



NQF Snapshot

Q3 2022



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

A quarterly report from
the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

November 2022

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Overview

NQF Snapshot Q3 2022 is ACECQA's 39th national report on children's education and care services operating under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

It provides analysis and information on the profile of the sector and the quality ratings of services against the National Quality Standard (NQS).

A revised version of the NQS commenced on 1 February 2018. The number of quality standards has reduced from 18 to 15, and the number of quality elements has reduced from 58 to 40.

The changes streamlined the NQS and reduced overlap between elements and standards. Analysis at the standard and element level uses quality ratings against the 2018 NQS only, while analysis at the overall and quality area level uses all current quality ratings against both the 2012 and 2018 NQS.

An [interactive online version of the Snapshot](#), which includes additional analysis, is available on the ACECQA website.

The data presented in this Snapshot was taken from the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) at 00.30 on 1 October 2022.

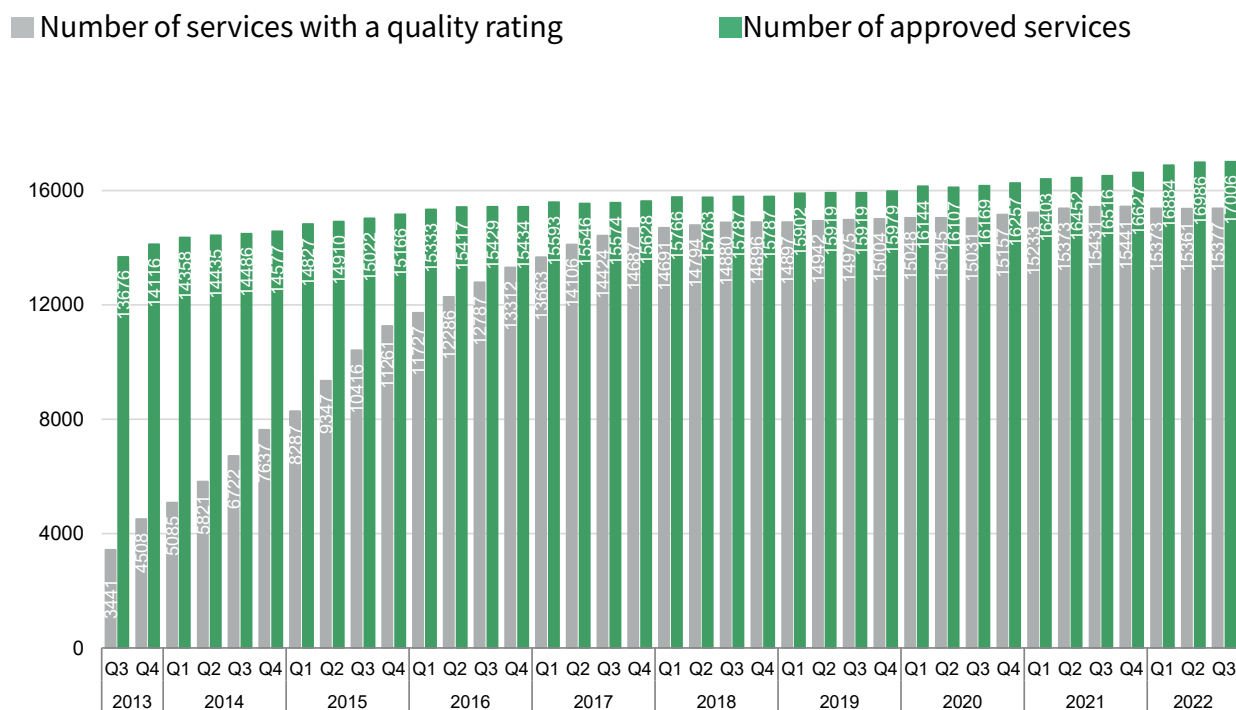
Due to rounding, individual percentages in the tables and figures may not add up to 100%.



Snapshot highlights

17,006	children's education and care services approved to operate under the NQF
15,377 (90%)	services with a quality rating
13,524 (88%)	services with a quality rating of Meeting NQS or above
7237	providers approved to operate
5761 (80%)	providers approved to operate only one service
34	services rated Excellent by ACECQA ¹
15,318	quality rating reassessments completed
68%	of services rated Working Towards NQS improved their overall quality rating at reassessment
11,821 (70%)	services with a quality rating against the 2018 NQS

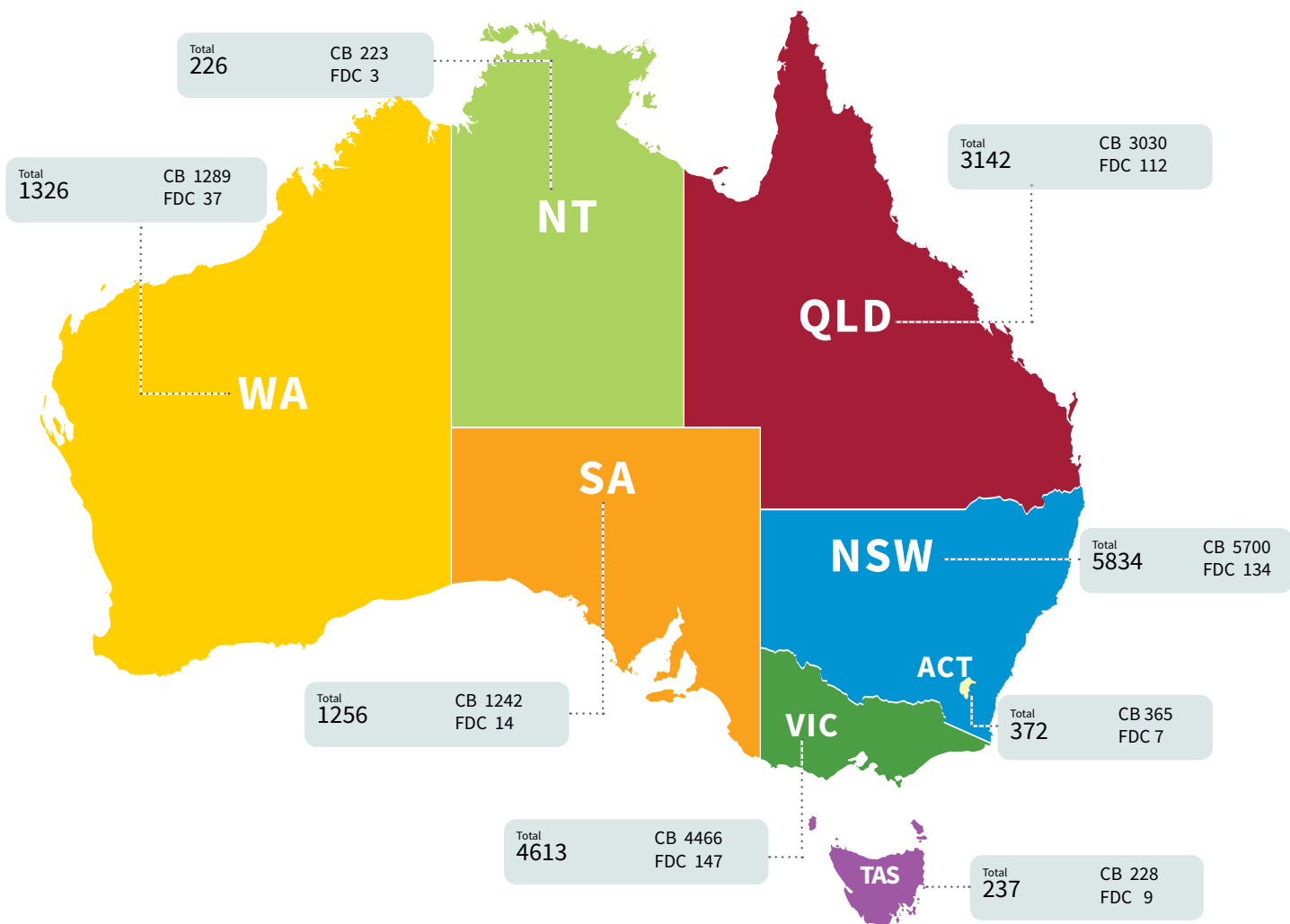
Figure 1: Number of approved services and number of services with a quality rating by quarter



¹ The Excellent rating is awarded for a period of three years. Unless a reapplication for the Excellent rating is received, a service's rating will revert back to Exceeding NQS after this three year period. The Snapshot includes the current number of Excellent rated services.

Profile of the sector

Figure 2: Number of approved services by jurisdiction and service type



<p>Total Centre-based (CB) ¹</p> <p>16,543 (97%)</p> <p>3% Increase on Q3 2021</p>	<p>Total Family day care (FDC) ²</p> <p>463 (3%)</p> <p>5% Decrease on Q3 2021</p>	<p>Total</p> <p>17,006</p> <p>3% Increase on Q3 2021</p>
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¹ A centre-based service is an education and care service other than a family day care service. This includes most long day care, preschool and outside school hours care services that are delivered at a centre. It does not include Tasmanian preschools/kindergartens and most preschools/kindergartens in Western Australia that are outside the scope of the NQF, as well as other services that aren't regulated under the National Law.

² A family day care service is an education and care service delivered through a network of educators operating from residences and other approved venues. They are sometimes known as family day care schemes and they are administered and supported by central coordination units.

Figure 3: Proportion of services rated Meeting NQS or above by overall rating and quality area

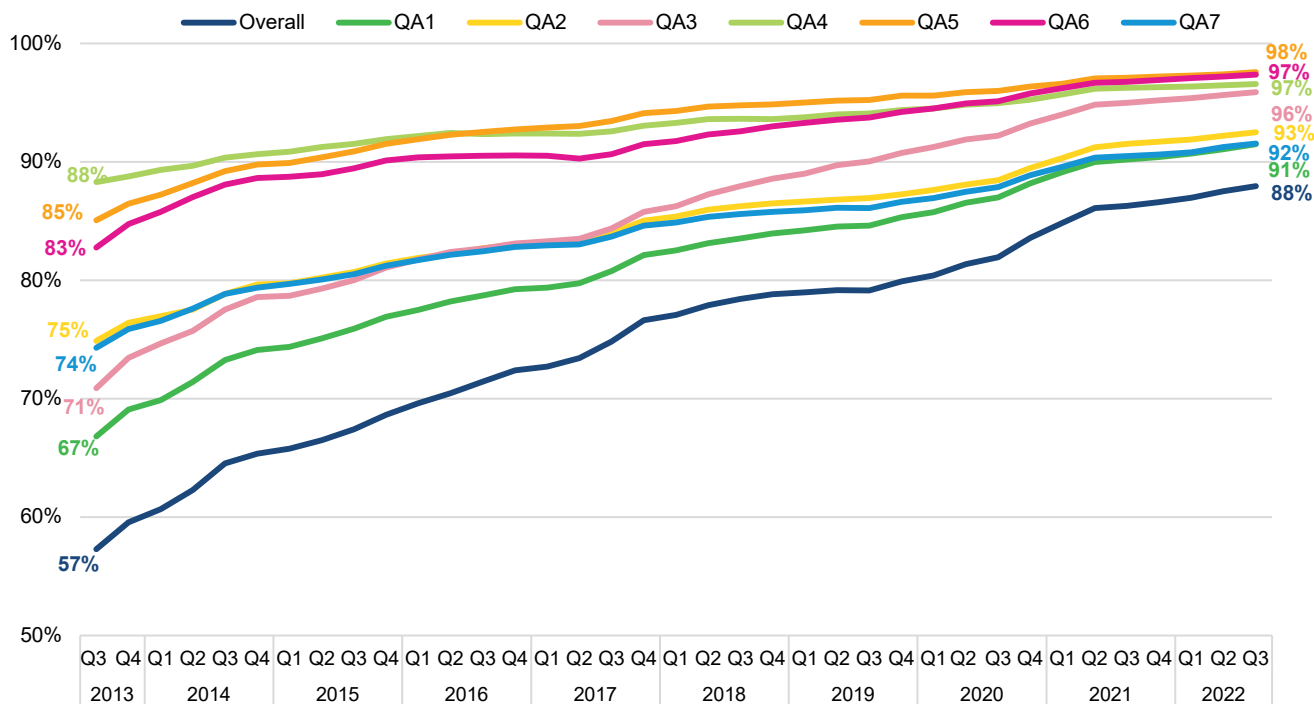


Figure 4: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS or above by overall rating and quality area

