



NQF Snapshot

Q4 2020



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

A quarterly report from
the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

February 2021

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Overview

NQF Snapshot Q4 2020 is ACECQA's 32nd national report on children's education and care services operating under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

It provides analysis and information on the profile of the sector and the quality ratings of services against the National Quality Standard (NQS).

A revised version of the NQS commenced on 1 February 2018. The number of quality standards reduced from 18 to 15, and the number of quality elements reduced from 58 to 40.

The changes streamlined the NQS and reduced overlap between elements and standards. Analysis at the standard and element level uses quality ratings against the 2018 NQS only, while analysis at the overall and quality area level uses all current quality ratings against both the 2012 and 2018 NQS.

An [interactive online version of the Snapshot](#), which includes additional analysis, is available on the ACECQA website.

The data presented in this Snapshot was taken from the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) on 1 January 2021 for the period ending 31 December 2020.

Due to rounding, individual percentages in the tables and figures may not add up to 100%.

On 2 April 2020, in recognition of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Education Ministers [announced](#) four critical areas for time-limited regulatory action, including the suspension of assessment and ratings. This resulted in a stark decline in assessment and rating visits in Q2 2020 (see Figure 10). Regulatory authorities have now recommenced the assessment and rating process.

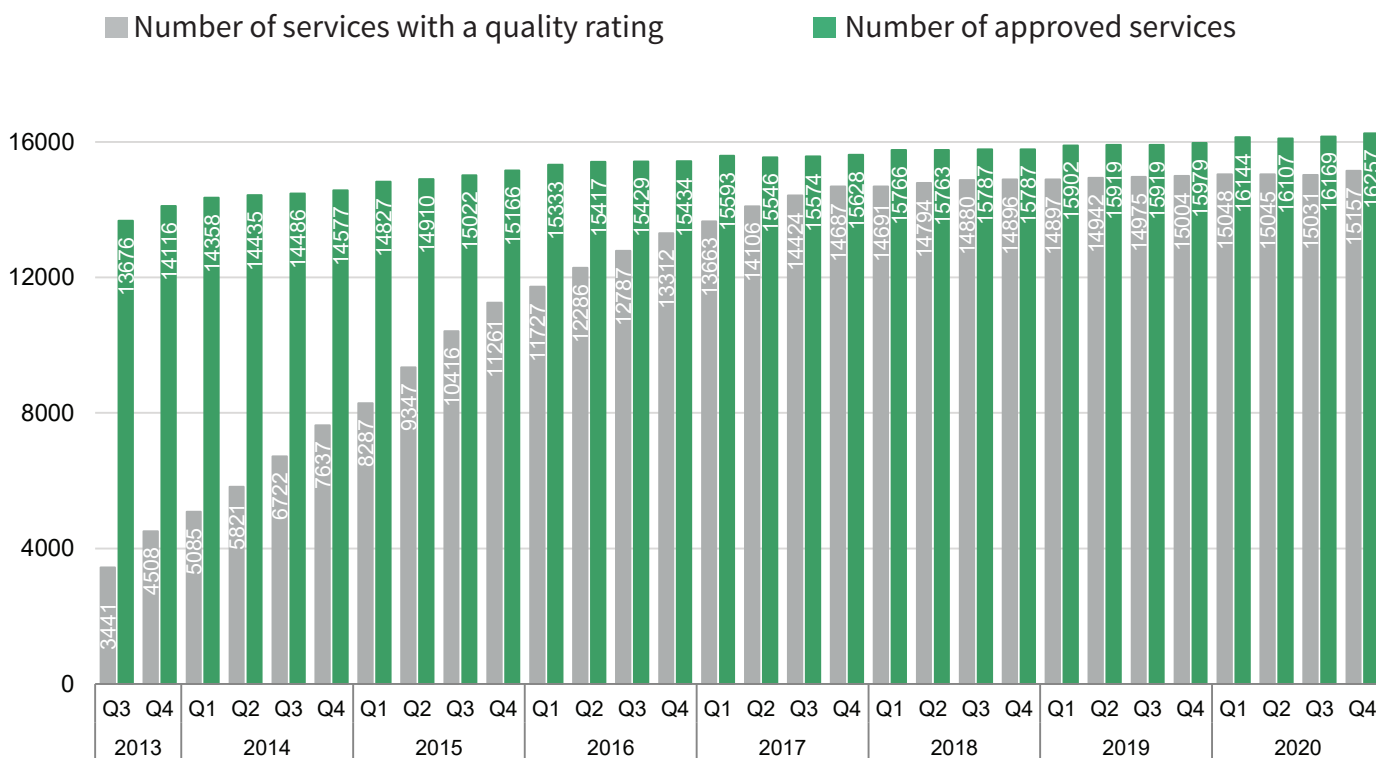
More than 1,100 centre-based service closures related to the impact of COVID-19 were recorded in the NQA ITS at the start of three consecutive weeks in March/April 2020 (see Figure 9). Up-to-date information is available via the [service and temporary closure mapping tool](#) on the ACECQA website.



Snapshot highlights

16,257	children's education and care services approved to operate under the NQF
15,157 (93%)	services with a quality rating
12,666 (84%)	services with a quality rating of Meeting NQS or above
7276	providers approved to operate
5891 (81%)	providers approved to operate only one service
40	services rated Excellent by ACECQA ¹
11,845	quality rating reassessments completed
66%	of services rated Working Towards NQS improved their overall quality rating at reassessment
8627 (53%)	services with a quality rating against the 2018 NQS

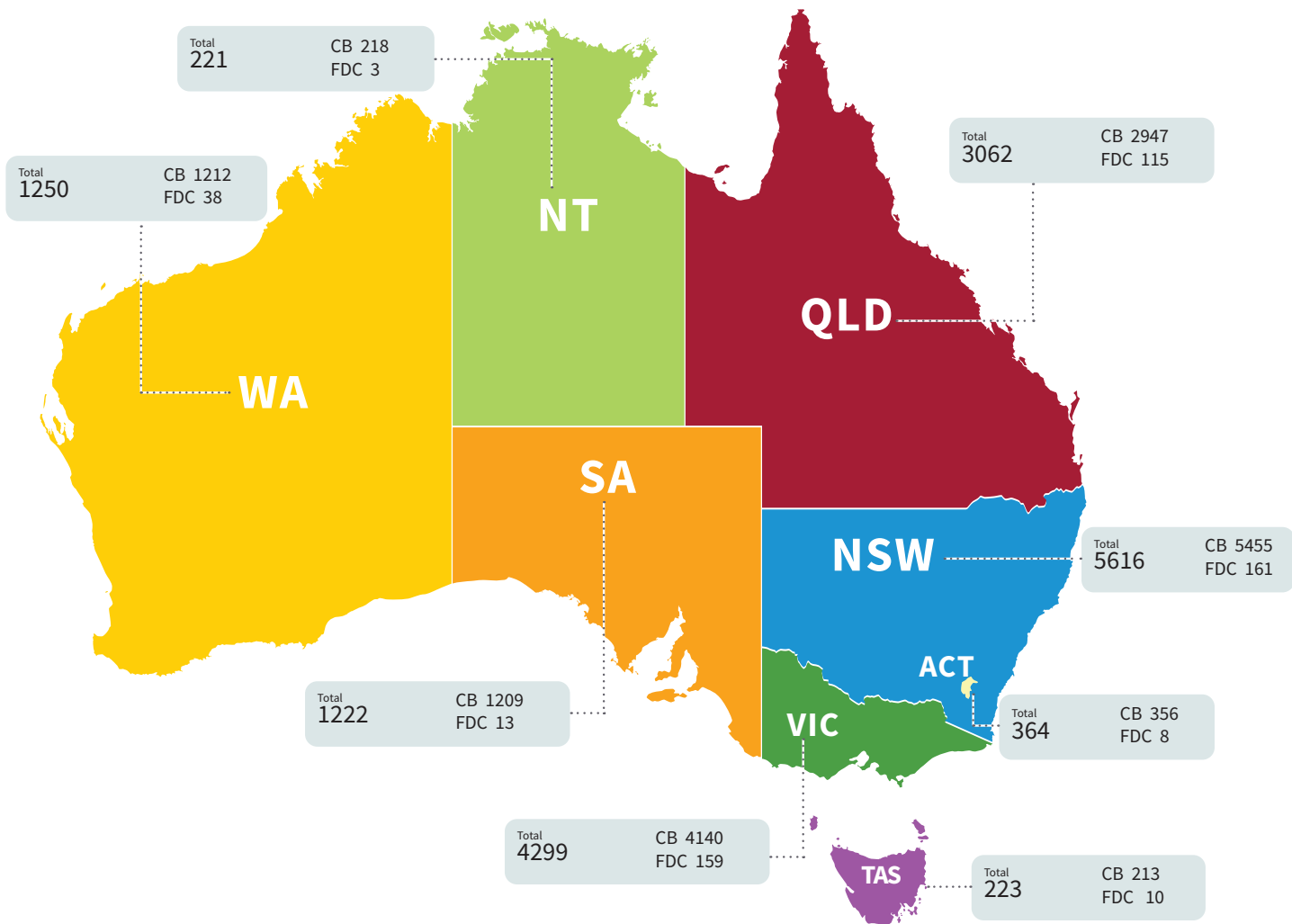
Figure 1: Number of approved services and number of services with a quality rating by quarter



