



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority



NQF Snapshot Q1 2024

May 2024

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

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Overview

NQF Snapshot Q1 2024 is ACECQA's 45th 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).

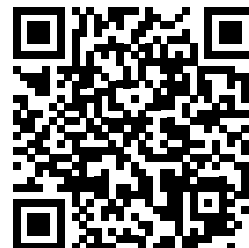
A revised version of the NQS commenced on 1 February 2018. The number of quality standards has reduced from 18 to 15, and the number of quality elements has reduced from 58 to 40.

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 April 2024.

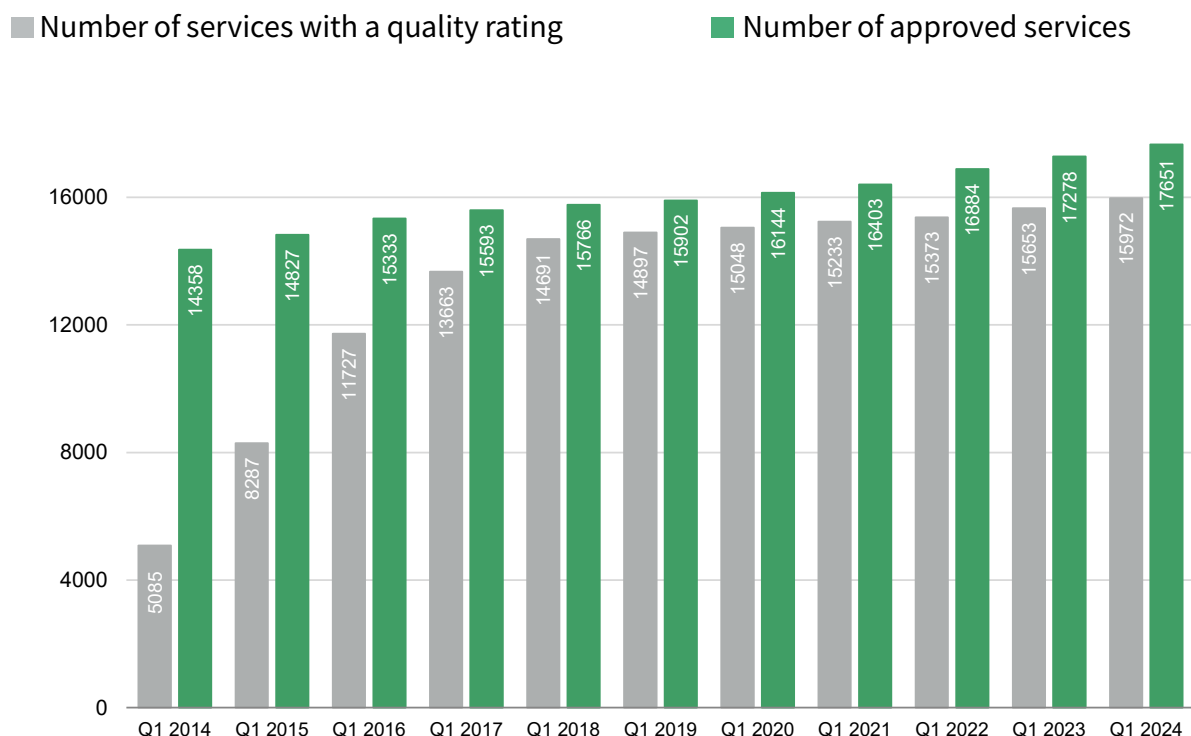
Due to rounding, individual percentages in the tables and figures may not add up to 100%.



Snapshot highlights

17,651	children's education and care services approved to operate under the NQF
15,972 (90%)	services with a quality rating
14,333 (90%)	services with a quality rating are Meeting NQS or above
7200	providers approved to operate
5676 (79%)	providers approved to operate only one service
28	services rated Excellent by ACECQA ¹
20,331	quality rating reassessments completed
68%	of services rated Working Towards NQS improved their overall quality rating at reassessment
14,909 (84%)	services with a quality rating against the 2018 NQS

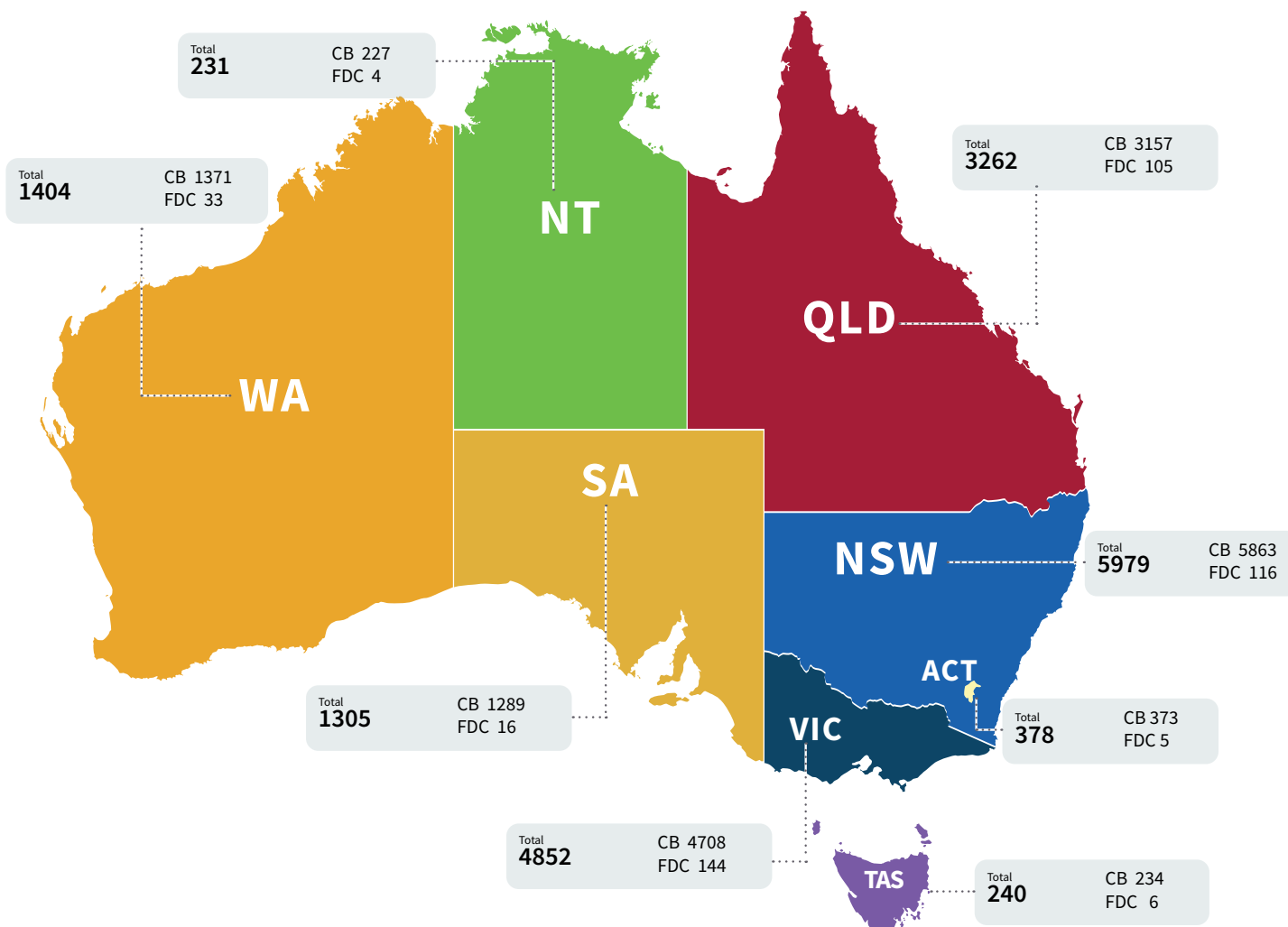
Figure 1: Number of approved services and number of services with a quality rating by quarter



¹ The Excellent rating is awarded for a period of five years. Unless a reapplication for the Excellent rating is received, a service's rating will revert back to Exceeding NQS after this five 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>17,222 (98%)</p> <p>+2% Increase on Q1 2023</p>	<p>Total Family day care (FDC) ²</p> <p>429 (2%)</p> <p>-5% Decrease on Q1 2023</p>	<p>Total</p> <p>17,651</p> <p>+2% Increase on Q1 2023</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

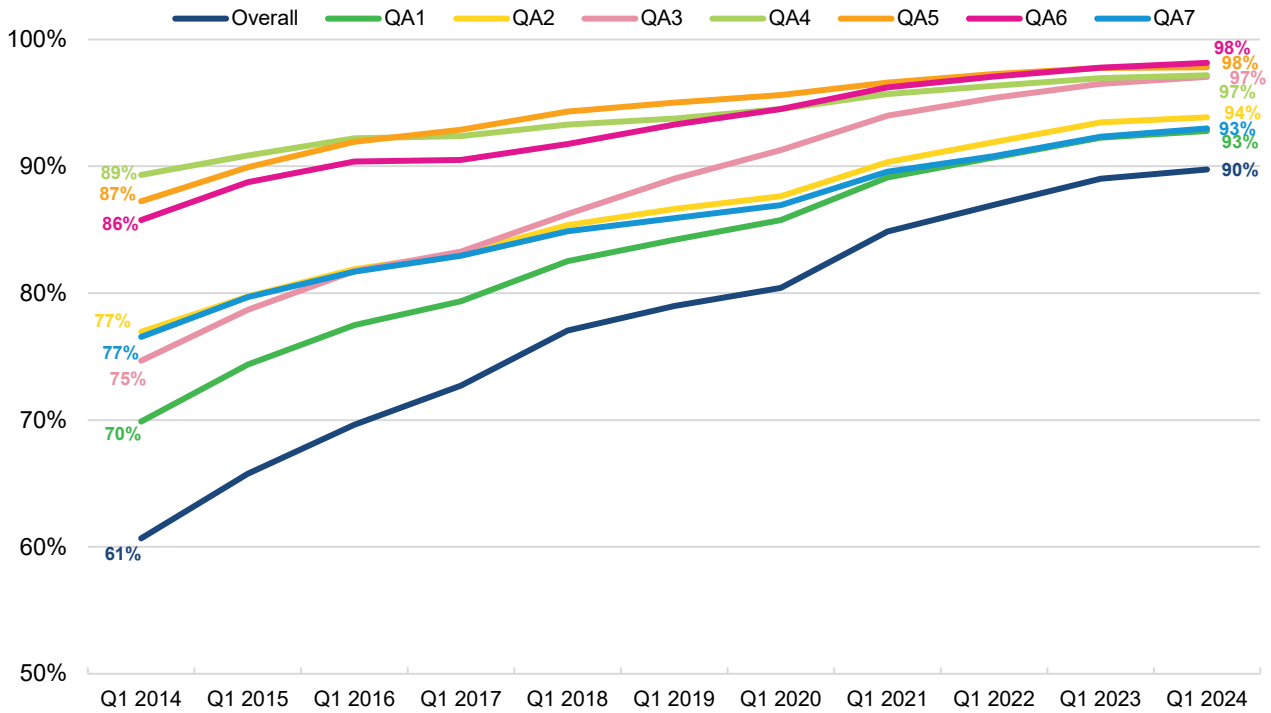


Figure 4: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS or above by overall rating and quality area