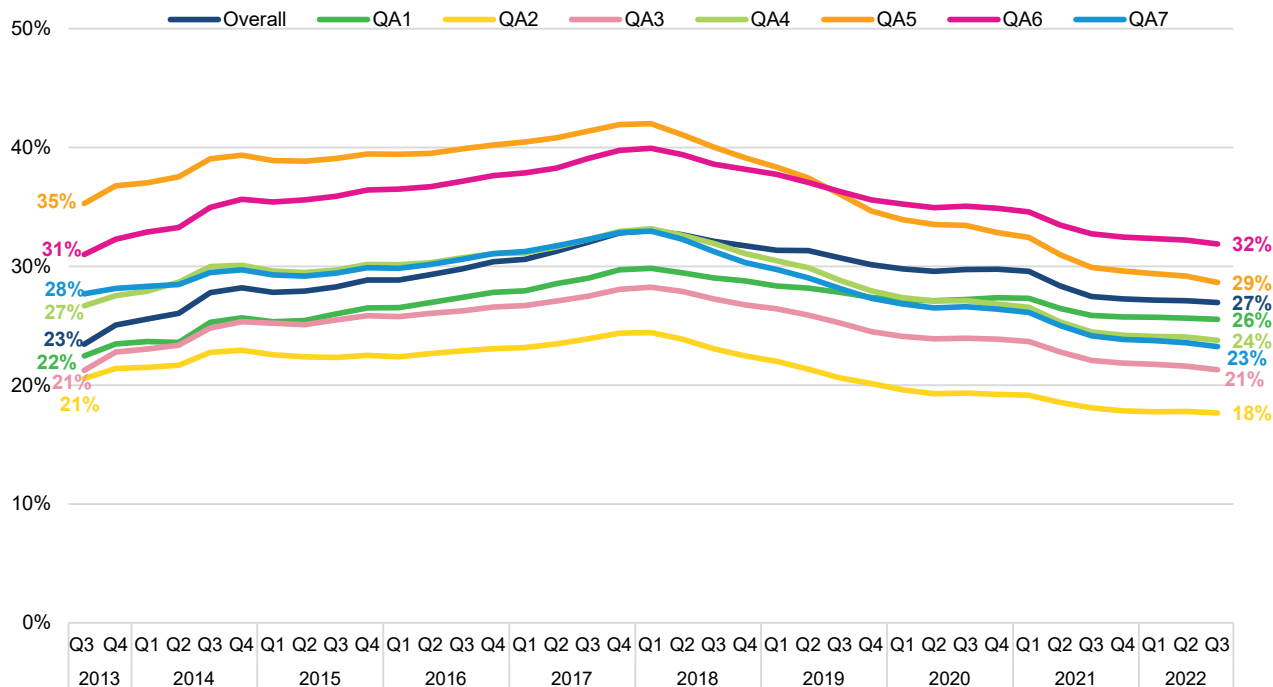


Figure 5: Proportion of services by service sub-type and jurisdiction ^{1,2,3,4,5}

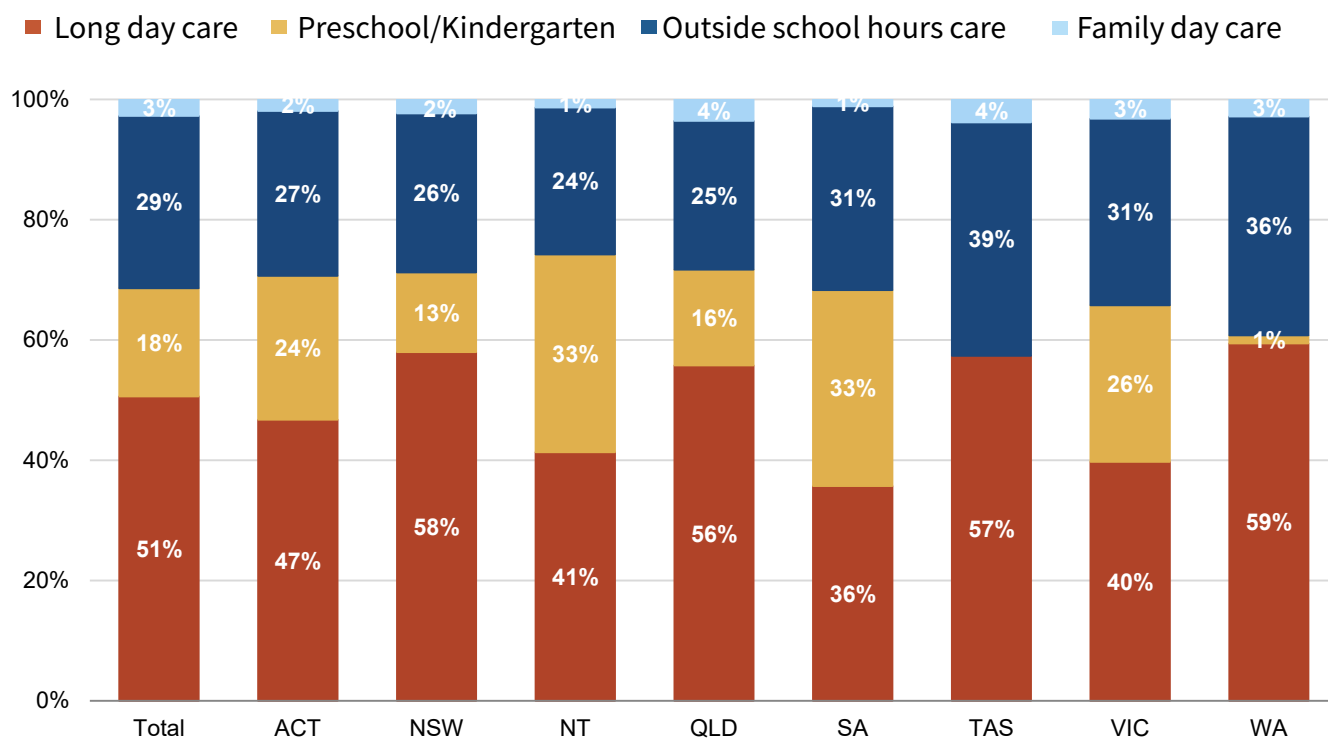


Table 1: Number of services by service sub-type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/ Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	7	174	89	102	0	372
NSW	134	3385	771	1544	0	5834
NT	3	93	74	55	1	226
QLD	112	1752	501	777	0	3142
SA	14	449	409	384	0	1256
TAS	9	136	0	92	0	237
VIC	147	1834	1200	1432	0	4613
WA	37	787	18	482	2	1326
TOTAL	463	8610	3062	4868	3	17,006

1 NQA ITS data collected on service sub-type is self-reported by providers when applying for service approval, and providers may choose multiple service sub-types. For example, a service providing both long day care and outside school hours care, or one providing both long day care and preschool/kindergarten.

2 Providers are not required to notify changes to this information, and therefore this NQA ITS information may not be current.

3 Centre-based services offering more than one type of service are classified as follows: services which provide long day care in addition to any other service type are classified as long day care services; services which provide preschool/kindergarten as well as outside school hours care are classified as preschool/kindergarten services; services which provide outside school hours care only are classified as outside school hours care services.

4 Excludes Tasmanian preschools/kindergartens and most preschools/kindergartens in Western Australia that are outside the scope of the NQF, as well as other services that aren't regulated under the National Law.

5 Three services categorised as 'Other' excluded for graphical purposes.

Figure 6: Proportion of services by provider management type ^{1,2,3}

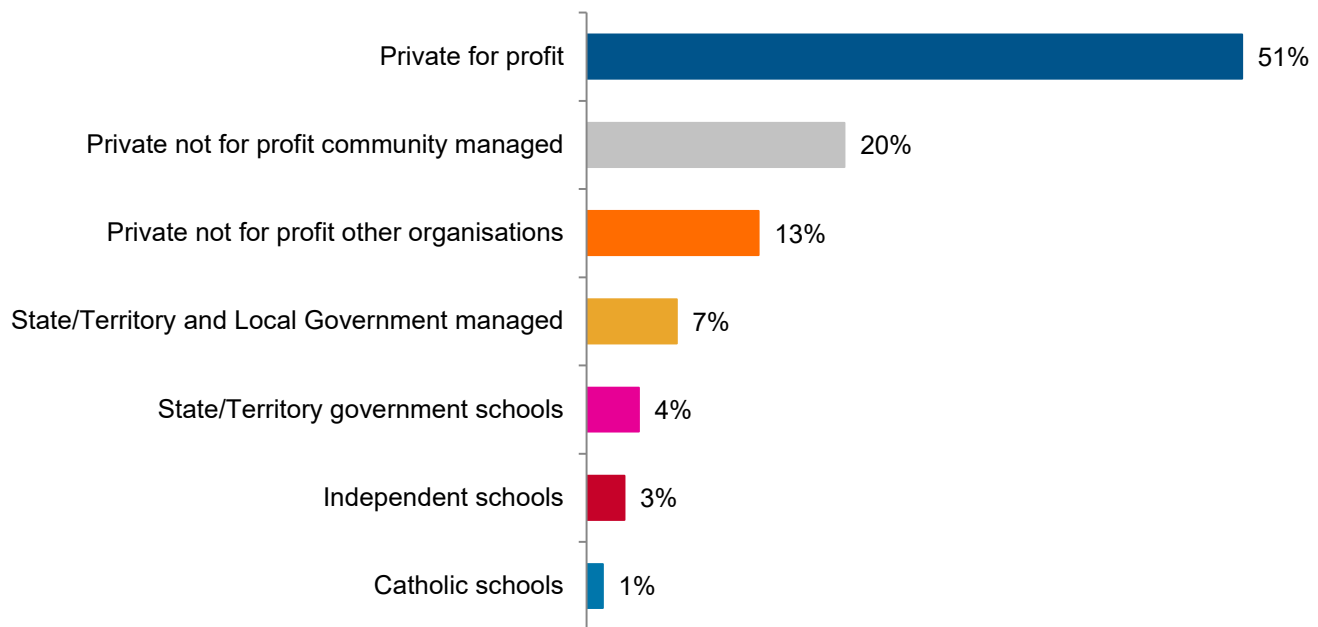


Table 2: Number and proportion of services by provider management type

Provider management type	Number of services	Proportion of services
Private for profit	8683	51%
Private not for profit community managed	3418	20%
Private not for profit other organisations	2281	13%
State/Territory and Local Government managed	1196	7%
State/Territory government schools	696	4%
Independent schools	501	3%
Catholic schools	216	1%
Not stated/Other	15	0%
Total	17,006	100%

¹ NQA ITS data collected on provider management type is self-reported by providers when applying for provider approval. Providers are not required to notify changes to this information, and therefore this NQA ITS information may not be current.

² Provider management type classifications are available at Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) [National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection: Data Collection Guide, 2013](#) (Cat. No. 4240.0.55.002).

³ 15 services categorised as 'Not stated/Other' excluded for graphical purposes.

Figure 7 shows that 80% of approved providers operate a single service while 1% of approved providers operate 25 or more services.

Figure 7: Proportion of approved providers by size

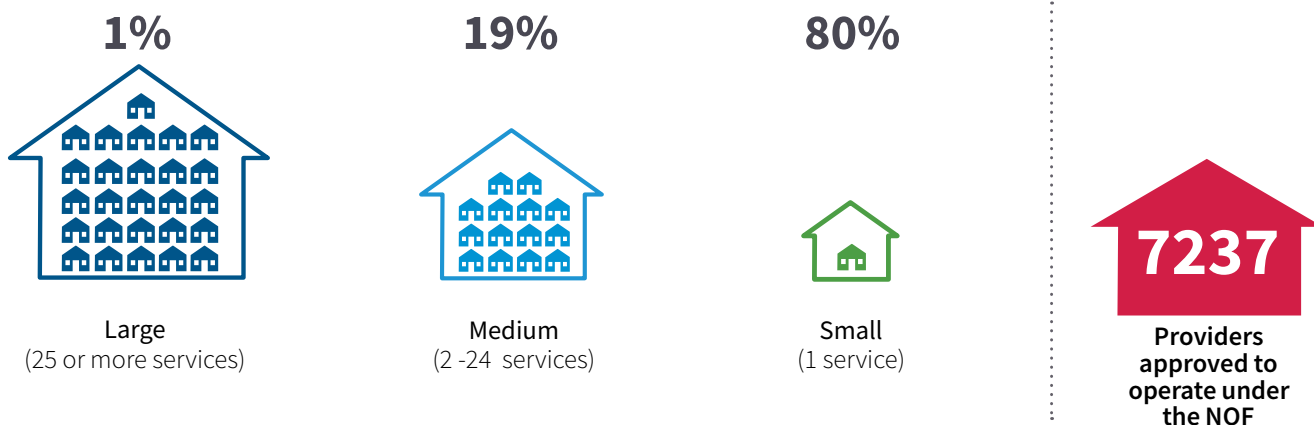


Figure 8 shows that 34% of approved services are operated by small approved providers while 35% of approved services are operated by large approved providers.

