



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Good news on preschool enrolment and quality improvement in government services report**

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) welcomes the improvement in preschool enrolment, as noted in the latest Report on Government Services (Child care, Education and Training sector) released on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2019

'It's heartening to see that Australia is catching up with the rest of the world and more than 96 per cent of our children are enrolled in 15 hours per week of a preschool program nationally, with some states and territories showing 100 per cent enrolment in the year before school', said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

'New South Wales (NSW) has shown the biggest improvement with 93.2 per cent of children in the year before school now enrolled for more than 15 hours a week in a preschool program, up from 84.9 per cent in 2016', Ms Page continued.

'This improvement extends to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with 96.6 per cent enrolled in a preschool program for 15 hours a week nationally. Once again in NSW, enrolment rates have risen considerably, up to 93.4 per cent in 2016, from 80.9 per cent in 2016', said Ms Page.

As per the report, the quality of early childhood education and care services also continues to improve. The number of services that meet or exceed the *National Quality Standard* (NQS) is now 77.9 per cent, up from 73.4 per cent in 2017.

Significant improvements in the percentage of services meeting and exceeding the NQS were noted in:

- NSW—up from 67.4 per cent in 2017 to 75.5 per cent in 2018
- Australian Capital Territory—up from 66.6 per cent in 2017 to 73.1 per cent in 2018
- Western Australia—up from 61.5 per cent in 2017 to 67.6 per cent in 2018.

'Australia leads the world in having an NQS for early childhood education, and quality continues to improve across the early childhood sector', said Ms Page. 'It is imperative that federal, state and territory governments continue to fund ongoing and regular quality assessments', she added.

'Improvements in quality and preschool enrolments are good news for children and families, as evidence indicates that children who attend high-quality early learning before they start school have better social, emotional and cognitive skills', said Ms Page. 'The next step for Australia is to extend access and support to all children to attend high-quality preschool programs for TWO years before they start school, in keeping with many other OECD countries', Ms Page asserted.

Currently, only 58.5 per cent of Australian three-year-olds attend early learning, putting Australia in the bottom third of OECD countries.

According to the Australian Early Development Census, which looks at children's development as they start formal schooling, children who participate in early learning have HALF the rate of vulnerability as compared to children who don't attend any early learning.

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*Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children from birth to eight years, their families and early childhood professionals.*