from families and as a result they were unable to do any learning stories, therefore most activities were spontaneous*. Meanwhile educators in the senior toddler room stated that they were *unable to do any planning because parents were not providing feedback and the children spend most of their time clinging to the educators*.

At a Vacation Care service, the authorised officer had a discussion with the nominated supervisor about the processes undertaken for planning, documenting and evaluating the program and children's progress. The authorised officer learned that *program planning was undertaken at a staff meeting where educators review evaluations of activities and information gathered on children to inform the upcoming program*. However, the nominated supervisor confirmed that this meeting or process was not documented.

Documentation

At a LDC service, the authorised officer found limited documentation of evaluation about children's learning and development in order to inform future curriculum planning. The service had no assessments or evaluations recorded of individual children's development, needs, interests or experiences. In addition, future planning listed activities only, and not goals or outcomes the educators wanted to develop further.

At a LDC service, the authorised officer found *no documented links between children's learning and development and what happens on a daily basis in each room*. Furthermore, *no program was displayed in any of the rooms* and although daily sheets were available in each room for educators to document what children had done during the day, the sheets were blank.

Element 1.2.3

Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program

Rationale

The Early Years Learning Framework and *My Time Our Place* identify 'ongoing learning and reflective practice' as one of the principles that underpin effective pedagogy. These frameworks acknowledge that we are all influenced by our own beliefs, experiences and world views. Critical reflection involves thinking about all aspects of experiences and considering different perspectives. Engaging in reflective practice as part of the cycle of planning, allows educators to examine their practices and gain insights to inform their future decision making.

The approved learning frameworks acknowledge the importance of establishing a culture of professional inquiry where educators are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review through which practices are examined, outcomes reviewed and new ideas generated. This enables issues of program quality, environment design, equity and children's wellbeing to be raised and debated.

When visiting a service, authorised officers may look for evidence of educators:

- working with children to document and reflect on their experiences and learning
- using a variety of methods such as diary jottings, children's comments and conversations, photographs and examples of children's work to assist their reflection on children's experiences, thinking and learning
- evidence that written programming and evaluation is ongoing, appropriate and inclusive of each child.

They may discuss:

- how critical reflection and assessment evaluation are ongoing processes in the service
- the opportunities available for educators to reflect on the events of each day, including thinking about what happened and why
- the opportunities available for educators to reflect on the program's successes and what can be extended or changed
- how children's comments about their experiences of the program are recorded and considered as part of the evaluation process
- whether information gathered provides insights about curriculum decision making that supports and extends children's learning, development and wellbeing
- how educators consider ways in which children's interests and ideas can be scaffolded to enhance their learning development

- how nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators promote a culture of professional enquiry, where practices and outcomes are reviewed and new ideas are generated.

Authorised officers may also seek evidence of critical reflection that clearly identifies:

- children's learning and their developing ideas and skills
- examples of children's spontaneous play
- the effectiveness of teaching strategies
- changes that may be needed in the environment.

This evidence may take the form of photographs, samples of children's work and their words being used to create records that are meaningful for children and can be shared with their families.

Reports from authorised officers highlight why some services have been assessed as having met element 1.2.3 while others have not met the element. Examples and excerpts included in the following tables are taken from a range of jurisdictions and sub-service types.

Services meeting element 1.2.3

The information provided below are only examples of evidence collected by the authorised officer when assessing a service against element 1.2.3. It is not a 'checklist' of standard practice which should be applied at all services. The examples are listed under the following headings:

Observation – the assessor observes what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are doing (for example, evaluating the effectiveness of learning opportunities, planning for current and future learning).

Discussion – the assessor and approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educators or staff members engage in a discussion about why and how particular practices occur at the service.

Documentation – the assessor refers to documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments and evaluations).

Observation

At a preschool/kindergarten service, the authorised officer commented that *at the end of each day, the educators were observed sitting together for a discussion about the day's events and planning for the following day*. The authorised officer further noted that staff meetings were also used to formally reflect on the *facilitation of children's learning and development and whole group experiences*.

At a preschool/kindergarten service, the authorised officer observed that *children were also engaged in reflection, through discussion at 'mat time' about what they had experienced that session, what they had learned and what they would like to do next time they came to the service*.

Discussion

At a LDC service, the Director explained to the authorised officer that *reflection occurred spontaneously throughout the day amongst the educators*. The Director went on to describe an example where the educators had reflected on a routine in their 'Inventors Room' and had decided that it was not effective. As a result they worked together to explore how the routine could be changed to better meet the needs and interests of children.