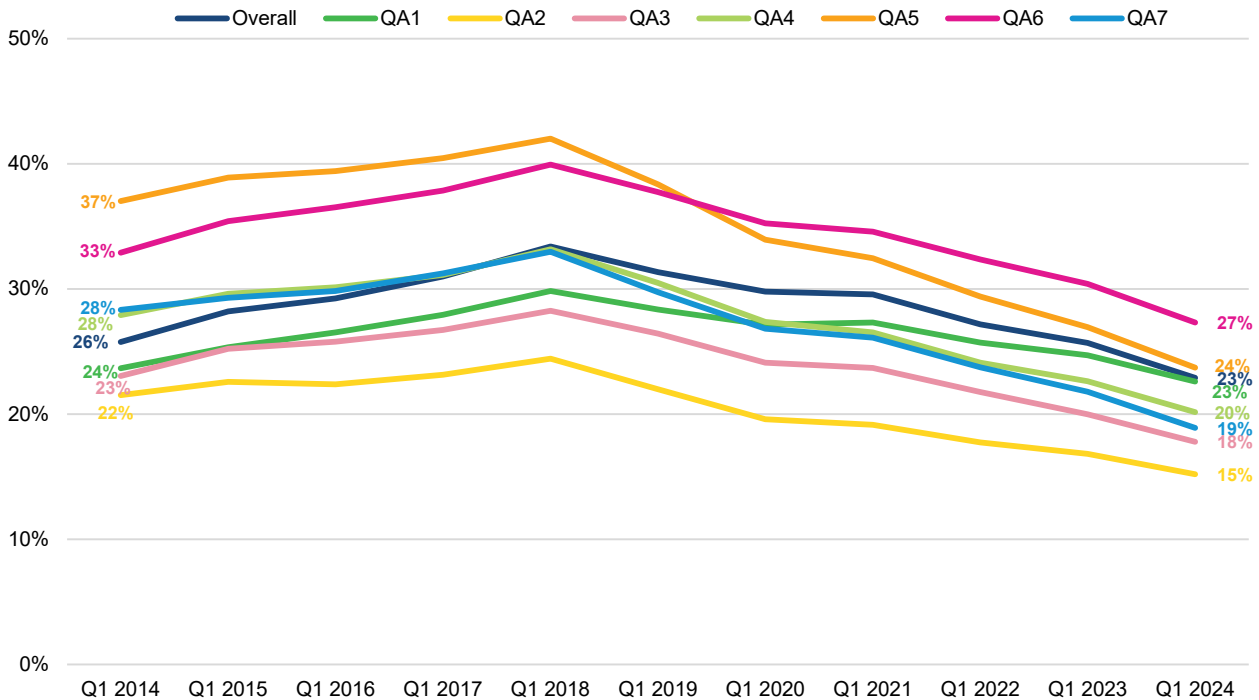


Figure 5: Proportion of services by service type and jurisdiction ^{1,2,3,4,5}

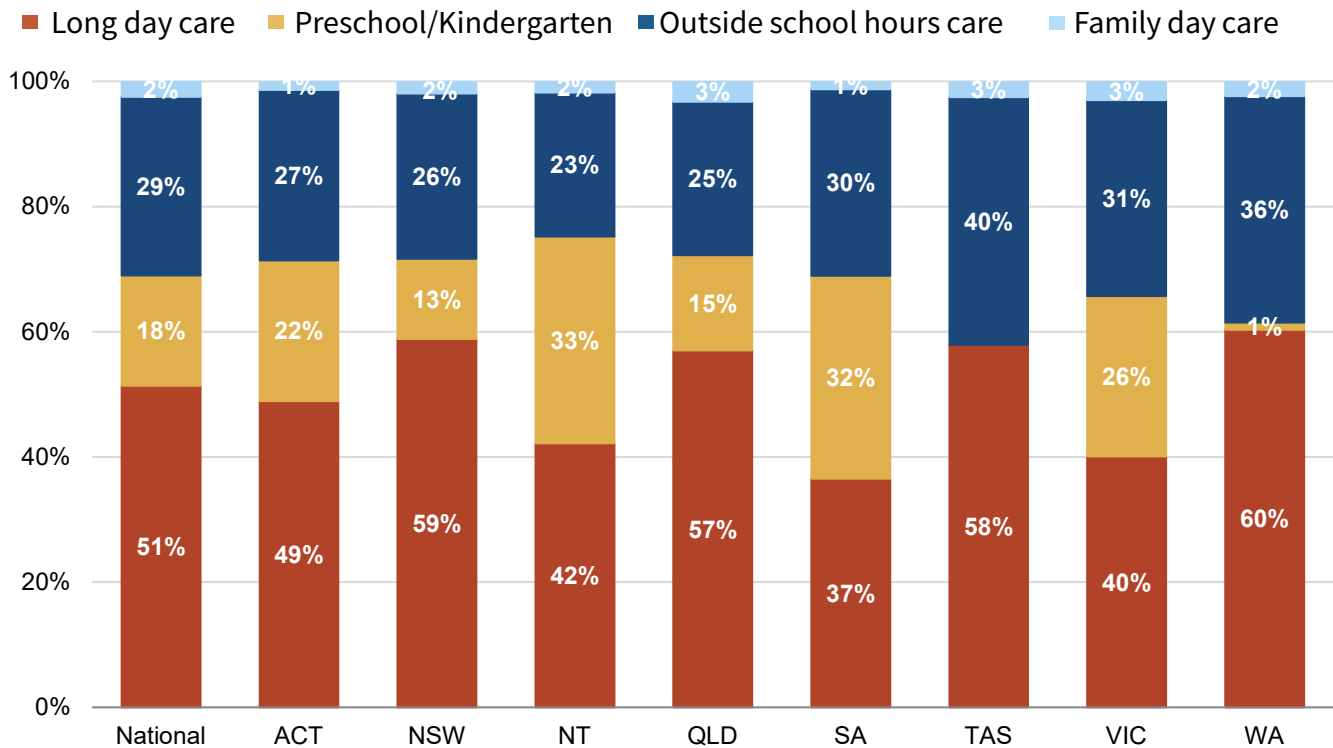


Table 1: Number of services by service type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	5	185	85	103	0	378
NSW	116	3519	766	1578	0	5979
NT	4	97	76	53	1	231
QLD	105	1860	496	801	0	3262
SA	16	477	423	389	0	1305
TAS	6	139	0	95	0	240
VIC	144	1944	1245	1519	0	4852
WA	33	846	16	507	2	1404
TOTAL	429	9067	3107	5045	3	17,651

1 NQA ITS data collected on service type is self-reported by providers when applying for service approval, and providers may choose multiple service 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: Number and proportion of services by provider management ^{1,2,3}

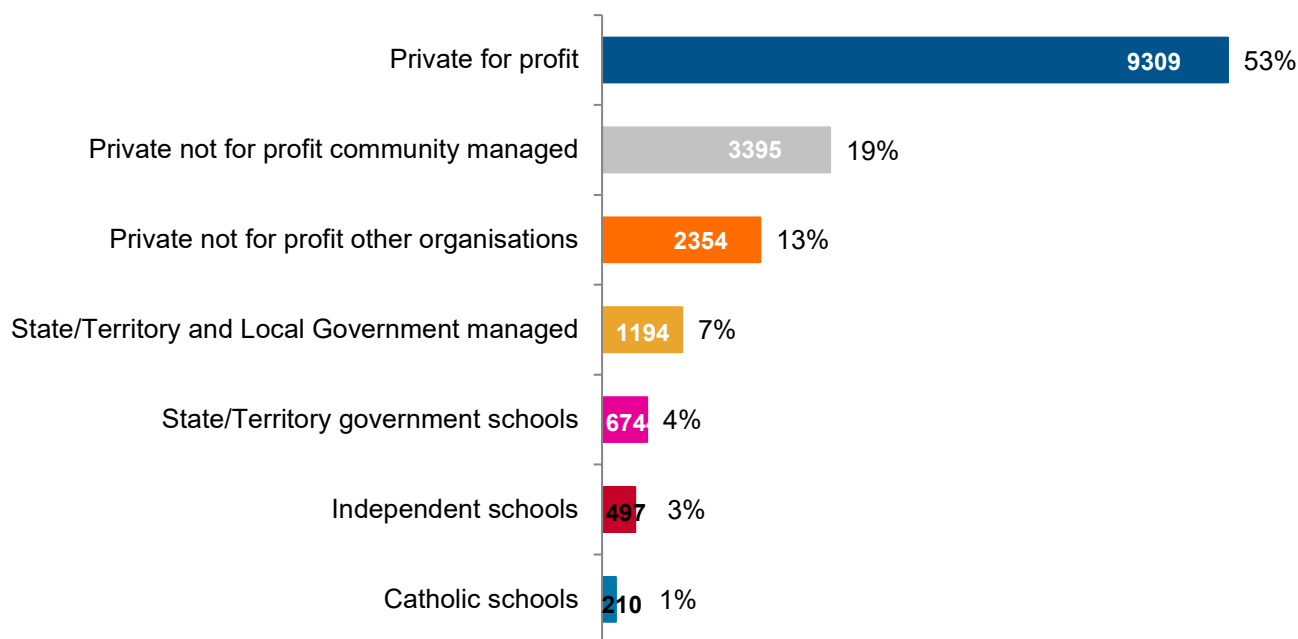


Figure 7 shows that 79% of approved providers operate a single service while 1% of approved providers operate 25 or more services.

