



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority™



Annual Report 2020–2021



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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Our purpose

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

An independent national statutory authority with a vision to ensure children have the best start in life through high quality early childhood education and care.

Our purpose is to work with all stakeholders to achieve the objectives of the National Quality Framework:

- 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
- Improve public knowledge, and access to information, about the quality of education and care services
- Establish a system of national integration and shared responsibility between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth in the administration of the national education and care services quality framework
- Reduce the regulatory and administrative burden for education and care services by enabling information to be shared between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth.

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8 October 2021

The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Chair
Education Ministers Meeting
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601

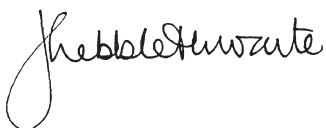
Dear Minister

The Board of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has pleasure in submitting to the Education Ministers Meeting the 2020–21 ACECQA Annual Report.

The report is presented in accordance with section 279 of the *Education and Care Services National Law* (the National Law) and conforms to its requirements.

The National Law requires that the Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) make arrangements for tabling the ACECQA Annual Report in the Parliament of a participating jurisdiction, as determined by the EMM. ACECQA is advised that South Australia has been confirmed as the participating jurisdiction for tabling purposes. Accordingly, the 2020–21 Annual Report has been prepared to meet the tabling requirements of that jurisdiction.


Yours sincerely



Judy Hebblethwaite
Chair

Supporting the sector 2020–21

Stakeholder engagement



2177 NQA ITS service desk enquiries 

- ✓ **88%** satisfaction for Regulatory Authority users
- ✓ **78%** satisfaction for sector users

835,000 visits to **StartingBlocks.gov.au**
26% increase on previous year


800 responses to **Disability Standards for Education Project** online survey 

25,772 customer service enquiries answered 

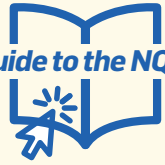
 comprised of **14,540** phone enquiries
 **11,232** email enquiries

12% increase in ACECQA website users



167,000 page views of **COVID-19** section of **StartingBlocks.gov.au** 


3446 NQF Review CRIS survey responses 

127,000 downloads of the **Guide to the NQF** 

39 conference & sector event presentations 

ACECQA functions

35 Excellent rated services
26 applications this year

72%  overall satisfaction with the NQA ITS for Regulatory Authority users **74%** overall satisfaction with the NQA ITS for public users

Over **600** ↑ NQA ITS enhancements

125 services rated **Excellent** since 2013

597 Individual qualification applications

ECT	Diploma	Certificate III	Outside School Hours Care
54%	29%	10%	7%

21 Higher education & other provider qualification applications

ECT	Diploma	Emergency Asthma	Anaphylaxis Management
17	2	1	1

15  finalised second tier review applications

90%  Authorised Officers very satisfied or satisfied with training

170 skilled migration skills assessments
917 provisional skills assessments 

54  Authorised Officers trained to undertake assessment & rating

Foreword from the Chair

On behalf of the ACECQA Board, I would like to present our annual report for 2020–21.

I am pleased to report that despite the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to deliver against our functions under the National Law, and meet our commitments under the Education Ministers Meeting’s interim Letter of Expectation and our Australian Government funding agreement.

It has been another challenging year in Australia, and education and care services have been at the frontline of this. I would like to commend the significant and ongoing contribution of our sector, particularly the teachers and educators who work tirelessly to ensure our children continue to enjoy high quality education and care.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of all ACECQA and Regulatory Authority staff to ensure that the National Quality Framework (NQF) continues to adapt and adjust to meet the needs of the sector and our children in these uncertain times.

The ACECQA Board fully appreciates the need, more than ever during challenging times, for a trusted, independent national authority. Given the generalised increase in domestic and international cyber security attacks during the pandemic, the Board has increased its focus on cyber security controls to ensure ACECQA continues to have a robust framework, providing a secure environment for the Regulatory Authorities’ and sectors’ central regulatory tool, the National Quality Agenda (NQA) IT System.

In addition to this, the Board has overseen the development of a comprehensive long-term strategy and investment roadmap for the NQA IT System. ACECQA is working with governments on this key project, to ensure our national IT system continues to effectively support jurisdictions in undertaking regulatory activities and approved providers in conducting their business.

The Board has also welcomed governments’ requests for ACECQA to lead a number of exciting new projects that will deliver significant benefits to



providers, educators, families and the community. These include the Joined up Approvals Project, the NQF Approved Learning Frameworks Update and the Disability Standards for Education Project. This is in addition to the work we are co-ordinating on behalf of all governments to develop a National Workforce Strategy to help address the national shortage of teachers and educators.

This is my final annual report for the Authority as I will conclude my term as Chair in December. I would like to sincerely thank my colleagues on the Board, our CEO and staff, for their support and dedication during the more than five years I have served as ACECQA Chair. Together we have played an important role in embedding the NQF and growing awareness of the importance of high quality education and care. I am extremely proud of our achievements and I know that I leave the organisation in the hands of an amazing collection of people with the capability, knowledge and passion to ensure ACECQA continues to be a world class organisation, dedicated to improving outcomes for children.

Judy Hebblethwaite
Chair

Report from the CEO

This time last year, my report highlighted the importance of working closely with government partners and sector stakeholders, in the face of a pandemic, to support high quality education and care in more than 16,400 approved services. I would like to start by acknowledging the incredible work of Regulatory Authorities, providers and their staff in maintaining their commitment to children's continuity of education and care while enduring the unpredictability of COVID-19 and its ongoing impact on our communities, families and personal health.

At ACECQA, we have adapted and innovated so that we are able to deliver our functions while also providing new and expanded programs, services and resources to meet the current and future needs of our government partners and sector stakeholders. This report, detailing achievements against our five strategic pillars, demonstrates the exceptional skills, hard work and commitment of our staff in working with stakeholders for the benefit of children's prosperity. Our shared commitment, across the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, to realising the purpose and objectives of the National Quality Framework (NQF) has made the continuous quality journey possible.

Enhance the NQF by working with Regulatory Authorities and governments

The strong relationships our teams have developed provide us with the knowledge needed to problem solve, provide advice on policy decisions and recommend refinements to the national regulatory system.

Working with our government partners, key projects and initiatives from the past 12 months include:

- exploring the implications of extending the Disability Standards for Education to all early childhood education and care providers. Key findings from our consultation with the sector highlight that services would like more assistance to raise awareness of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and to promote inclusive access and participation for children with disability



- updating the Approved Learning Frameworks to ensure they remain fit for purpose and to strengthen connections with school curricula and other related policies and frameworks. On behalf of all governments, we are leading this update with a higher education institution-led partnership with Macquarie University, Queensland University of Technology and Edith Cowan University. To date, a literature review has been conducted and a stakeholder discussion paper is being prepared to inform the next stage of stakeholder engagement
- supporting the 2019 NQF Review through the provision of policy advice, hosting the national website, and analysing the Consultation Regulation Impact Statement family and sector surveys.

We also developed and delivered a new suite of professional development programs for Regulatory Authorities including:

- Administrative Law and Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice
- online authorised officer assessment and rating programs
- the Queensland Supporting Regulatory Quality and Consistency project, a competency-based training and assessment program for all staff of the Queensland Regulatory Authority.

We continue to identify and contribute to evidence-based policy decisions and “what works” operational improvements with government partners through

the Early Childhood Policy Group (ECPG) and our Regulatory Practice Committee (RPC). Issues under consideration this year included regulation amendments, sector communications, Regulatory Authority workforce training, emergency evacuations from multi-storey buildings, NQA ITS development and national communications to increase awareness of the NQF.

Earlier this year, the Australian Government asked us to lead an important new project that will cut red tape for prospective education and care providers. The Joined up Approvals project will combine approval processes so provider and service applications are assessed simultaneously by Regulatory Authorities against the National Law and by the Australian Government against the Family Assistance Law. This 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. Stage one has commenced and the project is scheduled for full implementation in June 2023.

Manage and generate data to support reporting on NQF outcomes

During the reporting period, we published our fourth NQF Annual Performance Report. As well as adding to our understanding of the NQF profile generated from previous reports, this latest edition examined the impact of, and response to, COVID-19 and severe bushfires.

We continue to publish and add to the data reported in our quarterly NQF Snapshot, providing a regular, detailed national report on children's education and care services. There have been more than 30,000 quality rating assessments of children's education and care services undertaken by Regulatory Authorities since the NQF's introduction.

In addition to this, we are now also reporting on the range and volume of other service visits undertaken by Regulatory Authorities as part of their regulatory role to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children attending approved services.

These reports and data, combined with the large number of assessments undertaken, reflect the significant effort by governments, service providers, teachers and educators to independently monitor, measure and evaluate the quality of early childhood education and school age care services in Australia – resulting in more than 85 per cent of services now rated at Meeting the National Quality Standards (NQS) or above.

Promote the benefits of the NQF and high quality early childhood education and care

We use our national perspective and research capability to inform families and the public about quality; to develop communications that promote the NQF; and to promote and advocate the value of our sector and its workforce.

In 2020–21, this included working with governments to prepare the country background report as part of the *OECD's Policy Review: Quality Beyond Regulations in ECEC* and continuing to provide feedback on OECD's *Starting Strong VI* report, which profiles our website *StartingBlocks* as a contemporary Australian initiative.

Our family-focused brand, StartingBlocks.gov.au continues to grow in popularity, with the number of sessions growing by 26 per cent during the reporting period. The most sought information by users include our Find Child Care page, suggestions on activities to do at home during the COVID-19 shutdown, service ratings, and information about children's development and the importance of play-based learning.

During 2020–21, our enquiries team received a total of 25,772 enquiries and these were answered, on average, within 1.8 days. There were 127,000 downloads of information from the online version of our *Guide to the NQF* and our monthly newsletter has 41,000 subscribers.

Our Quality Support Program (QSP), funded by the NSW Department of Education, supported quality improvement in 167 services during the reporting



period. The program's evaluation report shows participating long day care services were two and a quarter times more likely to achieve a rating of 'Meeting NQS' or above compared to matched non-participating services. Both long day care and family day care participating services showed a greater increase in the number of Elements 'met' between pre-QSP and post-QSP quality ratings than matched non-participating services did.

Strengthen the capability of our sector to deliver high quality services

One of the most significant challenges for a high quality sector is a well-qualified and viable workforce. Using a co-design method, and with the full support of stakeholder representatives, we have been leading the development of a National Workforce Strategy on behalf of all governments. This ten-year strategy identifies evidence-based actions and initiatives to improve the supply, retention and quality of the

sector workforce. Unlike previous national strategies, this strategy recognises that each stakeholder has a responsibility in advancing the goal of a sustainable, highly skilled workforce. The Strategy is due to be considered by Education Ministers later this year.

In light of how keenly staffing shortages are being felt in the sector, our Board decided to extend, for students graduating in 2021, their determination to reduce the number of supervised professional experience days undertaken by graduates in their final year of study. This is one way to provide practical support to address some of the challenges arising from COVID-19.

We have also worked with the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) member organisations to develop and deliver the *Leading Quality Improvement* program for in-service professional development focusing on improving understanding of achieving service quality for staff

in leadership and management roles. This approach is consistent with our research into the relationship between Quality Area 1 and Quality Area 7 of the NQS, and the overall quality of a service.

Working with services that are out of scope of the NQF under the Commonwealth-funded *Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR)* program, we helped build the capacity and capability of services to develop and maintain a Quality Improvement Plan.

We have also continued our work to be a reliable source of quality information for the sector about “what works” including:

- following the decommissioning of the Early Childhood Resource Hub (ECRH), we have uploaded relevant resources to our website to ensure the sector has continued access
- updating Exceeding NQS guidance and developing new resources, including a series of case studies that offer practical and illustrative examples of what Exceeding NQS practice can look like for each Standard
- publication of two new addendums to our *Educational Leader Resource*. Working with the Family Day Care Association Queensland, we developed an addendum to support the unique aspects of a family day care educational leader, including a collection of practitioner stories from the field. Working with the National Outside School Hours Services Alliance (NOSHSA), we developed an outside school hours care (OSHC) addendum which provides a collection of information, reflections, practical ideas and shared experiences of educational leaders in OSHC
- publication of a set of detailed guidelines to help service providers in writing and reviewing their policies and procedures that address important health and safety matters, such as safe sleep, transport and emergency evacuations. These guidelines are based on versions we first developed in partnership with the Queensland Regulatory Authority.

Operate as a high performing, effective and efficient organisation

Under the strategic direction of our Board, staff remain committed to exceeding stakeholder expectations of our ability in, and reputation for, the delivery of effective programs, services and resources in an efficient and responsive way. This performance has been enabled by our Business Services group which continues to monitor, adapt and implement contemporary finance, HR and IT systems and processes so that we are able to provide the Board and funding partners with a high standard of accountability and transparency of performance.

With the unstinting guidance and counsel of our Chair, Judy Hebblethwaite and Board members, we have grown our income from new projects by approximately \$4 million, representing 172 per cent growth from 2019–20. This, combined with the funding provided by the Australian Government, has allowed us to grow the number and diversity of our services to the sector. From July 2021, under the capable leadership of the Executive and Leadership teams, we will implement a new organisational structure to accommodate this growth and the needs of the sector over the forward years.

One of the most important contributions we make to Australia’s high quality ECEC sector is through the continuity of our staff and their long experience with, and deep understating of, the NQF and research-informed education and care programs, policies and practices. My sincere gratitude to each person and the Executive Team who made this year’s achievements possible.

I look forward to continuing to work with our Board, government partners and sector stakeholders to help children and their families to flourish.

Gabrielle Sinclair
Chief Executive Officer





PART 1:

Our governance and operations



1.1 Our role and functions

The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is an independent statutory authority established under Part 11 of the [Education and Care Services National Law](#) (the National Law). Our overarching function under the National Law is to guide the implementation and administration of the National Quality Framework (NQF) and to monitor and promote national consistency. To achieve this, we must perform the functions described in Section 225 of the National Law, including:

- conducting national audits relating to the administration of the NQF
- keeping national information on the assessment, rating and regulation of education and care services
- establishing, maintaining and publishing national registers of approved providers and education and care services
- promoting and fostering continuous quality improvement by education and care services
- making determinations with respect to the highest level of rating for approved education and care services – the Excellent rating
- educating and informing education and care services and the community about the NQF
- publishing guides and resources to support parents and the community in understanding the importance of quality early education and care
- publishing guides and resources to support education and care services in understanding the NQF
- training state and territory Regulatory Authority staff
- establishing the qualifications required to be an educator in the sector.

Education Ministers endorsed the ACECQA Review Education Council response, agreeing with the Review's findings that ACECQA is fit for purpose and operating consistently with its requirements under the National Law.

Under the National Law (Part 5, Division 4 – ‘Review by Ratings Review Panel’), we are also responsible for managing the sector’s second tier review function.

Letter of Expectation

The Education Ministers Meeting’s¹ interim Letter of Expectation 2020–21 (**Appendix A**) is the foundation for our Work Plan 2020–21 and informs our strategic plan.

Reporting

We produce the following reports and plans:

Strategic Plan

The purpose of our Strategic Plan 2020–2024 is to clearly demonstrate our priority areas for overseeing the implementation of the NQF. It provides direction on areas of focus for the five-year period and communicates to our stakeholders how we will work with them to deliver our programs, services and resources. The plan also sets out our vision, includes our organisational values and our success indicators.

Forward Work Plan

Our forward work plan is informed by the Education Ministers Meeting’s interim Letter of Expectation, the National Law, our strategic plan and our funding agreement with the Australian Government. The work plan outlines our key deliverables and timelines for implementation.

Our final progress report for our Work Plan 2020–21 demonstrates how we have met our obligations and delivered a substantial program of work assisting the Early Childhood Policy Group (ECPG) to progress a number of new and existing projects. The final report for 2020–21 was noted by the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) in April 2021.

Annual report

Under Section 279 of the National Law, we must submit an annual report to the Education Ministers Meeting. The 2020–21 report is our tenth report. Under section 279 (2) of the National Law, the annual report must include:

- an audited financial statement for the period to which the report relates
- a report about the performance of our functions under this Law during the period to which the annual report relates
- an assessment of the implementation and administration of the NQF
- all directions given to us by the Ministerial Council and our response
- all directions given to the Regulatory Authorities by the Ministerial Council and the Regulatory Authorities’ responses
- a report on any committees established by the Board
- any other matter determined by the Ministerial Council.

Ministerial directions

Under section 222 (1) of the National Law, the Education Ministers Meeting may give directions to our Board in relation to carrying out its functions under the law. Section 222 (2) also permits the Education Ministers Meeting to give directions to a Regulatory Authority with respect to the administration of the NQF. No directions were given to us or a Regulatory Authority by the Education Ministers Meeting in 2020–21.

ACECQA Review

In December 2020, Education Ministers endorsed the ACECQA Review Education Council response, agreeing with the Review’s findings that ACECQA is fit for purpose and operating consistently with its requirements under the National Law. In April 2021, AESOC noted our final implementation report.

1 Formerly known as the Education Council.



1.2 Our Board and Sub Committees

Our Board

The Board is responsible to the Education Ministers Meeting for our overall strategy, governance and performance. The Board comprises up to 13 members appointed by the Education Ministers Meeting. Membership of the Board is outlined at **Appendix C**, with Jane Prentice resigning in the reporting period and Jenni Perkins joining the Board (for her second term) in 2020–21.

The Board held four meetings in 2020–21. Board meeting attendance is outlined at **Appendix D**.

Key undertakings for the Board in 2020–21 include overseeing:

- our continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- our Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and operations during the COVID-19 pandemic
- enhanced cyber security controls
- our new Sector Quality Strategy; Stakeholder Engagement Strategy; and our Research and Evaluation Strategy
- our work to progress a national approach to the children’s education and care workforce
- our work to reduce red tape by ‘joining-up’ provider approval processes under the NQF and Family Assistance Law
- our work to update the NQF Approved Learning Frameworks – *Belonging, Being and Becoming* and *My Time, Our Place*
- the planning and development of an NQA ITS Strategy and Investment Roadmap
- an update to our published list of approved educator qualifications following SkillsIQ’s updates to the children’s education and care sector training package



The ACECQA Board.

Back row (L–R): Joce Nuttall, Anne Glover, Amanda Price-McGregor, Akiko Jackson, Selwyn Button.

Front row (L–R): Marc de Rosnay, Judy Hebblethwaite (Chair), Ann Farrell (Deputy Chair), Michael White.

Not photographed: Maree Bredhauer, Sandra Lambert, Jenni Perkins, Jane Prentice.

- our financial performance
- our implementation of recommendations from the ACECQA Review
- our performance against our strategic and forward work plans.

- overseeing the implementation of our new finance management system.

Board Sub Committees

Audit, Finance and Risk Sub Committee

The purpose of the Audit, Finance and Risk Sub Committee is to provide independent assistance to our Board by overseeing and monitoring the organisation’s financial performance, governance, legal and reporting accountability requirements; as well as its governance, risk and control frameworks. Membership of the Sub Committee and details of meetings held throughout 2020–21 are outlined at **Appendix E**.

Priorities for the Sub Committee during the reporting period included:

- monitoring our BCP during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis
- reviewing and endorsing the financial statements
- reviewing and monitoring our financial and corporate governance policies and strategies, including the risk management plan, investment policies, procurement policies, fraud control plan, financial delegations, and legal and compliance reporting
- overseeing an internal audit of our cyber security controls and framework

Performance and Remuneration Sub Committee

In 2020–21, the Performance and Remuneration Sub Committee provided advice on performance and remuneration matters. Membership of the Sub Committee and details of meetings held throughout 2020–21 are outlined at **Appendix E**.

Strategy Sub Committee

The Strategy Sub Committee was ceased by decision of the Board in December 2020. Membership of the Sub Committee is outlined at **Appendix E**.

Enterprise Agreement Sub Committee

The Enterprise Agreement Sub Committee has been in abeyance throughout 2020–21. Membership of the Sub Committee is outlined at **Appendix E**.

Qualifications Sub Committee

In 2020–21, the Qualifications Sub Committee provided advice on the approval of new national children’s education and care vocational qualifications, and the review of the ‘equivalent early childhood teacher’ provision. Membership of the Sub Committee and details of meetings held throughout 2021 are outlined at **Appendix E**.



1.3 Our operations

Organisational structure and staffing

Led by Chief Executive Officer Gabrielle Sinclair, we have four business groups delivering our functions:

- Business Services
- Educational Leadership
- Policy and Strategic Programs
- Strategy, Communications and Consistency.

The Educational Leadership group, led by National Education Leader Rhonda Livingstone, delivers the following functions:

- provision of advice on quality programs, practices and policies in early childhood education and school age care services and contributes to national reform processes
- development and delivery of training and testing for authorised officers in assessing and rating against the NQS, in collaboration with Regulatory Authorities

- assessing and promoting excellence in the delivery of early childhood education and school age care services to support continuous quality improvement
- development and delivery of programs and resources to build a shared understanding with Regulatory Authorities and peak organisations of the requirements and expectations of the NQF and promoting quality practice.