Figure 8: Proportion of approved services by provider size

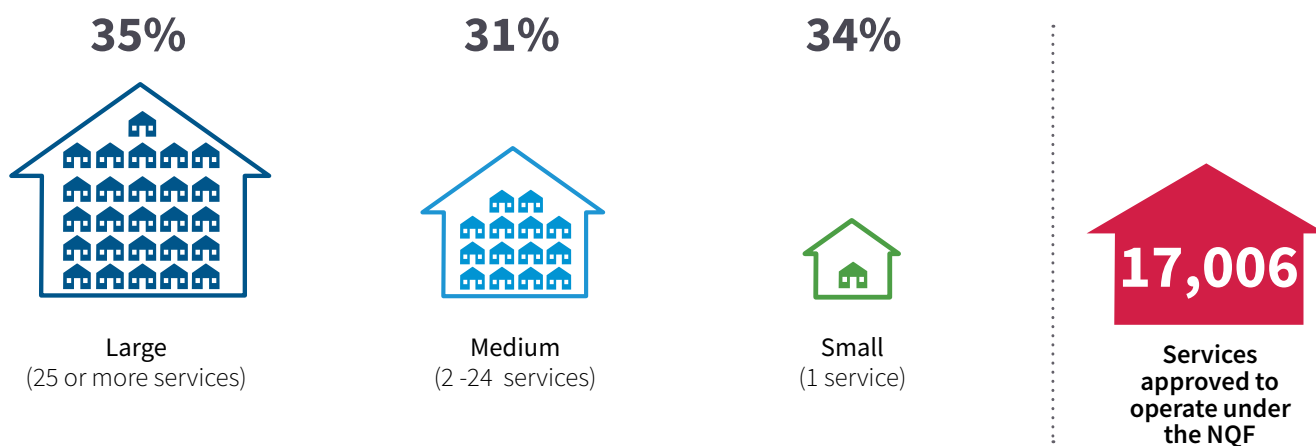
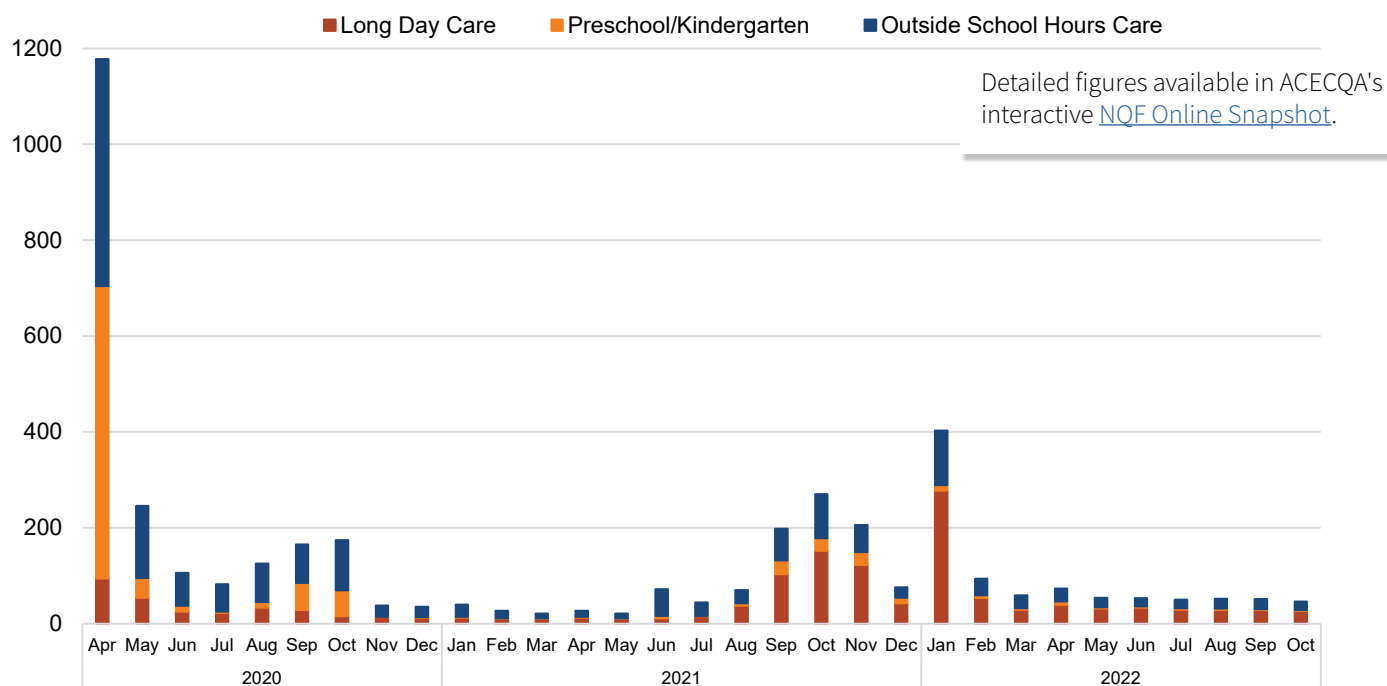


Figure 9 shows the total number of centre-based services closed at the start of each month from April 2020, where the closure is related to the impact of COVID-19.

The number and proportion of service closures varied over time and across jurisdictions. This may be due to differing approaches to precautionary measures, such as school closures, at the state and territory level. The timing, duration and extent of these measures impacts the demand for children’s education and care services, as well as the decisions of service providers to keep services operating.

More than 1100 centre-based service closures related to the impact of COVID-19 were recorded in the NQA ITS at the start of April 2020, with the majority of these being preschools/kindergartens, followed by outside school hours care services. There were just under 400 centre-based service closures at the start of January 2022. There were 46 centre-based service closures at the start of October 2022, with the majority of these being long day care services. Up-to-date information is available via the [service and temporary closure mapping tool](#) on the ACECQA website.

Figure 9: Number of centre-based service closures recorded in the NQA ITS at the start of each month, related to the impact of COVID-19



Progress of assessment and rating

Table 3 includes all approved services. The proportion of services with a quality rating will not reach 100% at any one time because a small proportion of services will only recently have been approved and may not have started operating or may have only been operating for a short period of time. In general, state and territory regulatory authorities will not assess and rate newly approved services which have been operating for less than 9-12 months.

Table 3: Quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Number of services	Proportion of all services	Number of services with a quality rating	Proportion of services with a quality rating
ACT	372	2%	336	90%
NSW	5834	34%	5352	92%
NT	226	1%	212	94%
QLD	3142	18%	2952	94%
SA	1256	7%	1208	96%
TAS	237	1%	213	90%
VIC	4613	27%	3995	87%
WA	1326	8%	1109	84%
TOTAL	17,006	100%	15,377	90%

Table 4: Number of services with a quality rating by service sub-type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/ Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	7	156	85	88	0	336
NSW	131	3175	745	1301	0	5352
NT	3	86	72	50	1	212
QLD	93	1656	466	737	0	2952
SA	12	423	403	370	0	1208
TAS	8	124	0	81	0	213
VIC	123	1585	1140	1147	0	3995
WA	31	662	15	400	1	1109
TOTAL	408	7867	2926	4174	2	15,377

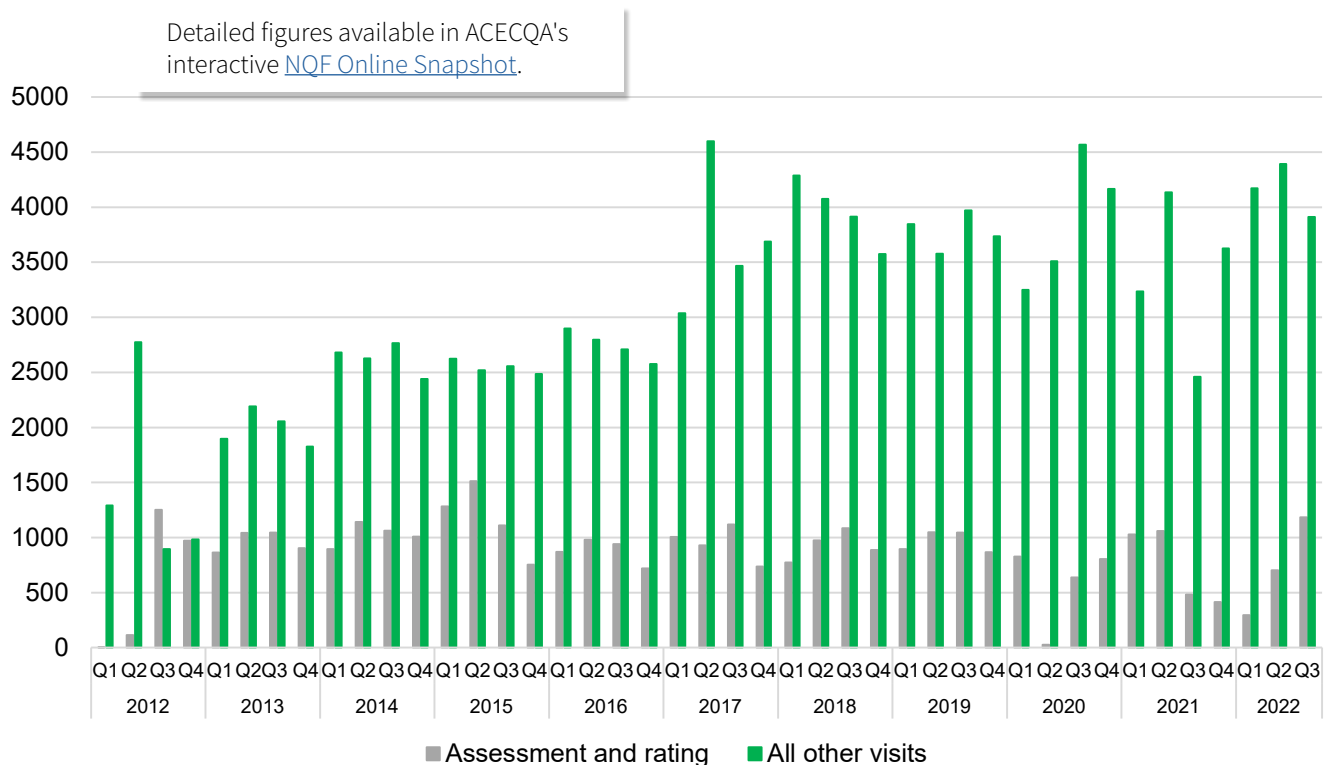
Service visits

Figure 10 shows the total number of quality assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits undertaken by state and territory regulatory authorities each quarter. Other types of visits include checking and monitoring compliance with the requirements of the NQF, investigating complaints and responding to events such as serious incidents or changes of service ownership, as well as visits for educative purposes.

While the ratio of assessment and rating visits to all other visits has fluctuated over time, state and territory regulatory authorities have undertaken more than three times as many other types of visit than assessment and rating visits since 2017, emphasising the significant amount of regulatory work that occurs outside of quality assessment and rating.

On 2 April 2020, in recognition of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Education Ministers announced four critical areas for time-limited regulatory action, including the suspension of assessment and ratings. This resulted in the stark decline in assessment and rating visits in Q2 2020.

Figure 10: Number of service visits (quality assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits)



Draft and final reports, and reviews

Table 5 shows the proportion of overall quality ratings that change between the draft and final assessment and rating report.

As part of the comprehensive assessment and rating process, service providers are issued a draft report by state and territory regulatory authorities, which includes the proposed quality ratings. Service providers are given the opportunity to provide any required feedback or clarification prior to the final report and quality ratings being issued.

More than 93% of all overall quality ratings remain unchanged between the draft and final assessment and rating reports.

Table 5: Proportion of overall quality ratings that change between the draft and final assessment and rating report

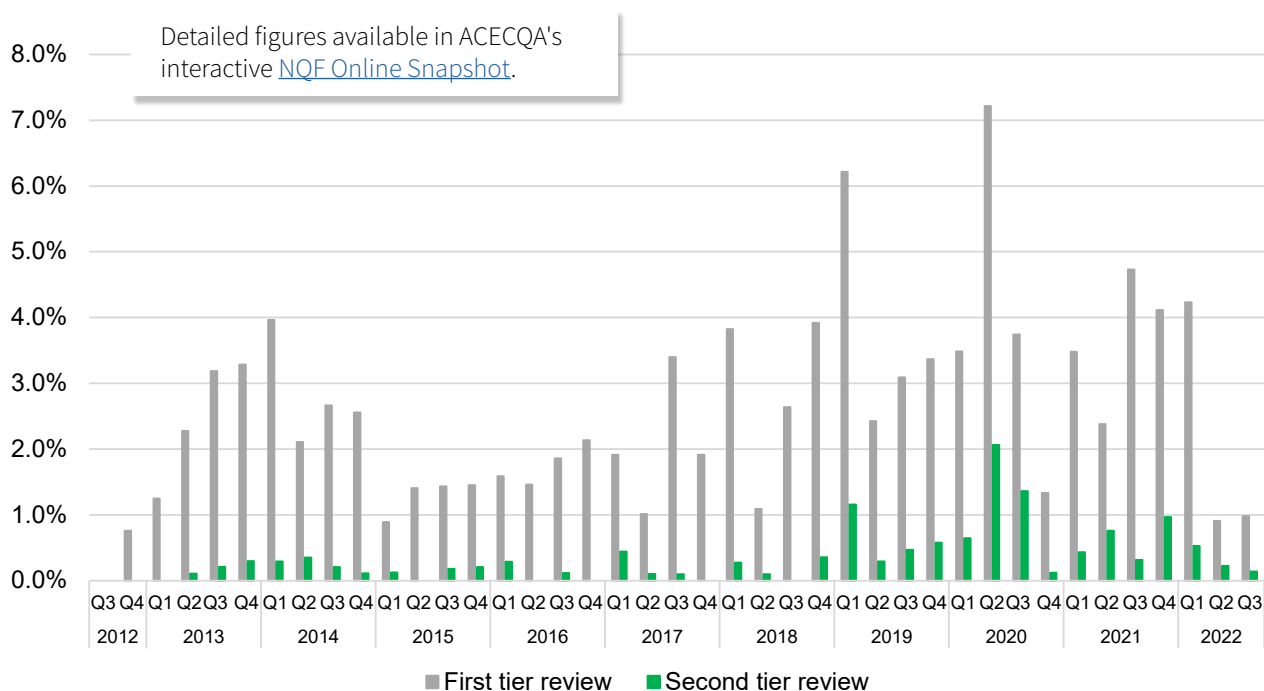
Rating level	Change in rating	%
Higher	1004	6.5%
Unchanged	14,337	93.5%
Lower	0	0.0%
Total	15,341	100%

Figure 11 shows the proportion of quality assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review.