Figure 7: Proportion of approved providers by size

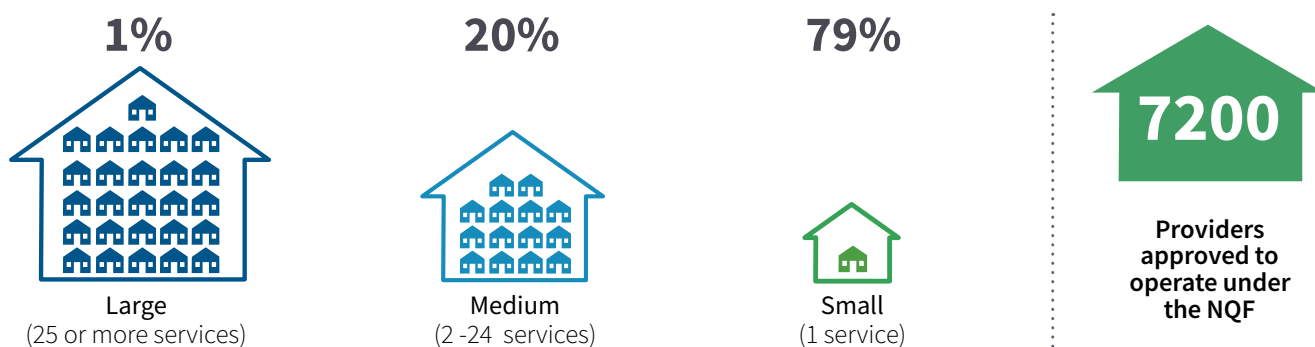
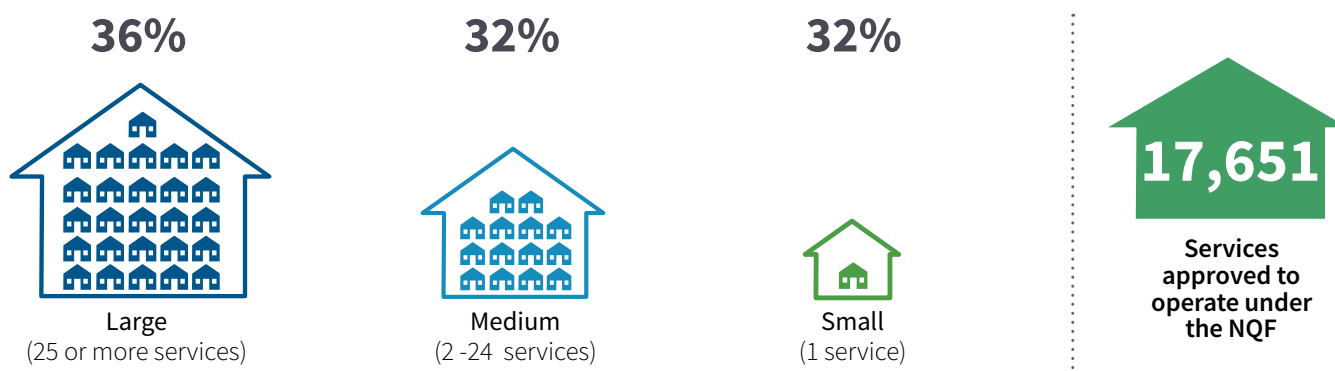


Figure 8 shows that 32% of approved services are operated by small approved providers while 36% of approved services are operated by large approved providers.

Figure 8: Proportion of approved services by provider size



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

Progress of assessment and rating

Table 2 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 assess and rate newly approved services within 9-18 months of operations commencing.

Table 2: 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	378	2%	344	91%
NSW	5979	34%	5592	94%
NT	231	1%	216	94%
QLD	3262	18%	3035	93%
SA	1305	7%	1246	95%
TAS	240	1%	215	90%
VIC	4852	27%	4153	86%
WA	1404	8%	1171	83%
TOTAL	17,651	100%	15,972	90%

Table 3: 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	5	168	82	89	0	344
NSW	115	3350	752	1375	0	5592
NT	3	88	74	50	1	216
QLD	87	1735	462	751	0	3035
SA	12	443	412	379	0	1246
TAS	5	131	0	79	0	215
VIC	114	1709	1144	1186	0	4153
WA	31	712	15	412	1	1171
TOTAL	372	8336	2941	4321	2	15,972

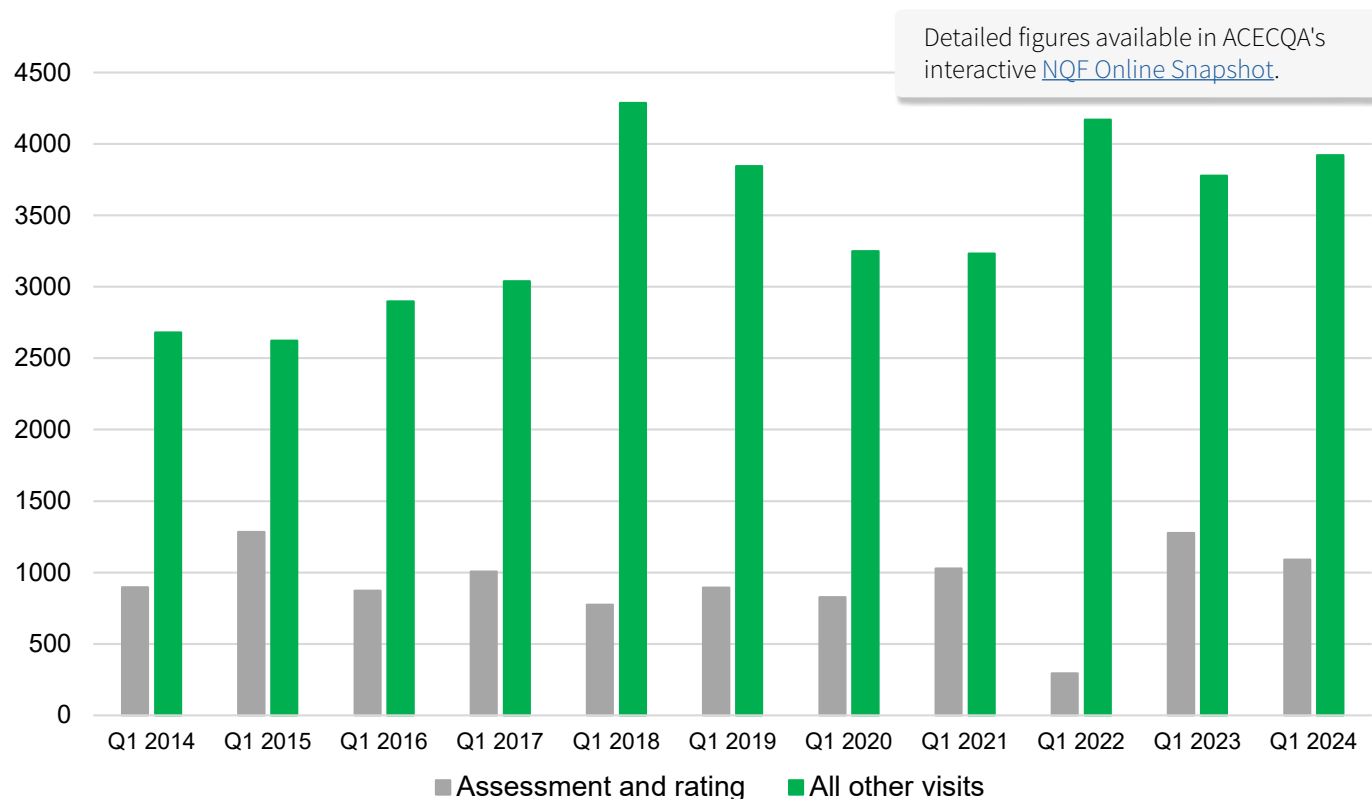
Service visits

Figure 9 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 9: Number of service visits (quality assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits)



Draft and final reports, and reviews

Table 4 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 94% of all overall quality ratings remain unchanged between the draft and final assessment and rating reports.

Table 4: Proportion of overall quality ratings that change between the draft and final assessment and rating report

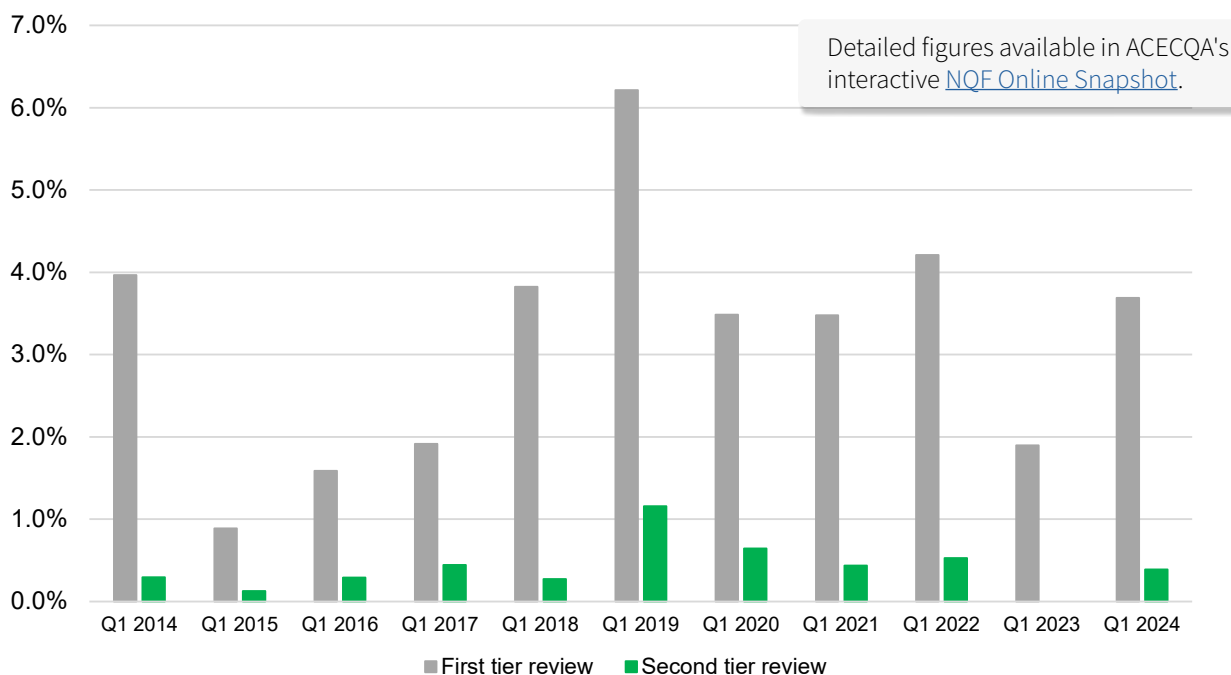
Rating level	Change in rating	%
Higher	874	5.5%
Unchanged	15,070	94.5%
Lower	0	0.0%
Total	15,944	100%

Figure 10 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 10: Proportion of quality assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review



Quality improvement

Table 5 presents a service's previous overall rating alongside its reassessed overall rating. For example, 4294 services previously rated Working Towards NQS improved their rating to Meeting NQS after reassessment. While 2306 services previously rated Working Towards NQS received the same rating again after reassessment.