The Strategy, Communications and Consistency group, led by General Manager Michael Petrie, delivers the following functions:

- development of evidence-informed resources to inform families and the community about the benefits of early childhood education and care, and what quality looks like in approved services

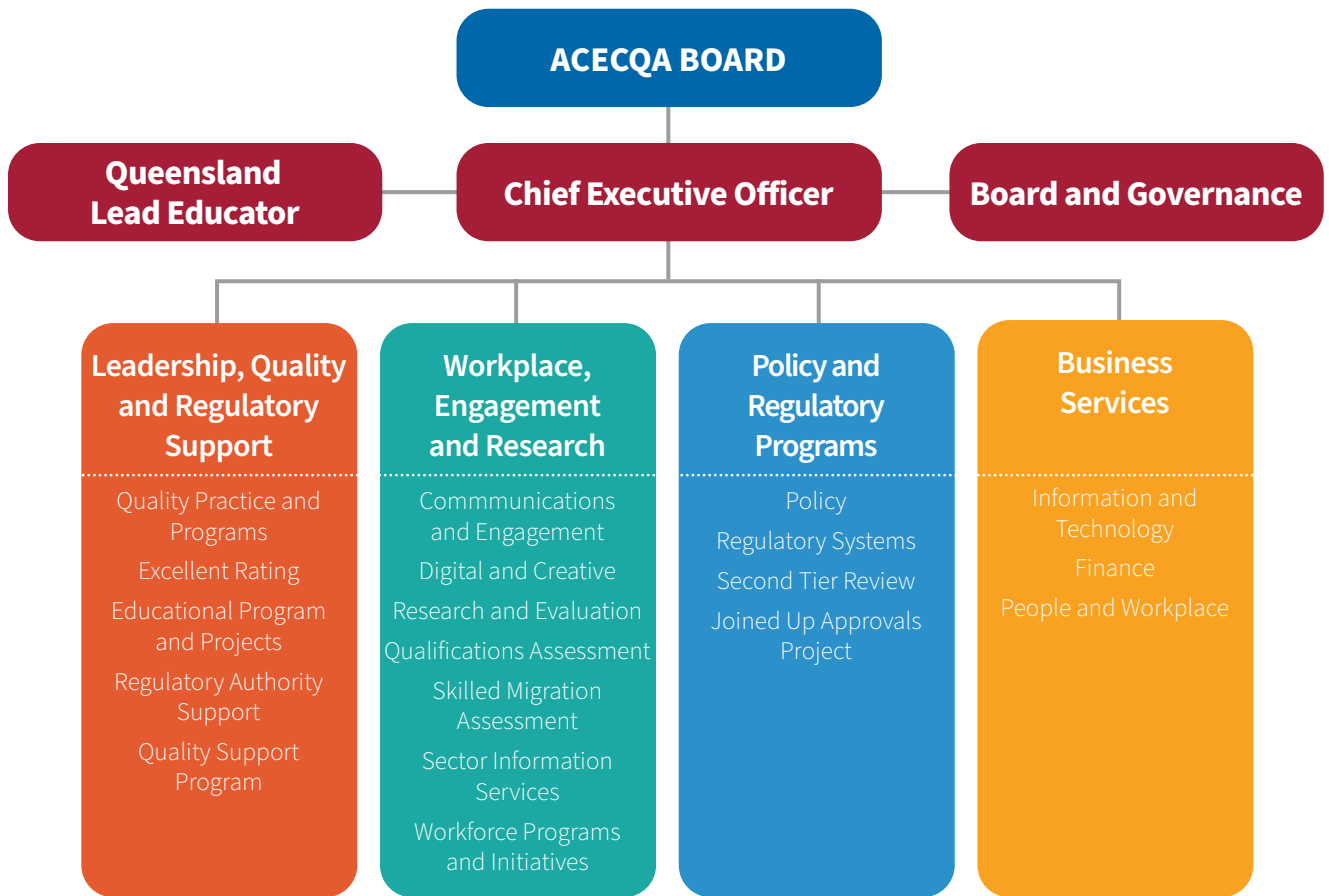


Figure 1: Organisational Structure, 30 June 2021.



L-R: Michelle Edwards, John Mason, Angela Buchanan, Lisa McCoy, Rhonda Livingstone, Gabrielle Sinclair and Michael Petrie.



- provision of information to educators and approved providers through a national enquiries service
- monitoring, assessing and reporting on the implementation of the NQF through a national audit program and the regular publication of reports
- approval of educator qualification courses offered by institutions
- determining the equivalence of individuals' qualifications who seek to work in the sector, particularly those with overseas qualifications
- assessing applications for skilled migration to work in Australia as a Child Care Centre Manager or Child Care Worker (Group Leaders only) occupations
- developing programs and initiatives to contribute to a sustainable, high quality workforce for the education and care sector.

The Policy and Strategic Programs group, led by General Manager John Mason, delivers the following functions:

- leading our national policy and strategic programs to support governments, Regulatory Authorities and the sector
- working with governments and the sector to provide strategic advice and support in the effective implementation of the NQF, including operational policy advice
- developing and delivering new programs and services, in collaboration with government partners, to improve quality in approved education and care services
- managing the quality rating review function including coordination of independent second tier review panel members.

The Business Services group, led by Chief Operating Officer Angela Buchanan, delivers corporate services functions, including ICT services, information and records management, finance, human resources and facilities.

This group also includes the education and care systems team, which provides maintenance and development of the National Quality Agenda IT

System (NQA ITS) for the NQF, including sector and Regulatory Authority support.

Lisa McCoy, our Queensland-based Executive team member has continued to work in partnership with the Queensland Department of Education as our Queensland Early Childhood Lead Educator. Lisa’s project work has continued to focus on ways to increase and sustain quality at the local service level.

Lisa is also leading integral national work across the building and education portfolios, identifying further safeguards to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children in multi-storey buildings. These safeguards are proposed as part of the 2019 NQF Review, the National Construction Code 2022 and also align with the implementation of the Building Confidence Reforms. The focus has been on achieving complementary and parallel evidence-based reforms across the frameworks.

Lisa also led the policy development, on behalf of all governments, for the expiring workforce regulations with a key focus on providing certainty to the sector and increasing national consistency.

The Board and Governance team, led by Board and Company Secretary Michelle Edwards, supports our Board and manages freedom of information (FOI), intellectual property, legal, governance, planning, and reporting and accountability requirements, including our participation in inter-governmental working groups.

The number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff at 30 June 2021 was 113, inclusive of employees on parental and unpaid leave. A breakdown of the workforce profile by FTE, headcount and gender is at Table 1.

Table 1: Workforce profile – FTE and headcount by gender, 30 June 2021

	Female	Male	Total
FTE	79.1	29.4	108.5
Headcount	83	30	113
% of workforce (headcount)	73%	27%	100%

Human Resources

The Human Resources team provided a range of strategic and operational services to promote the engagement, performance and development of our staff.

The team’s major milestones were:

- launching a new learning management platform offering a broad selection of eLearning courses tailored for our needs
- delivering a leadership development program for experienced leaders
- facilitating implementation of an organisational realignment commencing from 1 July 2021.

In a year marked by remote working arrangements due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the team focussed on the wellbeing of staff, providing advice and support, delivering internal communications and responding to changing situations throughout the year.

Financial Management

In 2020–21, ACECQA’s operational funding was provided by the Australian Government and this comprised the majority of ACECQA’s revenue (approximately 68 per cent).

In addition to this operational funding, income streams in 2020–21 mainly included:

- fee revenue under the National Law relating to ACECQA’s functions of assessing educator qualifications and undertaking second tier reviews
- fee revenue of assessing skills for the Child Care Centre Manager and Child Care Worker (Group Leaders only) occupations under the skilled migration program
- funding for continuing the delivery of a quality support program to build quality in education and care services from the NSW Government
- funding for delivering specific programs and services to governments and education and care sector stakeholders
- sale of NQF educational resources.

ACECQA operated in accordance with the Board-approved budget to deliver on the strategic priorities contained in the Education Ministers Meeting's Interim Letter of Expectation for 2020–21. The operating result for the 2020–21 financial year was a surplus of approximately \$0.8 million, which includes \$0.5 million timing differences in funding receipts. ACECQA's \$3.5 million operational funding for 2020–21 was recognised in 2019–20, offset by \$3 million operational funding for 2021–22 being recognised this year in advance. Excluding timing differences, the adjusted surplus is approximately \$1.4 million.

Funding from the Australian Government recognised in 2020–21 was approximately \$14.6 million. ACECQA also received own-source revenue of approximately \$6.9 million, mainly from funding for delivering programs and services for governments, services delivered under the National Law on a fee for service basis, the sale of NQF educational resources and interest income.

The total expenditure for the 12 months was \$20.6 million. The main expenditure items were:

- salaries and on-costs (approximately 74 per cent)
- ICT costs (approximately 10 per cent)
- occupancy costs (approximately 5 per cent).

The 2020–21 Financial Statements report an \$11.7 million accumulated surplus as at 30 June 2021 and total assets of approximately \$17.4 million. The accumulated surplus includes approximately \$3 million funding received in advance from the Australian Government, which will be progressively spent in 2021–22, as well as required working capital to remain solvent. As an independent statutory authority, adequate working capital is crucial to ACECQA's financial viability to ensure ACECQA can arrange supplier contracts, declare solvency and cover any funding shortfall or funding delays.

In 2020–21, a high priority for the finance team was implementation of new finance software for commencement from 1 July 2021. This new software will provide for greater automation in finance workflows and improved analytics and reporting.

Information and Communication Technologies

Information and Communication Technologies management

Our ICT Operations team manages all technical matters for the organisation and provides technical support on the NQA ITS for our external stakeholders. During 2020–21, the ICT Operations team delivered a number of high-priority projects including:

- managing and delivering an asset replacement plan where over 450 assets were renewed for the organisation. This included the provisioning of laptops and monitors for all staff
- uplifting and modernising our technical infrastructure through a migration to Microsoft 365
- enhancing cyber security through implementing advanced monitoring and end-point protection with security partners
- delivering a cyber security training and awareness campaign to all staff.

The ICT Operations team continues to prioritise ICT security and conducts regular reviews and testing across the internal and external systems, partnering with experts within the market.

Information and Records Management

The Information and Records Management function provides governance over our recordkeeping responsibilities spanning the lifecycle of all corporate records. An Information and Records Management framework facilitates and promotes statutory records compliance and a robust recordkeeping culture.

In 2020–21, Information and Records Management was integrated in a number of key projects, including:

- strategic future options for our electronic document and records management system (EDRMS)
- recordkeeping advice and guidance in relation to new finance software implementation



- recordkeeping design aspects of the M365 project
- ongoing management and administration of our EDRMS interfaces.

The Information and Records Management function continues to adapt and respond to our evolving needs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

We are committed to a strong work health and safety (WHS) culture through arrangements which include consultation, supporting policies and procedures, workplace inspections, ergonomics, training and emergency procedures.

Management reports to the Board and its Audit, Finance and Risk Sub Committee on WHS incidents, hazards and issues.

During 2020–21, WHS was supported through activities that included:

- delivering an Employee Assistance Program for confidential counselling services
- delivering an influenza vaccination program
- managing office-based hazards through regular workplace inspections, ergonomic assessments and consultation
- ensuring emergency preparedness through building warden activities, first aid officers and services, and maintaining associated reporting mechanisms
- managing home-based hazards through collaboration and communication tools, supporting home workstation set-up and ergonomics, and health promotion and engagement activities.



Reconciliation Action Plan and Indigenous Participation Plan

Our 2019–2020 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was extended beyond 2020 and ended 30 June 2021, due to COVID-19. A key focus of our RAP was to promote and build positive relationships, enhance respect and build on opportunities that drive reconciliation in our organisation and how we deliver on our functions and our activities, reach, services and programs. Our RAP is built on our continued belief that reconciliation, along with cultural awareness, safety and competency need to be embedded across the organisation, as well as in the work we do with children’s education and care stakeholders. COVID-19 impacted our relationship targets, which we are reflecting on and reshaping as we look to our next RAP.

Our Indigenous Participation Plan, developed in accordance with the Australian Government’s

Indigenous Procurement Policy, complements the RAP. The plan requires regular reporting to the Australian Government on progress against key targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and business participation. In 2020–21, our focus was on delivering cultural awareness training to staff, designing a future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander internship program, and holding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement workshops.

Freedom of Information

The National Law and National Regulations apply and modify the *Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). Table 2 shows the status of Freedom of Information applications for the reporting period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Table 2: FOI application status

Applications considered	Number
On hand as at 1 July 2020	0
Received	4
Granted in full	0
Granted in part	0
Access refused	0
Dealt with administratively	1
Withdrawn by the applicant	4
Transferred to another agency	0
On hand as at 30 June 2021	0
Appeals to the National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information Commissioner	0
Appeals to the relevant Administrative Tribunal	0

Privacy

The National Law applies the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) (the Privacy Act) to regulatory bodies that undertake the administration of the ‘national education and care services quality framework’, including us. The National Law and National Regulations modify the way the Privacy Act applies to the national education and care services quality framework and to us. Our [Privacy Policy](#), published on our website, provides information on:


- the type of personal information we collect and hold
- how we collect and hold personal information
- purposes for which we collect, hold, use and disclose personal information
- how the public may access personal information held by us and seek its correction.

During 2020–21, we did not receive any privacy complaints. In addition, no investigations were undertaken by the National Education and Care Services Privacy Commissioner.

ECS Ombudsman

The Education and Care Services (ECS) Ombudsman is an independent, statutory officer appointed by Education Ministers under the National Law. The Ombudsman is responsible for independently examining complaints and concerns about the administrative actions we undertake. In 2020–21, we worked with the ECS Ombudsman to resolve a qualification assessment matter raised with her office, in which the Ombudsman upheld our original decision.



A photograph of a person's hand using silver tongs to pick up a piece of food from a blue bowl. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a restaurant or cafe, with a map on the table and a patterned tablecloth. The right side of the image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange gradient.

PART 2: Reporting on our functions and administration of the NQF



2.1 Guiding administration of the National Quality Framework

Working with our government partners

One of our key strategies in our 2020–2024 Strategic Plan is to enhance the NQF by working with Regulatory Authorities and governments. Details of current joint projects with our government partners are provided throughout this section of the report.

Regulatory Practice Committee

The Regulatory Practice Committee (RPC) provides a forum for state and territory Regulatory Authorities, the Australian Government and us to share better practice regulatory ideas, identify new trends and emerging issues and develop mechanisms to address them, improve national consistency and reduce red tape for the sector.

In 2020–21, the RPC and its working groups supported priority areas of regulatory work including:

- implementing a national Regulatory Authority staff survey to identify areas for nationally consistent professional development
- developing authorised officer and sector guidance on regulatory practice issues
- identifying key areas for reform with regards to safety in multi-storey buildings (further details below)
- setting priorities for the ongoing development of the NQA ITS
- providing guidance on a longer-term NQA ITS Strategy and Investment Roadmap (further details in Part 2.4)
- clarifying 2020 transportation amendment regulations (further details below).

Early Childhood Policy Group

The Early Childhood Policy Group (ECPG) comprises senior representatives from each state and territory and the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE). The ECPG reports and provides strategic policy advice to the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) on early childhood related matters. We consult with ECPG on policy and high level operational matters prior to reporting to AESOC and the Education Ministers Meeting.

During 2020–21, in addition to consulting with ECPG on our formal reporting obligations, we have been an active member of several ECPG groups supporting work on the following priority areas:

- National Workforce Strategy – in partnership with the sector, developing a strategy for a national approach (further details in Part 2.8)
- NQF Approved Learning Frameworks Update (further details below)
- Joined up Approvals Project (further details below)
- Disability Standards for Education (DSE) Project (further details below).

Amendments to the National Regulations to protect safety of children during transportation

Transporting children can present additional risks to their safety, including during transition between a vehicle and an education and care service's premises or other locations. To mitigate these risks, in October 2020 all governments introduced new requirements that strengthen oversight arrangements when children are being transported under the care of an education and care service, including a requirement to conduct a risk assessment and obtaining written authorisation prior to transporting a child.

To support preparedness for the changes, we published [guidance material](#) and an [information sheet](#) answering sector questions about how the requirements operate in practice.

Continuous quality improvement

Progressing the 2019 NQF Review

Regular reviews of the NQF provide assurance that the regulatory system remains current and continues to drive quality improvement in supporting children's learning and development.

We supported the NQF Review through:

- reviewing and programming two Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (CRIS) stakeholder surveys in February 2021, to support the March–April consultation period
- undertaking analysis of surveys and written consultation responses in May–June 2021, including the contribution of data and related evidence
- maintaining and enhancing the NQF Review website to accommodate new features (videos, promotion of information sessions, survey, written submissions)
- providing policy advice and options to inform the CRIS, including on options:
 - for streamlining quality assessment and rating requirements for OSHC services
 - to better align all aspects of the National Child Safe Principles with the NQF
 - that seek to strengthen NQF safeguards for the health, safety and wellbeing of children in relation to regular transportation and emergency and evacuation from multi-storey buildings
 - to strengthen and streamline oversight of approved provider governance, including options that will support the Joined up Approvals Project.

In 2021–22, a Decision Regulation Impact Statement (DRIS) – informed by the CRIS process – will be finalised, which will assist Education Ministers in deciding what options for change should be implemented.

Operational Policy

Lead Investigators Network

The Lead Investigators Network (LIN) is a group of lead investigation and compliance monitoring staff from all state and territory Regulatory Authorities and the Australian Government, convened by us. The LIN provides a community of practice for experienced investigators to develop cross-jurisdictional, strategic approaches to investigation and enforcement practice, and a forum for emerging issues and sharing of information on investigation and enforcement strategies, practices and procedures.

In 2020–21, the LIN worked on best practice for responding to alleged instances of failure to ensure protection from harm and hazard, and inadequate supervision, as well as responses to investigation, non-compliance and prosecution trends. Another focus was sharing learnings from regulators' responses to the impact of COVID-19.

ECEC Safety in Multi-storey Buildings

An overarching objective of the NQF is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children attending education and care services. Since July 2020, we have led national work across the building and education portfolios focused on identifying further safeguards to reduce risks associated with the emergency evacuation of young children from multi-storey buildings.

Young children in education and care services are typically unable to respond independently in an emergency, relying on the preparedness, knowledge and ability of early childhood professionals combined with effective building safety features and emergency response equipment. For education and care services located in multi-storey buildings, risks associated with emergency evacuation are increased.

Regulatory Authorities have the ability to mandate that children's education and care services located in multi-storey buildings must implement site specific emergency and evacuation practices. However, robust risk management of this issue involves the effective interaction between the NQF and

the National Construction Code (NCC), as well as jurisdictional consideration of planning and future development, and fire safety measures.

The ECEC Safety in Multi-storey Buildings joint working group, led by us, first convened in July 2020 and includes representatives from DESE and Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER), as well as the Queensland, Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, and New South Wales Regulatory Authorities. Since its inception the group has:

- developed options for the NQF Review relating to service approvals and emergency and evacuation procedures for services located in multi-storey buildings
- submitted a response to the proposed amendments to the NCC 2022 relating to early childhood services located in high-rise buildings
- submitted five submissions on relevant Building Confidence Reform consultations led by the Australian Building Codes Board
- developed third party guidance for building practitioners about design considerations, NQF decision making and effective practice in multi-storey services
- informed the development of national sector guidance on emergency evacuation procedures.

New Projects

Community Child Care Fund Restricted Project

The Australian Government (DESE) engaged us to develop and deliver a project that would build the capacity and capability of DESE funding program managers to assess the Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) of Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) services.

While some CCCFR services can be out of scope of the NQF they each maintain obligations to DESE to develop, and then review and submit a QIP annually, based on self-assessment against the NQS. Our



advice and resources supported the DESE program managers to more effectively engage with CCCFR service providers through this QIP process in a strengths-based and constructive manner.

Delivered over three stages, the project developed and implemented resources to help assess CCCFR service QIPs, including:

- Stage one: the development of an assessment framework, reporting template and three online QIP professional development modules for CCCFR service providers
- Stage two: assessment of 158 QIPs and authoring of 158 one-two page feedback reports guided by the assessment framework
- Stage three: development and delivery of a one-day online training program for funding agreement managers.

Disability Standards for Education project

We were engaged to support all governments' consideration of the implications of extending the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) to all children's education and care services, to inform the Australian Government's [2020 review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005](#).

The project had two phases: phase one – desktop research delivered via a preliminary report to governments; and phase two – stakeholder engagement.

Supported by a [discussion paper](#), the engagement process received more than 800 responses to an online survey, and written submissions from early childhood and school age education and care service providers and peak bodies. We held 28 electronic 'face-to-face' meetings with large providers and peak bodies representing a cross section of all service types. We also presented to Inclusion Agencies and Inclusion Support professionals.



Our [summary consultation report](#) contains stakeholder engagement findings, including that:

- barriers exist to the effective access and participation of children with disability in children's education and care, with more needing to be done to raise awareness of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and promote inclusive access and participation for children with disability

- there is a need for greater clarity and guidance for service providers about what constitutes a 'reasonable adjustment' and 'unjustifiable hardship' in early childhood education and care and school age education and care
- a majority view that the NQF has helped increase awareness and understanding of what constitutes effective inclusive practice in a way that caters for need – and builds on strengths – at the individual child level.

The Australian Government's 2020 DSE Review final report contains a number of findings and recommendations – as they relate to children's education and care – that were shaped by our work. The report [recommendations](#) offer a great opportunity to build upon our collective efforts to support children with disability to access and participate in children's education and care.

New educator-to-child ratio calculator for centre-based services

A fundamental feature of the NQF is improved educator-to-child ratios and qualification requirements. Sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified educators enable the delivery of quality education and care programs, which respond to and promote children's learning and development. The required educator-to-child ratios for education and care services are set out in the National Regulations, including requirements for early childhood teachers (ECTs).

In 2020–21 we, working with all state and territory Regulatory Authorities, developed an online calculator to help simplify calculations across centre-based services.

The [online tool](#) calculates the minimum number of educators a centre-based service must have based on a given number of children and the age mix. It also calculates requirements for ECTs.

Approved Learning Frameworks Update

Education Ministers commissioned an update of the two national Approved Learning Frameworks (ALFs) under the NQF in December 2020, and subsequently agreed [terms of reference](#) for the project.

As the ALFs have now been in use for close to a decade, the purpose of this update is to ensure they continue to reflect contemporary developments in practice and knowledge, while supporting all educators to best meet the learning and development needs of each child.

We are leading the project in accordance with the interim Letter of Expectation, and have responsibility for overall project management on behalf of all governments. This includes managing contractual arrangements and deliverables with a national consortia led by a partnership between Macquarie University, Queensland University of Technology and Edith Cowan University. The consortia was contracted in April 2021 to deliver the 2021 NQF ALFs Update project.

The project is occurring over three stages. Stage one commenced with the launch of the ALFs Update website and surveys in June 2021. In stage one the consortia is seeking stakeholders' views on the ALFs. Later project stages include developing proposals for any changes to the ALFs and testing those with the sector.

Joined up Approvals (JuA) Project

We are working jointly with the Australian Government to undertake the Joined up Approvals (JuA) Project. The JuA Project is a key initiative under the Australian Government's Deregulation Agenda and will streamline administrative requirements for education and care providers by combining NQF and Australian Government approval processes. Provider and service applications will be assessed simultaneously by state and territory Regulatory Authorities against the *Education and Care Services National Law* and by the Australian Government against the Family Assistance Law. Our IT systems will be enhanced and used as the national system for new provider/service applications.