As part of the comprehensive assessment and rating process, service providers may request a (first tier) review by the relevant state and territory regulatory authority following the final report and quality ratings being issued. They may also subsequently request a (second tier) review by an expert panel convened by ACECQA.

While the proportion of assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review is very low, it has increased in recent years. This may reflect a number of factors, including changes introduced with the 2018 NQS which made it more challenging for a service to achieve an overall rating of Exceeding NQS. In addition, most services have now been quality assessed and rated more than once, with a lower subsequent rating more likely to be challenged by a service provider.

Figure 11: Proportion of quality assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review



Quality improvement

Table 6 presents a service's previous overall rating alongside its reassessed overall rating. For example, 3644 services previously rated Working Towards NQS improved their rating to Meeting NQS after reassessment. While 2078 services previously rated Working Towards NQS received the same rating again after reassessment.

Table 6: Reassessments by overall quality rating¹

		Rating after reassessment				Total
		Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	
Rating before reassessment	Significant Improvement Required	20	77	15	0	112
	Working Towards NQS	48	2078	3644	772	6542
	Meeting NQS	5	892	3557	833	5287
	Exceeding NQS	2	327	1370	1678	3377
	Total	75	3374	8586	3283	15,318


		Rating after reassessment				Improvement rate
		Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	
Rating before reassessment	Significant Improvement Required	18%	69%	13%	0%	82%
	Working Towards NQS	1%	32%	56%	12%	68%
	Meeting NQS	0%	17%	67%	16%	16%
	Exceeding NQS	0%	10%	41%	50%	-

¹ Reassessments include the following processes described in the National Law: i. Partial reassessment and re-rating requested by provider; ii. Partial reassessment and re-rating instigated by the regulatory authority; iii. Full reassessment and re-rating requested by provider; iv. Full reassessment and re-rating instigated by the regulatory authority.


Overall quality ratings

Authorised officers from state and territory regulatory authorities assess and rate services using the seven quality areas, 15 standards and 40 elements that make up the NQS. Services are given a rating for each of the seven quality areas and an overall rating.


1 Educational program and practice	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	Excellent
2 Children's health and safety	<p>Service does not meet one of the seven quality areas or a section of the legislation and there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>The regulatory authority will take immediate action.</p>	<p>Service provides a safe education and care program, but there are one or more areas identified for improvement.</p>	<p>Service provides quality education and care in all seven quality areas.</p>	<p>Service goes beyond the requirements of the National Quality Standard in at least four of the seven quality areas.</p>	<p>Exceeding rated services that promote exceptional education and care, demonstrate sector leadership, and are committed to continually improving.</p> <p>This rating can only be awarded by ACECQA.</p>
3 Physical environment					
4 Staffing arrangements					
5 Relationships with children					
6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities					
7 Governance and leadership					




RATED
WORKING TOWARDS
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD



RATED
MEETING
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD



RATED
EXCEEDING
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD



RATED
EXCELLENT
by ACECQA

Table 7: Overall quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Significant Improvement Required		Working Towards NQS		Meeting NQS		Exceeding NQS		Excellent	Total
ACT	0	68	20%	114	34%	152	45%	2	336	
NSW	2	691	13%	3355	63%	1288	24%	16	5352	
NT	0	39	18%	146	69%	27	13%	0	212	
QLD	0	283	10%	1880	64%	781	26%	8	2952	
SA	0	163	13%	516	43%	526	44%	3	1208	
TAS	0	39	18%	119	56%	55	26%	0	213	
VIC	0	375	9%	2520	63%	1095	27%	5	3995	
WA	0	193	17%	729	66%	187	17%	0	1109	
TOTAL	2	1851	12%	9379	61%	4111	27%	34	15,377	

Figure 12: Overall quality ratings by service type

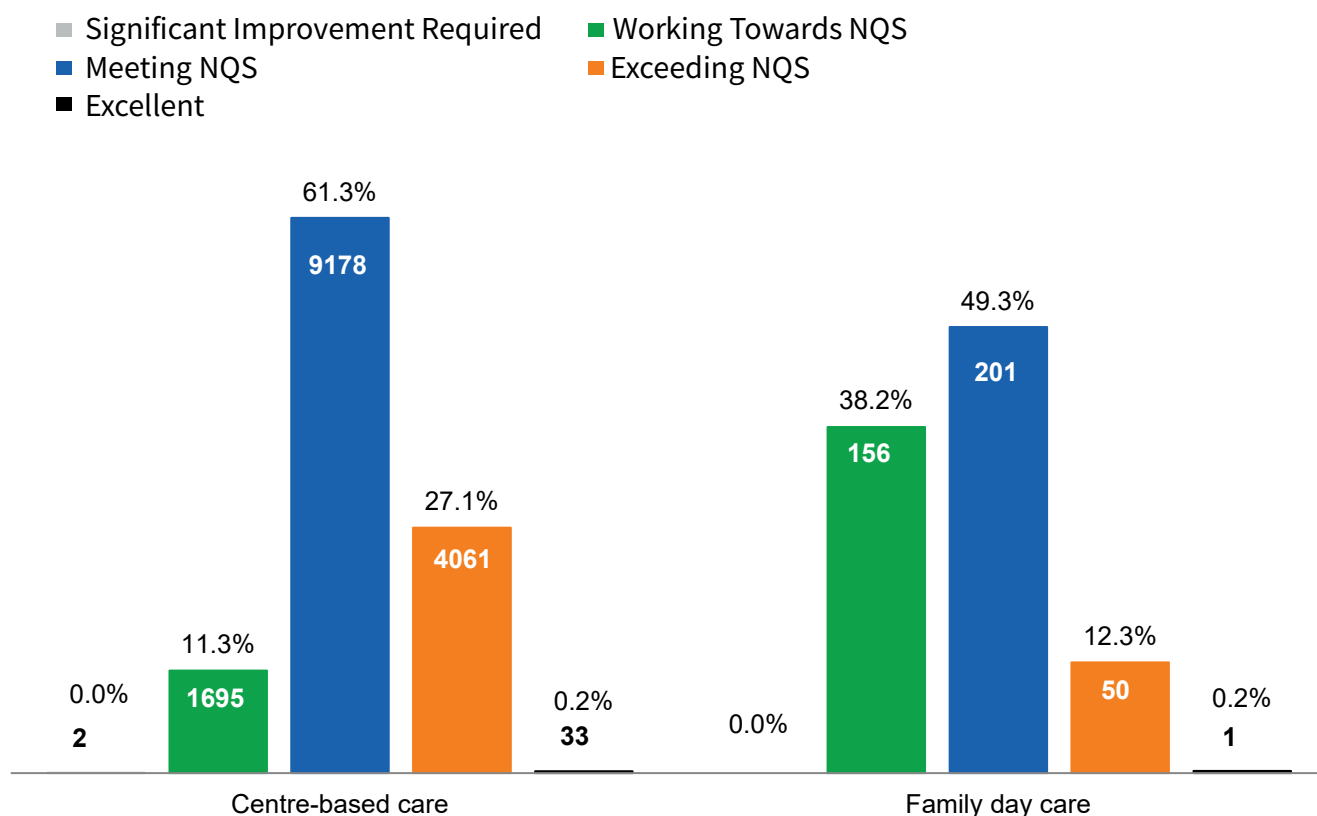


Figure 13: Overall quality ratings by centre-based service sub-type

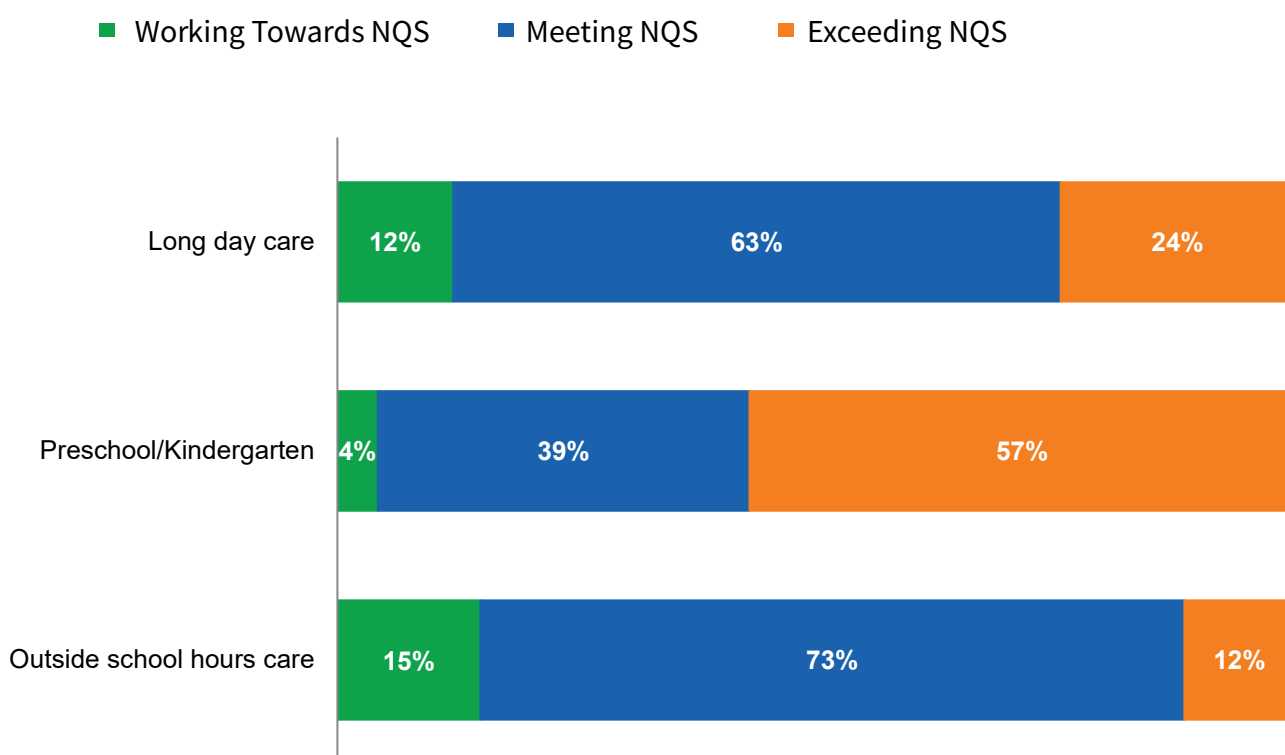
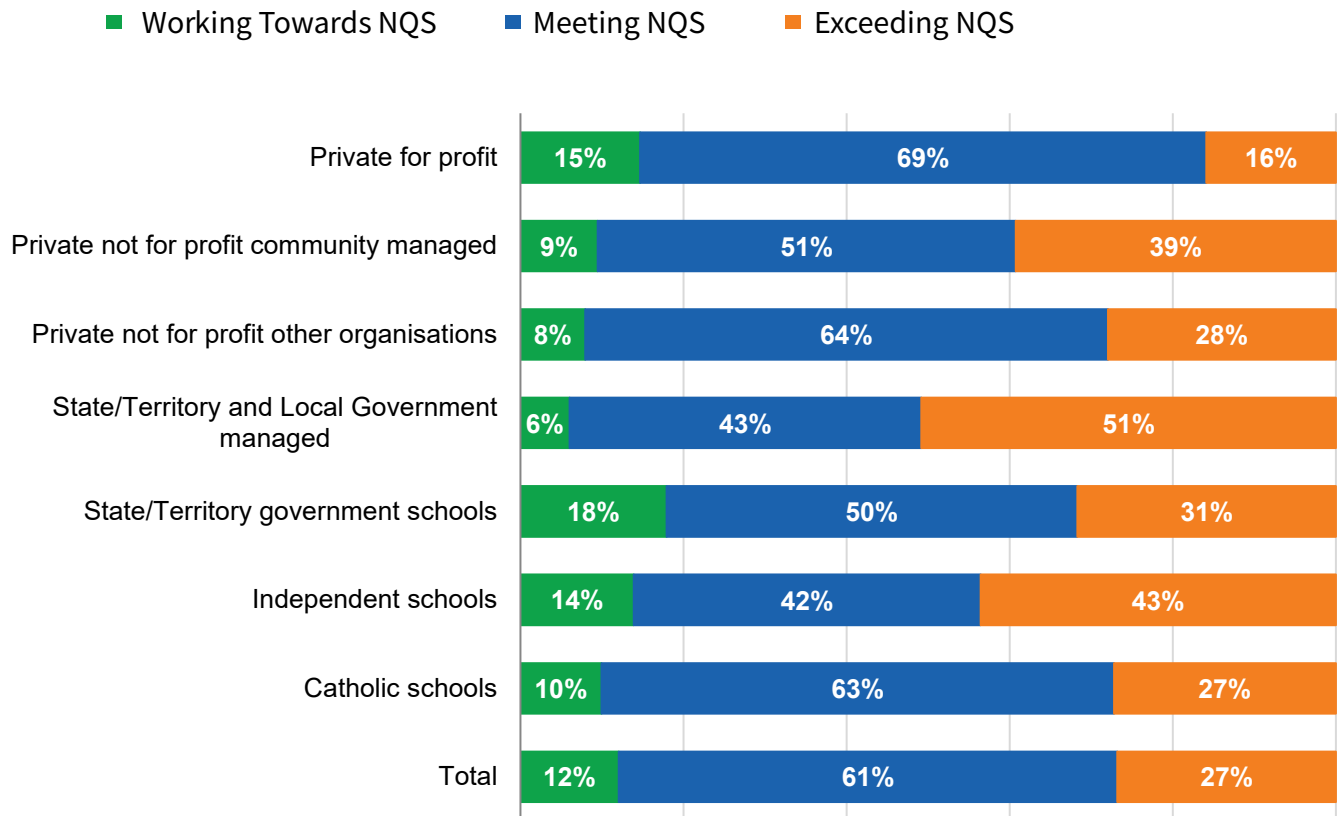


Figure 14 shows the variation in spread of quality ratings between provider management types.