Table 5: 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	21	82	17	0	120
	Working Towards NQS	57	2306	4294	807	7464
	Meeting NQS	11	1183	5455	1171	7820
	Exceeding NQS	2	432	2148	2345	4927
	Total	91	4003	11,914	4323	20,331


		Rating after reassessment				Improvement rate
		Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	
Rating before reassessment	Significant Improvement Required	18%	68%	14%	0%	83%
	Working Towards NQS	1%	31%	58%	11%	68%
	Meeting NQS	0%	15%	70%	15%	15%
	Exceeding NQS	0%	9%	44%	48%	-

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 6: Overall quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	Excellent	Total
ACT	0	58 17%	133 39%	152 44%	1	344
NSW	7	525 9%	3915 70%	1134 20%	11	5592
NT	0	39 18%	156 72%	21 10%	0	216
QLD	0	319 11%	2103 69%	606 20%	7	3035
SA	0	202 16%	591 47%	453 36%	0	1246
TAS	0	37 17%	132 61%	46 21%	0	215
VIC	1	230 6%	2763 67%	1150 28%	9	4153
WA	0	221 19%	883 75%	67 6%	0	1171
TOTAL	8	1631 10%	10,676 67%	3629 23%	28	15,972

Figure 11: Overall quality ratings by service type

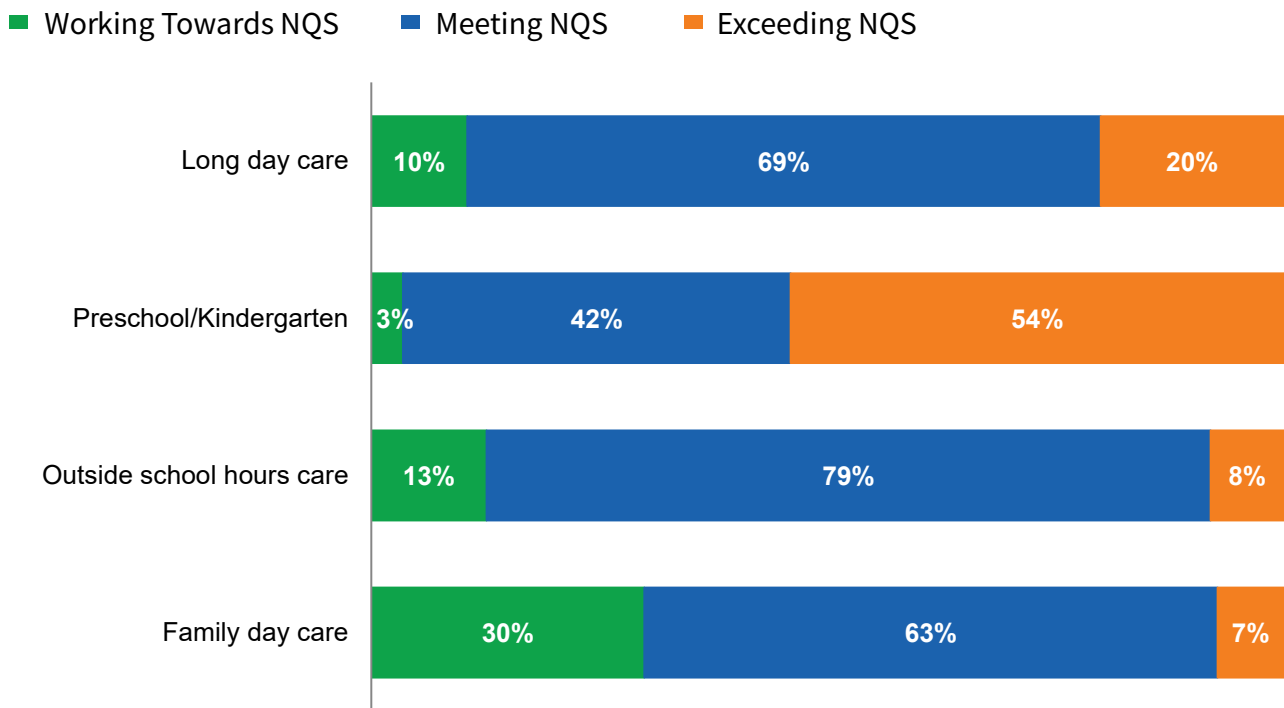
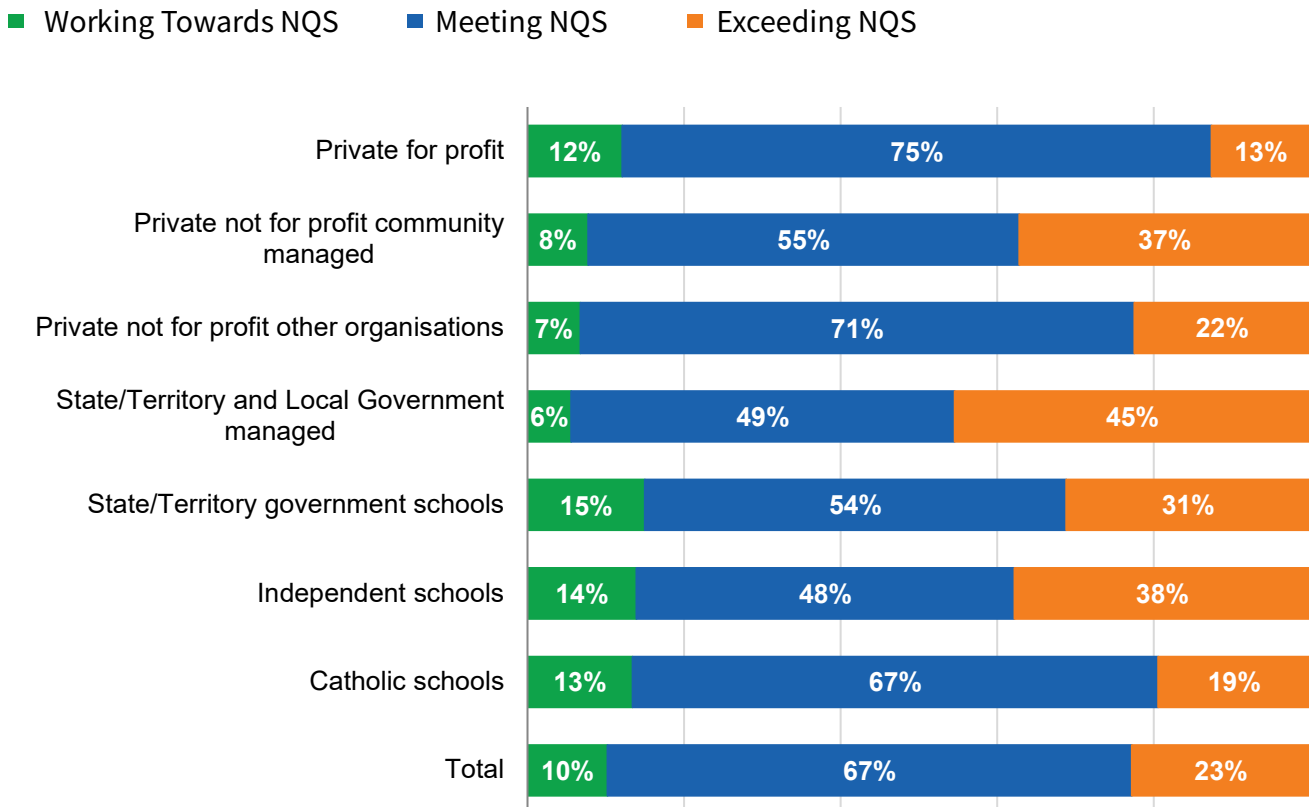


Figure 12 shows the variation in spread of quality ratings between provider management types.

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 11). In contrast, preschools/kindergartens make up only 1% of ‘Private for profit’ services.

Figure 12: Overall quality ratings by provider management type¹



¹ 17 providers categorised as ‘Not stated/Other’ excluded for graphical purposes.

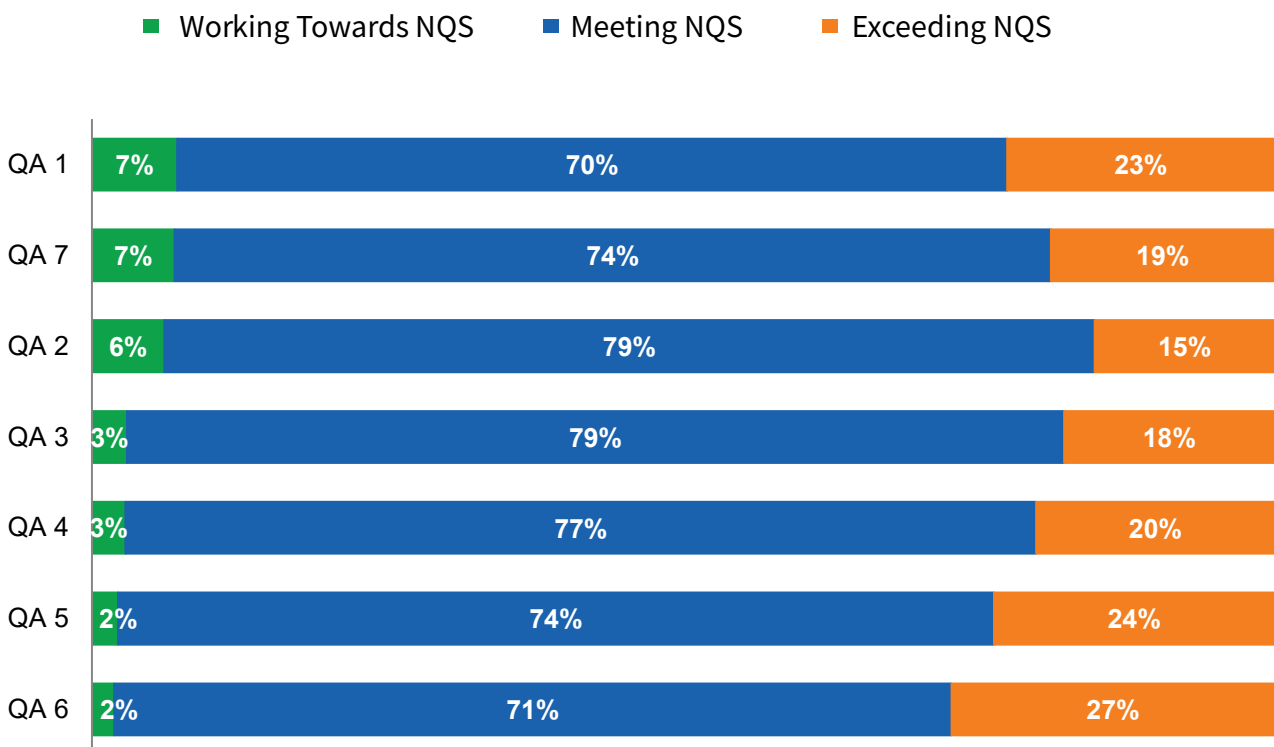
Quality area ratings

Table 7 and Figure 13 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 7: Quality area ratings

