



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 18 March 2025

Compliance and quality in the early childhood education and care sector

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and all our members are deeply committed to the provision of high-quality early childhood education and care in which children are safe, thriving and learning. Yesterday's episode of *Four Corners* was devastating, exposing terrible breaches of quality standards in some early childhood services. This highlights the need for enhanced safeguarding within services including a national approach to Working with Children Checks, better support for educators who raise concerns, and stronger powers and resourcing for regulatory authorities. Regulatory authorities need capacity for more frequent monitoring of services and the staffing to respond quickly to concerns raised by families or educators. Both federal and state/territory governments need more power to sanction and shut down providers who consistently fail to meet quality standards and put children at risk.

Speaking on *Sunrise*, ECA's Chief Executive Officer Samantha Page said, 'Anyone working in the early childhood sector that watched *Four Corners* last night was devastated—this sort of child harm should just never occur. What we really need to do is strengthen the powers of the regulatory authorities and get a lot tougher on who is allowed to operate early childhood education and care services.'

The early childhood education and care sector has widely supported the *National Quality Framework* introduced in 2012 which includes the National Law and Regulations and *National Quality Standard* to which providers, services and early childhood professionals must adhere. What is clear from *Four Corners* and the reporting on historical and current compliance actions by the regulatory authorities themselves, is that unscrupulous and unsafe practices do still exist in parts of the sector. There is absolutely a need to ensure that the regulators are best equipped to deal with issues responsively and decisively to ensure child safety and wellbeing is uncompromised.

Families should have confidence that early childhood education and care services have been recently assessed and rated as compliant under the *National Quality Framework*. There should also be greater transparency in the regulatory systems so that operators and services that have been sanctioned for breaches or have waivers in place are publicly identified.

Samantha Page said, 'We also need to understand that it's diligent educators whistle blowing on poor practice and that's a good thing. What we need is regulators to be faster to respond and to have more power. We've been calling for a long time for a national Working with Children Check. That's really important. We don't want these state-based disparate systems. We want a national approach to that; that protects children from unscrupulous people who might want to work in this sector. We only want ethical professionals working in early childhood settings.'

Samantha Page continued, *'We want regulatory authorities to be better funded to be able to undertake more regular rating and assessment. All services should be assessed and rated within the first 12 months of opening and every three years thereafter. We want regulators to have capacity to respond quickly when concerns are raised either by educators or by families, and to intervene and have strong powers to shut services down. No one in the sector wants dodgy providers. This is a sector that has embraced good strong regulatory frameworks. We have a world leading national quality system, but we need to enforce it.'*

Parents/carers will undoubtedly have questions about how they ensure that the service they have chosen is compliant and ensures their child/ren's safety and wellbeing. All early childhood education and care services must disclose their rating under the *National Quality Framework*. This can often be found on the information board in the front foyers of early childhood education and care services. If it is not on display, it is entirely appropriate for parents/carers to ask. Services will be [assessed as](#) Excellent, Exceeding the National Quality Standard, Meeting the National Quality Standard, Working Towards the National Quality Standard, or Significant Improvement Required. Parents/carers can also look up the service on the [National Register](#) on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website and view the service rating there, including when last assessed.

Samantha Page said, *'The most important thing I think parents can do is form good relationships with their educators and the team of educators working with their children, be present in the service in the morning and pick up time, talk to their educators, form those really strong bonds because these relationships are important to building confidence in the care that is being provided to your child and fostering communication with you.'*

Early Childhood Australia is committed through its continued advocacy to high-quality, universal early childhood education and care for every child wherever they live, meeting the needs of children, families and community. Australia's world-leading *National Quality Framework* is an essential foundation to strengthening the system we have, as we move towards universal delivery of early childhood education and care. Both compliance and quality are important in the provision of early childhood education and care that ensures the safety, learning, development and wellbeing of young children. Early Childhood Australia has long advocated for the continued and enduring attention, support and investment of Australian governments as essential for high-quality early childhood education and care, underpinned by Australia's *National Quality Framework*, to be realised for every child.

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