These differences can reflect a range of contextual factors, such as the service profile of these provider types. For example, half of all 'State/Territory and Local Government managed' services are preschools/kindergartens, with preschools/kindergartens performing better against the NQS than other service types (see Figure 13). In contrast, preschools/kindergartens make up only 1% of 'Private for profit' services.

Figure 14: Overall quality ratings by provider management type¹



¹ 14 providers categorised as 'Not stated/Other' excluded for graphical purposes.

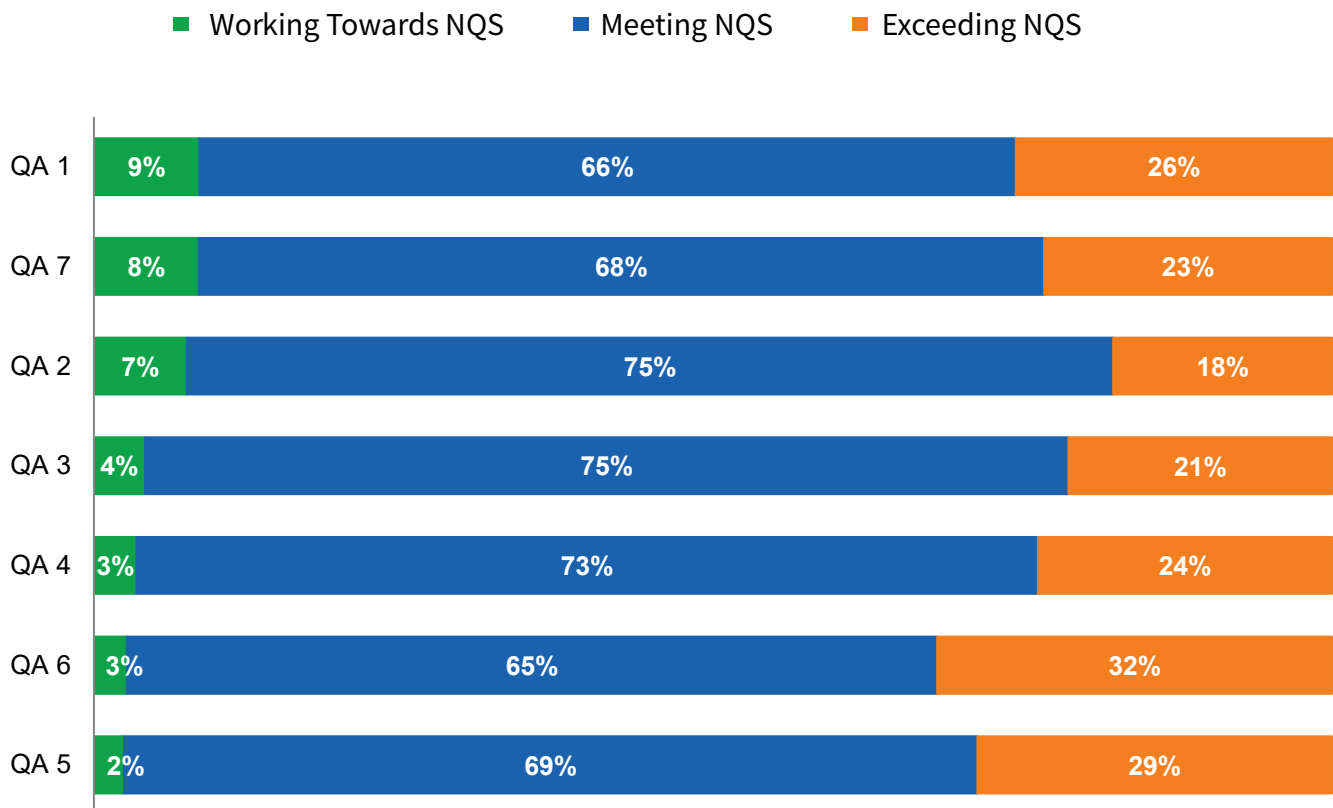
Quality area ratings

Table 8 and Figure 15 rank the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the number and proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Table 8: Quality area ratings

	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS
Quality Area 1 - Educational program and practice	0	1308	10,140	3929
Quality Area 7 - Governance and leadership	2	1300	10,501	3574
Quality Area 2 - Children's health and safety	2	1151	11,506	2718
Quality Area 3 - Physical environment	0	634	11,468	3275
Quality Area 4 - Staffing arrangements	0	527	11,195	3655
Quality Area 6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	1	406	10,065	4905
Quality Area 5 - Relationships with children	2	371	10,598	4406

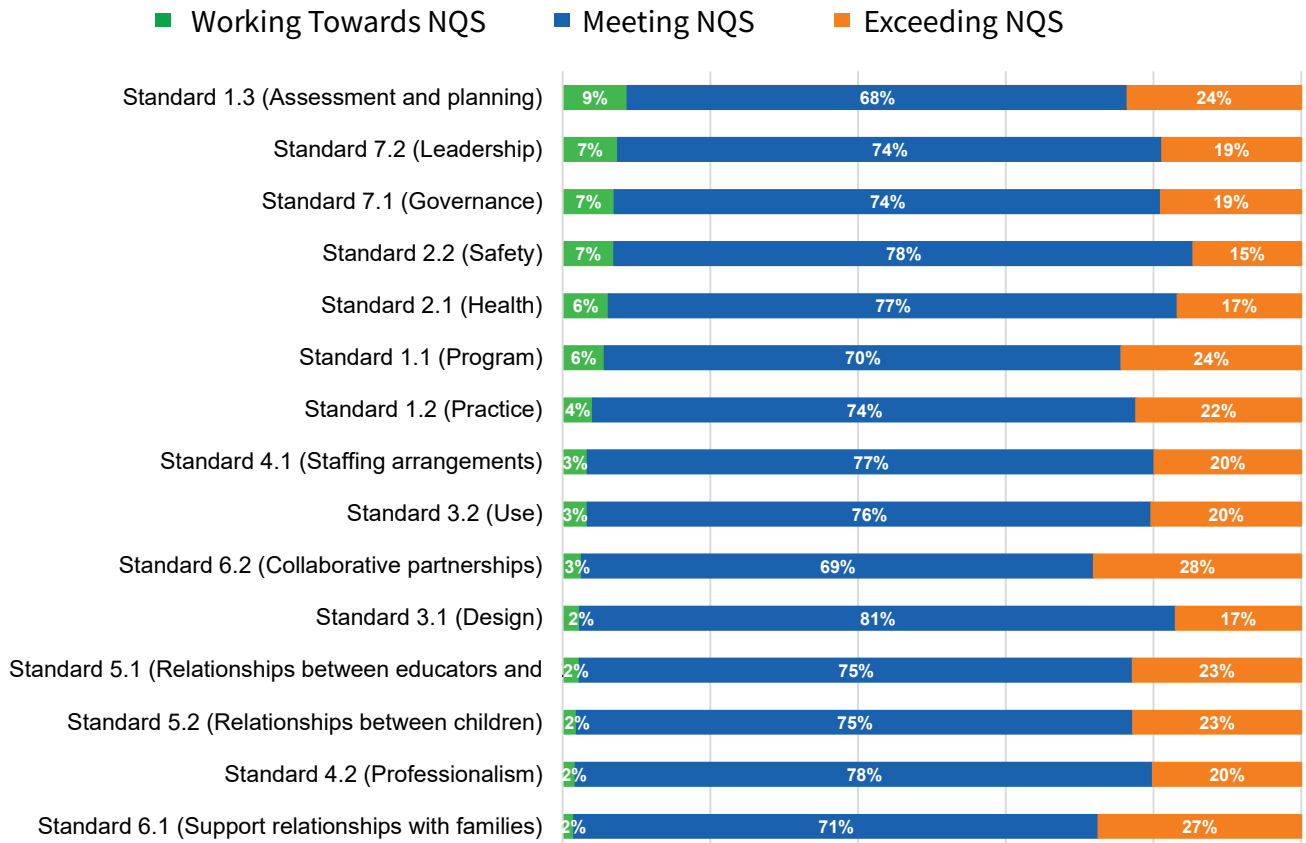
Figure 15: Quality area ratings



Standard level ratings under the 2018 NQS

Figure 16 ranks the 15 standards of the 2018 NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each standard.

Figure 16: Standard level ratings under the 2018 NQS



Element level results under the 2018 NQS

Table 9 ranks the 40 elements of the 2018 NQS in descending order, based on the proportion of services that do not meet each element.

Table 9: Element level results under 2018 NQS

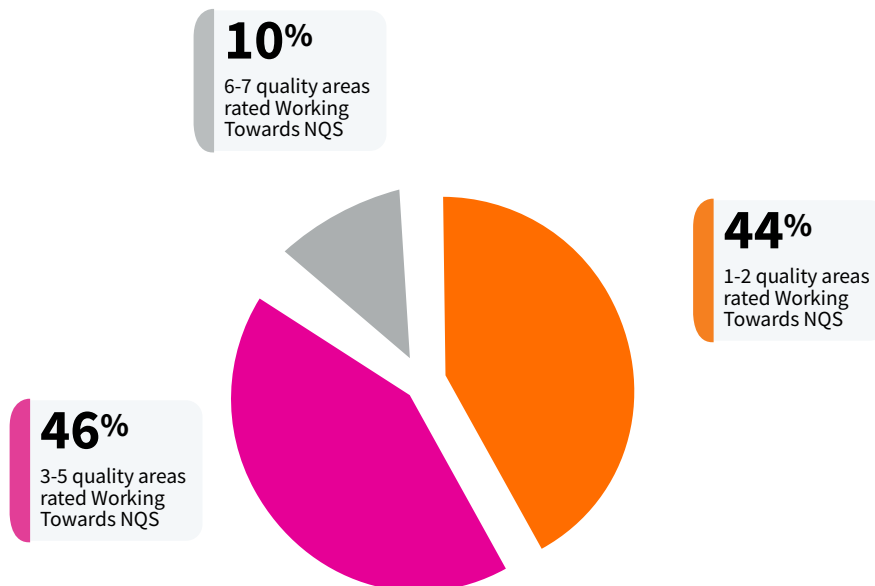
2018 NQS Element	% Not Met
1.3.1 (Assessment and planning cycle)	7.4%
1.3.2 (Critical reflection)	7.3%
7.1.2 (Management systems)	6.3%
2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures)	5.4%
7.2.2 (Educational leadership)	5.0%
2.2.1 (Supervision)	4.9%
7.2.3 (Development of professionals)	4.8%
1.1.3 (Program learning opportunities)	4.1%
2.2.2 (Incident and emergency management)	3.6%
4.1.1 (Organisation of educators)	3.2%
7.2.1 (Continuous improvement)	2.9%
1.1.1 (Approved learning framework)	2.7%
1.2.3 (Child directed learning)	2.6%
1.1.2 (Child-centred)	2.5%
1.3.3 (Information for families)	2.3%
1.2.2 (Responsive teaching and scaffolding)	2.3%
3.2.3 (Environmentally responsible)	2.1%
1.2.1 (Intentional teaching)	2.0%
5.1.2 (Dignity and rights of the child)	1.9%
7.1.1 (Service philosophy and purpose)	1.9%