	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS
Quality Area 1 - Educational program and practice	1	1151	11,208	3612
Quality Area 7 - Governance and leadership	6	1115	11,832	3019
Quality Area 2 - Children's health and safety	7	976	12,559	2430
Quality Area 3 - Physical environment	1	473	12,654	2844
Quality Area 4 - Staffing arrangements	1	452	12,299	3220
Quality Area 5 - Relationships with children	2	350	11,831	3789
Quality Area 6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	0	298	11,311	4363

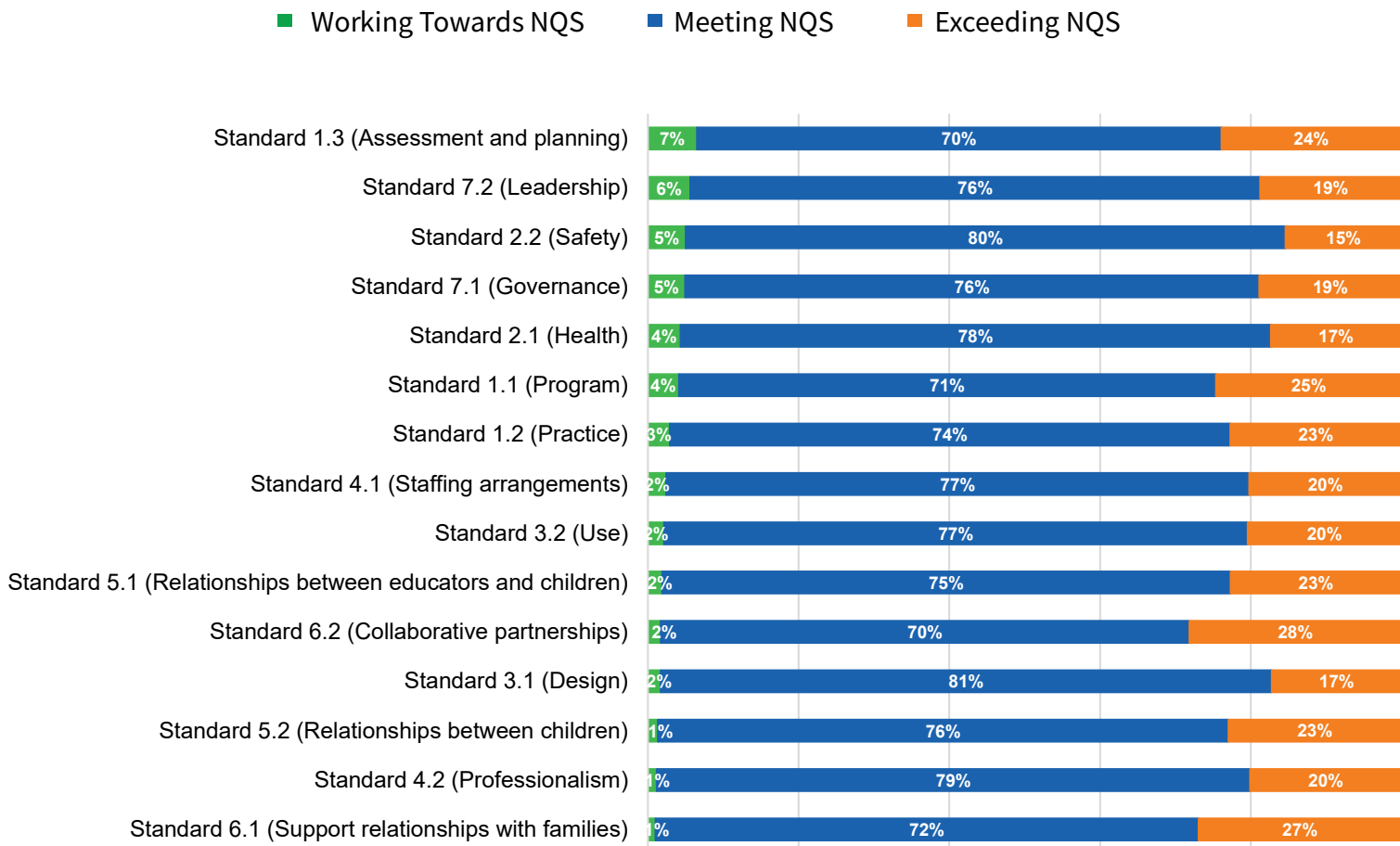
Figure 13: Quality area ratings



Standard level ratings

Figure 14 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 14: Standard level ratings



Element level results

Table 8 ranks the 40 elements of the 2018 NQS in descending order, based on the proportion of services that do not meet each element.

Table 8: Element level results

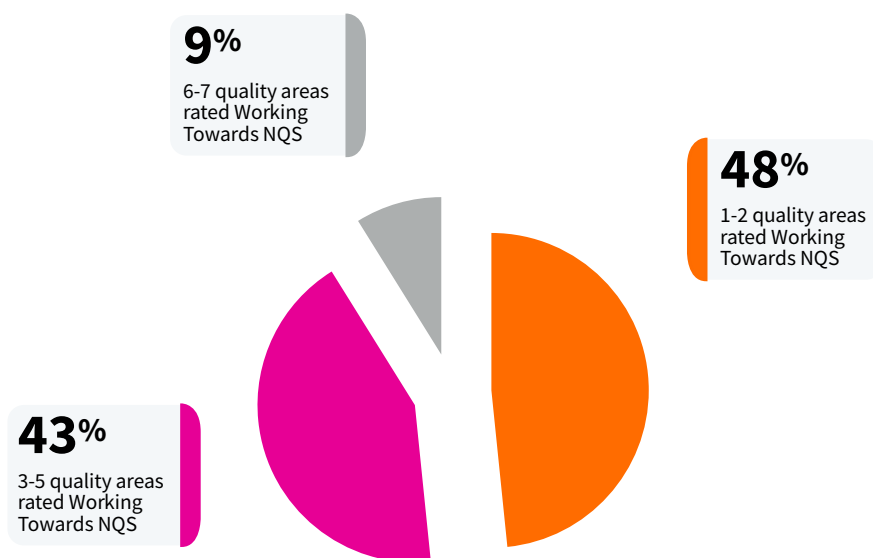
2018 NQS Element	% Not Met
1.3.1 (Assessment and planning cycle)	5.5%
1.3.2 (Critical reflection)	5.4%
7.1.2 (Management systems)	4.4%
7.2.2 (Educational leadership)	4.0%
2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures)	3.8%
2.2.1 (Supervision)	3.7%
7.2.3 (Development of professionals)	3.4%
1.1.3 (Program learning opportunities)	2.9%
2.2.2 (Incident and emergency management)	2.5%
4.1.1 (Organisation of educators)	2.3%
1.1.1 (Approved learning framework)	2.1%
7.2.1 (Continuous improvement)	2.1%
1.2.3 (Child directed learning)	1.8%
1.1.2 (Child-centred)	1.7%
1.3.3 (Information for families)	1.7%
5.1.2 (Dignity and rights of the child)	1.6%
1.2.2 (Responsive teaching and scaffolding)	1.6%
1.2.1 (Intentional teaching)	1.5%
7.1.1 (Service philosophy and purpose)	1.4%
7.1.3 (Roles and responsibilities)	1.4%

2018 NQS Element	% Not Met
3.1.2 (Upkeep)	1.4%
3.2.3 (Environmentally responsible)	1.4%
5.2.2 (Self-regulation)	1.3%
6.2.3 (Community engagement)	1.2%
2.1.3 (Healthy lifestyle)	1.1%
5.1.1 (Positive educator to child interactions)	1.1%
3.2.1 (Inclusive environment)	1.0%
3.2.2 (Resources support play-based learning)	1.0%
2.2.3 (Child protection)	1.0%
4.2.2 (Professional standards)	1.0%
6.2.2 (Access and participation)	0.9%
2.1.1 (Wellbeing and comfort)	0.8%
6.1.3 (Families are supported)	0.6%
4.2.1 (Professional collaboration)	0.6%
3.1.1 (Fit for purpose)	0.6%
6.1.2 (Parent views are respected)	0.5%
6.2.1 (Transitions)	0.4%
6.1.1 (Engagement with the service)	0.4%
4.1.2 (Continuity of staff)	0.4%
5.2.1 (Collaborative learning)	0.3%

Services rated Working Towards NQS

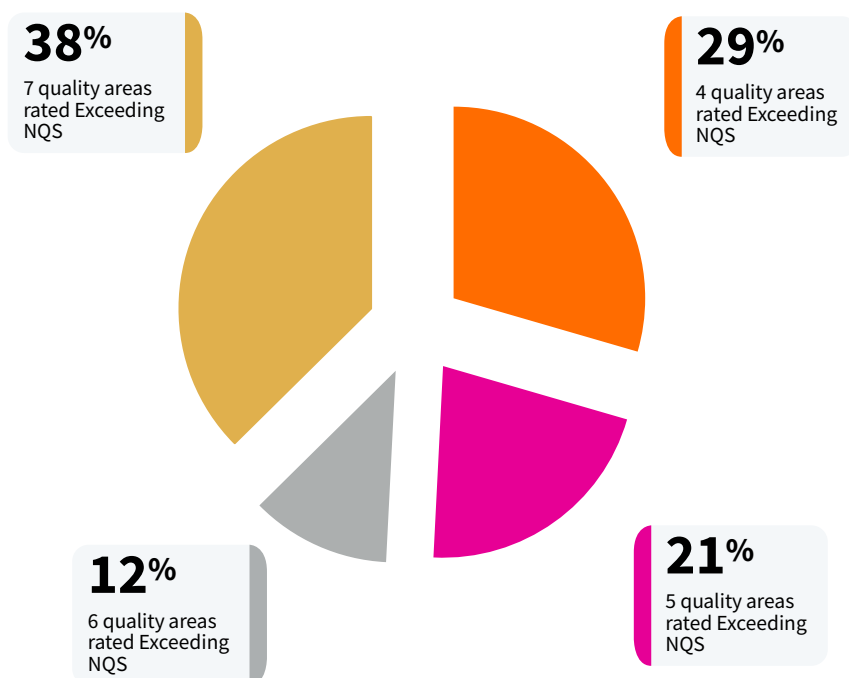
A service receives an overall rating of Working Towards NQS if any of the seven quality areas are rated Working Towards NQS. A quality area is rated Working Towards NQS if any of the standards within that quality area are rated Working Towards NQS.