¹ The Excellent rating is awarded for a period of three years. Unless a reapplication for the Excellent rating is received, a service's rating will revert back to Exceeding NQS after this three year period. The Snapshot includes the current number of Excellent rated services.

Profile of the sector

Figure 2: Number of approved services by jurisdiction and service type



<p>Total Centre-based (CB) ¹</p> <p>15,750 (97%)</p> <p>2% Increase on Q4 2019</p>	<p>Total Family day care (FDC) ²</p> <p>507 (3%)</p> <p>-7% Decrease on Q4 2019</p>	<p>Total</p> <p>16,257</p> <p>2% Increase on Q4 2019</p>
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¹ A centre-based service is an education and care service other than a family day care service. This includes most long day care, preschool and outside school hours care services that are delivered at a centre. It does not include preschools in Tasmania or Western Australia out of scope of the NQF, as well as other services that aren't regulated under the National Law.

² A family day care service is an education and care service delivered through a network of educators operating from residences and other approved venues. They are sometimes known as family day care schemes and they are administered and supported by central coordination units.

Figure 3: Proportion of services rated Meeting NQS or above by overall rating and quality area

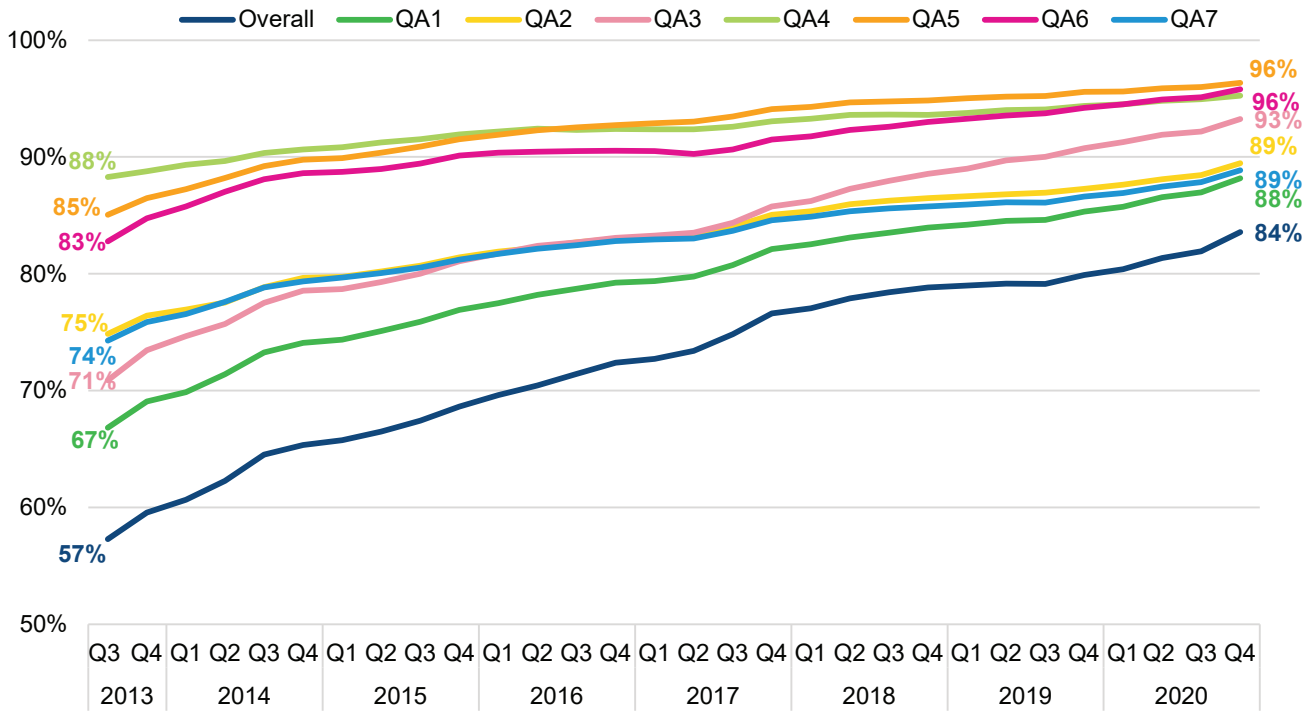


Figure 4: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS or above by overall rating and quality area

