



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

**OUR
VISION:
EVERY
YOUNG
CHILD IS
THRIVING
AND
LEARNING**

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 15 May, 2018

Budget cuts put young children and quality of care at risk

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) calls on the Federal Government to recommit to the National Partnership Agreement that underpins the *National Quality Framework* (NQF) in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

In last week's Budget, the Federal Government withdrew its commitment to the [National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care](#), and cut the financial support that contributes to the assessment and rating of ECEC services by state and territory governments.

'ECA is concerned that the Federal Government has unilaterally withdrawn its support for this National Partnership Agreement, without any consultation with regulatory bodies or the early childhood sector, signalling that it no longer supports quality improvement,' said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

The NQF is delivering a uniform national approach to quality in ECEC services for young children; 77 percent of services nationally are 'meeting' or above the [National Quality Standards](#). However, there are still 23 percent of all services for young children that are not yet meeting the standards and the timeframe for reassessment is often slower than we would like it to be.

'Quality in early childhood education and care is not "done",' continued Ms Page. "We still have a way to go, both ensuring that services below standard improve, and ensuring that services can rise to meet new challenges.'

With the findings out of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* comes a new focus on ensuring that all organisations that provide services to children are "[child safe](#)".

We also know that while research has identified the benefits of participation in early education as being higher in disadvantaged populations, the quality of ECEC services tends to be lower in disadvantaged communities across Australia.

'With a new [Child Care Subsidy](#) about to be implemented, potentially increasing the number of services in the sector this is not the time to cut support and funding for the system that underpins quality,' said Ms Page.

'When regulators are stretched and not paying attention, problems can occur, and there is too much public investment in the early education sector for strong, national regulations to be deprioritised,' said Ms Page. 'It took the Federal Government a long time to act on warnings about fraudulent Family Day Care operators—this is not the time to drop the ball on quality regulation. Indeed, this could put children at risk—risk of not being supervised adequately, exposure to low quality interactions and activities—or at worst risk of physical harm.'

The NQF should be strengthened rather than compromised to ensure the social, emotional, physical and developmental wellbeing of young children in ECEC settings.

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