At an OSHC service, the authorised officer had a conversation with the educator about the process of *encouraging children to have a strong voice in the direction of their learning*. The educator explained that *children are encouraged to give comments on experiences in which they have participated, which they scribe in the evaluation folder. Educators quoted the child's name with the comment written next to it as a part of an ongoing anecdote of learning evaluations* – examples of children's comments included *It was good, I really liked using pens and the crafter was good, it was fantastic!*

Documentation

At a preschool/kindergarten service, the authorised officer noted that *critical reflection on children's learning and development was documented by the educators in their own daily reflective diary* and that *this information was used in reflection with other educators to implement, review and revise the program*. The authorised officer added that the educators at this service had a set of formalised questions to guide their personal diaries.

At an OSHC service, the authorised officer noted that *educators worked with children to document and reflect on their experiences and learning*. Evidence of this was the inclusion of a child's comments in a daily journal entry that described her enjoyment of learning about different countries and the resulting activity of making a Chinese puppet.

Services not meeting element 1.2.3

The information provided below are only examples of evidence collected by the authorised officer when assessing a service against element 1.2.1. The examples are listed under the following headings:

Observation – the assessor observes what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff member are doing (for example, evaluating the effectiveness of learning opportunities, planning for current and future learning).

Discussion – the assessor and approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educators or staff members engage in a discussion about why and how particular practices occur at the service.

Documentation – the assessor refers to documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments and evaluations).

Observation

At an OSHC service, the authorised officer observed constant talking about children, but a lack of clarity as to how these conversations impact upon the program since the educators had not yet discussed the program that would be offered in the afternoon.

Discussion

At a LDC service, the Educational Leader told the visiting authorised officer that *there was no critical reflection conducted on children's learning nor was there a process in place for documenting reflections.*

At an OSHC service, the regional manager, in discussing the reflection journal, mentioned to the authorised officer that it was simply *a summary of the activities that had occurred throughout the week.* The authorised officer added, *the regional manager stated that critical reflection occurred through conversations, staff meetings and reports from the regional manager, however, this was not evident from staff meeting minutes, programming documentation or the regional manager reports that were sighted.* Moreover, educators at this service were not encouraged to discuss their reflections. When asked how critical reflection occurred at the service, the coordinator explained to the authorised officer that she *encouraged the educators to try to resolve their concerns independently or amongst themselves.* The coordinator added that if this was not possible she would then *assist the educators to develop strategies.*

Documentation

At a FDC service, the visiting authorised officer noted that *critical reflection is not evident in programs. There is minimal evidence of documented evaluations of children's learning and experiences, and no evidence of how observations and evaluations are used to guide future planning.*

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted several interesting features about the distribution of Quality Area 1 ratings. As the number of quality ratings grows and patterns become clearer, it becomes increasingly possible to understand the causes of variations in ratings. The reports of authorised officers show how the standard of service practice and leadership are major contributing factors.

As well, we can see how underlying structural variation across the sector can shape observable patterns in quality rating results. Possibly the clearest example of these structural differences are the factors specific to each jurisdiction that are discussed earlier in this report. ACECQA has discussed these differences with senior staff and lead assessors in each jurisdiction, and their feedback provides additional insight. For example:

- some jurisdictions have prioritised the rating of newly established services where their 'quality' is unknown, or prioritised the rating of services that may be of poorer quality, so that these services can receive timely feedback or assistance.
- other jurisdictions have prioritised the rating of services that were considered most ready to engage in the quality rating process, and therefore may be of higher quality.
- some jurisdictions have historically invested more in professional development and service quality improvement. For example, where a jurisdiction has subsidised a part of the sector to operate at higher quality levels, such as through contracting the presence of early childhood teachers across the long day care sector.

Variation in Quality Area 1 ratings was also evident at the service sub-type level. As previously noted, services described as preschool/kindergarten were more likely than other service sub-types to be rated as Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1, while family day care and outside school hours care were the least likely to be rated as Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1.

It is possible that the variation in quality ratings may also be associated with the formal qualification of educators in the various service sub-types. An example is outside school hours care, where there are differing qualification requirements for educators depending on the jurisdiction in which they are employed. The minimum qualification in South Australia, for instance, is a diploma. In Queensland and Victoria, a Certificate III is the minimum standard, whereas in NSW no formal qualification is required.