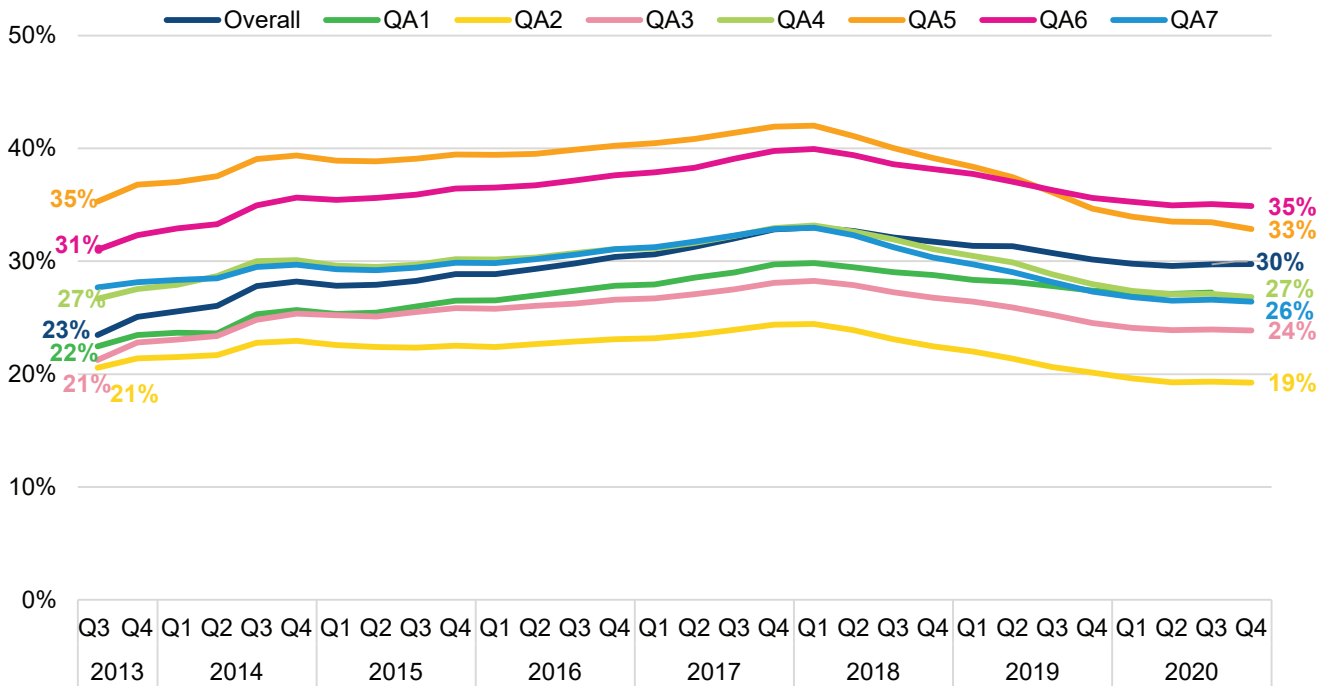


Figure 5: Proportion of services by service sub-type and jurisdiction ^{1,2,3,4,5}

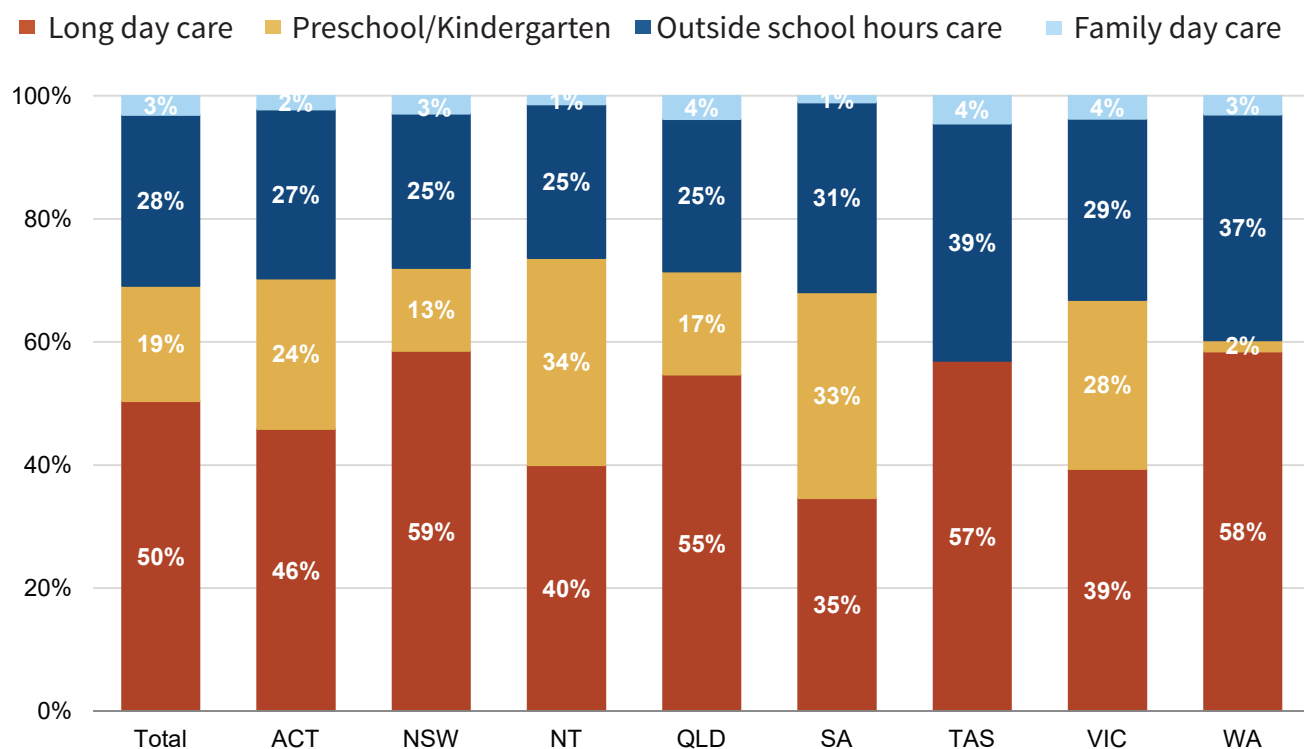


Table 1: Number of services by service sub-type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/ Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	8	167	89	100	0	364
NSW	161	3288	758	1409	0	5616
NT	3	88	74	55	1	221
QLD	115	1674	513	759	1	3062
SA	13	423	409	377	0	1222
TAS	10	127	0	86	0	223
VIC	159	1691	1183	1266	0	4299
WA	38	730	23	458	1	1250
TOTAL	507	8188	3049	4510	3	16,257

1 NQA ITS data collected on service sub-type is self-reported by providers when applying for service approval, and providers may choose multiple service sub-types. For example, a service providing both long day care and outside school hours care, or one providing both long day care and preschool/kindergarten.

2 Providers are not required to notify changes to this information, and therefore this NQA ITS information may not be current.

3 Centre-based services offering more than one type of service are classified as follows: services which provide long day care in addition to any other service type are classified as long day care services; services which provide preschool/kindergarten as well as outside school hours care are classified as preschool/kindergarten services; services which provide outside school hours care only are classified as outside school hours care services.

4 Excludes preschool/kindergarten services operating in Tasmania and Western Australia that are out of scope of the NQF, as well as other services that aren't regulated under the National Law.

