

# 1. Achieving quality early education

Ensuring that all children in Australia have access to affordable, high quality early education and care is one of CELA's key principles and underpins our commitment to achieving best practice nationally.

Success means that increasingly, more centres and services will meet and exceed quality standards and ultimately best practice will become the norm across our sector.

Quality is now measured via the National Quality Standard (NQS) which sets a high national benchmark for early education and care services. The NQS assesses 7 Quality Areas that are important outcomes for children. Most services throughout Australia have now been quality rated, at least once.

The area most frequently identified as requiring improvement is QA1 Educational Program and Practice, the key quality area that impacts children's learning and development ([ACECQA](#)).

We understand that services in some areas may find it harder to lift quality than others. Nearly a quarter of services in the most disadvantaged SEIFA areas are rated as Working Towards, compared to under a fifth of services in the most advantaged areas. Similarly, more than a quarter of services in major cities are rated as Exceeding the NQS compared to less than a fifth of services in remote and very remote Australia ([ACECQA Occasional Paper 7 June 2020](#)).

## Instructional support is vital

Research also shows wide differences in the level of emotional and instructional support that children receive, especially when they are babies and toddlers. The E4Kids study ([Cloney et al., 2017](#)) revealed that instructional support is the key to promoting children's higher order thinking skills and creativity, and that levels of instructional support are low across all services – and lower still in low socio-economic areas.

## A qualified workforce leads to better school readiness

Other studies ([Degotardi and Gill 2017](#), [Warren and Haisken-DeNew 2013](#), [LSAC](#), [Manning et.al 2017](#)) reveal that access to a trained workforce is key, with evidence that babies and toddlers acquire more language, and children are better academically prepared for school, when their teachers are well qualified.

## CELA's is committed to supporting quality improvement

CELA is committed to quality improvement. This commitment includes supporting, encouraging and engaging more services to meet and exceed the quality standards so that children can access high quality services regardless of where they live.

We are committed to helping our members to build key capabilities in Educators, such as the capacity to reflect and to build relationships with others ([Jackson 2020](#)).

CELA will continue to develop strategies and resources to improve quality standards across our sector via:

- ▶ Professional development training and resources.
- ▶ Targeted quality improvement initiatives.
- ▶ Advocating to state and federal governments to support workforce development across the sector, and in particular targeted at low socio economic and rural and remote areas.

## Quality early education advocacy position in brief

### Key facts

Quality of early childhood education varies across Australia:

- ▶ 1 in 4 services in most disadvantaged SEIFA areas are Working Towards the National Quality Standards.
- ▶ Just 1 in 4 services in major cities are Exceeding the National Quality Standards.
- ▶ Children who attend high quality early education are likely to know more words per minute as babies, and to perform better in school.
- ▶ Community providers are more likely to provide higher quality early childhood education and care than profit driven providers.
- ▶ Workforce shortages are impacting the ability of many centres to provide quality service.

### What are we seeking?

- ▶ An ECEC Workforce Strategy to enable small, stand-alone centres to attract and retain skilled, diverse staff who meet children's needs.
- ▶ Commitment to supporting and expanding community provision.
- ▶ Ongoing professional learning to lift quality - especially in QA1 Educational Program and Practice.
- ▶ Changes to education qualifications to ensure they meet service needs.
- ▶ Greater parental understanding of the National Quality System and involvement in the Quality Improvement Process.

### Actions we are taking

- ▶ CELA's submission to the National Workforce Strategy, represented the view of our members, addressing immediate and long-term solutions and how workforce and quality are intrinsically linked
- ▶ Communication with Minister Tudge in collaboration with like-minded peaks about the success of community providers in the achieving high quality
- ▶ Communicating with Minister Tudge in collaboration with like-minded peaks about the urgent need to address workforce shortages now
- ▶ We are devising innovative workforce models in conjunction with peers and other like stakeholders.

- ▶ We have delivered practical training to 300 educators in Communicating Quality Ratings to provide the tools which support them in being part of lifting parental understanding of quality
- ▶ Regular representation at State Advisory Panels ensuring that a clear and consistent message regarding quality are heard
- ▶ Regular representation at State Advisory Panels ensuring that a clear and consistent message is sustained in relation to quality across the sector and the vital role that community and small providers play in this
- ▶ Provide quality, affordable and accessible professional learning opportunities, for individual educators and whole teams, so as skill gaps can be filled
- ▶ Shine a light on real life stories about quality practice in Amplify and Broadside

**What does progress look like?**

- ▶ ACECQA workforce strategy responds to needs of small and community providers.
- ▶ Lifting parents' understanding of quality so as they include this in their decision-making process when making choices for their children
- ▶ Government initiatives which support quality improvements across all service types
- ▶ Supporting more CELA members to be rated as Exceeding
- ▶ Retention of qualifications and ratios in NQF
- ▶ Action taken on the strategies put forward to Minister Tudge to address immediate workforce shortages