The Productivity Commission's (2011) *Early Childhood Development Workforce* report³² and responses to the Productivity Commission's (2014) *Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Issues Paper*³³ note the critical role that a capable and effective education and care workforce will play in achieving the aims of the NQF.

³² Productivity Commission (2011). *Early Childhood Development Workforce*. Productivity Commission, Melbourne

³³ See for example, Centre for Community Child Health (2014). *Response to the Productivity Commission's Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Issues Paper*. Parkville Victoria: Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Several recent and ongoing research projects – including the E4 Kids³⁴ and Australian Abecedarian Approach³⁵ studies and action research projects being supported by PSCs and others³⁶ – explore the impact of educational leadership and educator qualifications on educational program and practice. This is also an issue which ACECQA intends to investigate further through future analysis.

Provider management type was also found to be associated with differences in ratings in Quality Area 1, with 'State/Territory and Local Government managed' services being more likely than other provider management types to be rated as Exceeding. As noted earlier, this may in part be attributable to the different service types that the provider management types typically offer.

Implications and future directions

Of the seven quality areas, Quality Area 1 is arguably the most critical to longer term child outcomes. A quality education and care program that builds on children's individual needs, interests and strengths is likely to have long term benefits not only for children but the broader society. On the contrary, poor quality education and care has been shown to have lasting detrimental effects on children's development (Centre for Community Child Health, 2014).

It is clear from the analysis that most services are providing high quality education and care that is stimulating and engaging, and enhances children's learning and development. However, the results also indicate that practices in some services are falling short in this area.

As noted at the beginning of the paper, ACECQA, Regulatory Authorities and major sector support agencies have in place a range of initiatives to guide and support service providers to meet the requirements of Quality Area 1.

In addition to these targeted initiatives, ACECQA continues to be active in raising community awareness across Australia about the importance of quality education and care. ACECQA will also continue working with Regulatory Authorities, and the Australian and state and territory governments to promote improved quality outcomes for children and their families.

³⁴ Melbourne Graduate School of Education & Queensland University of Technology (2015). 'E4 Kids: Effective Early Educational Experiences', Research Bulletin, Issue 6: pp 1-7.

³⁵ See for example, Campbell, F.A., Ramey, C.T., Pungello, E., Sparling, J. and Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). 'Early Childhood Education: Young Adult Outcomes from the Abecedarian Project' Applied Developmental Science, Volume. 6, Issue 1: pp 42–57; Sparling, J. (2011). 'Evidence-based' early childhood education in Australia: the Abecedarian Approach, Deans Lecture Series, Melbourne Graduate School of Education & Queensland University of Technology, QUT, Brisbane: pp 1-7.

³⁶ See for example, Cohrssen, C., Church, A. and Tayler, C. (2010) Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Evidence Paper, University of Melbourne and DEECD, Melbourne; Early, D. M., et al. (2006) 'Are teachers' education, major, and credentials related to classroom quality and children's academic gains in pre-kindergarten?' Early Childhood Research Quarterly 21.2: 174 195; Pianta, R.C., et al. (2008) Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual: K-3. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, Baltimore.

Links to resources

ACECQA website

www.cecqa.gov.au

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Appendix A

QA1	Educational program and practice
1.1	An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.
1.1.1	Curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
1.1.2	Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
1.1.3	The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
1.1.4	The documentation about each child's program and progress is available to families.
1.1.5	Every child is supported to participate in the program.
1.1.6	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence events and their world.
1.2	Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.
1.2.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.
1.2.2	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning.
1.2.3	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program.
QA2	Children's health and safety
2.1	Each child's health is promoted.
2.1.1	Each child's health needs are supported.
2.1.2	Each child's comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.3	Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.4	Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines.
2.2	Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children.
2.2.1	Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child.
2.2.2	Physical activity is promoted through planned and spontaneous experiences and is appropriate for each child.

2.3	Each child is protected.
2.3.1	Children are adequately supervised at all times.
2.3.2	Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.
2.3.3	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.3.4	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
QA3	Physical environment
3.1	The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose.
3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.1.3	Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service and to allow flexible use, and interaction between indoor and outdoor space.
3.2	The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.
3.2.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organised to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program and allow for multiple uses.
3.3	The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.
3.3.1	Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.
3.3.2	Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.
QA4	Staffing arrangements
4.1	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing.
4.1.1	Educator-to-child ratios and qualification requirements are maintained at all times.
4.2	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
4.2.2	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills, to improve practice and relationships.
4.2.3	Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.