5 Three services categorised as 'Other' excluded for graphical purposes.

Figure 6: Proportion of services by provider management type ^{1,2,3}

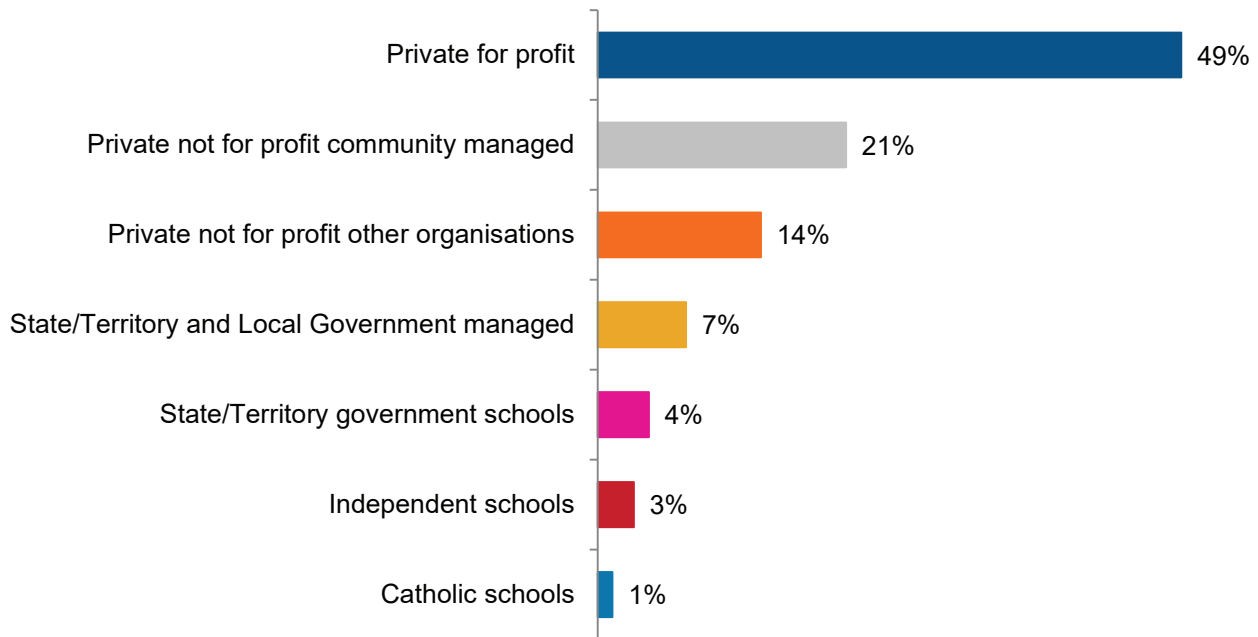


Table 2: Number and proportion of services by provider management type

Provider management type	Number of services	Proportion of services
Private for profit	8000	49%
Private not for profit community managed	3402	21%
Private not for profit other organisations	2236	14%
State/Territory and Local Government managed	1210	7%
State/Territory government schools	699	4%
Independent schools	495	3%
Catholic schools	200	1%
Not stated/Other	15	0%
Total	16,257	100%

¹ NQA ITS data collected on provider management type is self-reported by providers when applying for provider approval. Providers are not required to notify changes to this information, and therefore this NQA ITS information may not be current.

² Provider management type classifications are available at Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) [National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection: Data Collection Guide, 2013](#) (Cat. No. 4240.0.55.002).

³ 15 services categorised as 'Not stated/Other' excluded for graphical purposes.

Figure 7 shows that 81% of approved providers operate a single service while 1% of approved providers operate 25 or more services.

Figure 7: Proportion of approved providers by size

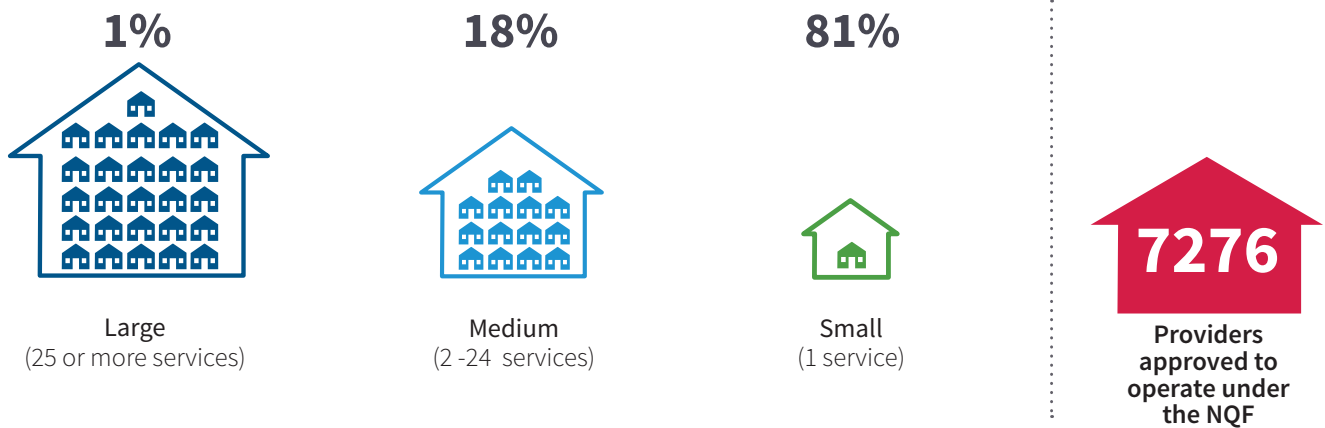


Figure 8 shows that 36% of approved services are operated by small approved providers while 33% of approved services are operated by large approved providers.