The project will benefit children and families through stronger and more nationally consistent controls on market entry. Other project outcomes include a reduction in the approval application processing time enabling suitable new providers and services to enter

The JuA Project is a key initiative under the Australian Government's Deregulation Agenda and will streamline administrative requirements for education and care providers by combining NQF and Australian Government approval processes.

the market sooner, improved information sharing across all governments, a reduction in the potential for illegal activity and nationally consistent education and testing for new providers.

The project will be delivered in three stages. Stage one will deliver national consistency on operational policy related matters and is expected to be completed in March 2022. Stage two will focus on IT system development, followed by the final stage which will see the implementation of the JuA application process and stakeholder engagement and training. The project will conclude in June 2023.



2.2 Reporting on NQF quality ratings

Sector overview

There were 16,452 education and care services [approved to operate](#) under the NQF at the end of the 2020–21 financial year – 15,964 centre-based care² services and 488 family day care³ services. This represented an annual increase of two per cent for centre-based services (slightly higher than the annual growth in these services in 2019–20 and 2018–19). The number of approved family day care services decreased by four per cent since the end of the 2019–20 financial year. Of the 7286 providers, 81 per cent (5883) were approved to operate a single service.

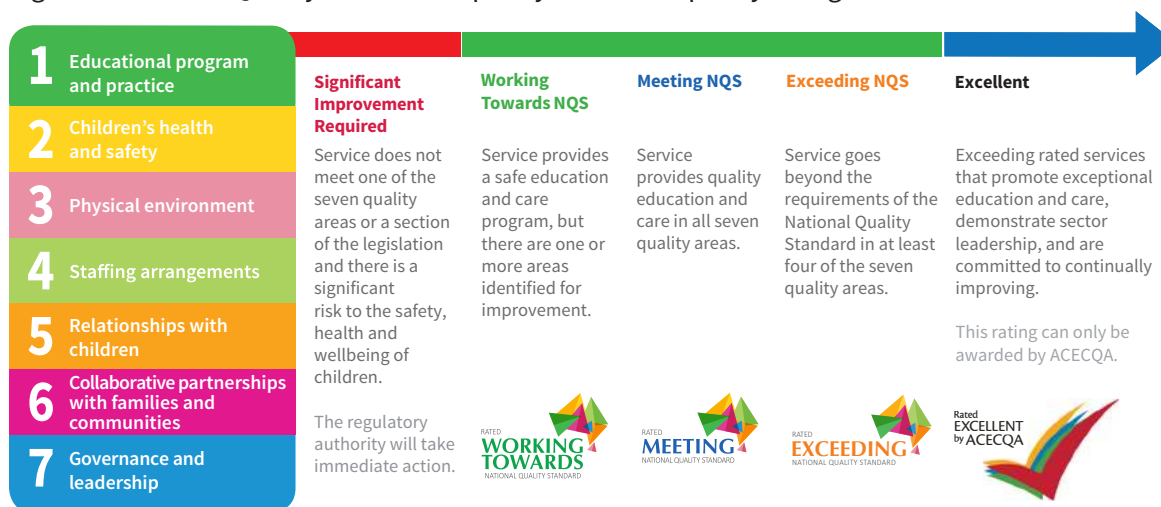
Quality ratings

Under the NQF, Regulatory Authorities in each state and territory [quality assess and rate](#) services against the National Quality Standard (NQS). This quality assessment is in addition to robust provider and service approval processes, and ongoing compliance, monitoring, enforcement and investigation activities.

2 Centre-based care services include most long day care, preschool/kindergarten and outside school hours care services. They do not include preschools in Tasmania or Western Australia that are outside the scope of the NQF, or other services that are not regulated under the Education and Care Services National Law.

3 Family day care services provide education and care in residences or venues. They are sometimes known as family day care schemes and are administered and supported by central coordination units.

Figure 2: National Quality Standard – quality areas and quality ratings



As at 30 June 2021:

- 86 per cent (13,235) of services are rated Meeting NQS or above – 28 per cent (4357) of these are rated Exceeding NQS or above
- 35 services are rated Excellent
- 9 services are rated Significant Improvement Required
- 13,100 quality rating reassessments had been completed. Of the services that were rated Working Towards NQS, 67 per cent improved their overall quality rating at reassessment.
- 60 per cent of services had been quality rated against the 2018 NQS.

Table 3: Overall quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Significant improvement required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	Excellent rated	TOTAL
ACT	0	78 (23%)	105 (32%)	148 (44%)	2	333
NSW	7	728 (14%)	3,258 (61%)	1,363 (25%)	12	5,368
NT	1	36 (17%)	143 (67%)	34 (16%)	1	215
QLD	0	324 (11%)	1,771 (60%)	829 (28%)	8	2,932
SA	0	166 (14%)	469 (40%)	544 (46%)	6	1,185
TAS	1	46 (22%)	106 (50%)	59 (28%)	0	212
VIC	0	517 (13%)	2,352 (58%)	1,146 (29%)	6	4,021
WA	0	234 (21%)	674 (61%)	199 (18%)	0	1,107
TOTAL	9	2,129 (14%)	8,878 (58%)	4,322 (28%)	35	15,373

Figure 3: Proportion of services rated Meeting NQS or above⁴

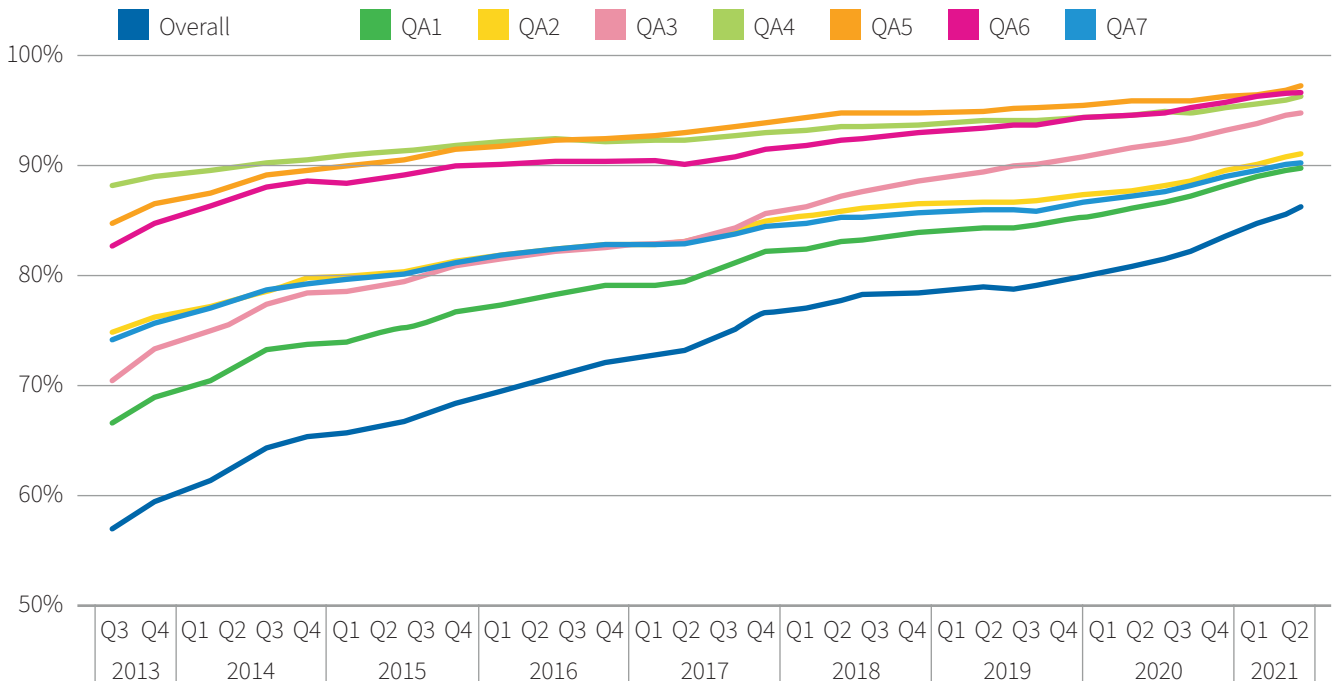
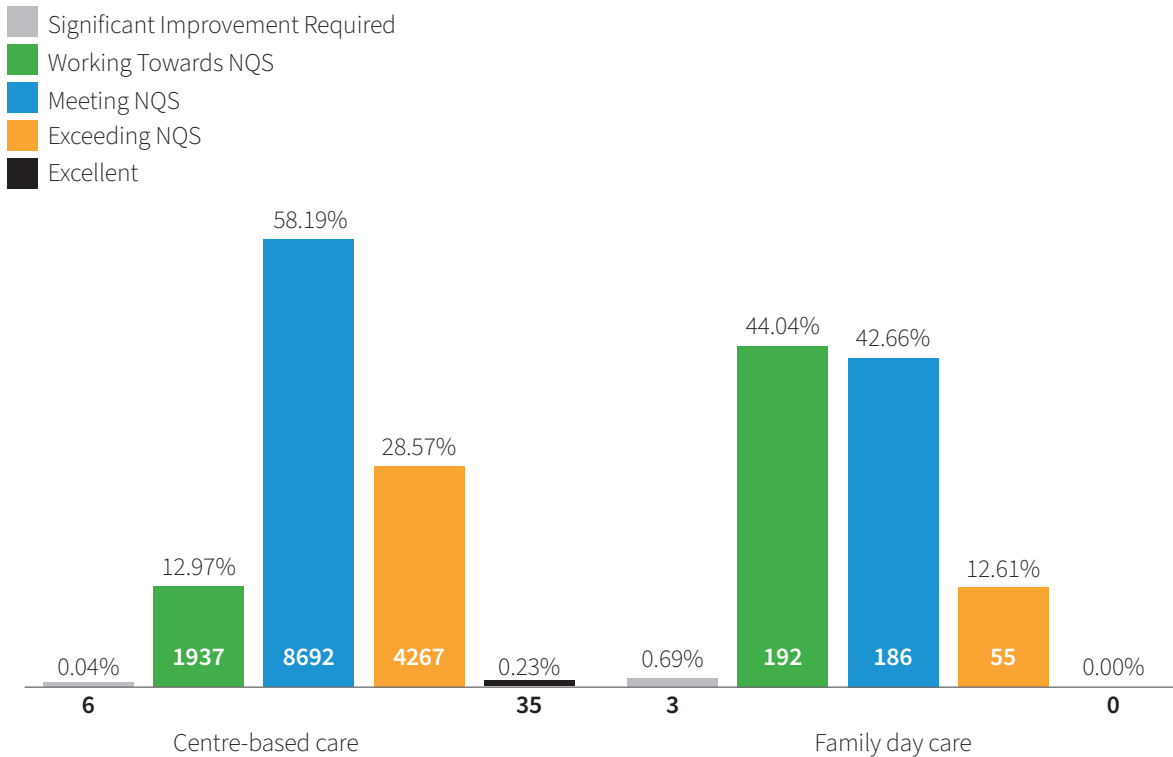
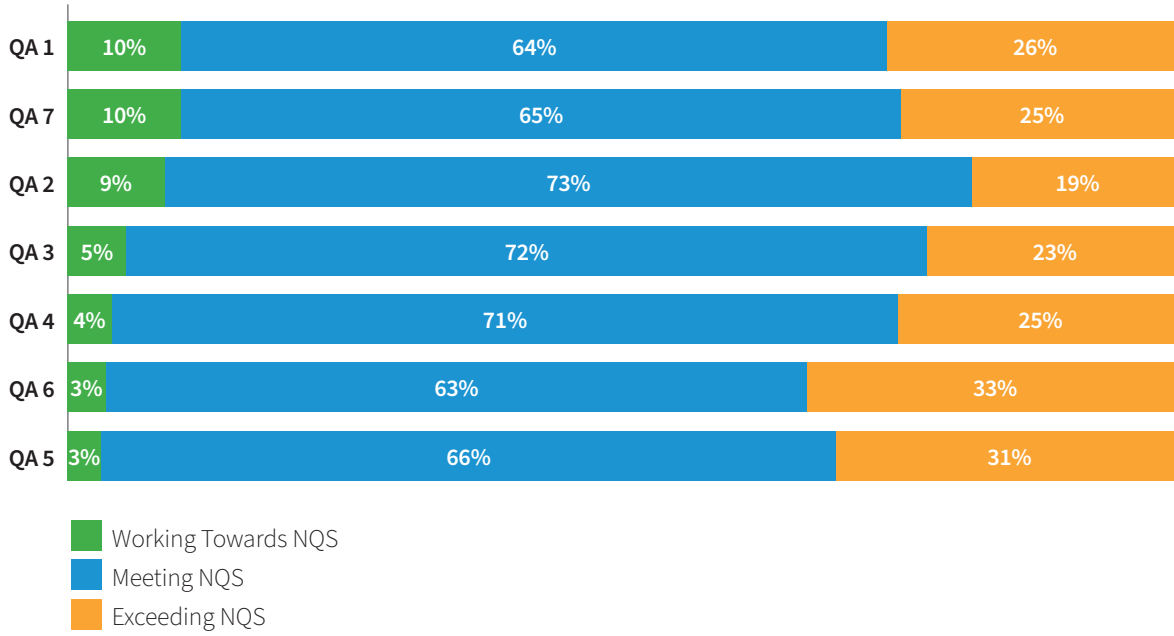


Figure 4: Overall quality ratings by service type



⁴ 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.

Figure 5: Quality area ratings





2.3 Reporting on national quality improvement

Research and evaluation strategy

In 2020–21, we developed our [Research and Evaluation Strategy 2021–24](#). The strategy builds on our previous 2017–21 strategy and aligns with our organisational strategic plan.

The strategy complements the [NQF Evaluation Framework](#) – a shared framework developed in collaboration with all Australian governments. The framework provides governments and the sector with a common way of considering to what extent the objectives of the NQF are being met.

Universities, research institutions, government agencies and departments, approved providers and other stakeholders can contribute to the NQF evidence base by commissioning, undertaking and publishing research in line with the shared framework.

Our own research and evaluation activities align to one or more of the objectives of the NQF to contribute to the NQF evidence base and inform the development and improvement of our programs, services and resources.

Our research and evaluation strategy and the evaluation framework are available on the [research and reports page](#) of our website, which provides a repository of NQF related research and evidence.

NQF Annual Performance Report

In December 2020, we published our fourth [annual performance report](#) on the NQF. The report highlights how education and care service providers adopted new strategies to support and protect children, staff and families from the risks presented by the 2019–20 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic.

The report also highlights the sector’s commitment to continuous quality improvement, with more services than ever rated Meeting NQS or above – up from 56 per cent in 2013 to 81 per cent in 2020.

The quality of services in the most disadvantaged areas continues to improve. However, there is a growing gap between the quality of services in the most disadvantaged and most advantaged areas.

The report also identifies other sector-wide challenges, such as workforce sustainability and educator wellbeing.

A range of [supporting resources](#), including a report summary, video, slides and interactive content, were published alongside the main report.

NQF Snapshots

Our quarterly [NQF Snapshot](#) reports provide analysis and information on the profile of the children’s education and care sector, and the quality ratings awarded to services, including examining the

More services than ever are rated Meeting NQS or above – up from 56 per cent in 2013 to 81 per cent in 2020.

distribution of ratings by service and provider management type, and geographic location. In May 2021, we published our 33rd Snapshot.

We continue to add new content to both the pdf version and the interactive [Online Snapshot](#). In 2020, data about temporary service closures related to the impact of COVID-19 was included along with the:

- volume of assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits undertaken by state and territory Regulatory Authorities
- level of change between draft and final quality ratings
- proportion of ratings that result in a review.





2.4 National registers and IT system

The National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) is the primary business tool for Regulatory Authorities under the National Law. We administer the NQA ITS which supports the operations of Regulatory Authorities and the education and care sector. Continual enhancement and improvement of the NQA ITS is one of our key commitments. We publish data from this system to the national registers on approved education and care services and providers in Australia.

National Registers

We publish two national registers on [our website](#):

- Education and Care Services – this register lists all services approved to operate under the NQF, and includes each service’s nature of care type as well as previous and current ratings

Figure 6: National Register data (the two registers include search and export functionality for ease of use by the public)

Region	Approved services		Approved providers
Australian Capital Territory	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV
New South Wales	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV
Northern Territory	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV
Queensland	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV
South Australia	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV
Tasmania	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV
Victoria	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV
Western Australia	Online	Export CSV	Export CSV

- Approved Providers – this register details individuals or entities authorised to operate an approved education and care service.

The register is also available on StartingBlocks.gov.au.

During the financial year there were 14 releases, with over 600 improvements, new features, bug fixes and reporting updates.

National Quality Agenda IT System

The NQA ITS is maintained and improved through an ongoing program of technical updates and functional improvements via scheduled releases. During the financial year there were 14 releases, with over 600 improvements, new features, bug fixes and reporting updates. These included:

- enhanced application security
- improved system workflows, in particular for reporting workflows
- implementation of new transport regulations
- provision of new functionality for the sector to re-download their current notice of rating
- enhanced serious incident reporting which allows for notifications related to individual children
- development of a register of prohibited persons and suspended educators
- generation and distribution of annual service fees' invoices for approved providers
- system performance improvements.

NQA ITS Governance

The Regulatory Practice Committee (RPC) is the governance committee which assists us with the strategic direction of the NQA ITS. Reporting to RPC is the National IT Systems Steering Group (NSG) which comprises representatives from all state and territory Regulatory Authorities, the Australian Government and ACECQA. The NSG met five times in the last year and is responsible for:

- making recommendations to the RPC regarding the system's strategic priorities

- considering operational decisions and significant matters regarding the NQA ITS
- managing data quality and consistency issues for the Regulatory Authorities.

The NQA ITS priorities are formulated through input from and discussions with the NSG, technological changes and high-level direction from the RPC. Our strategic plan and interim Letter of Expectation also inform the work plan's development. The annual forward work plan outlines agreed system enhancements in a delivery schedule for the year. It is reviewed by NSG and then endorsed by RPC.

NQA ITS usage

The NQA ITS includes an online public portal to give education and care approved providers a secure and direct means of communicating with Regulatory Authorities. The public portal supports users to:

- register online
- review and update provider and service details
- submit applications and notifications, including emergency notifications
- provide supporting documentation where relevant
- pay invoices and annual fees
- manage user access.

In 2020–21, 96.9 per cent of approved providers had registered to use the portal with one or more user accounts.



The objective of the Strategy and Investment Roadmap is to identify and prioritise investment in the NQA ITS to ensure that it effectively supports jurisdictions in their regulatory activities into the future.

Applications and notifications

Approved providers are required by the National Law to submit certain applications and notifications. The NQA ITS public portal supports the online submission of forms, and this is the primary channel for approved provider / Regulatory Authority interactions. In 2020–21, 9322 applications and 82,032 notifications were submitted.

NQA ITS service desk and training support

The NQA ITS service desk provides technical assistance to both the sector and Regulatory Authorities via email and phone calls. Due to working from home arrangements, service tickets were handled through email instead of calls. In 2020–21, the service desk responded to 2177 enquiries from users, which represents a decrease of approximately 19.6 per cent from 2019–20.

Training and support are provided to Regulatory Authorities through face-to-face training, online modules, interactive courses, training videos and quick-reference help guides. The sector also receives guidance documents. Within the year the following were delivered:

- twenty-seven new or updated help guides for Regulatory Authorities on using the system and to explain legislation changes
- a new emergency help guide was provided to the sector for advice around COVID-19 emergency processes for NQA ITS public users

- the NQA ITS user guide was improved and updated to accurately reflect changes to the system.

NQA ITS satisfaction survey

The NQA ITS 2020 satisfaction survey was sent to Regulatory Authority and sector users in November. The survey seeks feedback on NQA ITS functionalities, the service desk, as well as training. Its results inform the forward work plan and guide system improvements and enhancements.

Service desk satisfaction remained high at 88 per cent for Regulatory Authorities and 78 per cent for the sector. Satisfaction with training and guidance was at 62 per cent for Regulatory Authorities and 57 per cent for sector users.

The overall satisfaction with the system was rated at 72 per cent by Regulatory Authority users, while public users reported that the NQA ITS met all or most of their needs at 74 per cent.

NQA ITS strategy and investment roadmap

During 2020 and 2021, we have been leading work to develop a Strategy and Investment Roadmap for the NQA ITS, a recommendation arising from the 2019 ACECQA Review.

The objective of the Strategy and Investment Roadmap is to identify and prioritise investment in the NQA ITS to ensure that it effectively supports jurisdictions in their regulatory activities into the future.



2.5 Second tier reviews and Excellent rating

Second tier reviews

Further review by a ratings panel, more commonly known as ‘second tier’ reviews, offer approved providers an opportunity to seek a final quality ratings review where they disagree with the rating level awarded through the quality assessment and rating process and at first tier review. Ratings reviews are conducted by a [ratings review panel](#).

Applications received and finalised

In 2020–21, we received 14 second tier review applications and finalised 15 applications. This is down compared with the previous year. It follows the temporary suspension of assessment and ratings by Regulatory Authorities in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a subsequent pause in second tier review applications.

Quality rating had resumed across most jurisdictions by October 2020, with the number of second tier review applications increasing from December 2020 in line with this resumption. The number of second tier review applications received from July–December 2020 was five, while nine applications were received from January–June 2021.

Of the 15 finalised applications in 2020–21, the ratings review panel, by consensus, decided to confirm all ratings in 14 cases, resulting in no change to the services’ overall ratings. For one application, the ratings review panel, by consensus, decided to amend the rating, resulting in an amendment to the service’s overall rating.

Seven of the 15 finalised applications were for services with a Meeting NQS rating and seven were for services with a Working Towards NQS rating after first tier review. One service had a Significant Improvement Required rating.



Of the 14 applications received in 2020–21:

- twelve were for centre-based long day care services, one for an outside school hours care service and one was for a family day care service
- nine were from NSW, three were from Queensland, and one each were from South Australia and Victoria.

Ratings Review Panel

We have a pool of 22 panel members across all states and territories that we call on periodically to sit on a ratings review panel. Panel members are appointed with expertise in: early learning and development research or practice; and/or law; and/or the assessment of quality in education and care services or other relevant services; and/or best practice regulation.