QA5	Relationships with children
5.1	Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Interactions with each child are warm, responsive and build trusting relationships.
5.1.2	Every child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
5.1.3	Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.
5.2	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.
5.2.1	Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.
5.2.2	Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
5.2.3	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained at all times.
QA6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
6.1	Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.
6.1.1	There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families.
6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.3	Current information about the service is available to families.
6.2	Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.
6.2.1	The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.2.2	Current information is available to families about community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.3	The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.
6.3.1	Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained.
6.3.2	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.3.3	Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated.
6.3.4	The service builds relationships and engages with their local community.

QA7	Leadership and service management
7.1	Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community.
7.1.1	Appropriate governance arrangements are in place to manage the service.
7.1.2	The induction of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is comprehensive.
7.1.3	Every effort is made to promote continuity of educators and co-ordinators at the service.
7.1.4	Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator or co-ordinator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.
7.1.5	Adults working with children and those engaged in management of the service or residing on the premises are fit and proper.
7.2	There is a commitment to continuous improvement.
7.2.1	A statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.2.2	The performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is evaluated and individual development plans are in place to support performance improvement.
7.2.3	An effective self-assessment and quality improvement process is in place.
7.3	Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service.
7.3.1	Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.
7.3.2	Administrative systems are established and maintained to ensure the effective operation of the service.
7.3.3	The Regulatory Authority is notified of any relevant changes to the operation of the service, of serious incidents and any complaints which allege a breach of legislation.
7.3.4	Processes are in place to ensure that all grievances and complaints are addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner.
7.3.5	Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly.

Appendix B

■ ■ ■ Limitations of the findings

A number of limitations of the analyses provided in this paper should be acknowledged. Firstly, given that around 25 per cent of approved services are yet to be quality rated, caution should be applied in generalising findings to all services. Although almost 75 per cent of services have been quality rated overall, in South Australia and Western Australia the proportion is around 45 per cent.

A second limitation stems from service sub-type data, and to a lesser extent, provider management type data. While data quality testing undertaken by ACECQA suggest a reasonably high level of accuracy in these variables, this cannot be completely verified at this time. Also, less than one per cent of currently approved services do not have any data on the nature of education and care they provide; and just over one per cent of currently approved services do not have any data on their provider management type. Another complicating factor is that some service types, such as outside school hours care, can be found operating across each of the other types, including within family day care settings, although the extent of this occurring is not captured in the NQA ITS.

■ ■ ■ Table 4 Number of approved services and number and percentage of services with a quality rating by sub service type

Sub service type	Total approved services	Number services with quality rating	% services with quality rating
Long day care	6,799	5,534	81%
Preschool/kindergarten	3,121	2,621	84%
Outside school hours care	4,159	2,704	65%
Family day care	1,077	398	37%
Other (some services self-selected this option. The nature of service is unreported).	10	4	40%
TOTAL	15,166	11,261	74%

Table 5 Number of approved services and number and percentage of services with a quality rating by provider management type

Provider management type	Total approved services	Number services with quality rating	% services with quality rating
Private for profit	6,741	4,519	67%
Private not for profit community managed	3,717	3,125	84%
Private not for profit other organisations	1,828	1,488	81%
State/Territory and Local government managed	1,317	950	72%
State/Territory government schools	780	581	74%
Independent schools	428	315	74%
Catholic schools	197	150	76%
Not stated	158	133	84%
TOTAL	15,166	11,261	74%

Table 6 Number of approved services and number and percentage of services with a quality rating by SEIFA

SEIFA ranking	Total approved services	Number of services with quality rating	% services with quality rating
10 (least disadvantaged)	1,110	818	74%
9	1,210	870	72%
8	1,299	984	76%
7	1,241	942	76%
6	1,299	994	77%
5	1,307	1,004	77%
4	1,436	1,131	79%
3	1,392	1,118	80%
2	1,603	1,308	82%
1 (most disadvantaged)	1,618	1,303	81%
N/A (inc. FDC)	1,651	789	48%
TOTAL	15,166	11,261	74%

Table 7 Number of approved services and number and percentage of services with a quality rating by ARIA +

ARIA	Total approved services	Number services with quality rating	% services with quality rating
Major cities of Australia	9,974	7,382	74%
Inner regional Australia	2,421	2,155	89%
Outer regional Australia	1,177	1,000	85%
Remote Australia	197	138	70%
Very Remote Australia	135	85	63%
N/A (inc. FDC)	1,262	501	40%
TOTAL	15,166	11,261	74%

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