Figure 8: Proportion of approved services by provider size

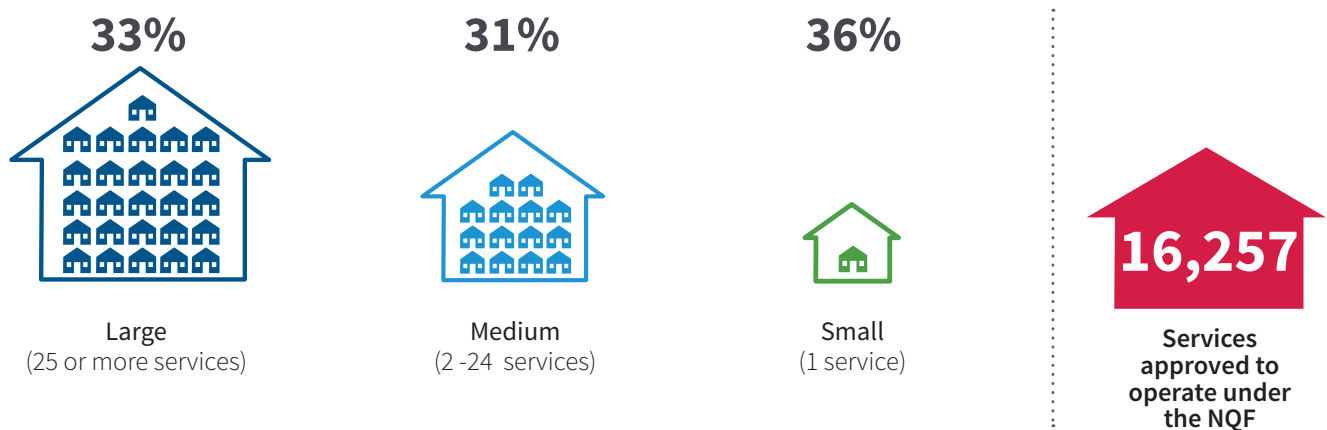


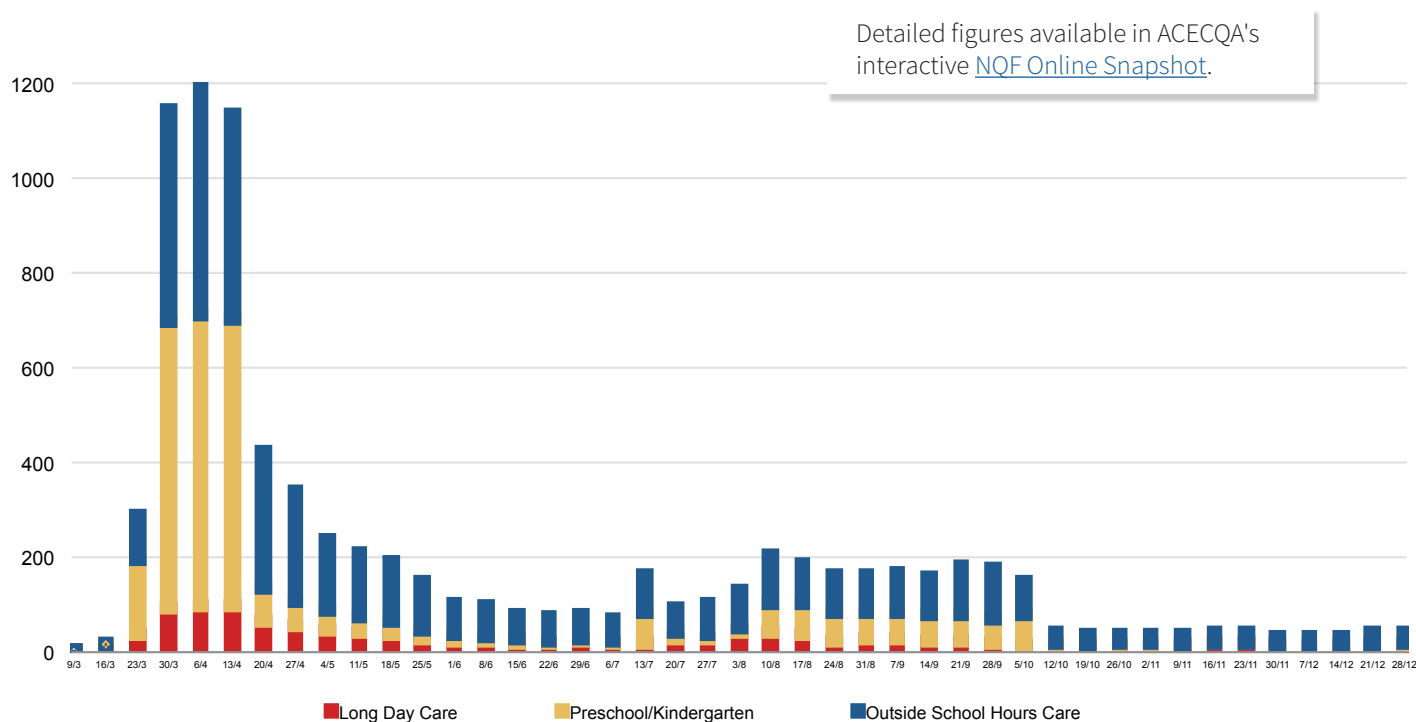
Figure 9 shows the total number of centre-based services closed at the start of each week from Monday 9 March to Monday 28 December, where the closure is related to the impact of COVID-19.

The number and proportion of service closures varied over time and across jurisdictions. This may be due to differing approaches to precautionary measures, such as school closures, at the state and territory level. The timing, duration and extent of these measures impacts the demand for children’s education and care services, as well as the decisions of service providers to keep services operating.

More than 1,100 centre-based service closures related to the impact of COVID-19 were recorded in the NQA ITS at the start of three consecutive weeks (Monday 30 March; Monday 6 April; Monday 13 April), with the majority of these being preschools/kindergartens, followed by outside school hours care services.

Up-to-date information is available via the [service and temporary closure mapping tool](#) on the ACECQA website.

Figure 9: Number of centre-based service closures recorded in the NQA ITS at the start of each week, related to the impact of COVID-19



Progress of assessment and rating

Table 3 includes all approved services. The proportion of services with a quality rating will not reach 100% at any one time because a small proportion of services will only recently have been approved and may not have started operating or may have only been operating for a short period of time. In general, state and territory regulatory authorities will not assess and rate newly approved services which have been operating for less than 9-12 months.

Table 3: Quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Number of services	Proportion of all services	Number of services with a quality rating	Proportion of services with a quality rating
ACT	364	2%	325	89%
NSW	5616	35%	5297	94%
NT	221	1%	213	96%
QLD	3062	19%	2857	93%
SA	1222	8%	1172	96%
TAS	223	1%	212	95%
VIC	4299	26%	3984	93%
WA	1250	8%	1097	88%
TOTAL	16,257	100%	15,157	93%

Table 4: Number of services with a quality rating by service sub-type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/ Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	6	148	87	84	0	325
NSW	147	3120	744	1286	0	5297
NT	3	86	73	50	1	213
QLD	100	1551	485	720	1	2857
SA	12	391	403	366	0	1172
TAS	10	121	0	81	0	212
VIC	133	1530	1155	1166	0	3984
WA	30	642	19	405	1	1097
TOTAL	441	7589	2966	4158	3	15,157

Figure 10 shows the total number of quality assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits undertaken by state and territory regulatory authorities each quarter. Other types of visits include checking and monitoring compliance with the requirements of the NQF, investigating complaints and responding to events such as serious incidents or changes of service ownership, as well as visits for educative purposes.

While the ratio of assessment and rating visits to all other visits has fluctuated over time, state and territory regulatory authorities have undertaken more than three times as many other types of visit than assessment and rating visits since 2017, emphasising the significant amount of regulatory work that occurs outside of quality assessment and rating.

On 2 April 2020, in recognition of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Education Ministers [announced](#) four critical areas for time-limited regulatory action, including the suspension of assessment and ratings. This resulted in the stark decline in assessment and rating visits in Q2 2020.

Figure 10: Number of service visits (quality assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits)

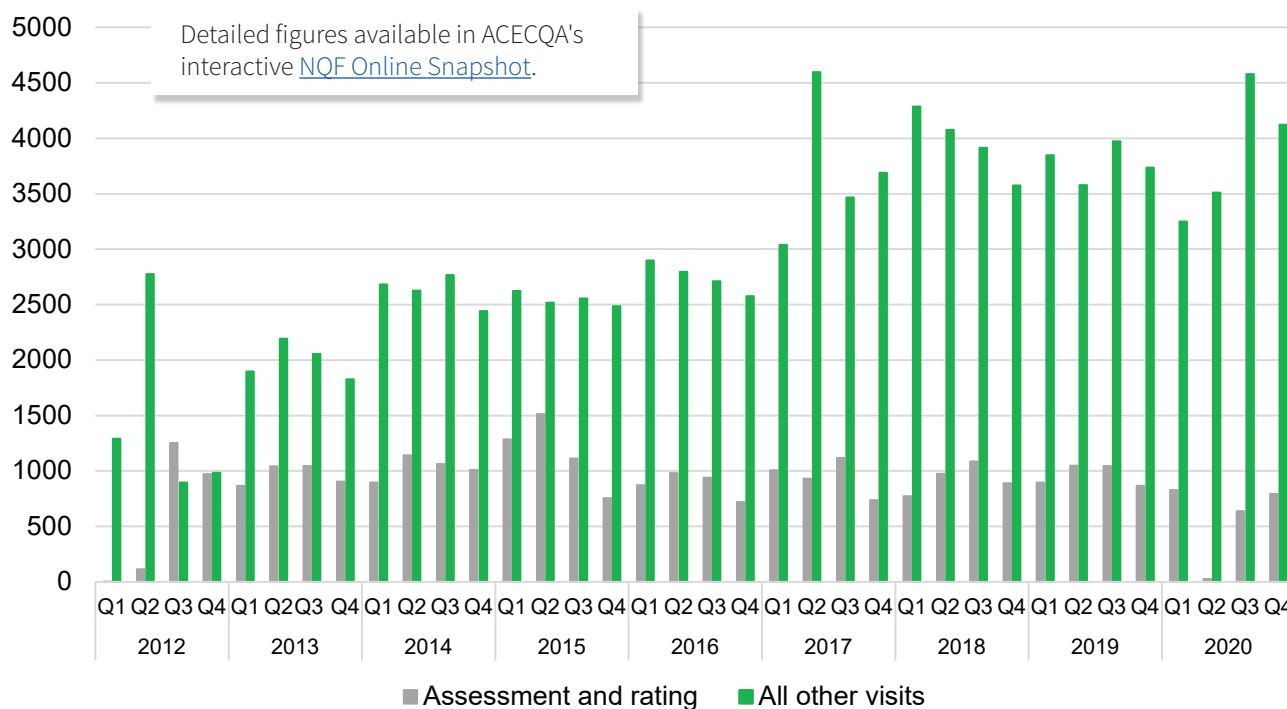


Table 5 shows the proportion of overall quality ratings that change between the draft and final assessment and rating report.