2018 NQS Element	% Not Met
7.1.3 (Roles and responsibilities)	1.9%
3.1.2 (Upkeep)	1.9%
5.2.2 (Self-regulation)	1.8%
3.2.1 (Inclusive environment)	1.8%
6.2.3 (Community engagement)	1.8%
2.1.3 (Healthy lifestyle)	1.6%
2.2.3 (Child protection)	1.6%
3.2.2 (Resources support play-based learning)	1.5%
4.2.2 (Professional standards)	1.4%
6.2.2 (Access and participation)	1.4%
5.1.1 (Positive educator to child interactions)	1.3%
2.1.1 (Wellbeing and comfort)	1.0%
3.1.1 (Fit for purpose)	0.9%
4.2.1 (Professional collaboration)	0.9%
6.1.3 (Families are supported)	0.9%
6.2.1 (Transitions)	0.8%
6.1.2 (Parent views are respected)	0.7%
6.1.1 (Engagement with the service)	0.7%
4.1.2 (Continuity of staff)	0.6%
5.2.1 (Collaborative learning)	0.5%

Services rated Working Towards NQS

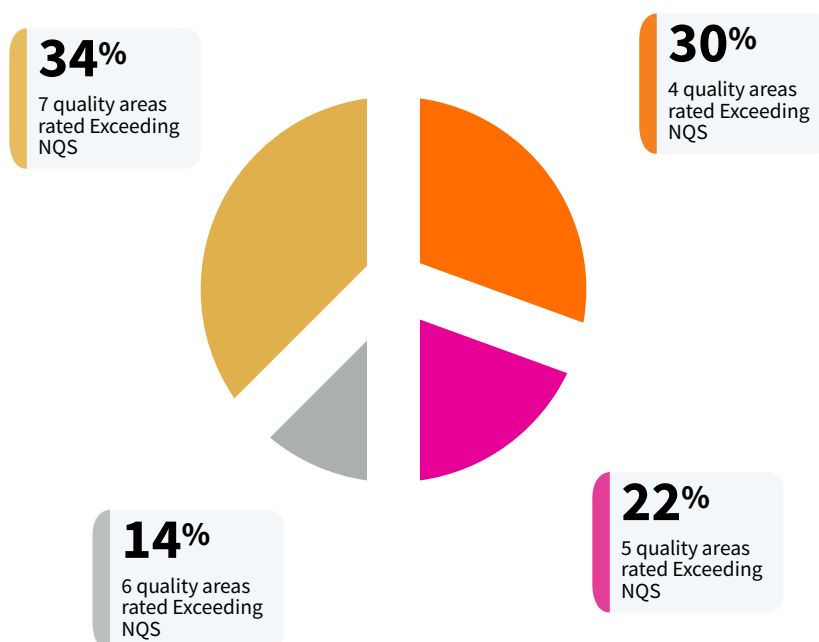
A service receives an overall rating of Working Towards NQS if any of the seven quality areas are rated Working Towards NQS. A quality area is rated Working Towards NQS if any of the standards within that quality area are rated Working Towards NQS.

Figure 17: Proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS by number of quality areas rated Working Towards NQS



Services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 18: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS by number of quality areas rated Exceeding NQS



Australian Capital Territory summary

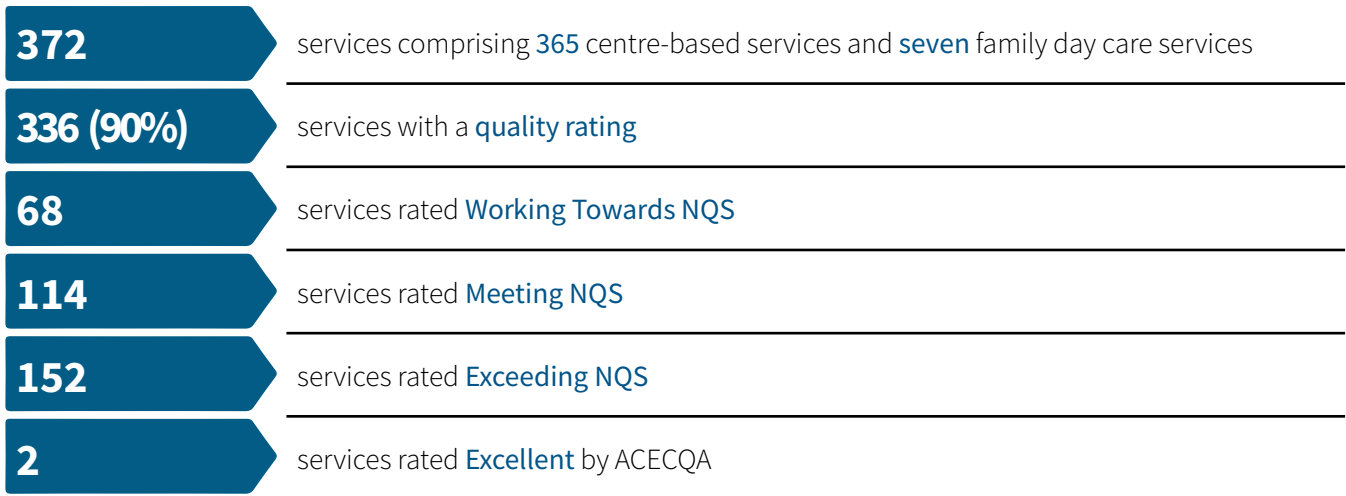
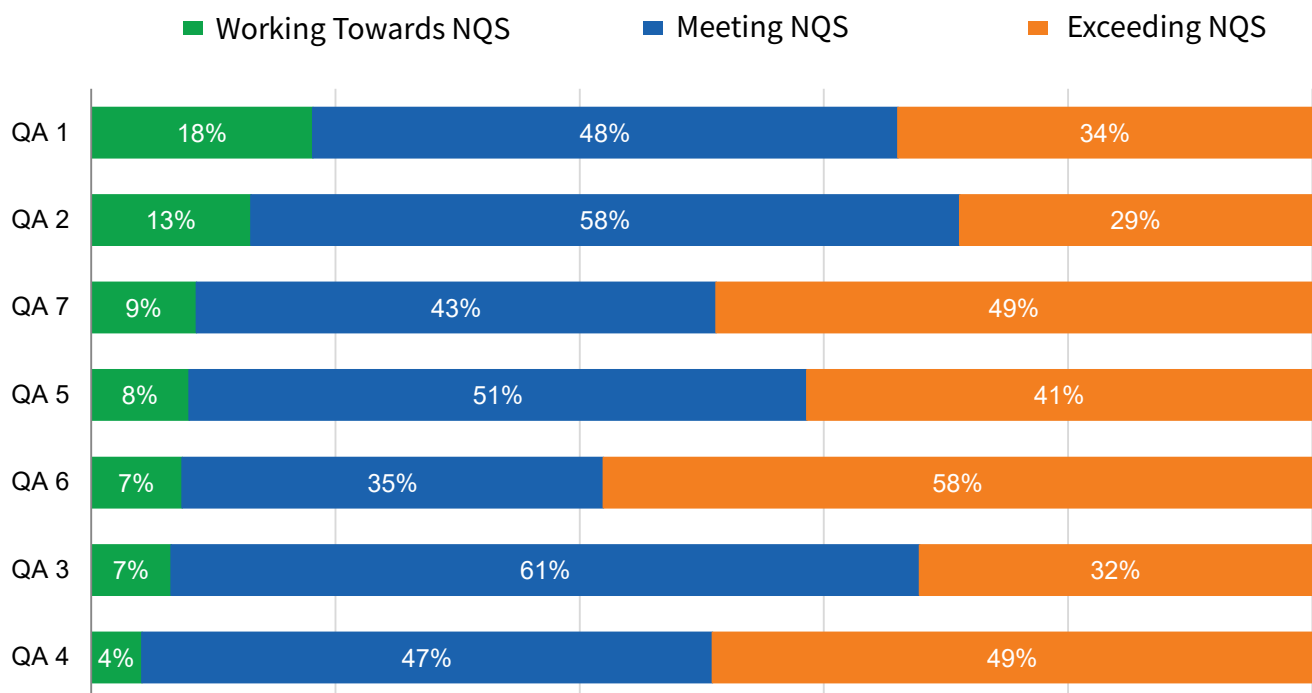


Figure 19 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 19: Quality area ratings



Contact details

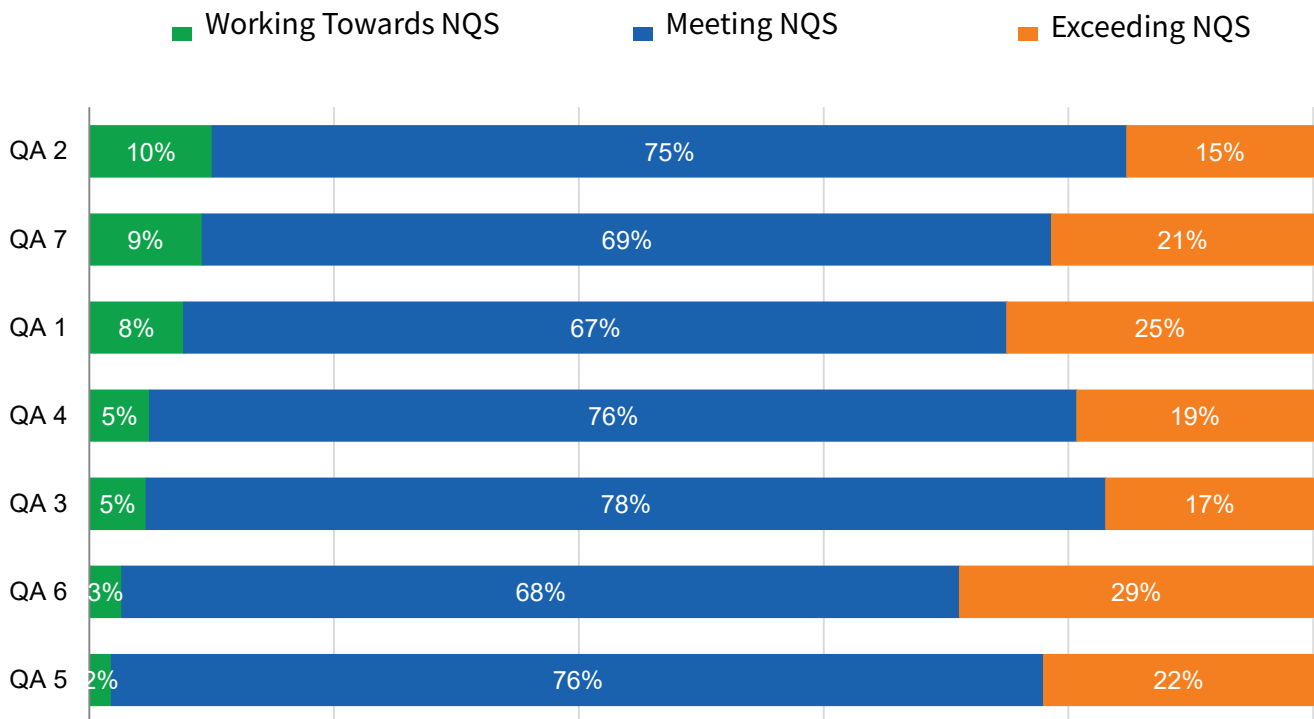
Education Directorate
 Children's Education and Care Assurance
www.education.act.gov.au/early-childhood

New South Wales summary

5834	services comprising 5700 centre-based services and 134 family day care services
5352 (92%)	services with a quality rating
2	services rated Significant Improvement Required
691	services rated Working Towards NQS
3355	services rated Meeting NQS
1288	services rated Exceeding NQS
16	services rated Excellent by ACECQA

Figure 20 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 20: Quality area ratings