Ratings review panel pool members complete an initial induction program, which includes training in education and care service quality assessment and the principles of good administrative decision making. They also receive ongoing training and support in their role.

In August 2020, we facilitated an information session for rating review panel members. The session provided panel members with an update on [new and amended guidance](#) specific to the Exceeding themes. This includes questions used by authorised officers nationally to consider against evidence gathered during the quality rating process, to help determine if Exceeding level quality is demonstrated for each standard. These questions are now used, where relevant, in (second tier) ratings reviews.

Additionally, a quarterly bulletin was introduced for ratings review panel members in December

2020. The bulletin provides panel members with information about second tier review applications received each quarter, including trends and issues of note. Information about the number of second tier review applications received and finalised, and the outcomes of these applications, is also publically available on [our website](#).

Excellent rating

We award the Excellent rating for children’s education and care services in Australia as one of our functions under the National Law. To be eligible to apply for the Excellent rating, a service must have received a quality rating of Exceeding NQS in all seven quality areas from their state or territory Regulatory Authority.

Since the 2018 changes to the eligibility benchmark (rising from an overall rating of Exceeding to a rating of Exceeding NQS in all quality areas) there has been a decline in the number of applications we have received – 64 in 2017–18, 21 in 2018–19 and 13 in 2019–20. The trend has reversed in 2020–21 with an increase in the number of applications to 26.

This increase could be in part due to the opportunities that approved providers, service leaders and staff have had to reflect on their exceptional practice and apply for the Excellent rating, particularly during times when enrolment numbers decreased during different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of the 26 applications received, 10 were from services reapplying, and 16 from services applying for the first time.

All applications, including re-applications, are assessed against the following ACECQA Board determined criteria:

- **Criterion 1:** The service exemplifies and promotes exceptional education and care that improves outcomes for children and families across at least three of the agreed themes.
- **Criterion 2:** The service demonstrates leadership that contributes to the development of a community, a local area, or the wider education and care sector.



- **Criterion 3:** The service demonstrates commitment to sustained excellent practice through continuous improvement and comprehensive forward planning.

Table 4: Source of applications received 2020–21

Total 2020–21 applications	Number	% of applications
NSW	14	54%
Vic	5	19%
SA	4	15%
Qld	1	4%
Tas	1	4%
ACT	1	4%
NT	0	0%
WA	0	0%

Excellent rated service profile

Following assessment of the 26 applications, 13 services were awarded the Excellent rating in 2020–21.

We awarded the Excellent rating for a third time to the AIS Caretaker’s Cottage Child Care Centre.

The following services were awarded the Excellent rating for a second time:

- Indooroopilly Montessori Children’s House
- Lansvale Public School Preschool
- Balnarring Preschool
- Alberton Preschool

The following services were awarded the Excellent rating for the first time:

- Belrose Community & Children’s Centre
- Goodstart Early Learning Bathurst
- Goodstart Early Learning Tuggerah
- Woy Woy Public School Guliyali Preschool
- Singleton Heights Pre-School
- The Yellow Cottage – Scone Grammar School Preschool
- Nazareth Catholic Community Early Childhood Centre
- Yuille Park Children’s Centre

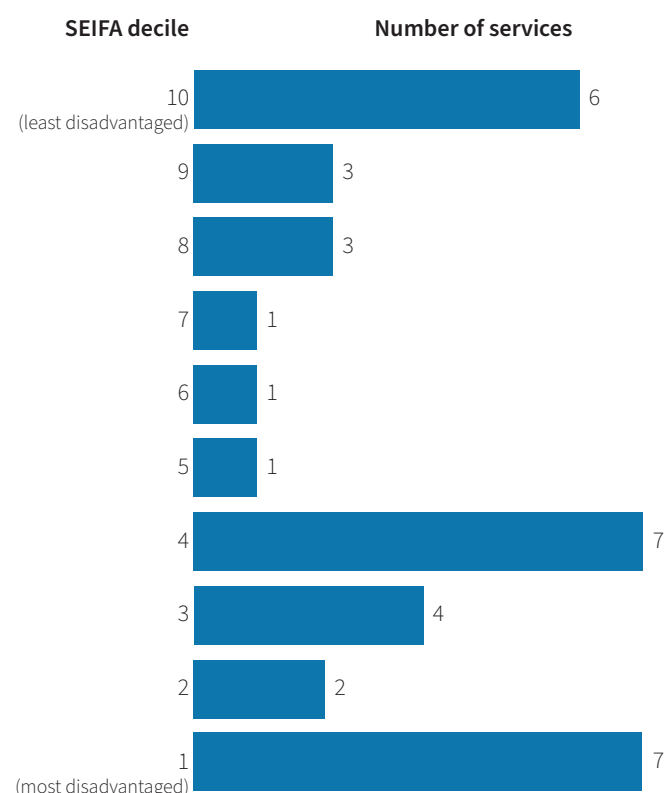
Thirty-five services have the Excellent rating as of 30 June 2021. All service types, except family day care, are represented.

As at 30 June 2021, we had received a total of 281 applications for the Excellent rating since the legislative provisions enabling this function were proclaimed in April 2013. Over this time, 124 services have been awarded the Excellent rating (this includes re-awarding).

We continue to write to the approved provider of services rated Exceeding NQS in all quality areas in the quality assessment and rating process, informing them of their eligibility to apply for the Excellent

rating and with information about how to apply. In 2020–21 we wrote to more than 150 services about their eligibility to apply, an increase on the 140 from the previous year.

Figure 7: Number of centre-based services rated Excellent by Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Disadvantage*



*The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a product of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The indexes are based on information from the five-yearly Census. Variables used cover a number of areas including household income, education, employment, occupation, housing and other indicators of advantage and disadvantage. ACECQA uses the address details of a service at the Statistical Area 1 (SA1) level to identify its SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (ISRAD) classification. Some services are excluded from SEIFA classifications because of poor quality address matching.



Exceptional practice enhances quality programs and practice across Australia

In 2020–21 we committed to sharing examples of unique and exceptional practices from Excellent rated services with the sector, stakeholders and Regulatory Authorities. Examples of exceptional practices from Excellent rated services are regularly shared in newsletters, publications, presentations, workshops and through social media to promote quality children’s education and care, and to encourage eligible services to apply for the Excellent rating. We share examples of exceptional practices with authorised officers and staff of the Regulatory Authority through training resources, workshops, presentations and publications. Footage from Excellent rated services and interviews with families, service leaders, educators and staff from Excellent rated services continues to be used to promote quality early learning to families through targeted promotions and StartingBlocks.gov.au.

In 2020 we reviewed and updated the [Excellent webpage](#) and application materials to create a more user-friendly experience for services considering applying for the Excellent rating. We included the voices of Excellent rated services on the webpage to share their stories of applying, and being awarded the Excellent rating.

The Excellent rating
Enhance. Innovate. Celebrate.

Home > Assessment & Ratings > The Excellent rating

About the Excellent rating

The Excellent rating celebrates excellence in the delivery of education and care. The rating recognises providers and educators using innovative practice to achieve significant improvements for:

- their children and families
- the local community and/or organisations
- the wider education and care sector.

Services rated 'Exceeding National Quality Standard' in all seven quality areas are eligible to apply. The 'Excellent' rating is the highest rating achievable under the National Quality Framework.

Being awarded the Excellent rating

When a service is awarded the Excellent rating, that becomes the overall rating for the service. Services must retain their rating of 'Exceeding National Quality Standard' in all seven quality areas throughout the three year award period to maintain their 'Excellent' rating. After this time, eligible services have the option to reapply for the Excellent rating.

Excellent rated services are found in urban, regional, rural and various socioeconomic areas throughout Australia. While conceptually different, excellent rated services demonstrate:

- active involvement of their children and families across service operations;
- engagement with its children and families to identify and meet their needs;
- leadership beyond the service;
- commitment to continual improvement and sustained exceptional practice.

Connect with voices from our Excellent rated services.

Ultimately, excellent rated services transform opportunities into outcomes. Tailored practices, programs and partnerships are established to respond to service specific contexts, circumstances and needs. As a result, children and families experience engagements at the highest level.

Follow our easy steps to apply for the Excellent rating.

Excellent rated services

For more information and to locate Excellent rated services, use the handy map below or our helpful index.

Excellent rated services
In the top right-hand corner of the map you can:

Current Previous

Exceptional practice in action.

Education and Care Service	Date awarded
Evelyn Street and Leverage Child	26 July 2021
Merrivale Preschool	26 July 2021
Tullie Park Children's Centre	17 June 2021
Boy 2 You My 2 You Preschool	27 April 2021
Edinburgh Metropolitan Children's Mutual Nurture*	24 March 2021
Lonsdale Public School Preschool*	11 February 2021
Goodman Early Learning Tumbarum	15 January 2021
AS Caremakers Cottage Child Care Centre*	23 December 2020
Wagga Wagga Childcare Centre	7 December 2020
Newport Community & Children's Centre	12 November 2020
The Yule Creek Nature Science Classroom Service Preschool	18 November 2020
Goodman Early Learning Waltham	27 October 2020
Kyalaroo Primary Preschool	28 September 2020

Sharing your story – being rated Excellent by ACECQA

Rated
EXCELLENT
by ACECQA



Singleton Heights Pre-School, NSW

Neisha Dean, Director / Nominated Supervisor / Educational Leader

The Excellent rating application process was very positive and inspiring for the whole team. Three key educators created the application documents, however, when we requested support, we were inundated with documentation, reflections and other samples from the whole team.

The process was the most interesting, exciting and motivating form of reflection any educational team could engage in.

“My advice for other services is to take your time, look at what you are doing well and be excited about it.”

*Christie Henderson ECT,
Singleton Heights Preschool*

Our engagement with the ACECQA assessment team was positive and supportive. Our phone interview was an opportunity for our team to share our service achievements in more detail and they expressed genuine interest and delight at our stories.

The report we received from ACECQA was detailed, was exceptionally written and captured the unique qualities of our service. We have utilised the comments and suggestions for future planning and continual improvement in our service Quality Improvement Plan.

The Minister for Education, Sarah Mitchell, visited us last month. Sarah has visited in the past to view works being undertaken at the preschool, through state government funding opportunities. Our “Excellent” certificate

hanging in the foyer was the first thing she noticed. Knowing how many services have achieved this across NSW, Sarah was eager to hear when we received the rating and congratulated us on our achievement.

Due to the restrictions of COVID-19, the children and educators celebrated and all of the families, collecting in the afternoon, joined the celebration by enjoying a piece of cake.





'Excellence is like really great and doing good things like making cupcakes and selling them to our friends next door so we have money to save the koalas we helped them so much!'



Lincoln

Goodstart Early Learning Tuggerah, NSW

Sharnee Fancett, Educational Leader, Tearne Martin, Assistant Director, and Adam Angwin, Centre Director

The Excellent process provided our team, children, families, and wider community with the opportunity to share our community, practices, and ways of working. We hoped that from our written application and conversations with ACECQA during the interview process that those from outside our service felt welcomed into our community and built an understanding of the sense of pride, love and passion we have in what we do every day for all children, families and our community.

At our service the children have great ownership and understanding of the process we went through in forming our application. When being covered to go off the floor to work on our application or when children have entered the back office for a cuddle when leaving for the day, they would ask 'Are you doing the excellence work'? We would assure them that yes, we are working on the project and shared what aspect was being worked on. We began capturing their voices to motivate our team and remind us of the most important opinion and that is what our children think of us.



'It is like Buzz Lightyear on my shirt, he plays with all of his friends and shows them how to go to infinity and beyond!'



Hamilton



Balnarring Preschool, Victoria

Q&A with Karen Anderson, Nominated Supervisor and Educational Leader

Q: What aspect of the process was most beneficial to you and your community?

A: The Excellent rating demonstrates to the teaching team, volunteer committee of management and the community that they have done and are doing a great job. A way of saying thanks for all of that hard work.

Q: Do you have any recommendations for other services, educators and teachers thinking of applying?

A: It takes time to write the application and will probably involve several drafts. The addition of photos can assist in demonstrating your messages to ACECQA.

Q: How does your service, educators, teachers, approved provider, children and families value being rated Excellent by ACECQA?

A: They are all amazed that a small community preschool can achieve such acknowledgment for their practices and programs.

Q: How do your educators and teachers feel about being Rated Excellent by ACECQA?

A: It's recognition of all the hard work each team member does and all they give to the service and children.

'Excellence is like a superpower it means that you can do cool things that no one else can do like fly or make magic potions!'



Olivia



'It is helping someone when they need help like you help us to learn how to do my 'e' properly!'



Courtney

The Yellow Cottage – Scone Grammar School Preschool, NSW

Q&A with Kirsty Hails, Nominated Supervisor

Q: What did you think about the Excellent rating application process? What aspect of the process was most beneficial to you and your community?

A: This process was such a valuable one for our preschool community and also our wider local community. It was an opportunity to celebrate our practices and to share these as a team.

Q: Do you have any recommendations for other services, educators and teachers thinking of applying?

A: Definitely apply, the process is a lovely way to reflect, share and also work as a team to really identify and value the practices that you have that set your service apart.

Q: How does your service, educators, teachers, approved provider, children and families value being rated Excellent by ACECQA?

A: It was such a humbling experience and not one stakeholder has ever taken it for granted. We are continually looking forward and trying to make sure our practices evolve and remain excellent.



Q: Have there been any changes to your service after being awarded Excellent?

A: We have continued our work in the community with regards to sharing our wellbeing practices. We ran a workshop and had over 70 educators attend from lots of different local services. We have staff presenting at the both the Positive Education Schools Association (PESA) and Visible Wellbeing conferences.



2.6 Educate and inform

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Country Background Report

Australia is participating in the OECD's *Policy Review: Quality Beyond Regulations in ECEC*, which seeks to support countries to better understand quality dimensions in early childhood education.

In 2020, we were engaged by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) to prepare the Country Background Report for the OECD on its behalf. All participating countries completed these reports.

In consultation with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions through a project reference group, we completed the Country Background Report for Australia. The report drew on a range of information and resources, and offers an authoritative source of contextual information on systems, policies and processes across Australia. The final report

was submitted by the Australian Government to the OECD Secretariat, and will inform a number of OECD publications that are expected to be released in 2021–22.

Quality Support Program – NSW in partnership with ACECQA

The Quality Support Program (QSP) began in 2018 and has continued in 2020–21. The QSP is an initiative of the NSW Department of Education. It involves us delivering free, tailored professional development and support to approved providers and service leaders. NSW-based services rated Working Towards the National Quality Standard (NQS), including family day care (FDC), long day care (LDC), preschool and outside school hours care are eligible to participate in the QSP.

In 2020–21, 167 services participated in the QSP, with more than 450 instances of support since the

QSP began. The purpose of the QSP is to improve the quality of participating services to the level of Meeting NQS or higher, and to improve participants' knowledge and confidence of the NQS. The QSP includes introductory workshops, face-to-face service visits, support video and phone calls and emails, eLearning training, and [bespoke resources](#).

[Recent findings](#) of our evaluation report show that the QSP was largely successful in supporting participating services to achieve an overall rating of Meeting NQS:

- sixty-five per cent of LDC services achieved a rating of Meeting NQS or above
- participating LDC services were two and a quarter times more likely to achieve a rating of Meeting NQS or above compared to matched non-participating services
- both LDC and FDC participating services showed a greater increase in the number of Elements 'met' between pre-QSP and post-QSP quality ratings than matched non-participating services did.

We also found that LDC services in disadvantaged areas achieved a higher quality rating if they participated in the QSP (left graph below) compared to a matched 'control' group of services (right graph below).

Participating LDC services were two and a quarter times more likely to achieve a rating of Meeting NQS or above compared to matched non-participating services.

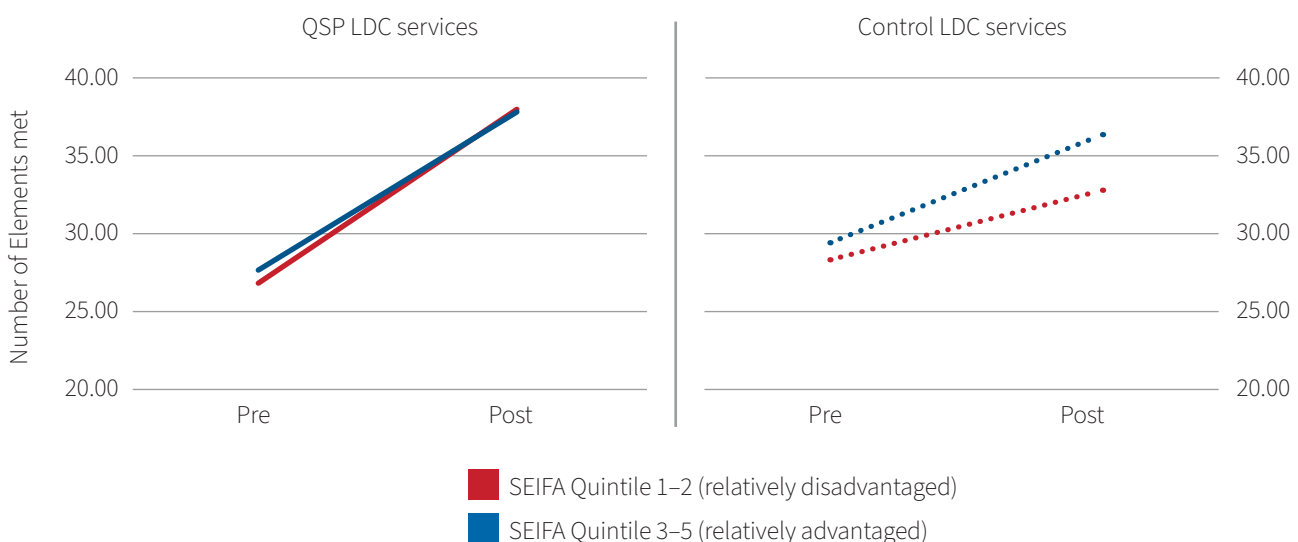
A [video story](#) of a service sharing their experiences is available on the [Quality Support Program](#) page of our website.

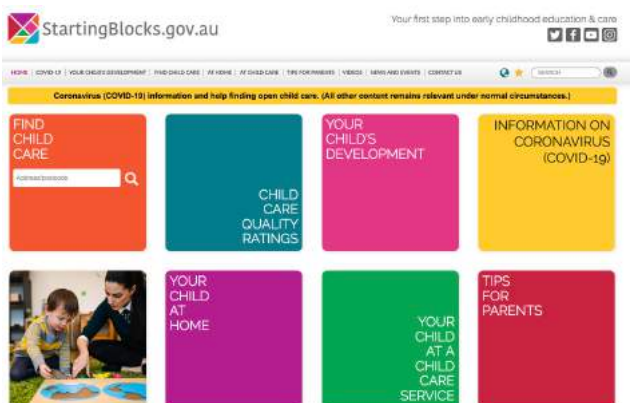
Engagement with families – StartingBlocks.gov.au

We are committed to increasing families' and the public's understanding of the importance of early childhood development and the benefits of giving children the best start in life through high quality early childhood education and care.

Our family-focused brand, [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#), provides a range of resources on its website, all written in plain English. The resources offer advice to families on early childhood education and care,

Figure 8: Higher quality ratings achieved by LDC services in disadvantaged areas





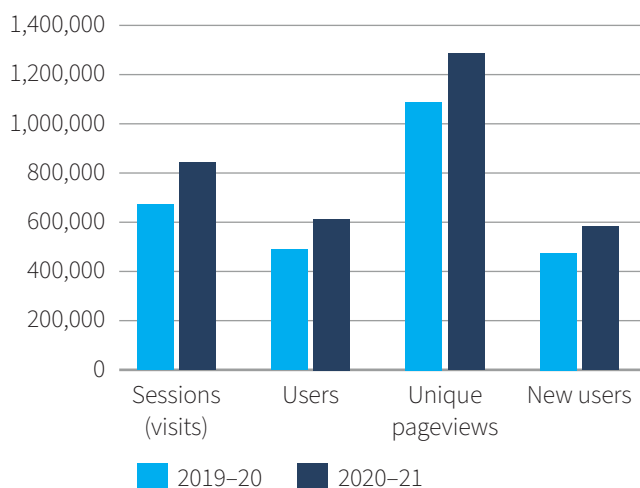
including choosing the right service, preparing your child before starting at a service and helping them settle in. They also provide tips on what to expect from the educators and how to build and maintain a collaborative partnership with your child's educators once they start attending an early childhood education and care service.

The helpful resources for stay-at-home parents, including activities to do at home to encourage children's learning and development, makes StartingBlocks.gov.au a one-stop shop for information on quality early childhood education and care.

Website growth

StartingBlocks.gov.au was launched in April 2015, and since then the website has hosted more than 2.3 million sessions with approximately 1.6 million users having visited the website as at the end of June 2021.

Table 5: StartingBlocks.gov.au statistics



The website grew steadily in 2020–21 as it hosted over 835,000 sessions, representing a 26 per cent increase on the previous year.

The top five resources/webpages in 2020–21 were:

1. Find Child Care
2. Activities to do at home during the COVID-19 shutdown
3. Child care ratings
4. Your child's development
5. The importance of play in children's learning and development.

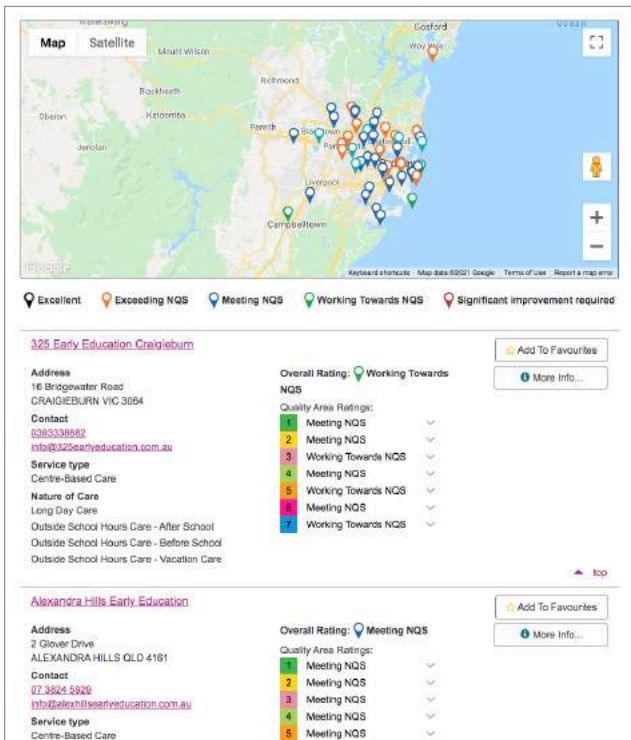
Website updates

The StartingBlocks.gov.au tagline 'Your first step into early childhood education and care' reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting parents to understand the benefits of quality early learning for their children.