As part of the comprehensive assessment and rating process, service providers are issued a draft report by state and territory regulatory authorities, which includes the proposed quality ratings. Service providers are given the opportunity to provide any required feedback or clarification prior to the final report and quality ratings being issued.

More than 93% of all overall quality ratings remain unchanged between the draft and final assessment and rating reports.

Table 5: Proportion of overall quality ratings that change between the draft and final assessment and rating report

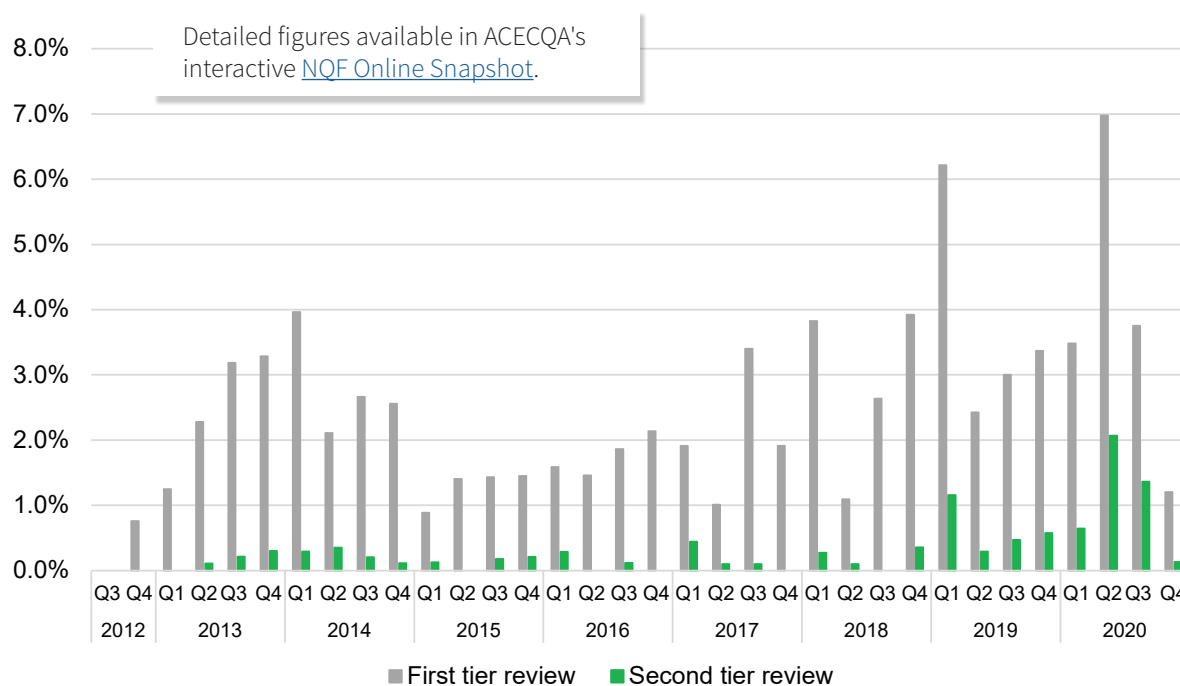
Rating level	Change in rating	%
Higher	1045	6.9%
Unchanged	14,062	93.1%
Lower	0	0.0%

Figure 11 shows the proportion of quality assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review.

As part of the comprehensive assessment and rating process, service providers are given the opportunity to request a (first tier) review by the relevant state and territory regulatory authority following the final report and quality ratings being issued. They may also subsequently request a (second tier) review by an expert panel convened by ACECQA.

While the proportion of assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review is very low, it has increased since the introduction of the 2018 NQS. This may reflect a transition period between the requirements of the 2012 NQS and the 2018 NQS, particularly in terms of practice required to be demonstrated to receive a rating of Exceeding NQS. Under the 2018 NQS, it is more challenging for a service to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS than under the 2012 NQS.

Figure 11: Proportion of quality assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review



Quality improvement

Table 6 presents a service's previous overall rating alongside its reassessed overall rating. For example, 2856 services previously rated Working Towards NQS improved their rating to Meeting NQS after reassessment. While 1797 services previously rated Working Towards NQS received the same rating again after reassessment.

Table 6: Reassessments by overall quality rating¹

		Rating after reassessment				Total
		Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	
Rating before reassessment	Significant Improvement Required	19	62	14	0	95
	Working Towards NQS	37	1797	2856	723	5413
	Meeting NQS	4	750	2623	683	4060
	Exceeding NQS	1	255	865	1156	2277
	Total	61	2864	6358	2562	11,845

		Rating after reassessment				Improvement rate
		Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	
Rating before reassessment	Significant Improvement Required	20%	65%	15%	0%	80%
	Working Towards NQS	1%	33%	53%	13%	66%
	Meeting NQS	0%	18%	65%	17%	17%
	Exceeding NQS	0%	11%	38%	51%	-

¹ Reassessments include the following processes described in the National Law: i. Partial reassessment and re-rating requested by provider; ii. Partial reassessment and re-rating instigated by the regulatory authority; iii. Full reassessment and re-rating requested by provider; iv. Full reassessment and re-rating instigated by the regulatory authority.

Overall quality ratings

Authorised officers from state and territory regulatory authorities assess and rate services using the seven quality areas, 15 standards and 40 elements that make up the NQS. Services are given a rating for each of the seven quality areas and an overall rating.