Figure 15: Proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS by number of quality areas rated Working Towards NQS



Services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 16: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS by number of quality areas rated Exceeding NQS



Australian Capital Territory summary

378

services comprising **373** centre-based services and **five** family day care services

344 (91%)

services with a **quality rating**

58

services rated **Working Towards NQS**

133

services rated **Meeting NQS**

152

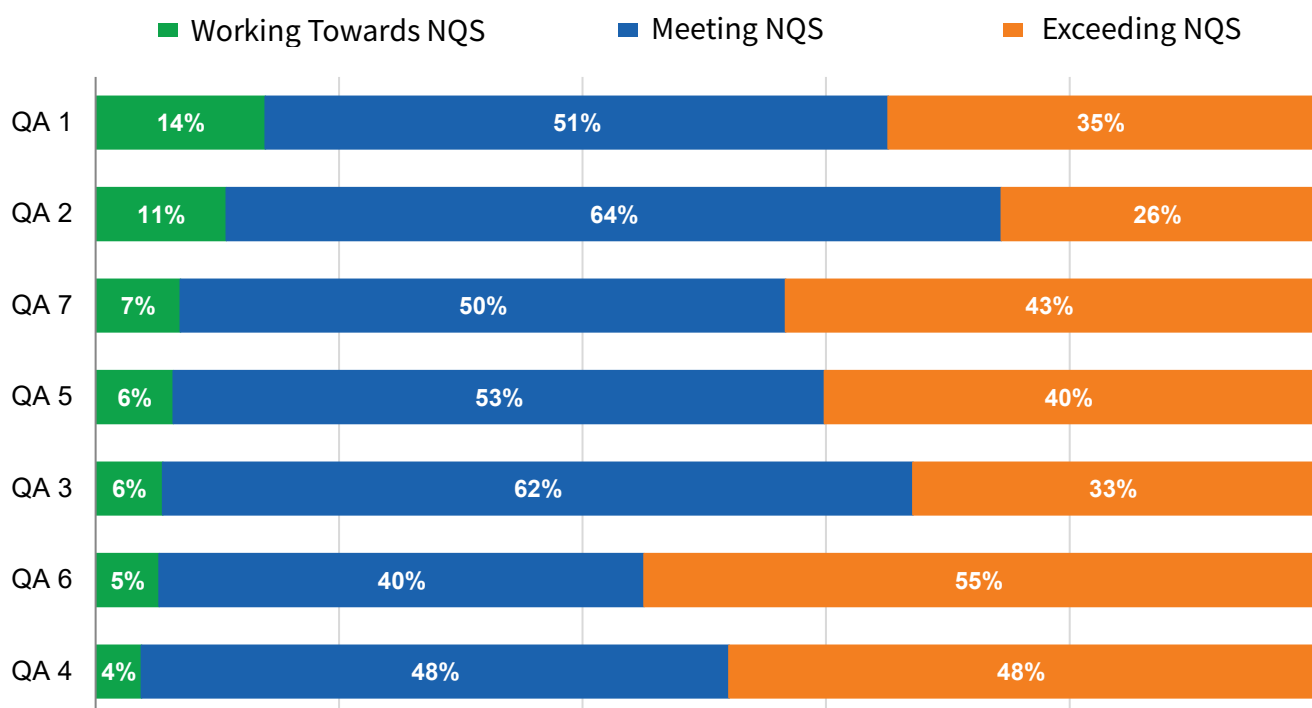
services rated **Exceeding NQS**

1

service rated **Excellent** by ACECQA

Figure 17 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 17: Quality area ratings



Contact details

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

New South Wales summary

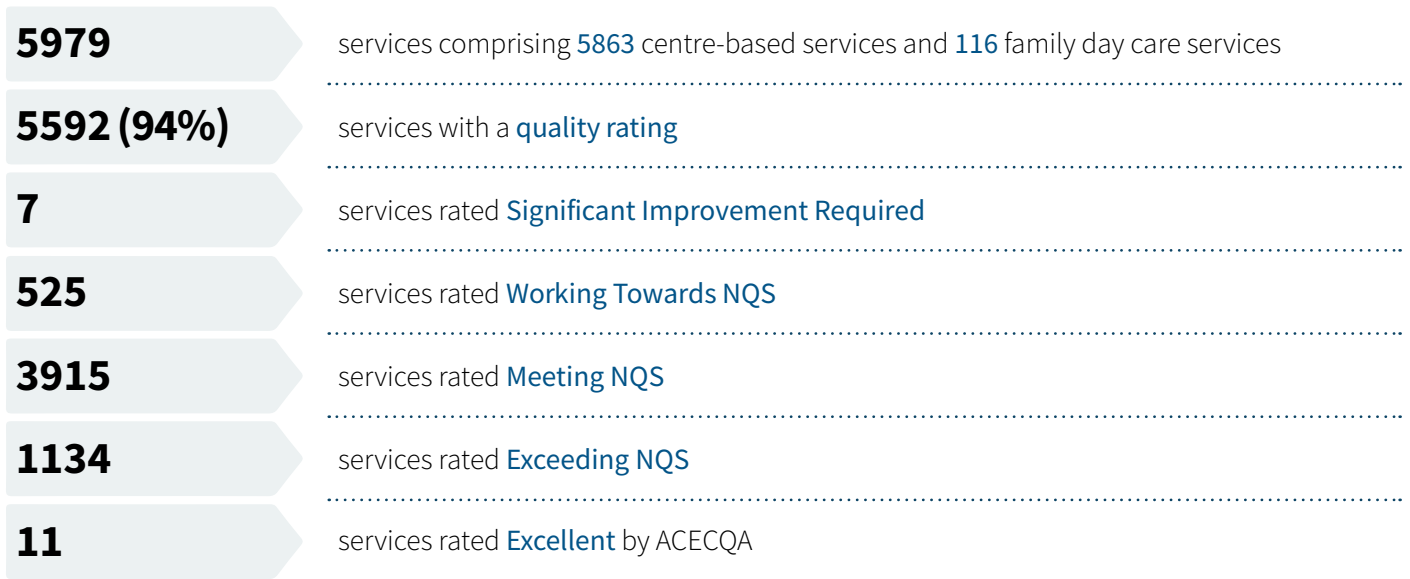
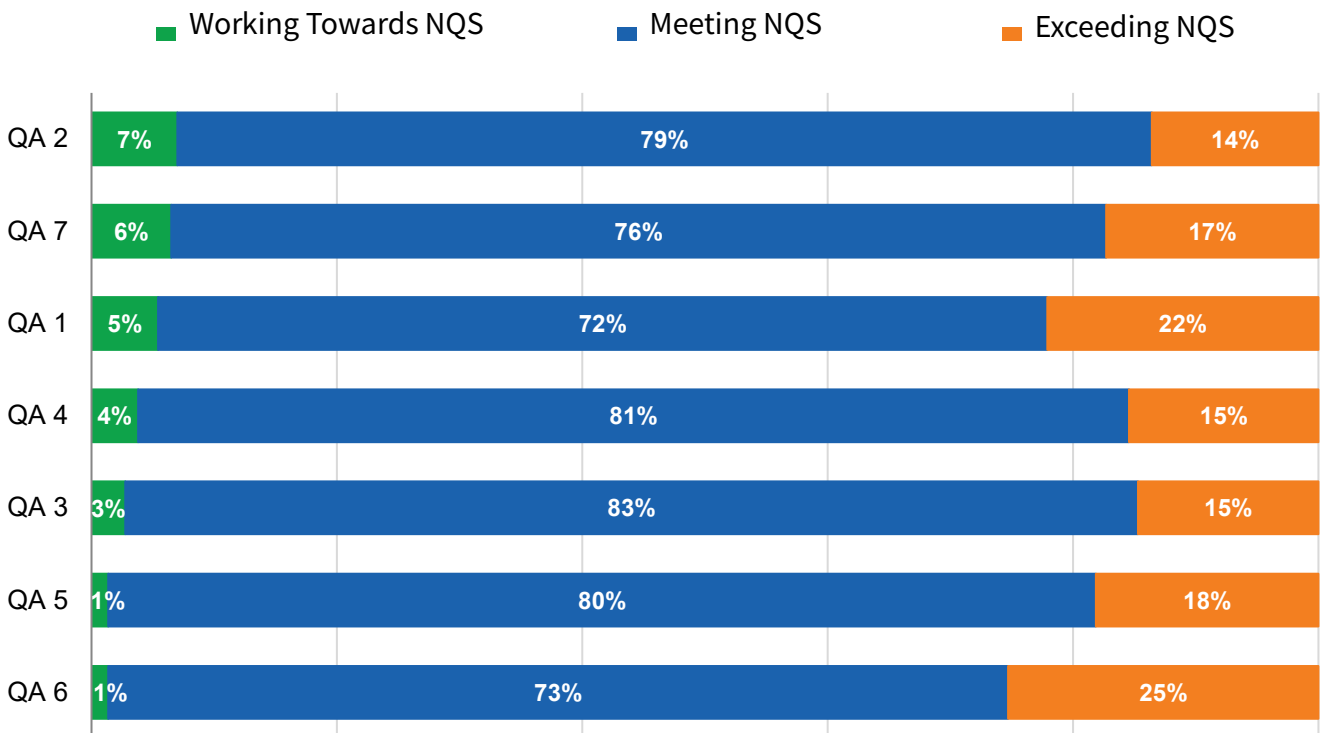


Figure 18 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 18: Quality area ratings