The website's [Find Child Care](#) tool helps families find quality early childhood education and care services near them. We continuously work towards improving the tool to enhance user experience and made the following updates during 2020–21:

- a new filter to help users find services by their NQS ratings and view results as a display of NQS rating colour-coded pins on a map
- a new tool to compare services that users have shortlisted in their 'favourites'
- a new option for users to enter their address/postcode on the website homepage to find services near them. This provides users with a shortcut to find services, and they can still visit the Find Child Care webpage and use filters to refine their search.

To support families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds we have translated more StartingBlocks.gov.au resources into six languages – Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese Simplified, Hindi, Punjabi and Korean – and will be publishing these on the website in 2021.



Social media

StartingBlocks.gov.au social media channels – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter – are continually driving increased engagement and traffic to the website.

StartingBlocks.gov.au
11 October 2020 · 🌐

Play is an activity where children show their remarkable ability for exploration, imagination and decision making. The type of play children engage in and its purposes change over the course of childhood from infancy to adolescence.

StartingBlocks.gov.au's resource offers advice on why play is important for early years, and how it supports a child's development and learning <https://bit.ly/3muiPuS>

HOW DOES PLAY SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING?

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Active play such as climbing, running, ball games, digging, jumping, and dancing uses large and small muscles.
- This supports children's overall health and sense of wellbeing, physical growth, appreciation for the benefits of active lifestyles and skills for independence in self-help such as dressing or feeding.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Imaginative and cooperative play which includes dressing up and role play can develop positive social and emotional skills and values.
- This helps children to practice how to work with other children, negotiate ideas, make decisions, develop self-confidence by experiencing success and challenges, learn to control their emotions and develop empathy and fairness.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- When your child plays individually and with others their cognitive skills, such as thinking, remembering, learning and going objectives, are all being developed.
- This supports development of these cognitive skills, problem solving, the power of imagination and creativity, concepts such as shapes, colors, measurement, counting and letter recognition, and insight such as conversation, persistence and resilience.

LITERACY AND NUMERACY DEVELOPMENT

- Play requires thinking, language, interaction, curiosity and exploration.
- Through play children develop skills and understanding of words, letters and sounding skills, writing skills through outlining, pointing and drawing, having fun alone and with others, characters, pretend, learning how to play, sharing, counting, measuring, sorting, classifying, and more.

During this reporting year, the Facebook posts recorded an average weekly reach of over 81,000 as compared to 55,000 last financial year (these are not unique user numbers). The increase can be attributed to our digital communications campaign to promote quality early learning videos from October to December 2020, in addition to regular promotions of StartingBlocks.gov.au resources throughout the year.

The StartingBlocks.gov.au Facebook page has over 43,000 followers as at 30 June 2021, and is the biggest social media contributor to the website traffic. Over 91 per cent of visitors to the website via social media came through Facebook.

StartingBlocks.gov.au has approximately 3600 followers on Instagram and approximately 400 followers on Twitter.

Advertising campaigns

Awareness of StartingBlocks.gov.au and audience engagement increased as a result of advertising campaigns this reporting year. These included blogs on websites, social media posts, digital radio and newsletters.

We are also committed to increasing awareness of the NQF and NQS among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and advertised [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://www.startingblocks.gov.au) in two editions of the *Koori Mail* in November 2020 and May 2021, reaching a readership of approximately 80,000 nationwide.

StartingBlocks.gov.au ran a radio advertising campaign in January and February 2021 to increase awareness of the website and NQS. There was increased traffic to StartingBlocks.gov.au during the campaign period.

Videos

For services and providers, StartingBlocks.gov.au is a good source for finding information to build parents' and carers' understanding of the standards services are required to meet under the NQS. Through our series of quality early learning videos, we demonstrated to families what quality education and care looks like under the NQF, and information about how teachers

In 2020–21, there were approximately 167,000 page views of the COVID-19 section of StartingBlocks.gov.au.

and educators work with families to understand and support children’s development and learning.

The videos feature the authentic and diverse voices and contributions of children, families, teachers and educators in services across Australia. They highlight unique and inspiring experiences, the development of supportive relationships, and the opportunities for children’s learning and development that are unique to quality early learning services and settings.

During this reporting period our campaign reached 3 million people, mainly through social media and blogger promotions. The overall total does not show us unique users.

The quality early learning videos campaign was a significant contributor to our overall growth on social media and our websites during this reporting period. There was increased reach and engagement on social media channels during the period 1 March 2020 to

31 March 2021, along with a 55 per cent increase in traffic to StartingBlocks.gov.au and 9 per cent increase in traffic to acecqa.gov.au (compared to 30 January 2019 to 29 February 2020).

COVID-19 section on StartingBlocks.gov.au

In 2020–21, there were approximately 167,000 page views of the COVID-19 section of StartingBlocks.gov.au, compared to 98,000 page views in 2019–20.

The StartingBlocks.gov.au Find Child Care tool continues to display information about services that are open during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Australian Government’s announcements on child care relief for families and services in Victoria in July and August 2020, and the child care fee freeze for Victorian families until 31 January 2021 were published on the website and promoted on social media.

Sector resources

Resources and guidance materials that support approved providers, service leaders, teachers and educators are essential to achieving quality outcomes for children. Improving policies, procedures, programs and professional practices directly benefits children’s safety, health, learning, wellbeing and development.

During 2020–21, we extended our ongoing support

Michael Petrie is a General Manager at ACECQA, he explains the benefits of early learning and how to choose a good centre for your family.

Listen to Michael Petrie on *Feed Play Love*:

The image shows an audio player interface for a podcast episode. On the left is a yellow cover image for 'Feed Play Love with Shevonne Hunt' featuring a woman and two children. To the right of the cover is a play button icon and the text 'Feed Play Love How to choose the right child care service for your family'. The 'whooshkaa' logo is in the top right corner. Below the text is a progress bar with a volume icon on the right. At the bottom right are icons for document, Apple, share, download, and speaker.

to Regulatory Authorities and continued to align our resource development with areas of need for the sector, important NQF areas and new regulatory requirements and updates. We delivered an extensive range of sector resources, including:

- guidance, information sheets and template updates reflecting the new requirements for the safe transportation of children
- information about minimising the risk of children being mistakenly locked in or out of service premises
- Quest for Quality knowledge game extension packs about documentation and acronyms.

We also continued developing a risk assessment and management tool to help providers, leaders and staff assess and manage risk as an ongoing part of daily practice. This tool is scheduled for publication in the second half of 2021.

Other important resources produced this reporting period include:

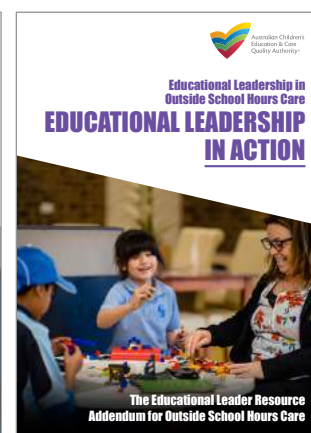
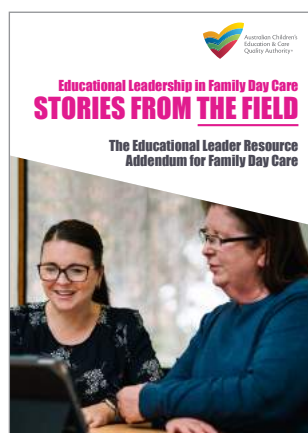
Guidance for effective policies and procedures

To protect children's health, safety and wellbeing, and to ensure their services meet requirements for sound management and governance, approved providers must ensure their policies and procedures cover matters set out in regulations 168 and 169 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*.

One of our roles is publishing guides and resources to support approved providers and service management to understand and work within the NQF. To this end, in consultation with state and territory Regulatory Authorities, we developed a set of guidelines that will help providers when preparing or reviewing these policies and procedures. The guidelines are a reference point for comprehensive policies and procedures that are best suited to each service context and community.

The first 12 national policy and procedure guidelines are available on our [website](#), and a further 16 guidelines will be published in August 2021.

The Educational Leader Resource Addendum for Family Day Care brings to life the stories and experiences of educational leaders from around Australia.



The Educational Leader Resource addendums

[The Educational Leader Resource](#) was developed to support educational leadership in all service types. In recognition of the unique role of family day care and school age care, as well as the challenges and opportunities worthy of recognition and celebration, we worked with a number of peak organisations in the development of two addendums with more contextual guidance for existing educational leaders and those considering taking on the role in these service types.

[The Educational Leader Resource Addendum for Family Day Care](#) brings to life the stories and experiences of educational leaders from around Australia. Each story in the addendum highlights critical strategies and ideas that build the effectiveness of educational leaders' practice. The stories come from practitioners working in a diverse range of services, highlighting practices that confirm the essential role of educational leadership in family day care.

[The Educational Leader Resource Addendum for Outside School Hours Care](#) is a topic-based collection of information, reflections, practical ideas and experiences of educational leadership. The guidance is drawn from Australian and international research, and practitioners working in a range of services, highlighting practices, research, ideas and knowledge that reinforce the importance of the role in outside school hours care.

Exceeding the NQS

New and updated resources focusing on the Exceeding themes were made available to the sector in September 2020. These resources were developed in response to sector feedback, including requests for more information about what each theme can look like in practice, and across different service contexts. The resources were developed in collaboration with state and territory Regulatory Authorities.

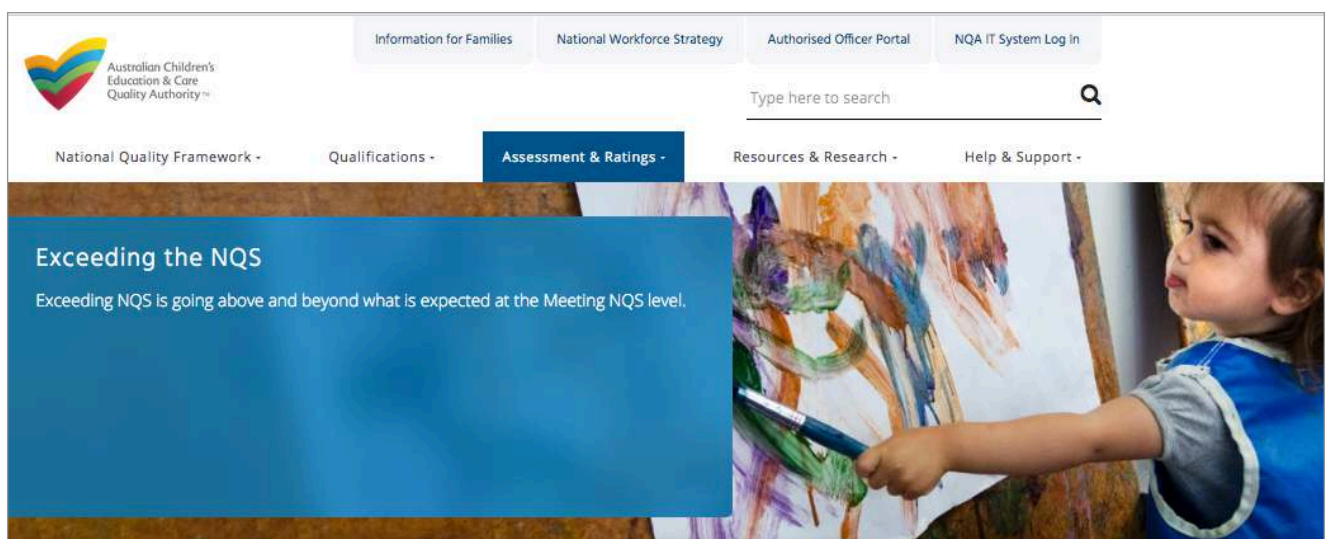
New resources included a series of case studies developed to offer practical and illustrative examples of high quality practice for each standard. There are examples within a variety of settings, including prior to school age and school aged centre-based services, as well as family day care. The case studies are hosted on the [Exceeding the NQS webpage](#). Fifteen case studies were published in 2020–21. More case studies will be published on the Exceeding the NQS webpage in the 2021–22 financial year.

Another new resource includes questions now being used by state and territory Regulatory Authorities to promote consistency in assessing and rating at the Exceeding NQS level. The resource is a series of questions to consider against evidence gathered during the quality rating process, to establish Exceeding practice for each quality Standard. The questions are included in the [Guide to the NQF](#) to offer further clarity and transparency for providers, service leaders and educators.

We also updated Exceeding guidance in the [Guide to the NQF](#). This includes translating guidance against each Standard previously presented as Exceeding ‘indicators’ into reflective questions for all Standards. The change makes the guidance more relatable and engaging by posing questions for service leaders, educators and other staff to ask of their own practices, complementary to the self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes.

Early Childhood Resource Hub transition

An extensive range of resources have been transferred to our website following the closure of the Early Childhood Resource Hub (ECRH) in October 2020, streamlining support to service providers and staff. Along with guidance on the NQF and key children’s education and care matters, the resources include relevant and up to date materials on the NQS, quality areas, Approved Learning Frameworks and



assessment and rating, as well as historic information and resources on the formation of the NQF and Approved Learning Frameworks.

To host the ECRH resources, we made website improvements to create a more centralised approach to resources, and to ensure easier access to these materials along with our current guidance. We added a new resources tab to the [NQS quality area pages](#) to highlight the relevant resources for each Standard concept. Our new [Connecting with practice videos](#) page features a suite of videos and supporting resources to promote discussion and critical reflection for teachers and educators.

Stakeholder Engagement

Conferences and speaking engagements

During 2020–21, our staff presented at 39 conferences and sector events. Topics included children’s education and care, the NQS and the Exceeding NQS themes in practice, self-assessment and quality improvement planning and educational leadership. The majority of these engagements were held online due to COVID-19 restrictions, resulting in more opportunity in some engagements to collaborate across jurisdictions and service types. Our staff were also invited to be guest presenters for webinars hosted by Regulatory Authorities and approved providers, presenting information about the NQF to all service types.

The online engagements provide broadened opportunities for professional development, with a continued focus on quality improvement. The majority of these events were freely accessible to participants online, with some events having an audience of more than 700.

We were also contracted by the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) to develop a bespoke Leading Quality Improvement program for members’ service leaders, including nominated supervisors, area managers and service support teams. The professional development program focussed on: empowering participants to better understand the NQS with a focus on Quality Area

1 and Quality Area 7; enabling them to consider, demonstrate and evidence the measurement of the Exceeding NQS themes; and providing direction in the use of our self-assessment tool to support compliance and continuous quality improvement.

NQF Review ‘Have Your Say’ website

In 2020–21, we delivered ongoing communications and engagement services for the 2019 NQF Review process. This review aims to ensure that the NQF is current, fit-for-purpose and implemented through best practice regulation.

Over a million children currently attend education and care services across Australia, and it is important that the NQF operates in a way that ensures these children are safe and supported in their educational and developmental outcomes. Families, communities, educators, services, providers and peak bodies are all invited to be part of informing government decision making during the 2019 NQF Review.

We built the [nqfreview.com.au](#) ‘Have Your Say’ website to encourage participation in the review process by the sector, families and communities. In March 2021, the Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (CRIS) was published on [nqfreview.com.au](#) and was downloaded over 2400 times.

The second round of consultations was held in March–April 2021.

During 2020–21 there were just under 20,000 visits to the site (up 75 per cent from 2019–20) and we received 3446 survey responses.

Enquiries service

Our enquiries team is often our first point of contact with stakeholders. During 2020–21, we received a total of 25,772 enquiries, made up of 14,540 phone calls and 11,232 emails.

This is slightly lower than 2019–20’s total of 27,257 enquiries due to temporary suspension of our 1300 422 327 phone line when working from home arrangements were activated.

During this reporting year our social media content has regularly reached more than 64,000 people a week.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment asked us to establish and maintain the Find Child Care Family Helpline (1800 291 041). The Helpline was live from 21 April to 30 October 2020 and supported families to find nearby open education and care services.

In November 2020, due to a COVID-19 outbreak in South Australia, the Helpline was reactivated from 19 November until 11 December.

As part of our Customer Service Charter, we aim to respond to enquiries within five days. Our average response time in 2020–21 was well below this, at 1.8 days.

Enquiries continually inform our website content, newsletter articles, information sheets, blogs and social media posts, helping us to deliver relevant communications to our broader audience.

ACECQA website

Our website is a trusted and increasingly popular source of information, particularly for our key stakeholders including educators, approved providers and peak organisations.

Since launch, the ACECQA website has hosted over 23.9 million sessions with over 8.6 million users having visited the website as at the end of June 2021.

The website grew steadily in 2020–21 as it hosted over 4,137,000 sessions, representing a 12 per cent increase on the previous year.

As mentioned above, we added new sections to the website including the Exceeding NQS case studies and national guidelines for preparing NQF policies and procedures.

As COVID-19 continued to impact Australia, we maintained our dedicated webpage to support families and services with reliable and relevant information, updates and resources.

The Qualifications area of the website was re-released in July 2020. It was a major project involving a thorough study of the information architecture of this area, interviews with users, analyses of page content, wireframing, design and a final presentation of the product. The Qualifications area is now more visually appealing and easier to navigate.

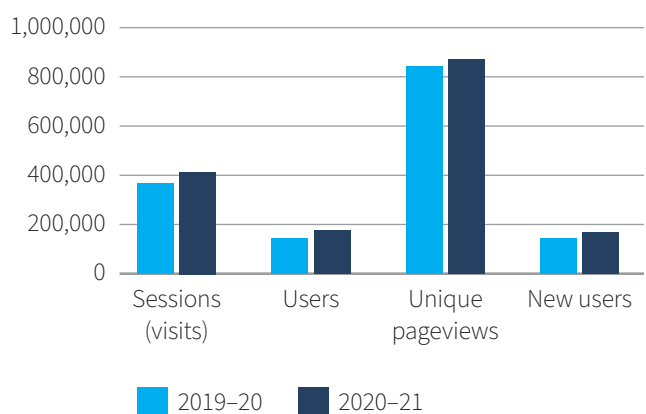
Social media

Our social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, are continually driving increased engagement with our communications. During this reporting year our social media content has regularly reached more than 64,000 people a week (not unique users). Our Facebook followers (58,000 as at 30 June 2021) have grown by almost 6000 on the previous year and our Twitter followers (5246 as at 30 June 2021) have grown by nearly 200 on the previous year.

Newsletter

Our monthly newsletters provide regular updates on our activities and events to subscribers, promoting quality early education and care and increasing awareness of our role. In particular, we aim to inform education and care professionals of key updates and legislative and policy changes that may affect them.

Table 6: acecqa.gov.au statistics





Throughout 2020–21 we continued to share essential information from the Australian Government and resources to support services and providers in a time of crisis.

Guide to the NQF

Our *Guide to the NQF* is a key reference used in most services across Australia. It is designed to help education and care providers, educators and Regulatory Authority staff understand and apply the requirements of the NQF. It provides information for all types of services in all states and territories, and remains an increasingly popular resource.

During 2020–21, there were 127,000 downloads of information from the online version on our website. We released an update to the *Guide to the NQF* in September 2020. We added information on regulation updates related to the transportation of children, along with other minor changes. We also added Exceeding NQS guidance for authorised officers.

As at 30 June 2021, our newsletter has more than 41,000 subscribers. Throughout 2020–21 we continued to share essential information from the Australian Government and resources to support services and providers in a time of crisis.

We recognise the busy schedules and information load of sector professionals, and are continually responding to user behaviours and feedback to improve our communications. This has resulted in an increased audience and positive feedback.

Our We Hear You blog shares a range of perspectives and insights into NQF topics from educators in services and our National Education Leader. Feature articles and guest posts from a variety of contributors from the children's education and care sector are published regularly. It has been viewed over 325,000 times during this reporting period.



2.7 Support and training for authorised officers

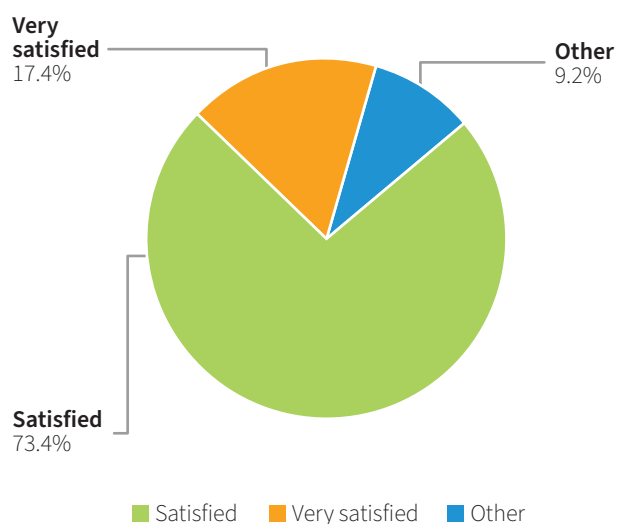
Authorised officer training

In 2020–21 we continued to fulfil our responsibilities under the National Law to provide assessment and rating training, support and testing to Regulatory Authorities in all jurisdictions. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face component of the national authorised officer training package continued to be delivered over four days, using an online format.

This year, we delivered the authorised officer training package five times to 54 participants from seven jurisdictions. As part of the national authorised officer training package, we provide support to new authorised officers undergoing reliability testing. We strengthened the existing authorised officer training package, including revising and master coding three practice assessments, ensuring resources and training materials reflect the increased national guidance for Exceeding NQS. Satisfaction levels remain high, with 90 per cent of

authorised officer survey participants satisfied (73.4 per cent) or very satisfied (17.4 per cent) with the national authorised officer training.