Contact details

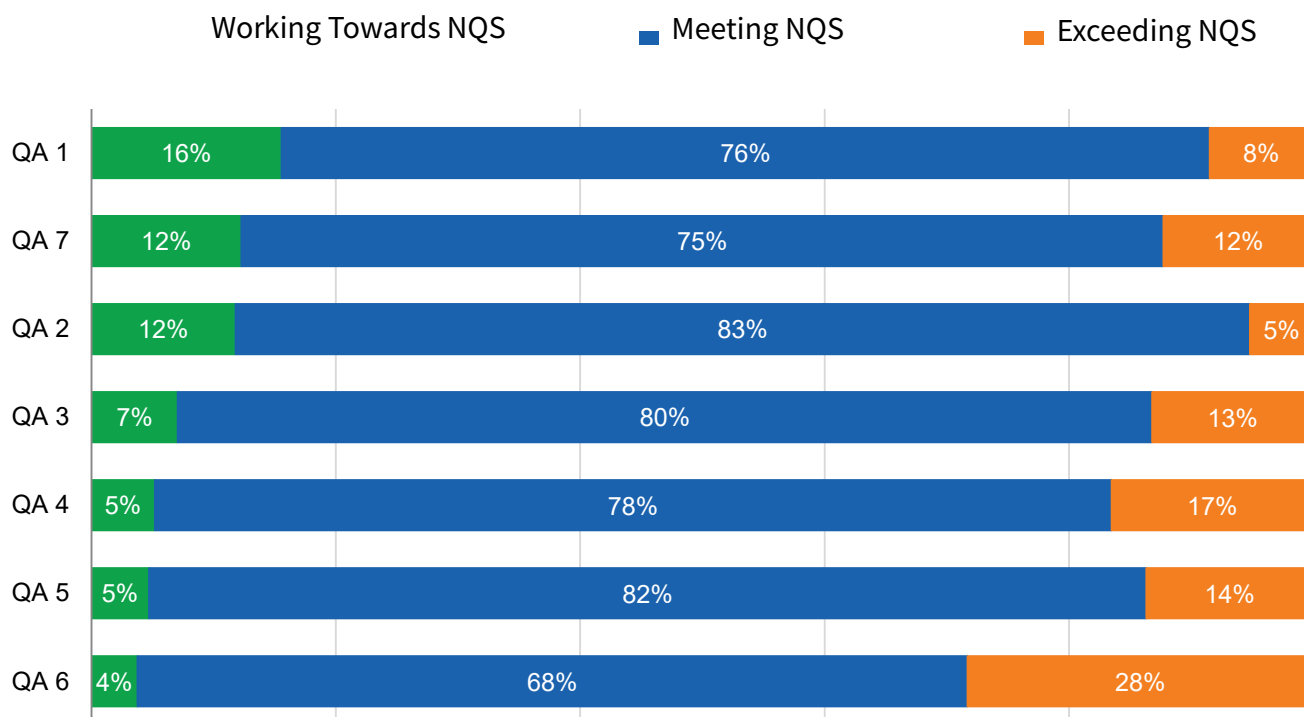
Department of Education
 Early Childhood Education Directorate
www.education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education

Northern Territory summary

226	services comprising 223 centre-based services and three family day care services
212 (94%)	services with a quality rating
39	services rated Working Towards NQS
146	services rated Meeting NQS
27	services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 21 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 21: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education
 Quality Education and Care NT
www.nt.gov.au/learning/early-childhood

Queensland summary

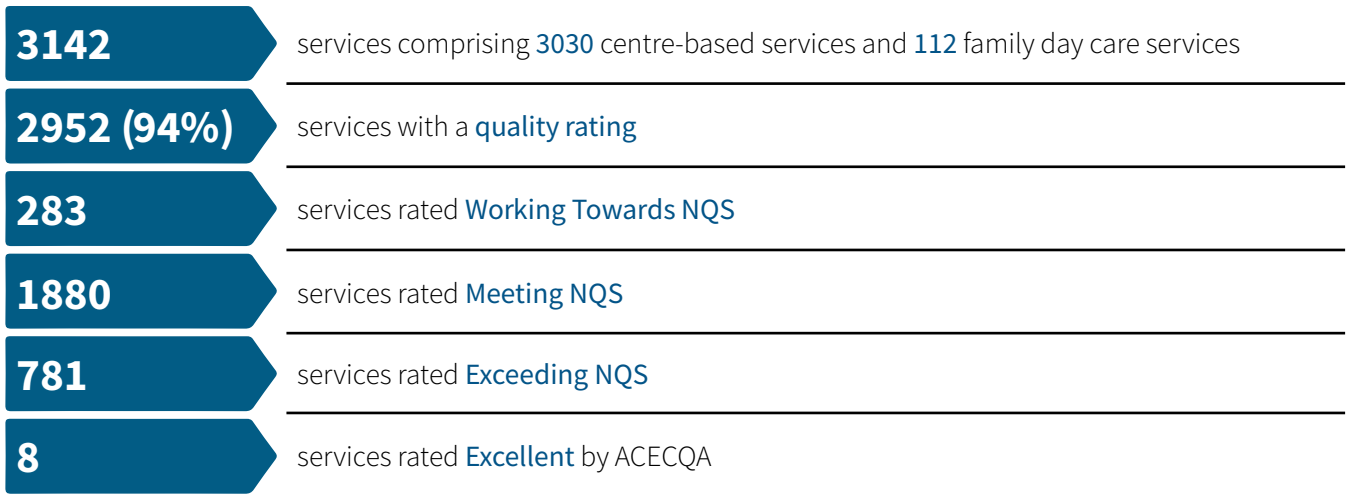
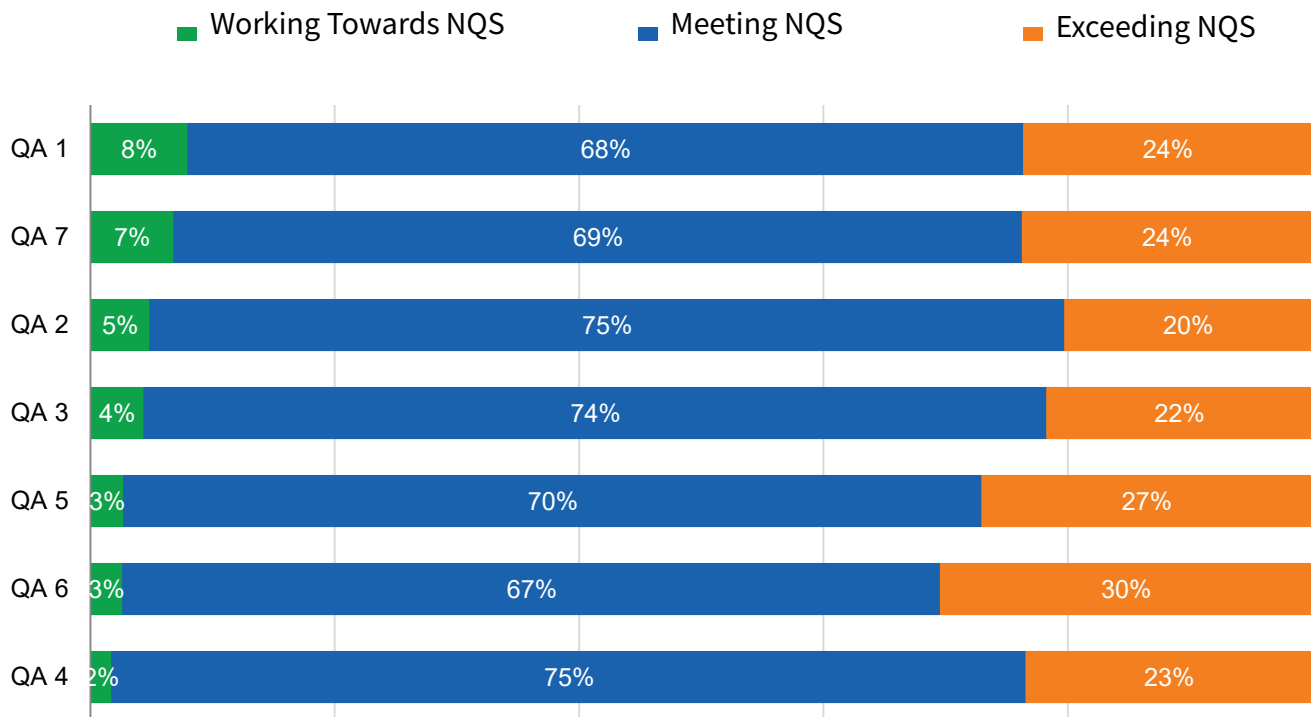


Figure 22 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 22: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education
 Early Childhood Education and Care
www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au

South Australia summary

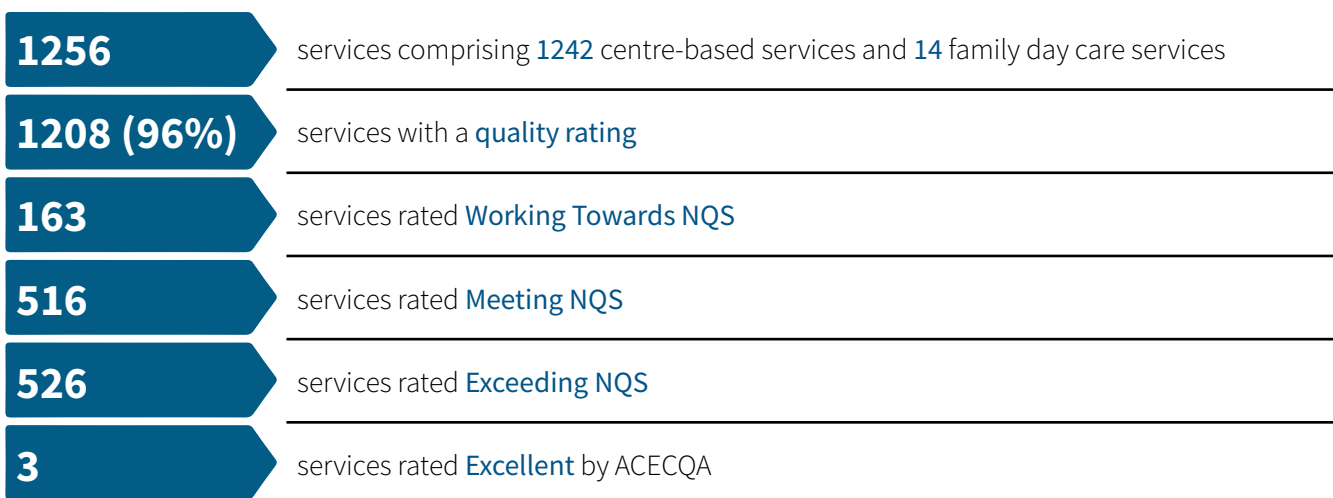
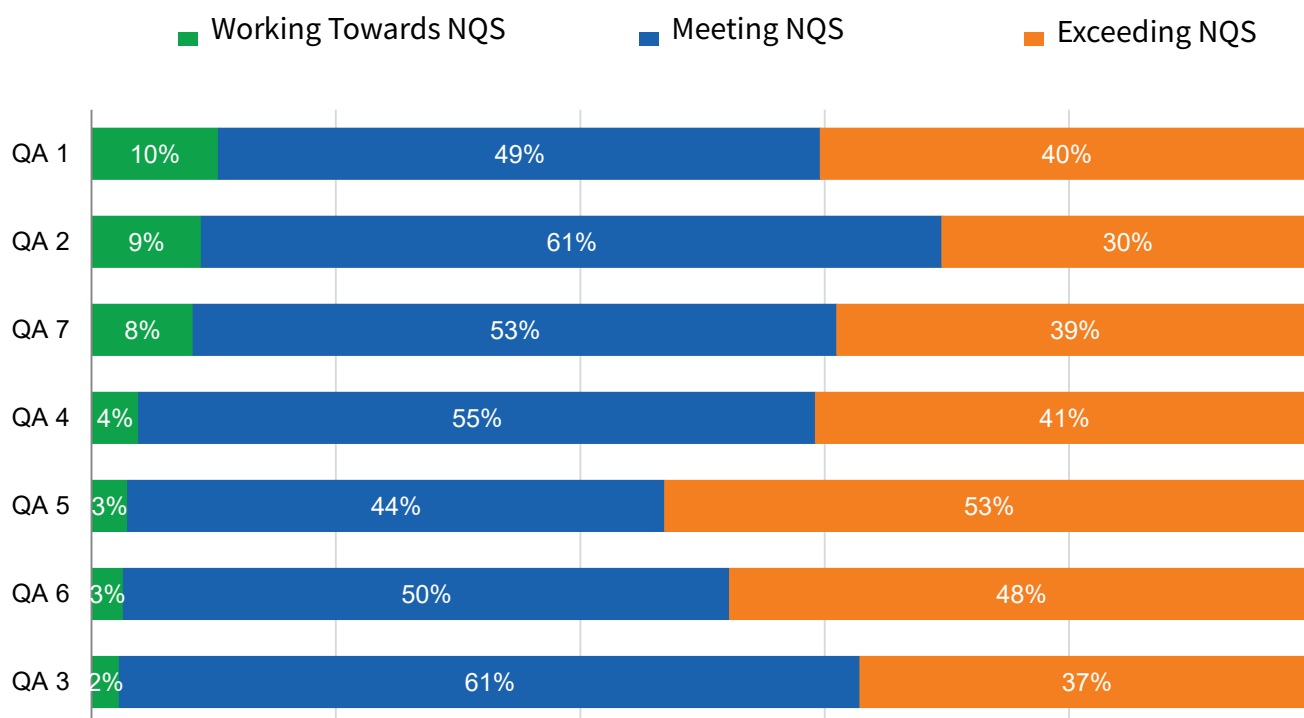


Figure 23 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 23: Quality area ratings