Contact details

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

Northern Territory summary

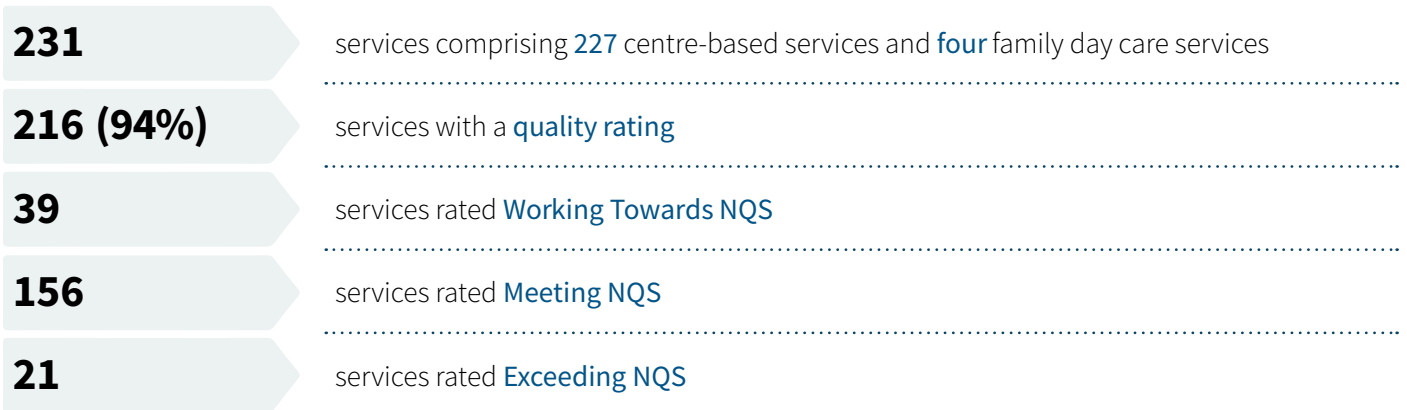
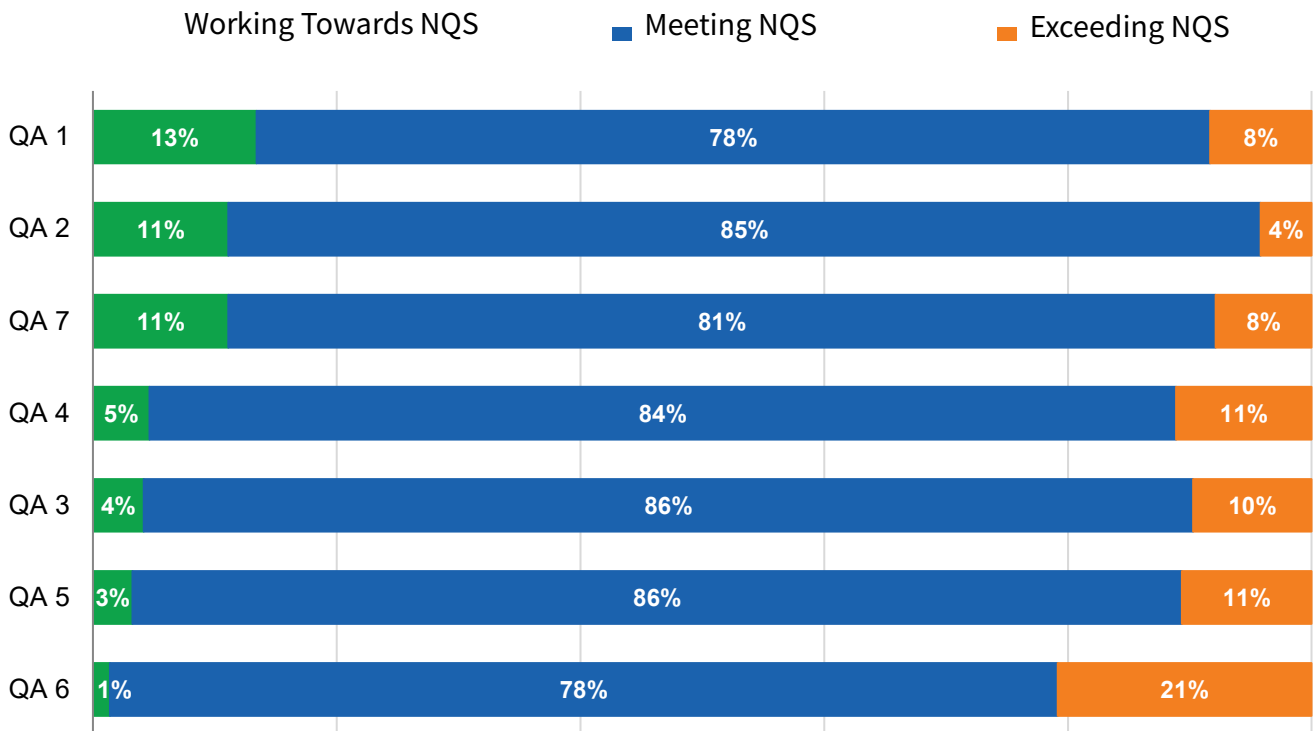


Figure 19 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 19: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education
Quality Education and Care NT

<https://education.nt.gov.au/committees-regulators-and-advisory-groups/quality-education-and-care-nt>

Queensland summary

3262

services comprising **3157** centre-based services and **105** family day care services

3035 (93%)

services with a **quality rating**

319

services rated **Working Towards NQS**

2103

services rated **Meeting NQS**

606

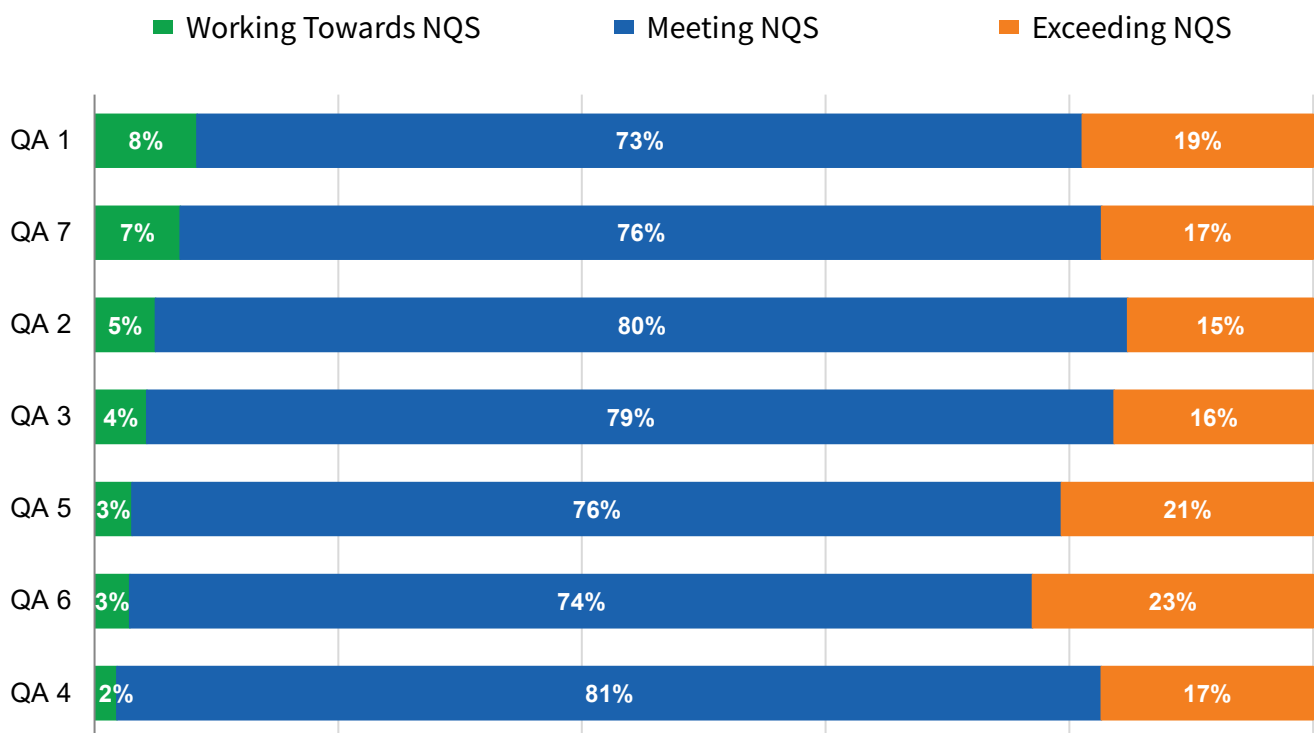
services rated **Exceeding NQS**

7

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 Regulatory Authority
www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au

South Australia summary

1305

services comprising 1289 centre-based services and 16 family day care services

1246 (95%)

services with a quality rating

202

services rated Working Towards NQS

591

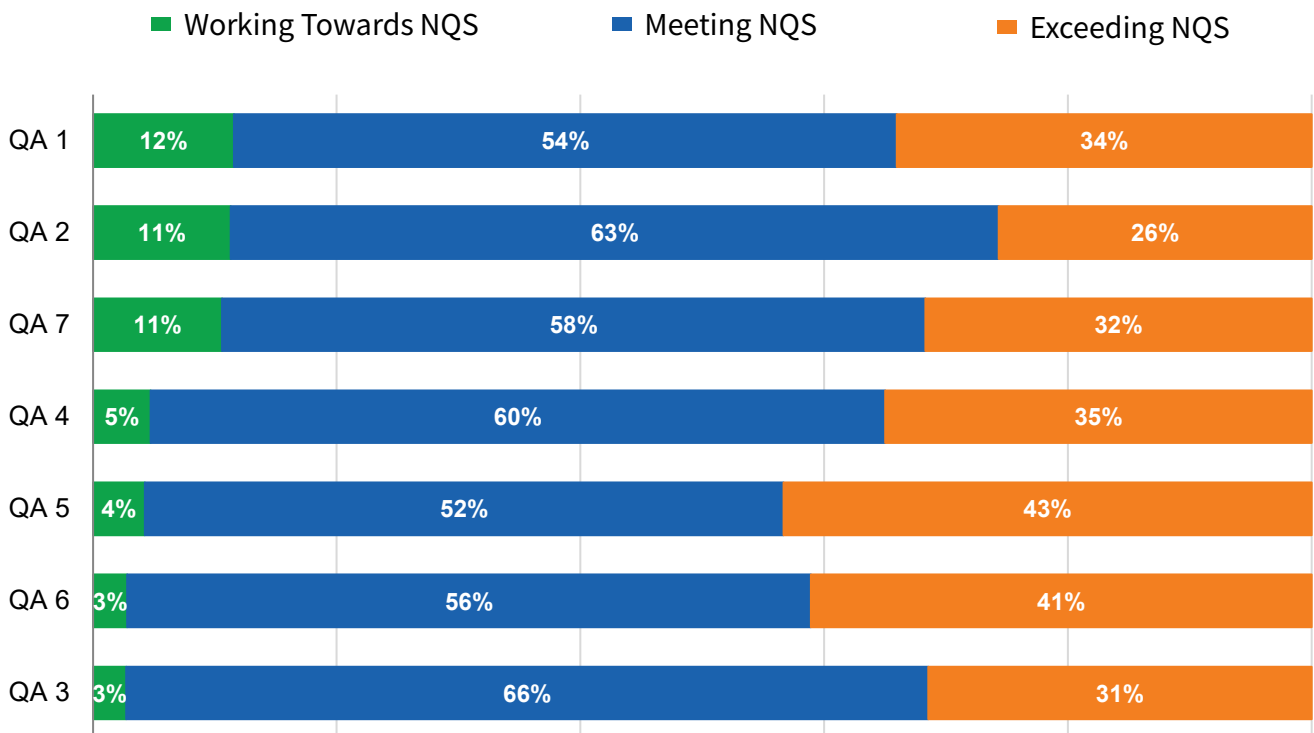
services rated Meeting NQS

453

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

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

Tasmania summary

240

services comprising **234** centre-based services and **six** family day care services