Figure 9: Authorised officer training satisfaction



Authorised officer testing and support

In addition to the reliability testing following national authorised officer training, we deployed 430 drift tests to authorised officers to ensure their ongoing reliability, to support a nationally consistent approach to the assessment and rating process. In 2020–21, we updated, master coded and developed four reliability and drift tests to further strengthen national consistency.

We also built on the suite of resources and training available to support authorised officers and regulatory staff, including:

- four RA Updates and one guidance note
- a suite of 11 new or revised eLearning courses, covering topics such as:
 - Exceeding National Quality Standard
 - Inclusion
 - NQF Fundamentals
 - Educational Leadership
 - considerations for assessing and rating specific service types and philosophies.

In addition, we delivered 15 Administrative Law training sessions across five jurisdictions, 92 per cent of participants were satisfied (44.9 per cent) or very satisfied (47.2 per cent) with this training. We also delivered a Quality Area 1 training program to one jurisdiction.

Lead Assessor Network

In 2020–21, we continued our chairing responsibilities for the Lead Assessor Network (LAN). The LAN continues to provide a forum for cross-jurisdictional representatives from all Regulatory Authorities, as nominated by the national Regulatory Practice Committee, to meet and consider national issues and opportunities for further consistency. In 2020, meeting frequency increased to monthly, before moving to bi-monthly meetings in 2021. This allowed LAN members to respond to the changing priorities as a result of COVID-19; with a total of nine meetings held. Lead assessors met to discuss operational issues (including the impact of COVID-19), plan and contribute to the development of eLearning courses, guidance notes and master coding of authorised officer reliability and drift tests.

Supporting Regulatory Quality and Consistency

In February 2020, the Queensland Regulatory Authority engaged us to develop and deliver a competency-based training and assessment program for their staff. The program builds on the assessment and rating training to further develop the skills and knowledge of staff relating to the full range of application-based, proactive and reactive regulatory functions undertaken.

The Supporting Regulatory Quality and Consistency (SRQC) project sought to build consistency in staff induction and training, and support regulatory best practice by providing high quality training materials. The training program design reflected the Queensland Regulatory Authority's competency framework that identified the competencies required to operate at Foundational, Adept and Advanced levels within the Regulatory Authority.

The project was completed in June 2021, delivering a comprehensive range of high quality training and resources including:

- eLearning modules
- workbooks
- managers' training toolkit
- mentoring framework and resources
- face-to-face and online training
- reliability and drift tests.

The project included a comprehensive evaluation, informed by an outcomes-based evaluation framework. The evaluation identified high levels of satisfaction with every component of the training program. Overall, the majority of respondents (97 per cent) were satisfied or very satisfied with the training program as a whole and statistically significant gains in individual and managers' assessments of skill and confidence were recorded.

The material developed in the SRQC project will provide a strong foundation for future training material for staff in Regulatory Authorities nationally to address the broad range of skills and competencies required to ensure compliance with regulatory standards and promote quality.



2.8 Educator qualifications

NQF applications from individuals

One of our key functions is determining and approving the qualifications needed to work in children's education and care services. These include:

- early childhood teaching qualifications
- diploma level education and care qualifications
- certificate III level education and care qualifications
- working with school age children qualifications
- first aid qualifications
- anaphylaxis management training
- emergency asthma management training.

We maintain a [list](#) of current and formerly approved qualifications, as well as state and territory specific [lists](#) of qualifications for working with school age children.

Individuals who do not hold qualifications on our published lists and are not recognised by former state and territory laws can [apply](#) to us to have their qualifications assessed for equivalence.

In 2020–21, we received 597 applications from individuals seeking to have their qualifications assessed, down from 926 applications last year. This reflects the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the associated restrictions and controls on immigration and Australia's borders.

More than half (54 per cent) of the applications were from individuals seeking equivalence to early childhood teaching qualifications, with more than one quarter (29 per cent) for diploma level qualifications, 10 per cent for certificate III level and seven per cent for working with children over preschool age.

The most common countries for individual applicants to hold qualifications from were the UK (17 per cent of all applicants), Australia (17 per cent) and New Zealand (12 per cent).

More than one quarter (29 per cent) of the applications were from individuals looking to work in NSW, followed by Queensland (22 per cent), Victoria (17 per cent) and Western Australia (17 per cent).

In 2020–21, we approved 268 applications from individuals. This included 86 early childhood teachers, 111 diploma level educators, 51 certificate III level educators and 20 educators working with school age children. The overall approval rate was 64 per cent, down from 71 per cent last year.

NQF applications from organisations

Organisations, such as universities and registered training organisations, can apply to have an early childhood education program or relevant training added to our approved lists.

Following consultation with higher education institutions and other key stakeholders, and in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances created by COVID-19, we modified our supervised professional experience requirements for students graduating in 2020. The modifications represented a 25–33 per cent reduction in the amount of supervised professional experience that we usually require.

In December 2020, we extended these modifications on an extenuating circumstances basis for students graduating in 2021. In order to apply these modifications to our approved programs, higher education institutes were required to submit an application that demonstrated the extended need for these modifications.

In our communications, we encouraged higher education institutes to undertake other meaningful forms of technology and scenario-based assessment, such as tele-presence, simulations and work-integrated placements. And also to undertake traditional supervised professional experience placements as soon as these were possible.

We also continue to work with higher education institutes as part of our flexible and proportionate approach to course assessment and approval, to ensure they fully understand our requirements and are able to offer high quality initial teacher education appropriate to their individual contexts and student cohorts.

In 2020–21, we received 21 applications from organisations wanting their qualifications or training assessed for equivalence, down from 22 applications last year.

Most applications concerned early childhood teaching qualifications, with two being diploma level qualifications, and two relating to asthma and anaphylaxis management training.

Of the 21 applications received, 12 had been finalised by 30 June 2020. All of the finalised applications were approved.

Skilled migration applications

In November 2019, we became the skills assessing authority for the Child Care Centre Manager and Child Care Worker (Group Leaders only) occupations.

The purpose of skills assessing authorities is to assist in the delivery of Australia's skilled migration program by completing skills assessments for occupations published on the Department of Home Affairs [skilled occupation list](#).

To apply for a visa under the skilled migration program, individuals require a skills assessment to be completed for their nominated occupation. Skills assessments determine whether the individual's skills, qualifications and experience meet the Australian standards for their nominated occupation.

Some skilled occupations include the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485). This visa is for international students who have recently graduated with skills and qualifications that are relevant to specific occupations Australia needs. To apply for this visa, individuals require a provisional skills assessment to be completed by the relevant skills assessing authority. We complete provisional skills

assessments for the Child Care Centre Manager occupation only.

In January 2021, we also commenced accepting applications under the Goldfields (WA), Far North Queensland (Qld) and Orana (NSW) Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMAs) for the Child Care Worker occupation. These are unique agreements between the Australian Government and a state, territory or regional authority to provide tailored migration arrangements to suit the specific needs of local regions.

In 2020–21, we received 170 applications from individuals wanting their skills, qualifications and employment experience to be assessed for skilled migration purposes. More than half (54 per cent) of the applications were for the Child Care Centre Manager occupation.

Of the 170 applications received, 150 had been finalised by 30 June 2021. Seventy-three were approved as suitable for the nominated occupation of Child Care Centre Manager and 51 were approved as suitable for the nominated occupation of Child Care Worker (Group Leaders only). The overall approval rate was 89 per cent.

In 2020–21, we also received 917 provisional skills assessment applications from individuals wanting their qualifications assessed for the purposes of the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485).

Of the 917 applications received, 764 had been finalised by 30 June 2021. All of the finalised applications were approved.

We publish quarterly updates of data relating to our NQF and skilled migration applications as part of our [operational activity report](#). The report is available on the [research and reports page](#) of our website.

Collaboration with partner bodies

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

Throughout 2020–21, we have continued our collaborative work with AITSL to promote national

consistency in the recognition and assessment of early childhood teachers in Australia, and provided advice to inform AITSL's strategic teaching and leadership initiatives.

SkillsIQ

During 2020–21, SkillsIQ completed its review of the children's education and care sector qualifications. These qualifications include the Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care.

The Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) [approved](#) the revised training package at its meetings on 23 February and 20 April 2021. The five revised qualifications will be made available to the sector in the second half of this year via the national training register – [training.gov.au](#).

The AISC also agreed to the development of resources to support recognition of prior learning for students with experience in the sector or other education-related qualifications, as well as research to examine the impact of the new entry requirement for the Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care on enrolment numbers and completion rates over the next two years.

National workforce strategy

In December 2019, Education Ministers endorsed the development of a new national workforce strategy as a joint partnership between all governments, the children's education and care sector, and other key stakeholders. In 2020 we were appointed, on behalf of governments, to coordinate the consultation and development of the new ten year strategy.

We commenced the development process in late September 2020 with the establishment of a cross-sector reference group that includes sector leaders from employers, higher education institutions, peak organisations and subject matter experts with significant networks covering different parts of the sector.

Between October 2020 and January 2021, we facilitated co-design sessions with governments

and national sector leaders to identify sector issues, priorities and potential actions and initiatives to inform the development of a [public consultation document](#) to seek broader sector feedback on the development of the strategy.

Throughout May 2021, we consulted with the sector through a national online survey, supported by a series of online information webinars and jurisdiction-specific events. We received 3800 responses to the survey which informed further discussions with national sector stakeholders and governments.

The final strategy is due to be considered by Education Ministers in the second half of 2021.



Recognition as an 'equivalent early childhood teacher'

In September 2013, we determined that a person who holds all of the following will be recognised as equivalent to an early childhood teacher:

- a primary teaching qualification that includes at least a focus on children aged 5 to 8 years old (e.g. a qualification with a focus on children aged 3 to 8 or 5 to 12) AND
- teacher registration in Australia (called 'accreditation' in New South Wales)
- an ACECQA approved diploma level (or higher) education and care qualification.

This transitional measure was reviewed by our Board in June 2021. The Board's deliberations focussed on the following:

- achieving a balance between the ongoing goal of building a highly skilled workforce while recognising persistent and increasingly urgent issues with the attraction, supply and retention of early childhood teachers (particularly in regional and remote areas)
- the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the restrictions on skilled migration for overseas trained early childhood teachers
- the recent changes to the national children's education and care training package, including the inclusion of specific skills and knowledge, such as early childhood theorists, developmental milestones and play based pedagogy, in the new Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- the extension of Regulation 242 ('Persons taken to be early childhood teachers') of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* in most jurisdictions until the end of 2023.

Based on these deliberations, the Board decided to extend and amend its transitional measure until the end of 2023 as follows. From 1 January 2022, a person who holds all of the following will be recognised as equivalent to an early childhood teacher:

- a primary or secondary teaching qualification
- teacher registration in Australia (called 'accreditation' in New South Wales)
- an ACECQA approved certificate III level (or higher) education and care qualification.

After the end of 2023, this transitional measure is scheduled to cease, however individuals who have obtained this combination of qualifications before the end of 2023 will continue to be recognised under this provision.





PART 3: **Financial Report and Financial Statements**

Financial Statements for the period ended 30 June 2021

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Education Ministers

Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority ('the Entity') for the year ended 30 June 2021 present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Entity as at 30 June 2021 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements, as required by subsection 279(3) of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*.

The financial statements of the Entity, which I have audited, comprise the following as at 30 June 2021 and for the year then ended:

- Statement by Chair, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer;
- Statement of Comprehensive Income;
- Statement of Financial Position;
- Statement of Changes in Equity;
- Cash Flow Statement; and
- Overview, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of my report. I am independent of the Entity in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements for financial statement audits conducted by the Auditor-General and his delegates. These include the relevant independence requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) to the extent that they are not in conflict with the *Auditor-General Act 1997*. I have also fulfilled my other responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Board's responsibility for the financial statements

The Board of the Entity is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements, as required by subsection 279(3) of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*. The Board is also responsible for such internal control as the Board determines is necessary to enable the preparation that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Board is responsible for assessing the ability of the Entity to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Board either intend to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objective is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control;
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control;
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Board;
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the entity to cease to continue as a going concern; and
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Australian National Audit Office



Peter Kerr

Executive Director

Delegate of the Auditor-General

Canberra

8 October 2021

Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2021

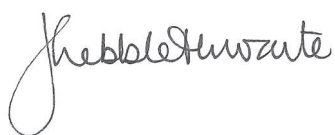
STATEMENT BY CHAIR, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

In our opinion, the attached general purpose financial statements for the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority ('ACECQA'):

- comply with Section 279 subsection (3) of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and relevant Australian Accounting Standards;
- are based on properly maintained financial records; and
- present a true and fair view of the financial position of ACECQA as at 30 June 2021 and the results of its financial performance and cash flows for the financial year ended 30 June 2021.

In our opinion, at the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board.



Judy Hebblethwaite
Chair of the Board
8 October 2021



Gabrielle Sinclair
Chief Executive Officer
8 October 2021



Angela Buchanan
Chief Operating Officer
8 October 2021

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
NET COST OF SERVICES			
Expenses			
Employee benefits	1.1A	14,507	12,467
Suppliers	1.1B	4,891	4,254
Finance costs	1.1C	35	48
Depreciation and amortisation	2.2A	1,215	1,174
Total expenses		20,648	17,943
Own-source revenue			
Revenue from contracts with customers	1.2A	6,795	2,613
Interest	1.2B	93	187
Other revenue		28	1
Total own-source revenue		6,916	2,801
Gains			
Other gains		-	118
Total gains		-	118
Net cost of services		13,732	15,024
Funding and other revenue from Governments	1.2C	14,574	10,405
Surplus / (Deficit)		842	(4,619)
Other comprehensive income			
		-	-
Total comprehensive income		842	(4,619)

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
ASSETS			
Financial Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	2.1A	7,541	4,796
Trade and other receivables	2.1B	887	4,611
Other investments	2.1C	6,289	4,289
Total financial assets		14,717	13,696
Non-Financial Assets			
Buildings – Right of Use ¹	2.2A	1,701	2,674
Leasehold improvements	2.2A	214	334
Plant and equipment	2.2A	279	272
Other current asset – inventory		4	2
Prepayments		461	549
Total non-financial assets		2,659	3,831
Total assets		17,376	17,527
LIABILITIES			
Payables			
Suppliers – trade creditors and accruals		588	393
Other payables	2.3	711	1,391
Total payables		1,299	1,784
Interest bearing liabilities			
Leases ¹	2.4	1,728	2,680
Total interest bearing liabilities		1,728	2,680
Provisions			
Employment provisions	3.1	2,534	2,092
Other provisions	2.5	77	75
Total provisions		2,611	2,167
Total liabilities		5,638	6,631
Net assets		11,738	10,896
EQUITY			
Retained surplus		11,738	10,896
Total equity		11,738	10,896

1. For leasing office space.

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Changes in Equity for the year ended 30 June 2021

	Total Equity	
	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Retained surplus		
Opening balance as at 1 July	10,896	15,202
Adjustment on initial application of AASB 16	-	313
Adjusted opening balance	10,896	15,515
Comprehensive income		
Surplus / (Deficit)	842	(4,619)
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income	842	(4,619)
Closing balance as at 30 June	11,738	10,896

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 30 June 2021

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Cash received		
Revenue from Governments	18,074	6,905
Sales of goods and rendering of services	6,766	3,503
Interest	86	215
Total cash received	<u>24,926</u>	<u>10,623</u>
Cash used		
Employees	(13,717)	(12,043)
Suppliers	(5,269)	(4,404)
Interest payments on lease liabilities	(32)	(45)
Net GST paid	(82)	(51)
Total cash used	<u>(19,100)</u>	<u>(16,543)</u>
Net cash from / (used by) operating activities	<u>5,826</u>	<u>(5,920)</u>
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Cash received		
Proceeds from Investments	-	7,500
Total cash received	<u>-</u>	<u>7,500</u>
Cash used		
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(128)	(229)
Investments	(2,000)	-
Total cash used	<u>(2,128)</u>	<u>(229)</u>
Net cash (used by) / from investing activities	<u>(2,128)</u>	<u>7,271</u>
FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Cash used		
Principal payments of lease liabilities	(953)	(889)
Total cash used	<u>(953)</u>	<u>(889)</u>
Net cash (used by) financing activities	<u>(953)</u>	<u>(889)</u>
Net increase in cash held	<u>2,745</u>	462
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	4,796	4,334
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	<u>7,541</u>	<u>4,796</u>

2.1A

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Overview

Objectives of the Entity

ACECQA is structured to undertake the full range of functions set out in the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* ('the National Law') and its related regulations, focusing on key priorities in accordance with the Interim Letter of Expectation for 2020–21 issued by the Education Council (now known as Education Ministers Meeting).

ACECQA is an independent national statutory authority and a not-for-profit entity.

The continued existence of ACECQA in its present form is dependent on Government policy and on continuing funding by Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

The Basis of Preparation

The financial statements are general purpose financial statements and are required by Section 279 subsection (2) of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations – Reduced Disclosure Requirements issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) that apply for the reporting period.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accrual basis and are in accordance with the historical cost convention, except for certain assets and liabilities at fair value. Except where stated, no allowance is made for the effect of changing prices on the results or the financial position.

The financial statements are presented in Australian Dollars and values are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars unless otherwise specified.

New Accounting Standards

No accounting standard has been adopted earlier than the application date as stated in the standard.

All new/revised/amending standards and/or interpretations that were issued prior to the sign-off date and are applicable to the current reporting period did not have a material effect on ACECQA's financial statements.

Taxation

ACECQA is not subject to income tax. ACECQA is liable for Payroll Tax, Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) and Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Impact of COVID-19

As at 30 June 2021, ACECQA assessed the impact of COVID-19 on its assets and liabilities. It has been determined there are no known events that would have a material impact on the financial statements.

Events After the Reporting Period

No events have occurred after balance date that should be brought to account or noted in the 2020–21 financial statements.

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Financial Performance

This section analyses the financial performance of ACECQA for the year ended 30 June 2021.

1.1: Expenses

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
1.1A: Employee Benefits		
Wages and salaries	12,862	10,702
Superannuation	1,234	1,105
Leave and other entitlements	411	660
Total employee benefits	14,507	12,467

Accounting Policy

Accounting policies for employee related expenses are contained in the People and relationships section.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
1.1B: Suppliers		
Goods and services		
Consultants	939	478
Contractors	66	150
Travel	45	286
Information and communication technology	2,113	1,826
Publishing	195	138
Other	714	680
Total goods and services	4,072	3,558

Other expenses are general administration costs including stakeholder engagement, professional development and recruitment.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Other suppliers		
Workers compensation expenses	169	67
Payroll tax expenses	637	629
Short-term Lease	13	-
Total other suppliers	819	696
Total suppliers	4,891	4,254

Accounting Policy

Short-term leases and leases of low-value assets

ACECQA has elected not to recognise right-of-use assets and lease liabilities for short-term leases of assets that have a lease term of 12 months or less and leases of low-value assets (less than \$10,000). ACECQA recognises the lease payments associated with these leases as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
1.1C: Finance Costs		
Interest on lease liabilities	33	46
Unwinding of discount – make good provision	2	2
Total finance costs	<u>35</u>	<u>48</u>

The above lease disclosures should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes 2.4 and 2.5.

1.2: Own-Source Revenue and Gains

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Own-source revenue		
1.2A: Revenue from Contracts with Customers		
Sales of goods	115	53
Rendering of services	6,680	2,560
Total sale of goods and rendering of services	<u>6,795</u>	<u>2,613</u>

Disaggregation of revenue from contracts with customers

Major products / services:

Sales of publications	115	53
Assessment services	458	276
Service delivery	6,084	2,252
Training services	138	32
	<u>6,795</u>	<u>2,613</u>

Type of customer:

Government entities	6,099	2,276
Non-government entities	696	337
	<u>6,795</u>	<u>2,613</u>

Timing of transfer of goods and services:

Over time	74	8
Point in time	6,721	2,605
	<u>6,795</u>	<u>2,613</u>

Accounting Policy

Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when control has been transferred to the buyer.

The following is a description of principal activities from which ACECQA generates its contract revenue:

Major products / services:	Principal activities	Timing of satisfaction of performance obligations	Payment term
Sales of publications	Selling National Quality Framework related resources published by ACECQA	Point in time when goods are dispatched	Payment upfront
Assessment services	Assessing applications under the Education and Care Services National Law and other assessments	Point in time when assessment decision is made	Payment upfront
Service delivery	Delivering specialised services to government partners and Education and Care sector stakeholders	Over time when the customer simultaneously receives and consumes the services as ACECQA performs or point in time when service is delivered Where no specific performance obligation is stipulated, revenue is recognised immediately in accordance with AASB 1058	Payment upfront or 30 days from a correctly rendered tax invoice
Training services	Providing training services to government partners and Education and Care sector stakeholders	Point in time when training is provided	Payment upfront or 30 days from a correctly rendered tax invoice

The transaction price is the total amount of consideration to which ACECQA expects to be entitled in exchange for transferring promised goods or services to a customer. The consideration promised in a contract with a customer may include fixed amounts, variable amounts, or both. The output method is used to measure ACECQA's progress towards complete satisfaction of a performance obligation. If a performance obligation is not satisfied over time, then it is satisfied at a point in time when ACECQA has an enforceable right to payment.

Receivables for goods and services are recognised at the nominal amounts due less any impairment allowance account. Collectability of debts is reviewed at end of the reporting period.

1.2B: Interest

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Deposits	93	187
Total interest	93	187

Accounting Policy

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method.

1.2C: Funding from Governments

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Funding from Commonwealth Government	14,574	10,405
Total funding from Governments	14,574	10,405

Other revenue for goods and services from contracts with governments are shown in Note 1.2A.

Accounting Policy

ACECQA recognises funding as revenue immediately in profit or loss in accordance with AASB 1058 *Income of Not-For-Profit Entities*.

Funding receivables are recognised at their nominal amounts.

1.2D: Unsatisfied Obligations

ACECQA expects to recognise as income any liability for unsatisfied obligations associated with revenue from contracts with customers within the following periods:

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Within 1 year	403	1,115
Total unsatisfied obligations	403	1,115

The above unsatisfied obligations disclosures should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Note 2.3.

Financial Position

This section analyses ACECQA's assets used to conduct its operations and the operating liabilities incurred as a result. Employee related information is disclosed in the People and Relationships section.