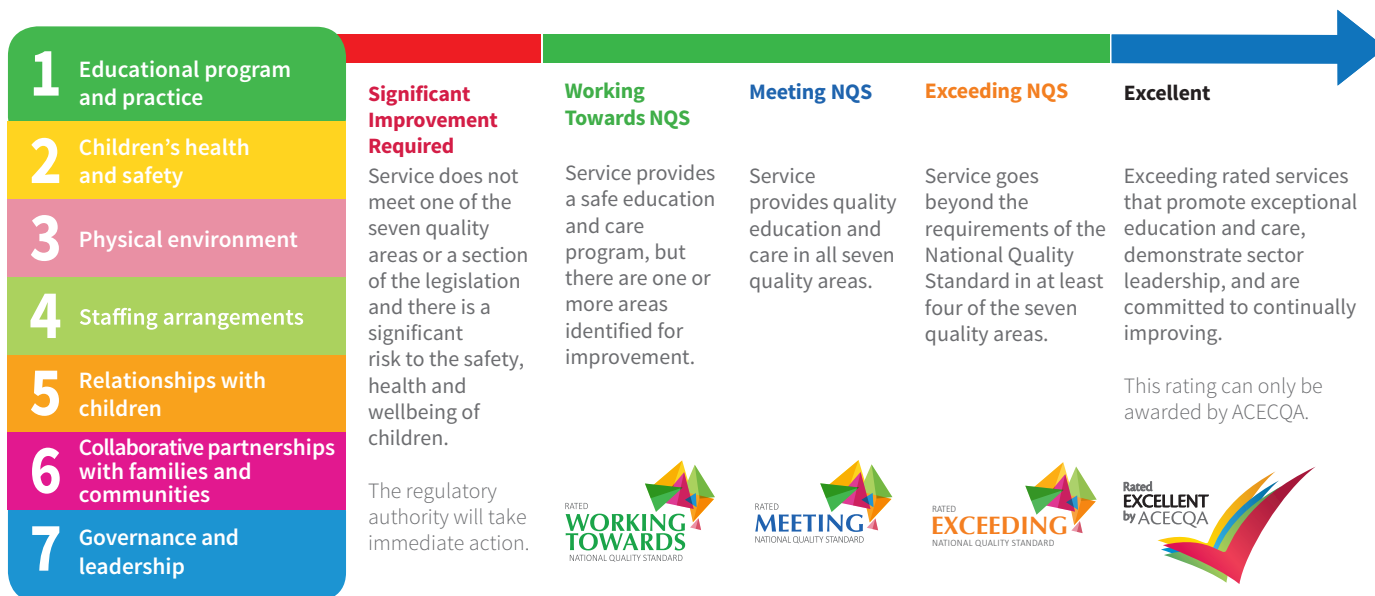


Table 7: Overall quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	Excellent	Total
ACT	0	81 25%	91 28%	151 46%	2	325
NSW	5	966 18%	2915 55%	1396 26%	15	5297
NT	1	37 17%	139 65%	35 16%	1	213
QLD	0	361 13%	1663 58%	825 29%	8	2857
SA	0	164 14%	450 38%	550 47%	8	1172
TAS	1	48 23%	96 45%	67 32%	0	212
VIC	2	547 14%	2177 55%	1252 31%	6	3984
WA	0	278 25%	625 57%	194 18%	0	1097
TOTAL	9	2482 16%	8156 54%	4470 29%	40	15,157