Contact details

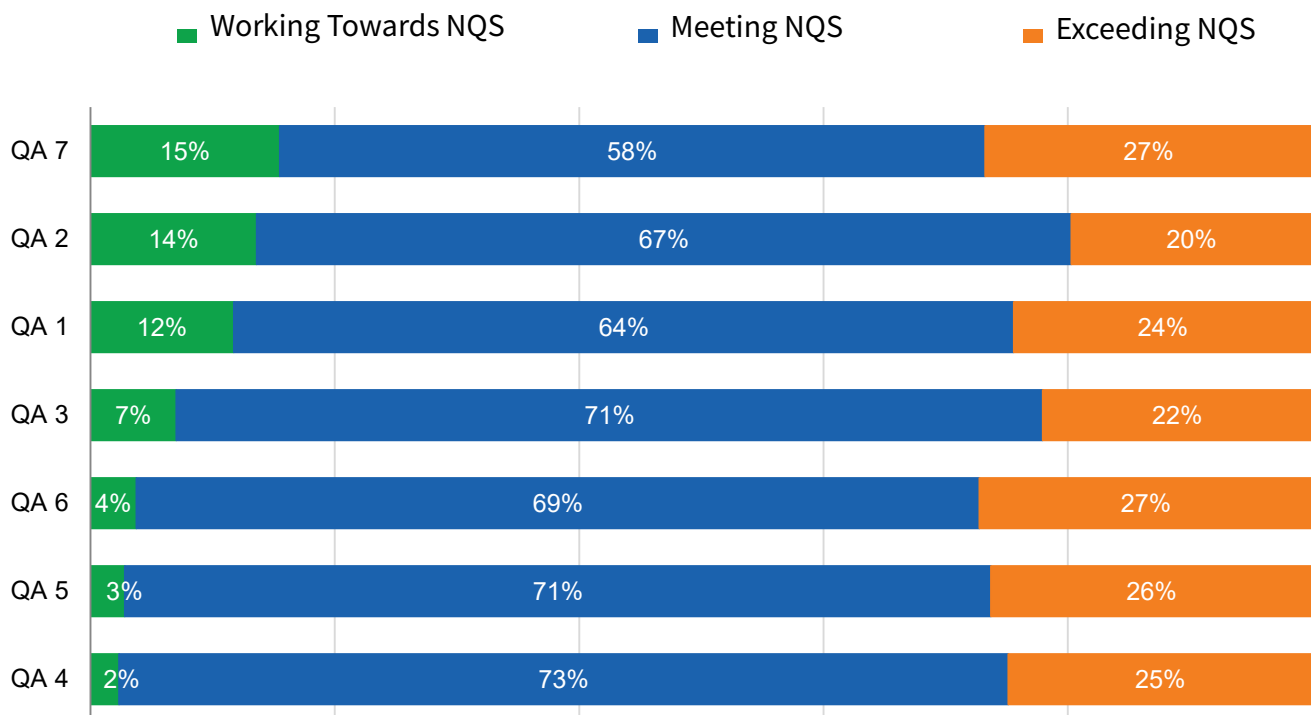
Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards
Board of South Australia
www.esb.sa.gov.au/early-childhood

Tasmania summary

237	services comprising 228 centre-based services and nine family day care services
213 (90%)	services with a quality rating
39	services rated Working Towards NQS
119	services rated Meeting NQS
55	services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 24 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 24: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education
Education and Care Unit
www.educationandcare.tas.gov.au

Victoria summary

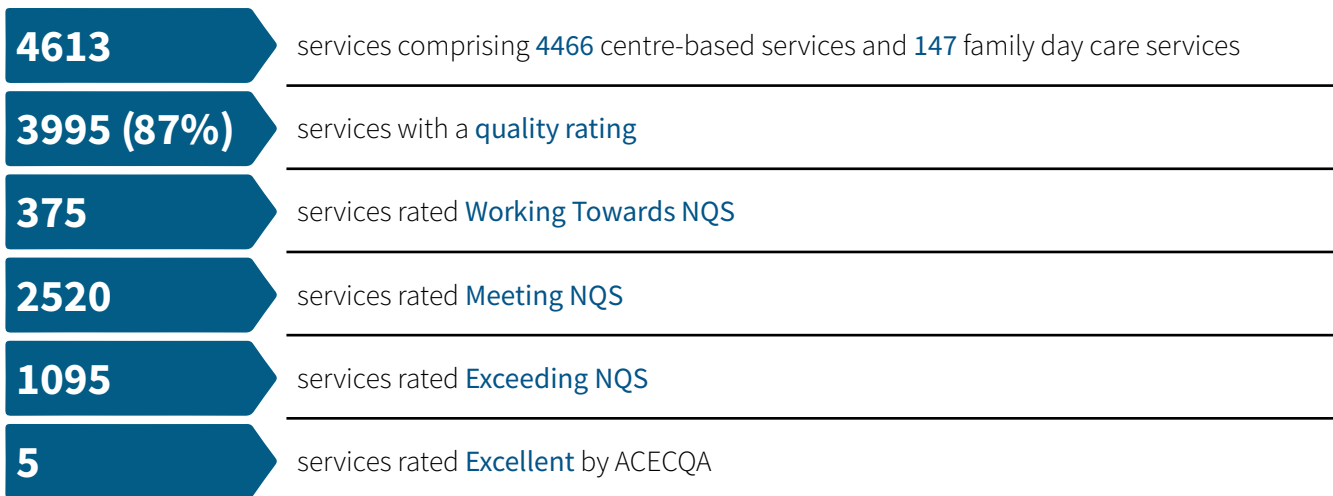
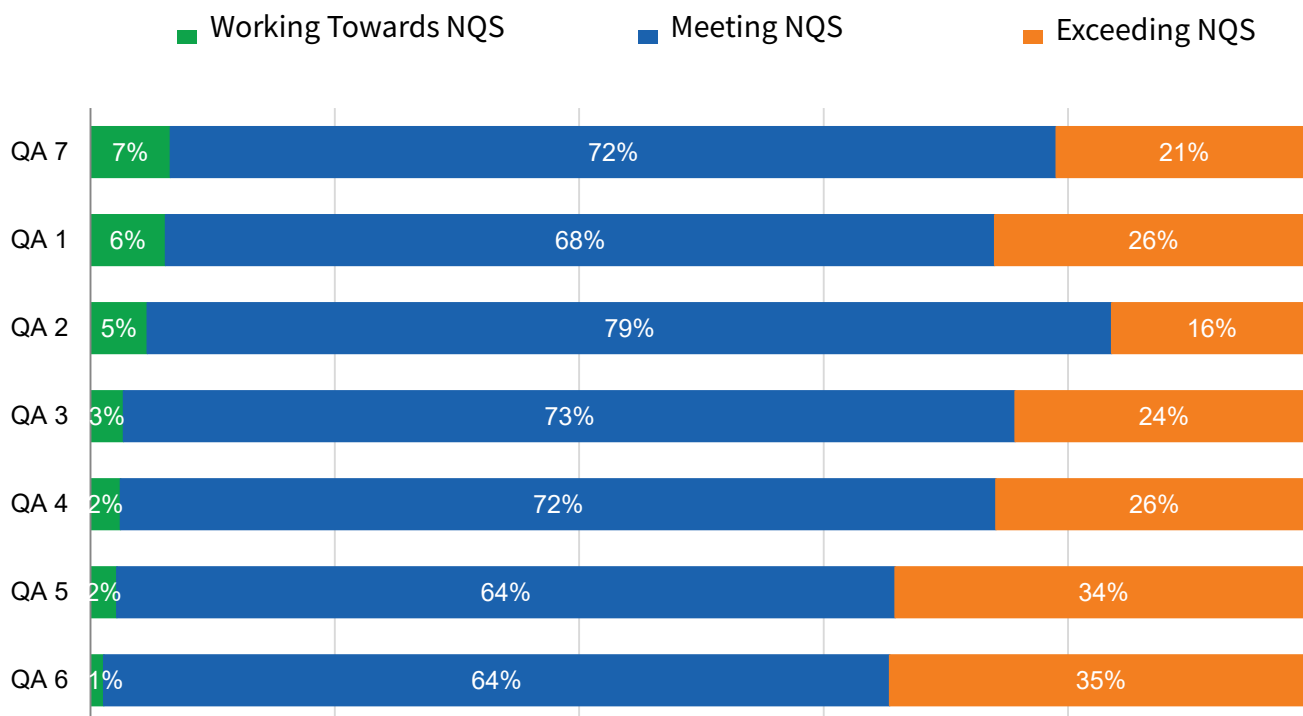


Figure 25 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 25: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education and Training
 Quality Assessment and Regulation Division
www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation

Western Australia summary

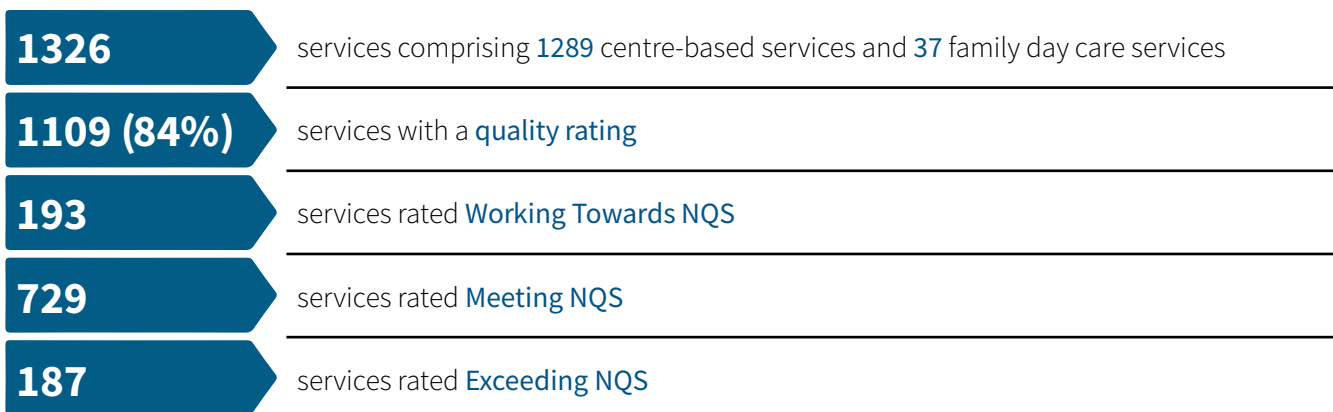
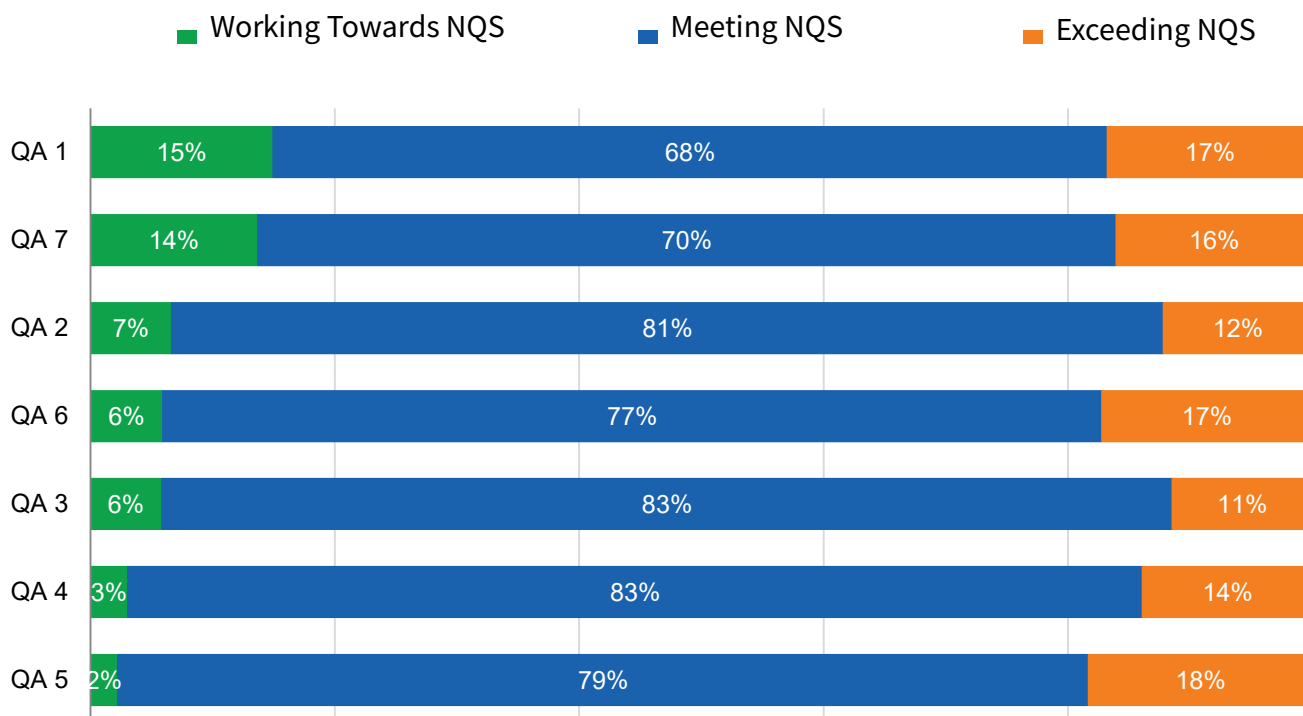


Figure 26 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 26: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Communities
 Education and Care Regulatory Unit
www.communities.wa.gov.au



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