2.1: Financial Assets

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
2.1A: Cash and Cash Equivalents		
Cash on hand or on deposit	7,541	4,796
Total cash and cash equivalents	7,541	4,796

Accounting Policy

Cash is recognised at its nominal amount. Cash and cash equivalents includes:

- a) cash on hand;
- b) demand deposits in bank accounts with an original maturity of 3 months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and subject to insignificant risk of changes in value.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
2.1B: Trade and Other Receivables		
Goods and services	446	4,073
Contract assets	287	429
Net GST receivables	123	70
Interest	31	25
Other receivables	-	14
Total trade and other receivables (gross)	887	4,611
Less impairment loss allowance	-	-
Total trade and other receivables (net)	887	4,611

The contract assets are associated with direct costs to fulfil contracts with customer.

Refer Note 2.3 for information relating to contract liabilities.

Credit terms for goods and services were within 30 days (2020: 30 days).

Accounting Policy

Financial Assets

Trade receivables, loans and other receivables that are held for the purpose of collecting the contractual cash flows where the cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest, that are not provided at below-market interest rates, are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method adjusted for any loss allowance.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
2.1C: Other Investments		
Term deposits	6,000	4,000
Security deposit for bank guarantee	289	289
Total investments	6,289	4,289

Accounting Policy

Investments are term deposits held at fixed interest rates to maturity. Interest income from investments is recognised on an effective interest rate basis.

2.2: Non-Financial Assets

2.2A: Property, Plant and Equipment

Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of property, plant and equipment for 2021

	Buildings – Right of Use \$'000	Leasehold Improvements \$'000	Plant & equipment \$'000	Total \$'000
As at 1 July 2020				
Gross book value	3,646	873	559	5,078
Accumulated depreciation and impairment	(972)	(539)	(287)	(1,798)
Net book value 1 July 2020	2,674	334	272	3,280
Additions – by purchase	–	–	130	130
Depreciation expense	–	(120)	(122)	(242)
Depreciation on right-of-use assets	(973)	–	–	(973)
Disposals	–	–	(1)	(1)
Net book value 30 June 2021	1,701	214	279	2,194
Net book value as of 30 June 2021 represented by:				
Gross book value	3,646	873	688	5,207
Accumulated depreciation and impairment	(1,945)	(659)	(409)	(3,013)
Net book value 30 June 2021	1,701	214	279	2,194
Carrying amount of right-of-use assets	1,701	–	–	1,701

Accounting Policy

Assets are recorded at cost on acquisition except as stated below. The cost of acquisition includes the fair value of assets transferred in exchange and liabilities undertaken.

Assets acquired at no cost, or for nominal consideration, are initially recognised as assets and income at their fair value at the date of acquisition.

Asset Recognition Threshold

Purchase of property, plant and equipment are recognised initially at cost in the statement of financial position, except for purchases costing less than \$1,000, which are expensed in the year of acquisition (other than where they form part of a group of similar items which are significant in total).

The initial cost of an asset includes an estimate of the cost of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located. This is particularly relevant to the accommodation sublease taken up by ACECQA where there exists an obligation to pay a fixed amount in lieu of a 'make good' clause. The cost is included in the value of ACECQA's Leasehold Improvements with a corresponding provision for the recognition of payment.

Lease Right of Use (ROU) Assets

Leased ROU assets are capitalised at the commencement date of the lease and comprise of the initial lease liability amount, initial direct costs incurred when entering into the lease less any lease incentives received. These assets are accounted for by ACECQA as separate asset classes to corresponding assets owned outright, but included in the same column as where the corresponding underlying assets would be presented if they were owned.

Revaluations

Following initial recognition at cost, property, plant and equipment (excluding ROU assets) are carried at fair value. Valuations are conducted with sufficient frequency to ensure that the carrying amounts of assets did not differ materially from the fair value of the assets as at the reporting date. The regularity of

independent valuations depended upon the volatility of movements in market values for the relevant assets.

Revaluation adjustments are made on a class basis. Any revaluation increment is credited to equity under the heading of asset revaluation reserve except to the extent that it reversed a previous revaluation decrement of the same asset class that was previously recognised in the surplus/deficit. Revaluation decrements for a class of assets are recognised directly in the surplus/deficit except to the extent that they reversed a previous revaluation increment for that class. Upon revaluation, any accumulated depreciation as at the revaluation date is eliminated against the gross carrying amount of the asset and the asset is restated to the revalued amount.

Depreciation

Depreciable property, plant and equipment assets are written-off to their estimated residual values over their estimated useful lives to ACECQA using, in all cases, the straight-line method of depreciation. Leasehold improvements are depreciated over the lease term.

Depreciation rates (useful lives), residual value and methods are reviewed at each reporting date and necessary adjustments are recognised in the current, or current and future reporting periods, as appropriate.

Depreciation rates applying to each class of depreciable asset are based on the following useful lives:

Asset Class	2021	2020
Leasehold improvements	Lease term	Lease term
Right-of-use assets	Lease term	Lease term
Plant and equipment	3 to 20 years	3 to 20 years

Impairment

All assets were assessed for impairment as at 30 June 2021. Where indications of impairment exist, the asset's recoverable amount is estimated and

an impairment adjustment made if the asset's recoverable amount is less than its carrying amount.

The recoverable amount of an asset is the higher of its fair value less costs to sell and its value in use. Value in use is the present value of the future cash flows expected to be derived from the asset. Where the future economic benefit of an asset is not primarily dependent on the ability to generate future cash flows, and the asset would be replaced if ACECQA was deprived of the asset, its value in use is taken to be its depreciated replacement cost.

Derecognition

An item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when no further future economic benefits are expected from its use or disposal.

Intangibles

ACECQA's intangibles comprise purchased software for internal use. These assets are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses. Purchases costing less than \$100,000 (2020: \$100,000) are expensed in the year of acquisition other than where they form part of a group of similar items which are significant in total.

Software is amortised on a straight-line basis over its anticipated useful life.

All software assets were fully amortised as at 30 June 2021 and 30 June 2020.

2.2B: Fair Value Measurements

	Fair value measurements at the end of the reporting period	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Non-financial assets		
Leasehold improvements	214	334
Plant and equipment	279	272
Total non-financial assets	493	606
Total fair value measurements of assets in the statement of financial position	493	606

All property, plant and equipment (excluding ROU assets) is measured at fair value in the Statement of Financial Position. When estimating fair value, market prices were used where available. Where market prices were not available, depreciated replacement cost was used.

The remaining non-financial assets and liabilities reported by ACECQA in the Statement of Financial Position do not apply the fair value hierarchy.

2.3: Payables

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
2.3: Other Payables		
Salaries and wages	244	188
Superannuation	24	19
Contract liabilities	403	1,115
Accruals and other payables	40	69
Total other payables	711	1,391

The contract liabilities are associated with revenue received in advance under contracts with customers where performance obligations are not satisfied.

Refer Note 2.1B for information relating to contract assets..

Accounting Policy

Supplier and other payables are recognised at amortised cost. Liabilities are recognised to the extent that the goods or services have been received (and irrespective of having been invoiced).

2.4: Interest Bearing Liabilities

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
2.4: Lease		
Lease Liabilities	1,728	2,680
Total leases	1,728	2,680

Leasing commitment – office accommodation

ACECQA has one lease for its office space. The lease commenced on 1 January 2016 for a period of 7 years and 3 months. At the end of lease, ACECQA is required to pay \$80k in lieu of a make good clause.

The total cash outflow for the lease for the year ended 30 June 2021 was \$1,084k inclusive of GST (2020: \$1,029k)

Accounting Policy

For all new contracts entered into, ACECQA considers whether the contract is, or contains a lease. A lease is defined as 'a contract, or part of a contract, that conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for consideration'.

Once it has been determined that a contract is, or contains a lease, the lease liability is initially measured at the present value of the lease payments unpaid at the commencement date, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease, if that rate is readily determinable, or an incremental borrowing rate consistent with the NSW Treasury Corporation rate.

Subsequent to initial measurement, the liability will be reduced for payments made and increased for interest. It is remeasured to reflect any reassessment or modification to the lease. When the lease liability is remeasured, the corresponding adjustment is reflected in the right-of-use asset or profit and loss depending on the nature of the reassessment or modification.

2.5: Other Provisions

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
2.5: Provision for Make Good		
As at 1 July	75	73
Additional provisions made	–	–
Unwinding of discount	2	2
As at 30 June	77	75

ACECQA is required to pay a fixed amount (\$80k) in lieu of a make good clause at the conclusion of the lease. ACECQA has made the provision to reflect the present value of this obligation.

People and Relationships

This section describes a range of employment and post employment benefits provided to ACECQA's staff and ACECQA's relationships with other key people.

3.1: Employment Provisions

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
3.1: Employment Provisions		
Leave	2,380	1,975
On-costs	154	117
Total employment provisions	2,534	2,092

Accounting Policy

Liabilities for short-term employee benefits and termination benefits expected within twelve months of the end of reporting period are measured at their nominal amounts.

The nominal amount is calculated with regard to the rates expected to be paid on settlement of the liability.

Unless otherwise stated, other long-term employee benefits are measured as the net total of the present value of the defined benefit obligation at the end of the reporting period.

Leave

The liability for employee benefits includes provision for annual leave and long service leave.

The leave liabilities are calculated on the basis of employees' remuneration at the estimated salary rates that will apply at the time the leave is taken, including the employer superannuation contribution rates and applicable on-costs, to the extent that the leave is likely to be taken during service rather than paid out on termination.

The liability for long service leave has been determined using the shorthand method. The estimate of the present value of the liability takes into account attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation.

Superannuation

The amount charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income represents the contributions made or to be made by ACECQA to employees' externally managed superannuation funds as nominated by them.

The liability for superannuation recognised as at 30 June 2021 represents outstanding contributions due but not yet paid.

On-costs

Employment on-costs are payroll tax and workers' compensation insurance which are not employee benefits and are recognised separately as liabilities and expenses when the employment to which they relate has occurred. Employment on-costs are included as part of 'Other suppliers' and are not included as part of 'Employee benefits'. The employment provisions include only the leave provisions and its related on-costs.

3.2: Key Management Personnel Remuneration

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
3.2A: Senior Executive Remuneration		
Short-term employee benefits	1,432,926	1,278,744
Post-employment benefits	166,970	147,632
Other long-term benefits	38,411	34,127
Total employment benefits	1,638,307	1,460,503

ACECQA's key management personnel are ACECQA Board members and Senior Executives.

The total number of Senior Executives that are included in the above table are 6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in 2021 (2020: 5.3 FTE).

Staff who have acted in a Senior Executive role for a period of less than three months have been excluded in the note.

Short-term employee benefits include salaries, paid annual leave and sick leave, accrued annual leave entitlements, benefits under salary sacrifice arrangements and non-monetary benefits. Post-employment benefits include superannuation. Other long-term benefits include accrued long service leave entitlements.

3.2B: Board Member Remuneration

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
Total Board remuneration	206,684	188,624

Board remuneration is the payments received or due and receivable by ACECQA Board members in 2020–21.

Remuneration for the Board is determined by the Education Ministers Meeting.

There were changes to the composition of the ACECQA Board in 2020–21. The highest number of Board members in 2020–21 was 13 (2019–20: 13).

3.3: Related Party Disclosures

Related party relationship

ACECQA is a national statutory body predominantly funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Its Board Members are appointed by the Education Ministers Meeting. Related parties to ACECQA are Board Members and Senior Executives.

Transactions with related parties

Giving consideration to relationships with related entities, and transactions entered into during the reporting period by ACECQA, it has been determined that there are no related party transactions to be separately disclosed.

Managing Uncertainties

This section analyses how ACECQA manages financial risks within its operating environment.

4.1: Contingent Assets and Liabilities

A bank guarantee was provided by ACECQA to the sublessor in relation to its leased premises. The value of the bank guarantee is \$289,124 (2020: \$289,124) and will be released upon termination of the sublease agreement.

The bank guarantee is secured by a term deposit of the same amount.

ACECQA had no other quantifiable or unquantifiable contingent assets or liabilities as at 30 June 2021 (2020: nil).

4.2: Financial Instruments

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
4.2A: Categories of Financial Instruments		
Financial assets at amortised cost		
Cash and cash equivalents	7,541	4,796
Trade and other receivables	477	4,112
Term Deposits	6,000	4,000
Security deposit for bank guarantee	289	289
Total financial assets at amortised cost	14,307	13,197
Total financial assets	14,307	13,197
Financial Liabilities		
Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost:		
Trade creditors	588	393
Other payables	40	69
Total financial liabilities measured at amortised cost:	628	462
Total financial liabilities	628	462

Financial assets exclude GST receivables and Contract Assets.

Financial liabilities exclude GST payables and Contract Liabilities.

In the comparatives, \$429k of Contract Assets were incorrectly included as "Trade and other receivables" under "Financial assets at amortised cost" in the 2019–20 financial statements and these have been excluded in 2020-21. This has the effect of reducing 'Total financial assets at amortised cost' by \$429k from \$13,626k to \$13,197k.

Accounting Policy

Financial Assets

ACECQA classifies its financial assets in the following categories:

- a) financial assets measured at amortised cost
- b) financial assets at fair value through profit or loss
- c) financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income.

The classification depends on both ACECQA's business model for managing the financial assets and contractual cash flow characteristics at the time of initial recognition. Financial assets are recognised when ACECQA becomes a party to the contract and, as a consequence, has a legal right to receive or a legal obligation to pay cash and derecognised when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the financial asset expire or are transferred upon trade date.

Financial Assets at Amortised Cost

Financial assets included in this category need to meet two criteria:

- 1) the financial asset is held in order to collect the contractual cash flows; and
- 2) the cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest (SPPI) on the principal outstanding amount.

Amortised cost is determined using the effective interest method.

Effective Interest Method

Income is recognised on an effective interest rate basis for financial assets that are recognised at amortised cost.

Impairment of Financial Assets

Financial assets are assessed for impairment at the end of each reporting period based on Expected Credit Losses, using the general approach which measures the loss allowance based on an amount equal to lifetime expected credit losses where risk has significantly increased, or an amount equal to 12-month expected credit losses if risk has not increased.

The simplified approach for trade and contract receivables is used. This approach always measures the loss allowance as the amount equal to the lifetime expected credit losses.

A write-off constitutes a derecognition event where the writeoff directly reduces the gross carrying amount of the financial asset.

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are classified as either financial liabilities 'at fair value through profit or loss' or other financial liabilities. Financial liabilities are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

Financial Liabilities at Amortised Cost

Financial liabilities, including borrowings, are initially measured at fair value, net of transaction costs. These liabilities are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, with interest expense recognised on an effective interest basis.

Trade and other payables are recognised at amortised cost. Liabilities are recognised to the extent that the goods or services have been received (and irrespective of having been invoiced).

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
4.2B: Net Gains on Financial Assets		
Financial assets at amortised cost		
Interest revenue	93	187
Net gains on financial assets at amortised cost	93	187

Other Information

5.1: Current/non-current distinction for assets and liabilities

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<u>Assets expected to be recovered in:</u>		
No more than 12 months		
Cash and cash equivalents	7,541	4,796
Trade and other receivables	887	4,611
Other investments	6,000	4,000
Other current asset – inventory	4	2
Prepayments	434	500
Total no more than 12 months	14,866	13,909
More than 12 months		
Other investments	289	289
Prepayments	27	49
Buildings – Right of Use	1,701	2,674
Leasehold improvements	214	334
Plant and equipment	279	272
Total more than 12 months	2,510	3,618
Total assets	17,376	17,527
<u>Liabilities expected to be settled in:</u>		
No more than 12 months		
Suppliers – trade creditors and accruals	588	393
Other payables	711	1,390
Employment provisions	1,166	945
Lease	928	867
Total no more than 12 months	3,393	3,595
More than 12 months		
Employment provisions	1,368	1,148
Lease	800	1,813
Other provisions	77	75
Total more than 12 months	2,245	3,036
Total liabilities	5,638	6,631

In the comparatives, \$867k of lease liability was incorrectly classified as non-current in the 2019–20 financial statements and has been reclassified to current in 2020–21.

This has the effect of decreasing liabilities expected to be settled in more than 12 months by \$867k from \$3,903k to \$3,036k and increasing liabilities expected to be settled in more than 12 months from \$2,728k to \$3,595k.

End of Financial Statements

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Appendices



Appendix A

Letter of Expectation 2020–2021



OUT 200930

Ms Judy Hebblethwaite
Chair
Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority Board
PO Box A292
Sydney NSW 1235

Dear Ms Hebblethwaite

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) Interim Letter of Expectation (LoE)

I am writing to set out the Education Council's priorities and expectations for the ACECQA interim period commencing 1 July 2020.

This interim LoE replaces the previous LoE issued to ACECQA on 18 December 2018, which expired on 30 June 2020.

Under normal circumstances, a new LoE would have been issued to ACECQA for implementation from 1 July 2020. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent impact on the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, there has been no opportunity for the Council to progress a new LoE.

The Council has therefore decided to issue an interim LoE which will remain in operation for a limited period, depending primarily on the time required for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery actions required to support the ECEC sector going forward. It is anticipated that this period will not extend beyond 12 months. The Council will subsequently provide a longer-term LoE, taking into account matters such as ACECQA's greater level of maturity, any endorsed recommendations arising from the ACECQA Review, and other issues which the Council considers relevant.

This LoE acknowledges key current activities while providing flexibility to accommodate the uncertainty surrounding the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. As with the previous LoE, this LoE aligns with the provisions of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law) and associated regulations, and commitments for the ECEC sector identified by the Council.

Purpose

The Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation and administration of the National Quality Framework (NQF) as per s220 of the National Law.

ACECQA is an independent statutory authority established under part 11 of the National Law, with its functions largely detailed under s225.

This LoE sets the Council's key priorities for ACECQA for the anticipated duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, and recognises that the ACECQA Board and Chief Executive Officer are responsible for ACECQA's implementation of these priorities.

Context

This LoE is developed in the context of evidence demonstrating that engagement in quality education and care, particularly in the early years, leads to better health, education and employment outcomes in later life.

It is for this reason jurisdictions have demonstrated commitment to the NQF as a consistent national regulatory system for the ECEC sector.

This LoE reflects the current position of the NQF operating within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The success of the NQF will continue to be highly influenced by the quality of collaborative efforts between ACECQA and key stakeholders, particularly during this challenging period.

Funding

This LoE also acknowledges the Australian Government's funding announcement of December 2019 which provides ACECQA with ongoing operational funding to progress its functions under the National Law, with \$46 million provided over a three year period from June 2020 to 30 June 2023.

This funding decision was informed by the 2019 independent Review of ACECQA, which found that ACECQA played a unique and critical role in the ECEC ecosystem. The Council will consider a formal response to recommendations from the ACECQA Review noting that, in the interim, many recommendations and opportunities for improvement have been implemented.

ACECQA is expected to continue to seek opportunities for commissioned work and to provide new programs, services and resources through cost recovery and commercially, consistent with its statutory functions, the unique needs of Regulatory Authorities (RAs) and stakeholders, and the strategic priorities in this LoE.

Term

As noted above, this LoE outlines the Council's expectations for ACECQA from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 or until the Council provides a longer-term LoE for ACECQA, the timing of which will depend primarily on the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery actions required to support the ECEC sector going forward.

The ECEC sector is changing, with an evolving and complex service profile and sustained expansion. As such, the efficacy and regulatory system underpinning the NQF is regularly reviewed by jurisdictions. This process of review will influence future decisions regarding the NQF and future LoEs will reflect resultant changes in the strategic directions of the Council.

Note this LoE will be subject to ongoing review, in the context of any new arrangements arising from National Federation Reform with respect to Education Council.

Principles

The health, safety and wellbeing of children is the paramount consideration of the strategic directions articulated in this LoE and these are the critical foundations to improved outcomes for lifelong learning through quality education and care experiences. As envisaged in the development of the NQF, the achievement of this objective and all objectives of the National Law is dependent on consistent and sustained collaboration between all stakeholders.

ACECQA in undertaking its statutory role and functions will contribute to the following core values:

- a transparent, fair, accountable, efficient and effective national system
- streamlined governance arrangements and clearly defined accountabilities

- collaboration with stakeholders in achieving NQF objectives
- nationally consistent implementation of the NQF, including the National Law, National Regulations and National Quality Standard
- ongoing support of quality research and evaluation, reflecting sector priorities and providing an evidence base for national decision making, and
- a continuous focus on quality improvement.

In performing its functions, ACECQA will:

- ensure it acts in accordance with the decisions of the Council, and
- progress advice to the Council in accordance with protocols, procedures and/or arrangements agreed to by the Council, or the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) on behalf of the Council.

Key Activities

The key activities outlined below acknowledge the commitment to ensuring the NQF is an integrated and consistent national system. ACECQA will prioritise these activities and detail key deliverables, timeframes and budgets for approval by the Council through a new forward work plan to be considered by Council in the third quarter of 2020.

ECPG is entrusted by the Council to provide high-level strategic policy advice on all early childhood matters, therefore ACECQA must consult with ECPG prior to progressing any policy matters to the Council. Within this context, the relationship between ACECQA and the ECPG is vital to successful administration of the National Quality Agenda (NQA). This LoE stipulates a specific role for ECPG in supporting ACECQA in developing the new forward work plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic is necessarily leading to a reprioritisation of activities and to the flexible application of regulation under the National Law. ECPG has been closely involved in discussions of promoting national consistency in the context of this flexibility, supported by ACECQA, and has also focussed on issues such as maintaining the viability of services and scenario planning.

Against this backdrop, ACECQA is delivering the following activities in support of the sector through COVID-19:

- supporting governments and the sector by collectively working through the implications of COVID-19 for ECEC services, including: pandemic; scenario planning; and during the recovery phase, including health advice and relevant government funding responses
- managing the Regulatory Practice Committee (RPC) to support regulatory practice that is responsive to the unique circumstances of jurisdictions, harmonised in accordance with national objectives and risk based for the efficient use of resources
- establishing a national 1800 helpline to assist families, including essential workers and those with vulnerable children, to find available ECEC services in their area during the pandemic
- developing new National Quality Agenda Information Technology System (NQA ITS) functionality to capture critical ECEC sector data, such as notification of service closures and reductions in number of children attending
- providing advice and new resources on the health and safety of children and educators during the pandemic, in accordance with advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee; and

- developing information for parents and carers about activities for children learning at home and sharing quality resources for their development through Starting Blocks.

