



MEDIA RELEASE

21 August 2025

ECA Welcomes the Victorian Government's Child Safety Review

Yesterday, the Victorian Government released The Rapid Child Safety Review (the Review) led by Mr Jay Weatherill AO and Ms Pam White PSM, in response to devastating reports of alleged child sexual abuse in some Victorian early childhood education and care (ECEC) services.

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) welcomes the release of The Rapid Safety Review and acknowledges the breadth and depth of its exploration into children's safety and safeguarding arrangements, as well as the insights into complex relationships between federal and state government responsibilities. Premier Jacinta Allan announced that all recommendations would be accepted and implemented. ECA acknowledges her commitment to making child safety the priority, both within Victoria and through working collaboratively with the Federal Government. The 22 recommendations address:

- advocacy on national reforms and system improvements (11 recommendations)
- strengthening the Victorian ECEC regulator and their functions (6 recommendations)
- reforms to Working with Children Checks and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (2 recommendations)
- investment in the early childhood workforce and child safe practice (3 recommendations).

ECA particularly welcomes the first recommendation of the Review—to privilege children's rights and best interests in all decision-making in the ECEC system. Substantive reform is required to change the early childhood sector from a regulated market focused on parental workforce participation to a universal system focused on children's rights and entitlements. Still, these reforms are necessary and timely, with momentum building across the country for a new approach.

ECA CEO Sam Page said, 'Ensuring, through amendments to the National Law, that children's safety, rights and best interests are foregrounded in every decision, whether at the board table in a large corporate provider or by a team leader within a small community centre—this is a significant and welcome change.'

The Review also recognises that safeguarding systems need to be more responsive to risk and effective in harm prevention. Services need to have the capability and authority to act quickly in response to safety concerns, red flags or incompetence to prevent harm from occurring—to remove a potential perpetrator before they have an opportunity to do harm. A National Register of Educators is an important part of the solution, as well as careful consideration of threshold risks at which regulators will de-register individuals, removing their eligibility to work with children. ECA welcomes Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn's commitment to enable better information sharing across settings where children are cared for, learn and play—so that they are safe. Bringing together the Working with Children Checks (WWCC), the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards in Victoria is a logical move to address where silos create blind spots.

ECA also welcomes moves to strengthen the Victorian ECEC regulator. Once adopted, every service will undergo an unannounced visit at least once every 12 months, with Assessment and Rating visits set to be completed with greater regularity. Increased penalties for offences under the National Law are proposed.

ECA agrees that families should be able to trust the timely and relevant information made available to them on service quality and compliance to support their own decision-making around their children's participation in ECEC settings. The use of other non-verified rating systems is confusing and may not reflect actual service quality and compliance with the National Law and Regulations.

ECA's Chief Executive Officer Samantha Page said, *'ECA has long advocated for greater resourcing for regulatory authorities to better enable their effectiveness and responsiveness. Reviewing and strengthening the capability of the regulatory authority is welcome to better reflect the complexity and dynamic nature of the early childhood sector. Additionally, advocacy to the Commonwealth to explore how the regulatory authorities can be better enabled with information, tools and powers to effectively regulate approved providers seems timely, particularly around the 'fit and proper person test' in the National Law.'*

The vast majority of early childhood professionals working with children and families are ethical and principled. We also know that there is a need to build capability in parts of the sector to ensure that every educator understands not just their responsibilities and obligations, but also feels able and confident to advocate for, and work to ensure, children's safety, rights and best interests, and respond effectively when these are put at risk. We are interested in engaging in discourse around, and contributing to, the establishing and sustaining of child safe culture in all early childhood services, and further exploring recommendations such as the trialling of CCTV and what this means in-service for children, families, early childhood professionals, services and providers.

Sam Page said, *'Early childhood professionals are important in the lives of children, families and communities and we acknowledge the recommendations of the Review. We will continue to acknowledge and profile ethical, principled, quality practice, while also addressing the current needs of the sector for guidance and resources that support child safety and safeguarding practices.'*

ECA looks forward to working with the Victorian and Federal Governments and the early childhood sector to prioritise children's safety and safeguarding practices as we build a national, universal system in which every child—regardless of location, household income or individual needs—can access high-quality early learning.

ECA CEO Samantha Page is available for comment on 0448 883 687.