



**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children

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

## **Statement from the ECA National Board: Stepping Up, Not Stepping Away in Response to Abuse Allegations and Quality Breaches**

ECA has always, and will continue to, advocate for high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) to achieve our vision of every young child thriving and learning. We work with providers across the spectrum of service types and governance structures, including public, private and not-for-profit because we are committed to every child, in every setting.

When harm occurs in an early childhood setting, it is important that responsibility is taken and effective changes are put in place to reduce the risk of harm occurring again in the future. It is for authorities such as the police, courts and ECEC regulators to assign blame and take appropriate responsive action. It is the role of the profession and advocacy organisations such as ECA to review and improve systems and practices to strengthen safeguards and build capability. That is what we have done in the past and that is what we will do in the future—**we step up, we do not step away.**

We do not defend or apologise for service failures, but we recognise that within every setting there are dedicated educators working to protect children's rights to safety and wellbeing. We want to support them in every way possible.

**Professional educators put the safety, wellbeing and rights of children first, every day.**

We recognise that the early childhood profession is feeling angry and betrayed following allegations of child sexual abuse occurring across several services in Melbourne, and revelations of regulatory breaches and poor practice in services across NSW. We know that all ECA members are feeling deeply for the children who have experienced harm, their families and the broader community of families who are now feeling a loss of confidence in the sector. We also understand that educators and service leaders are under pressure to strengthen safeguards and rebuild public confidence in a context of highly charged media coverage and public debate.

As we work through this period of professional grief and challenging social discourse, we encourage educators to draw on the foundations of early childhood education and care. The [ECA Code of Ethics](#) provides useful guidance on the obligations of early childhood professionals to act in ways that:

- promote the best interests of all children
- build a spirit of collegiality and professionalism through collaborative relationships
- advocate for the early childhood profession and the provision of quality education and care.

We also encourage you to look after yourself, access support services as you need them and encourage your colleagues to do so also.

ECA is currently working with experts in child safeguarding, other peak bodies, service providers and colleagues across the sector to engage in discussions with policymakers on evidence-based responses. Specifically, ECA is advocating for:

- a national register of early childhood educators
- an enhanced national system of working with children screening (that includes reportable conduct in every jurisdiction)
- stronger enforcement of the *National Quality Standard* (NQS)—with attention to staffing that provides proper supervision of children at all times
- upskilling educators and service leaders in abuse prevention, responding to risk and creating a culture of reporting within settings.

In addition, ECA is working in collaboration with subject matter experts to collate resources to support service leaders as they navigate current challenges.

In relation to recent commentary about sponsorship of the ECA National Conference, sponsorship is essential for the viability of the conference and represents an investment in our collective work. We acknowledge the concern within the community, and we are currently reviewing this with our partners.

ECA is transparent and ethical in our work; we do not shy away from complex or challenging discourse. We don't step away from the educators or providers who take responsibility and commit to child safety and service quality. ECA members are always welcome to engage with us through [eca@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:eca@earlychildhood.org.au)

Authorised by: ECA National Board