In addition, it is expected that ACECQA will continue to deliver, or assist in delivering, the following activities endorsed by Education Council:

- contribute to the 2019 Review of the NQF which is being led by the NQF Review Subgroup chaired by NSW. In particular, support the Consultation Regulation Impact Statement stakeholder consultations and develop communications
- investigate and provide advice on the possibility of extending the Disability Standards for Education to child care providers
- lead the Approved Learning Frameworks (ALFs) Update Scoping Working Group to:
 - develop Terms of Reference, a timeline, a process for determining who will conduct the update, an engagement strategy and address funding
 - participate in the proposed ALFs Update steering committee
 - provide support as needed for communications and engagement
- in collaboration with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), progress work in relation to recommendations 5 and 6 of the National Review of Teacher Registration related to registration of Early Childhood Teachers and professional standards, to align with the Education Council's decision of December 2019
- maintain its role as the assessing authority for the Child Care Centre Manager and Child Care Worker (group leaders only) occupations under the Skilled Migration Program. It is ACECQA's responsibility to set the Assessment Standards and complete skills assessments for applicants applying for a skilled migration visa under these occupations
- participate in the Joined up Approvals Working Group, including to undertake additional analysis to clarify implementation considerations, including governance matters, refined costings and a suitable delivery mode, and
- participate in the Children's Education and Care National Workforce Strategy Working Group to develop a Strategy and Action Plan for Education Council.

Governance

Working collaboratively with the Australian, State and Territory governments

The Council expects ACECQA to continue to work collaboratively and maintain strong working relationships with AESOC, ECPG and jurisdictions, including Regulatory Authorities (RAs), to ensure effective implementation of the NQF.

Importantly, in a changing early childhood sector, ACECQA will continue to collaborate with RAs through the RPC and working groups, to support better practice and consistent regulation of the ECEC sector.

Planning and Reporting

ACECQA will provide a written progress report against its forward work plan to the Council at least once per year. The progress report should outline ACECQA's performance in relation to its functions specified in the National Law and the priorities identified in this LoE.

ACECQA will also provide a budget update in its progress report, identifying any proposed changes to the forward work plan that may be required to ensure it is able to deliver on Council priorities. Timeframes for the submission of reports to Ministers will be guided by Council meeting dates. It is expected that ECPG will

support ACECQA in delivering Council's priorities and that ACECQA will engage with ECPG in preparing its progress report to Council.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Council, I look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the quality of ECEC and promoting children's development, health, safety and well-being.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Merlino". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'J'.

The Hon James Merlino
Chair

30 September 2020

Appendix B

Chair's response to Letter of Expectation 2020–2021



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

ABN 59 372 786 746

Level 6, 175 Liverpool Street
Sydney NSW 2000

PO Box A292
Sydney NSW 1235

p | 02 8240 4200 f | 02 8240 4206
www.acecqa.gov.au

16 October 2020

The Hon James Merlino
Chair, Education Council
PO Box 202
Carlton South Vic 3053

Dear Chair

Thank you for the interim Letter of Expectation 2020-21 outlining the Education Council's priorities for the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

We are pleased to have met the expectations of Council under the previous letter and thank the Council for acknowledging our efforts, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time of uncertainty, we have continued to deliver all our functions, and worked closely with governments, regulatory authorities, service providers, peak bodies and higher education institutions to support the continuation of high quality education and care for children and their families.

We were particularly pleased by Education Council's endorsement of the findings of the independent review of ACECQA and to hear that our government partners and the sector share the view that our work is integral to the success of the National Quality Framework and the national regulatory system.

The resulting decision by the Australian Government to provide us with ongoing operational funding from 1 July 2020 allows us to take a longer term approach to our work, to enhance the functions we are delivering under the National Law, particularly in relation to developing new programs to support governments and the sector, as well as to help families make informed choices.

As your letter notes, the sector is facing many challenges and a key focus of our work will be to help governments and the sector continue to realise high quality education and care within a changing setting that requires both flexibility and guidance.

Given the shorter, less detailed nature of this interim letter, we are developing a high level forward work plan for consultation with our government partners, and for submission to Education Council in December 2020. The plan details the work we will undertake to support the aims and priorities outlined by Council.

We look forward to continuing our work with our many sector and government stakeholders to support high quality early childhood education and care, and promote children's development, health, safety and well-being.

Yours sincerely

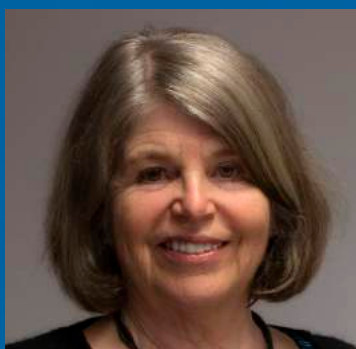
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Hebblethwaite". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

Judy Hebblethwaite
Board Chair

Children have the best start in life through high quality early childhood education and care

Appendix C

ACECQA Board membership



Ms Judy Hebblethwaite Chair

Judy Hebblethwaite has worked for more than 35 years in education, including more than 13 years in various roles associated with early childhood. She was a teacher before holding a number of senior positions in the Tasmanian Department of Education. These included Director, Early Years as well as managing the child care regulatory unit in the Department.

Judy has a strong commitment to quality early childhood education and care. She oversaw the final development, introduction and implementation of the state *Child Care Act* in 2000 and was responsible for much of the establishment phase of the Child and Family Centre program in Tasmania. Judy also led Tasmania's participation in the development of the National Quality Agenda framework and the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education initiative. Judy was also President of the Board Link Youth Health Service in Tasmania.



Professor Emeritus Ann Farrell Deputy Chair

Ann Farrell is Professor Emeritus in the School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, Faculty of Creative Industries, Education and Social Justice, Queensland University of Technology. She served as Head of School from 2005 to 2020. Earning a PhD from The University of Queensland in 1996, she received an Honorary Doctorate from Gothenburg University (Sweden) in 2012 for international leadership in early childhood research.

Ann's expertise is in international policy research, early childhood teacher education, research ethics, and children's rights to protection and participation.

Ann serves in a range of national and international roles: National Advisory Council, Beyond Blue Australia; Australian Research Council International Reader; External Assessor, Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council; International Assessor for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; International Advisory Board, Faculty of Education, Gothenburg University; International Expert, London Economics International; and International Assessor, South Africa's National Research Foundation, Reviews and Evaluation Directorate.



Ms Maree Bredhauer

Maree Bredhauer has worked for more than 35 years in both the private and public sector in early childhood in the Northern Territory, including time as a primary school principal in both urban and rural schools.

Maree has been President of the NT Schools Principals' Association, with an executive role in the creation of the Centre for School Leadership. This centre is a partnership organisation between Charles Darwin University and the Department of Education. In June 2014, Maree left her position in Early Childhood Policy and Regulations in the NT Department of Education to work in the not-for-profit sector. Until recently Maree was the Manager of Early Childhood Australia NT Branch, is a member of the Early Childhood Australia Board and holds an elected position in local government as Mayor of Litchfield Municipality



Mr Selwyn Button

Selwyn Button is a Gungarri man from South West Queensland, raised in Cherbourg.

Selwyn is the Registrar, Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) the regulatory body supporting more than 3000 Indigenous corporations across the country. Selwyn has extensive experience in Queensland health and education sectors. From 2014 to 2018 he was Assistant Director-General of Indigenous Education in state schools, where he oversaw significant improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Prior to that he was CEO of the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC), chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane Limited, and director of the Indigenous health policy branch within Queensland Health. He is a former teacher and Queensland police officer.

Selwyn has served on numerous councils and committees including Oxfam Australia, Queensland Council of Social Service, and the Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee. He remains a director of The Lowitja Institute and Queensland Rugby Union.



Professor Marc de Rosnay

Marc de Rosnay is the Professor of Child Development and Academic Director at Early Start, University of Wollongong. He leads transformational early childhood initiatives involving the university and community, with the goal of improving developmental, educational, and social opportunities for vulnerable children. With the team at Early Start, Marc works to translate current evidence on child development and early learning into everyday care and professional practices, and to develop systems to support children, families and educators in regional and remote contexts. He also provides support for various community and charity organisations, as well as state and Australian government initiatives.

In 2003, Marc was awarded a Churchill College Fellowship (University of Cambridge) in recognition of his original work on emotion understanding and development in infancy and early childhood. In 2006 he moved to the School of Psychology, University of Sydney, where he held an Australian Research Council (ARC) Postdoctoral Fellowship between 2007 and 2010.

Marc's own research focuses on how children become socially and emotionally competent, with a particular interest in the ways in which we understand and care for children, on the one hand, and the ways in which they understand us, on the other. In addition to his scholarly outputs, Marc has worked consistently to communicate research about early childhood and development into the public forum and has taken a leading scientific role in various documentaries (including the *Life At* series on ABC television).



Dr Anne Glover AO

Anne Glover is an international education and development consultant with extensive experience in designing, implementing and evaluating development programs. Anne specialises in systemic reform and the development of fair and efficient education systems. For more than 20 years she has worked with regional governments – Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati and Vanuatu – to develop and implement education reform agendas at national, state and local levels.

Anne also has specific expertise in early childhood care and education. A child advocate with a long commitment to promoting and protecting children's rights and working proactively to support children's access to and participation in education, Anne has more than 30 years' experience in the early childhood education and care sector as a practitioner, academic, researcher and mentor. Beginning her academic career at the University of South Australia in 1983, Anne has been responsible for early childhood program and course development and coordination, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and supervising higher degrees. A keen researcher committed to rigorous and ethical research, she was a Foundation Member of the UniSA Early Childhood Research Group and the Paediatric Wellbeing Research Group, and is currently an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at UniSA.

Anne is actively engaged in various organisations concerned with children's wellbeing and is the Presiding Member of the SA Child Development Council.



Ms Akiko Jackson

Akiko Jackson is an internationally experienced non-executive director and strategy adviser with more than thirty years as an executive in the financial services industry including CBA, Macquarie Bank and Westpac; Shinsei Bank and Mitsubishi Tokyo UFJ Financial Group in Japan; and as a strategy management consultant in the US and Australia. She has worked in both the private and the public sectors, in both large corporations and start-ups and has extensive experience in risk management, large scale and digital transformation, strategy development, equity raising and leadership development. Akiko is a Fulbright Scholar with an MBA from Stanford University, and a Bachelor of Law from Keio University, Tokyo. She is bilingual in English and Japanese.

Akiko is a non-executive director of Pepper Money and Foundation & Friends (F&F) of the Botanic Gardens and a member of the Portfolio Advisory Council of Services Australia. She also chairs the F&F Finance, Audit & Risk Committee, is a member of the Infrastructure NSW Audit & Risk Committee, and the Pepper Money Audit & Risk Committee and Nomination & Remuneration Committee. Akiko is on the coaching panel and an executive coach to senior executives in the Victorian public sector.

Her past non-executive director and strategy advisory roles include non-executive director of 86 400, member of the Advisory Committee of the Australian Treasury and Strategy Advisory Committee of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and Chair/Senior Reviewer of Capability Reviews of multiple Commonwealth Departments.



Ms Sandra Lambert AM

Sandra Lambert has more than 35 years' experience working in the public sector and education. She was a teacher and principal before moving into a number of roles in educational administration in the ACT Government, including as Executive Director of Schools and Training responsible for policy and programs in government schools at all levels. She then worked in other senior executive ACT Government roles and was the Chief Executive of the then ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services from 2002–2010, where she was responsible for children's services across public and private sectors.

After 2010, Sandra held a variety of positions including on the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, the Cultural Facilities Corporation, the Land Development Agency Board (LDA) and as Chair of the Risk, Business Continuity and Security Committee in the then Department of Human Services (DHS). She then spent almost two years in New York, New York State and California working as a consultant in educational leadership and English language arts.

On returning to the ACT in 2015, she resumed her role on the LDA and was Deputy Chair for its final year of operation. Currently, Sandra is Chair of the ACT Remuneration Committee, a member of the ACT Homes for Homes Advisory Group and works as an executive leadership coach. She also participated as an independent member on two of the then Department of Human Service Committees. Sandra is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders and was admitted to the Order of Australia in 2012 for expertise in public sector leadership and management.



Professor Joce Nuttall

Joce Nuttall is a Professor at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, where she leads the Teacher Education, Quality, and Professional Practice Research Concentration in the Institute for Learning

Sciences and Teacher Education. Joce has more than 35 years' experience as a leader and educator in primary and early childhood settings (principally early childhood education and care) and as a teacher educator and researcher.

Joce's research focuses on the initial and continuing education of educators and educational leaders, and the development of strategies for system-level workforce capacity-building in early childhood education and care. Joce also has significant expertise in the construction and implementation of early childhood curriculum policy and the design of teacher education programs.

In 2015, Joce was Chair of the Advisory Group on Early Learning, which reviewed the implementation of New Zealand's early childhood curriculum framework, Te Whāriki, on behalf of the New Zealand Government. Joce is a fellow of the Australian Teacher Education Association and is a previous Governor-General's appointee to the Board of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.



The Hon. Jane Prentice⁵

Jane Prentice has an extensive record of community engagement and involvement in Queensland and the Pacific, with particular experience in the development and implementation of public policy.

In the 1980s, Jane established one of Australia's largest event management companies before she was elected as a Councillor of Brisbane City Council and served on the Civic Cabinet.

In 2010, Jane was elected as a Member of the Australian Parliament and also served as Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services. In this position she played a significant role in the implementation and development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which involved ongoing engagement and negotiation with the disability sector and state and territory governments.

Jane serves as a member of the Advisory Board of Griffith University's School of Government and International Relations, and the Australian Government's Expert Panel on International Aid which is charged with reviewing Australia's international aid program and advising the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Jane has previously served on the board of the Red Cross in Queensland and is currently the President of Scouts Queensland.

⁵ The Hon. Jane Prentice resigned from the Board on 24 March 2021.



Ms Jenni Perkins⁶

Jenni Perkins has over 30 years' experience in social policy development, program design, community consultation, evaluation and performance reporting, and has led policy reform agendas across disability and community services.

As Director General of the Department for Communities from 2010–2013, Jenni had leadership responsibility for the implementation of the National Quality Framework for children's education and care services in Western Australia. Jenni was also responsible for the delivery of state-wide parenting information and support services, along with youth and community services.

As the acting Commissioner for Children and Young People in Western Australia from 2013–2015,

Jenni established collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal and community organisations to undertake a state-wide consultation with over 1200 Aboriginal children and young people.

Jenni has a strong interest and commitment to the delivery of evidence-based policy and consumer-focussed services.



Mrs Amanda Price-McGregor

Amanda Price-McGregor has more than 20 years' experience in strategic planning, policy development, community engagement and project delivery.

She has a diverse industry background encompassing state and national project experience in private sector consulting, and state and local government sectors with widespread experience across an array of portfolio areas. These areas include land use planning, infrastructure planning, urban and regional development, education planning, retail planning, housing, land development, engineering and buildings and tourism nationally and in her home state of South Australia.

As the managing principal and owner of a strategic planning consulting firm, Amanda has considerable expertise in high-level consulting, project management, portfolio policy-making and implementation.

Amanda has an avid interest in early childhood education and child development and has been a devoted and active board member in a community childcare centre for more than three years. She also served on the centre's strategic development and human resources planning committees.

Amanda has a strong interest in encouraging and empowering early childhood educators to work with parents and carers to help identify children with potential growth and development delay and is a passionate advocate for early intervention to help address these challenges.

⁶ Ms J Perkins' second term started on 14 August 2020.



Mr Michael White

Michael White has had over 30 years of experience in the fields of child development, child protection, youth justice and early childhood education as an academic, teacher and administrator in both the government and non-government sectors.

Michael lectured in Human Development at the University of Tasmania and was responsible for the leadership of the Early Childhood Programs of the University for several years.

Michael was Director of Schools in Victoria and subsequently, Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. In the health and human services sector he held the positions of Executive Director Children, Youth and Family Services Bureau (ACT) and State Program Manager for Children Youth and Family Support in Tasmania.

In Victoria, Michael was responsible for the development of 'whole of government' policy on children and young people, and for the creation of a system to monitor the health, safety, learning, development and well-being of all children aged 0–18. The Child and Adolescent Monitoring system remains a major research and policy resource on children in Australia.

Michael's work also includes an active interest in the economic and social context which frames the development of systemic responses to the needs of families in Australia. From 2009 to 2011, he held the position of Director in the Economics and Policy Division of PricewaterhouseCoopers, focussing specifically on early childhood issues.

Appendix D

Board meeting attendance

Meetings of the ACECQA Board 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

Meeting	Date	Apologies	Location
Meeting 3/2020	28 August 2020	Nil	Videoconference
Meeting 4/2020	3–4 December 2020	Selwyn Button ⁷	Videoconference
Meeting 1/2021	25–26 March 2021	Selwyn Button ⁸	Videoconference
Meeting 2/2021	17–18 June 2021	Nil	Sydney

⁷ Mr S Button was an apology for 3 December and attended for finance items on 4 December.

⁸ Mr S Button was an apology for 26 March.

Appendix E

Board sub committees and attendance

Audit, Finance and Risk Sub Committee

Membership

Selwyn Button – Chair
Maree Bredhauer
Marc de Rosnay
Akiko Jackson
Jenni Perkins (from 4 December 2020)
David Black – External member

Meeting	Date	Apologies	Location
Meeting 3/2020	7 August 2020	Nil	Videoconference
Meeting 4/2020	25 September 2020	Maree Bredhauer	Videoconference
Meeting 5/2020	20 November 2020	Nil	Videoconference
Meeting 1/2021	25 February 2021	Nil	Videoconference
Meeting 2/2021	27 May 2021	Maree Bredhauer	Videoconference

Performance and Remuneration Sub Committee

Membership

Judy Hebblethwaite – Chair
Ann Farrell
Michael White

Meeting	Date	Apologies	Location
Meeting 1/2021	25 March 2021	Nil	Videoconference

Qualifications Sub Committee

Membership

Joce Nuttall – Chair
Anne Glover
Ann Farrell
Sandra Lambert

Meeting	Date	Apologies	Location
Meeting 1/2021	17 May 2021	Nil	Videoconference

Strategy Sub Committee⁹

Membership

Judy Hebblethwaite – Chair
Ann Farrell
Jenni Perkins
Amanda Price-McGregor
Michael White
Gabrielle Sinclair (CEO)
Angela Buchanan (COO)

Enterprise Agreement Sub Committee¹⁰

Membership

Judy Hebblethwaite – Chair
Michael White
Vacancy

9 Strategy Sub Committee ceased by decision of the Board December 2020.

10 Enterprise Agreement Sub Committee in abeyance in 2020–21.

Appendix F

ACECQA's major speaking and sector engagements

ACECQA engagement name	Location	Date
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	3 August 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	4 August 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	9 September 2020
CCC Member Wellbeing Event	Virtual	11 September 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	15 September 2020
Workforce Discovery Session – ELACCA, ACECQA, PWC	Virtual	15 September 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	22 September 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	22 September 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	13 October 2020
3rd International Early Childhood Action Congress	Virtual	15 October 2020
Early Childhood Education and Care Reference Group Meeting	Virtual	16 October 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	19 October 2020
Enhance FDC Educator Meeting	Virtual	19 October 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	26 October 2020
Community Child Care Association AGM	Virtual	27 October 2020
ECEC Innovation Forum 2020	Virtual	29 October 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	2 November 2020
Be You Video Project	Brisbane, Qld	3 November 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	5 November 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	10 November 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	16 November 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	23 November 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	30 November 2020
Gowrie Australia meeting	Virtual	2 December 2020
ELACCA Leading Quality Improvement Training Program	Virtual	7 December 2020
NT Early Years Key Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting	Virtual	8 December 2020
NT Sector Workshop	Virtual	8 February 2021
NT Early Years Advisers professional development	Virtual	9 February 2021
Goodstart Tuggerah, award ceremony	Tuggerah, NSW	24 February 2021
Early Childhood Australia (ECA) NSW Conversations via Zoom	Virtual	25 February 2021
Griffith University & Professional Development Network presentation	Woolloongabba, Qld	10 March 2021

ACECQA engagement name	Location	Date
Community Connections Services Australia (CCSA) Rural and Remote Forums	Katoomba, NSW	22 March 2021
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment Executive Leadership Group Meeting	Virtual	7 April 2021
Goodstart Bathurst, award ceremony	Bathurst, NSW	19 April 2021
Queensland Educational Leadership	Virtual	10 May 2021
FNQld – Educational Leadership	Townsville, Qld	22 May 2021
Enhance FDC Educator Mini Conference Inspire, Ignite and Spark	Virtual	24 May 2021
Queensland Educational Leadership	Virtual	1 June 2021
Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) Queensland conference	Brisbane, Qld	4 June 2021
ACT Sector Forum	Canberra, ACT	7 June 2021
Education Standards Board SA, Board Professional Development Day	Adelaide, SA	10 June 2021
June Twilight Webinar	Virtual	22 June 2021

Appendix G

Glossary

ACECQA	The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
AESOC	Australian Education Senior Officials Committee
AISC	Australian Industry and Skills Committee
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ALF	Approved Learning Frameworks
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
CCCFR	Community Child Care Fund Restricted
CRIS	Consultation Regulation Impact Statement
DDA	<i>Disability Discrimination Act</i>
DESE	Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
DRIS	Decision Regulation Impact Statement
DSE	Disability Standards for Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECPG	Early Childhood Policy Group
ECRH	Early Childhood Resource Hub
ECT	Early Childhood Teacher
ELACCA	Early Learning and Care Council of Australia
FDC	Family Day Care
FOI	Freedom of Information
FTE	Full time equivalent
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JuA	Joined up Approvals
LAN	Lead Assessor Network
LDC	Long Day Care
LIN	Lead Investigators Network
NCC	National Construction Code
NQA	National Quality Agenda
NQA ITS	National Quality Agenda IT System
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
NSG	National IT Systems Steering Group
OSHC	Outside School Hours Care
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QSP	Quality Support Program
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RPC	Regulatory Practice Committee
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SRQC	Supporting Regulatory Quality and Consistency
WHS	Work Health and Safety

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