215 (90%)

services with a **quality rating**

37

services rated **Working Towards NQS**

132

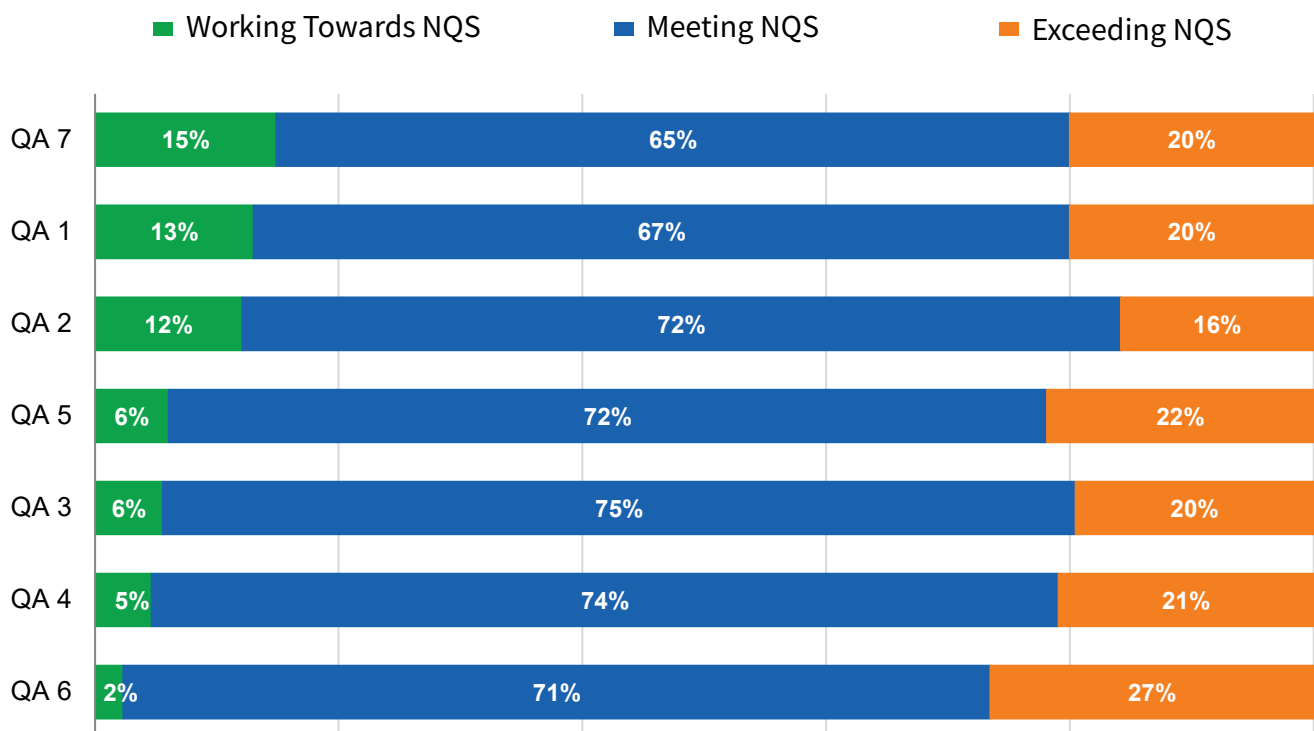
services rated **Meeting NQS**

46

services rated **Exceeding NQS**

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 for Education, Children and Young People
Education and Care Unit

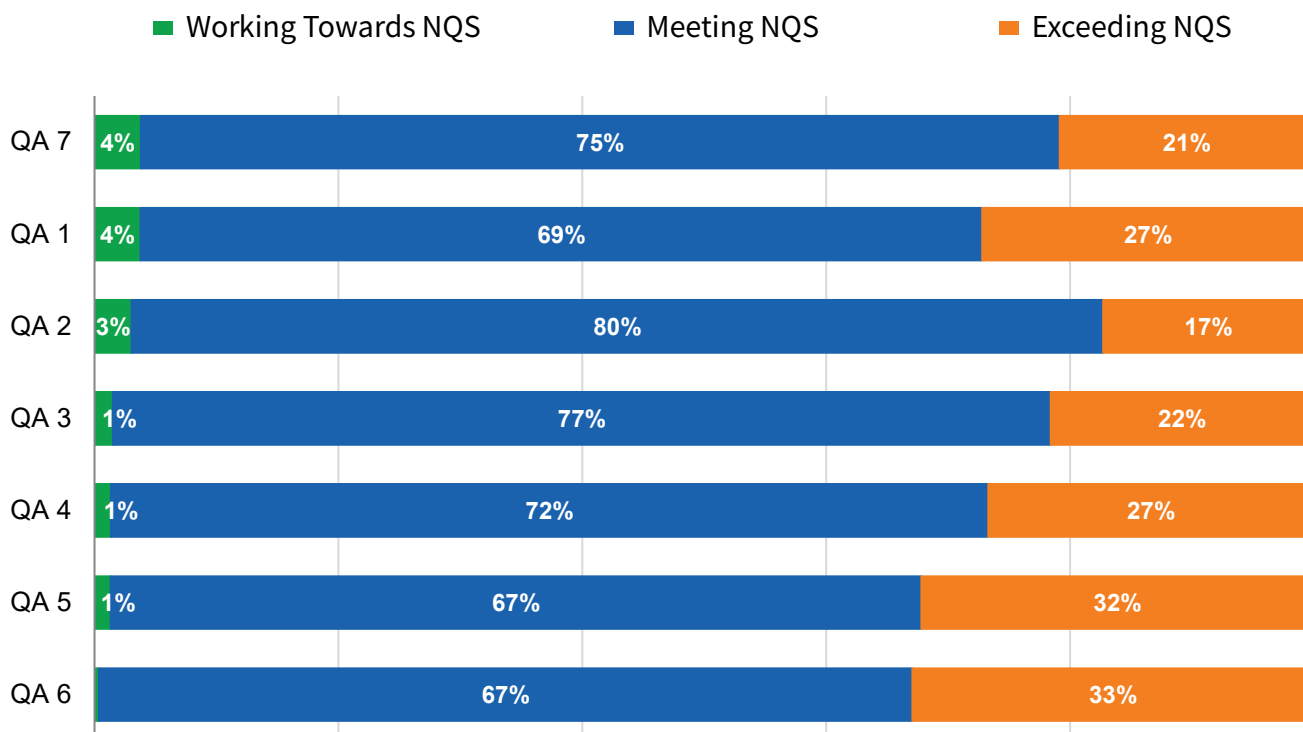
www.educationandcare.tas.gov.au

Victoria summary

4852	services comprising 4708 centre-based services and 144 family day care services
4153 (86%)	services with a quality rating
1	service rated Significant Improvement Required
230	services rated Working Towards NQS
2763	services rated Meeting NQS
1150	services rated Exceeding NQS
9	services rated Excellent by ACECQA

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

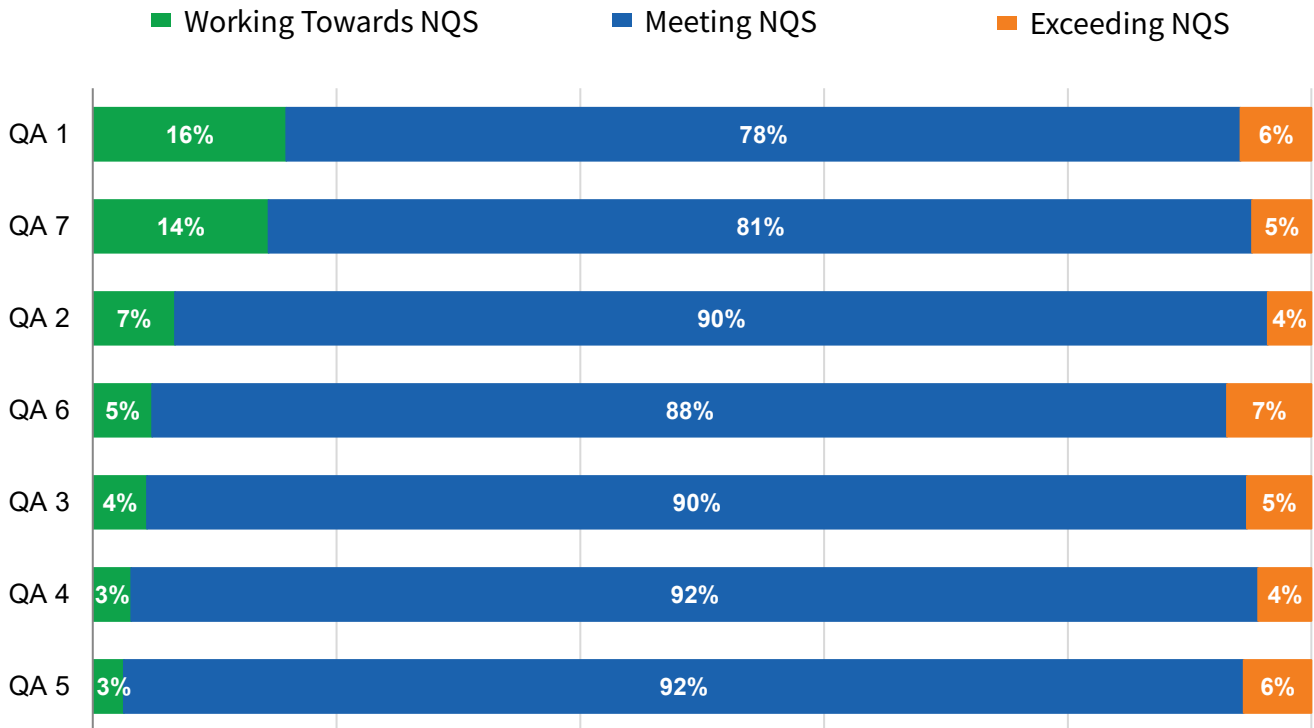
Department of Education and Training
 Quality Assessment and Regulation Division
www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation

Western Australia summary



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 Communities
Education and Care Regulatory Unit

www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/education-and-care-regulatory-unit



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Published by ACECQA

ABN 59 372 786 746

Level 14, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, NSW, 2010

Web: www.acecqa.gov.au

Email: info@acecqa.gov.au

Media enquiries: media@acecqa.gov.au



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