Figure 12: Overall quality ratings by service type

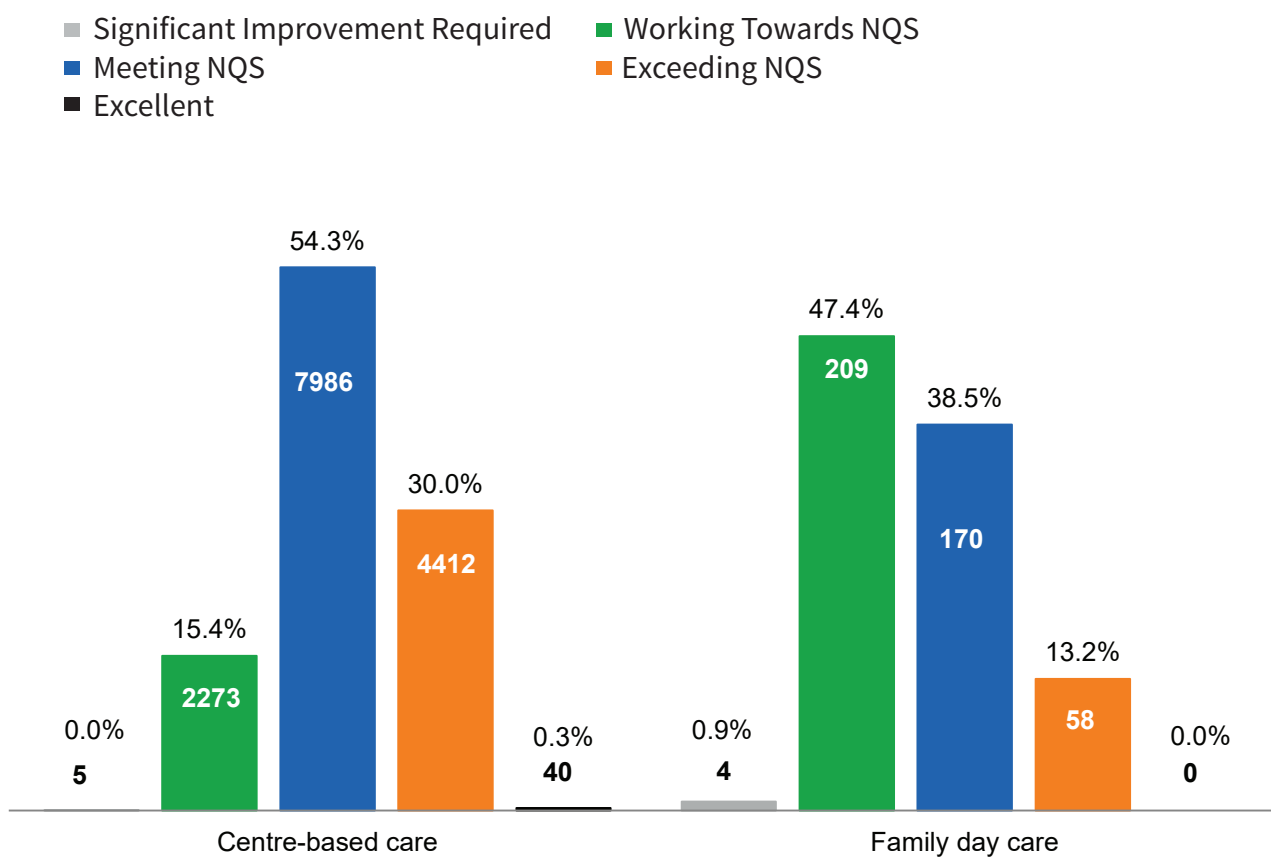


Figure 13: Overall quality ratings by centre-based service sub-type

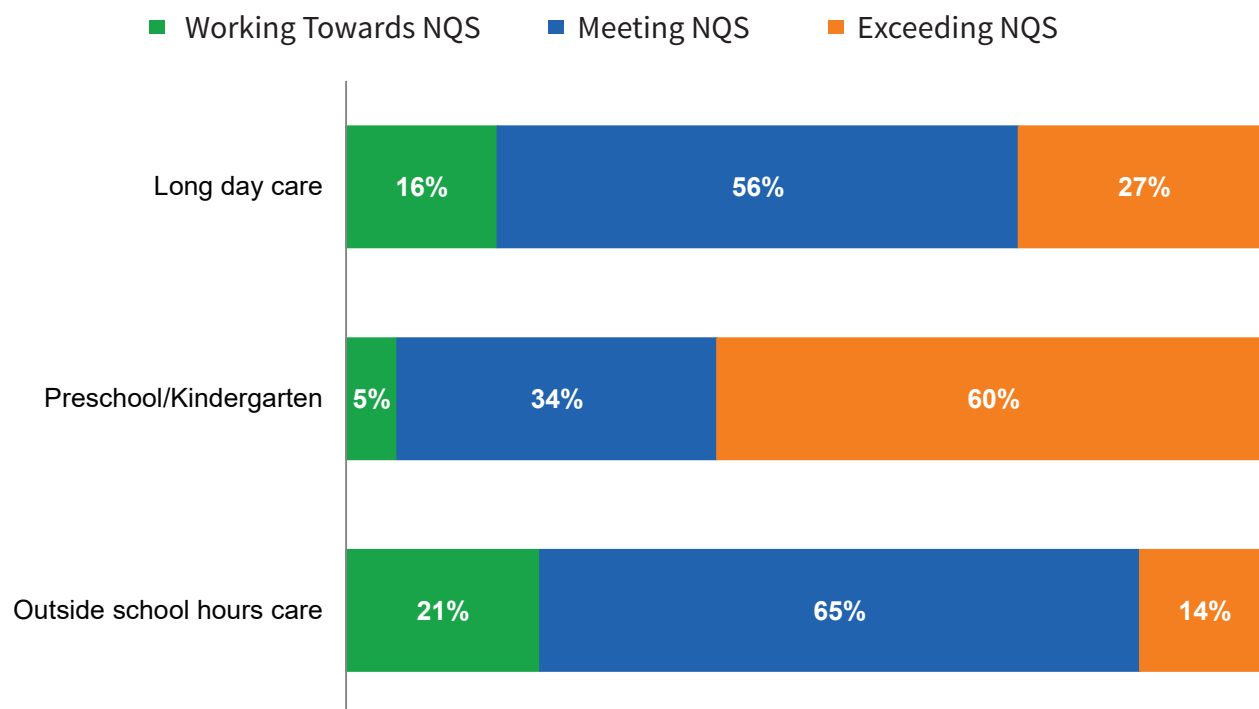
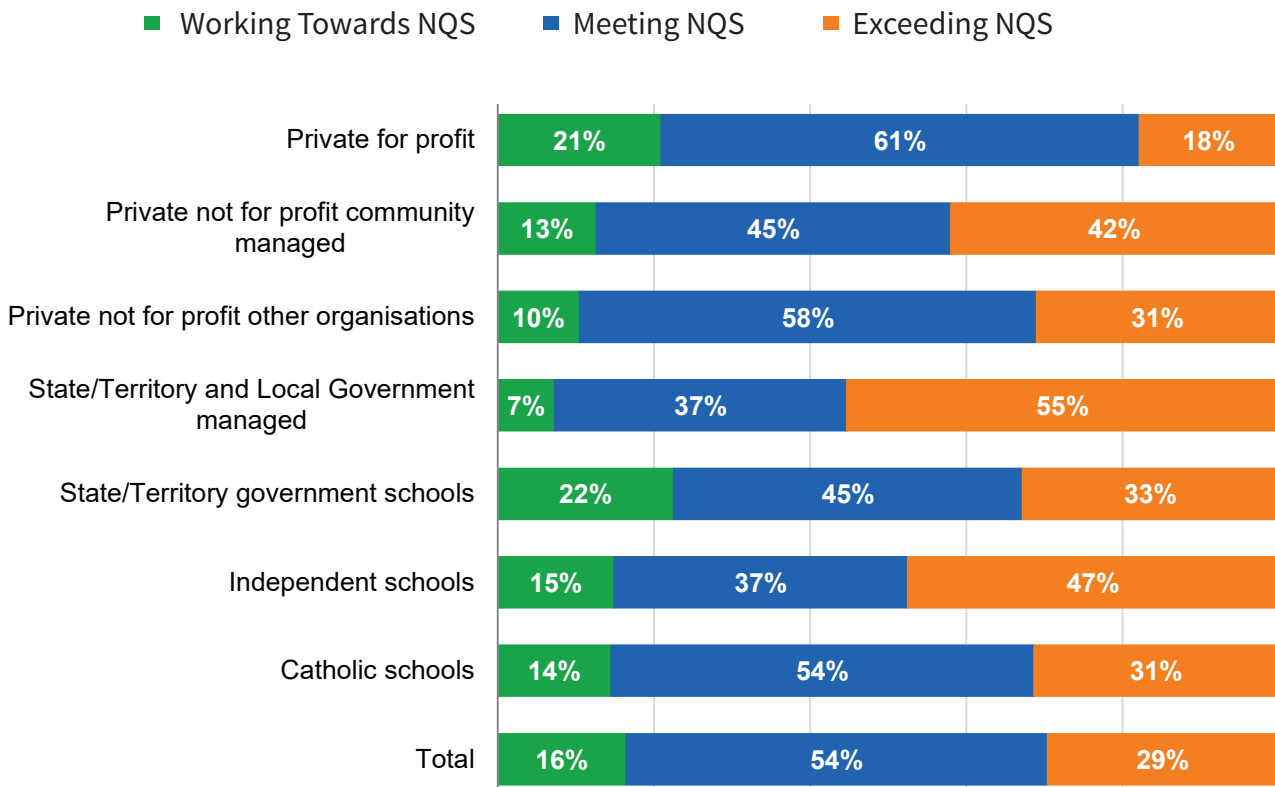


Figure 14 shows the variation in spread of quality ratings between provider management types.

These differences can reflect a range of contextual factors, such as the service profile of these provider types. For example, half of all 'State/Territory and Local Government managed' services are preschools/kindergartens, with preschools/kindergartens performing better against the NQS than other service types (see Figure 13). In contrast, preschools/kindergartens make up only 1% of 'Private for profit' services.

Figure 14: Overall quality ratings by provider management type¹



¹ 15 providers categorised as 'Not stated/Other' excluded for graphical purposes.

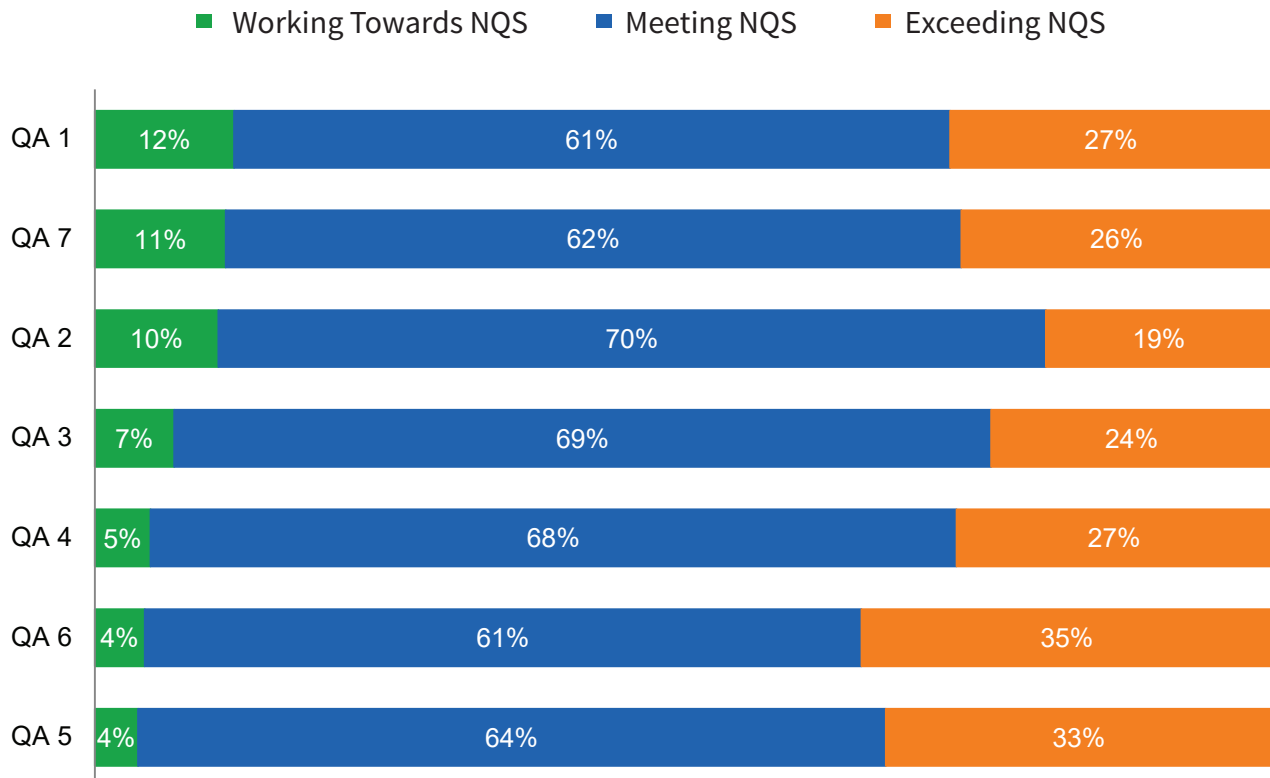
Quality area ratings

Table 8 and Figure 16 rank the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the number and proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Table 8: Quality area ratings

	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS
Quality Area 1 - Educational program and practice	0	1790	9218	4149
Quality Area 7 - Governance and leadership	5	1684	9465	4003
Quality Area 2 - Children's health and safety	8	1588	10,645	2916
Quality Area 3 - Physical environment	4	1020	10,514	3619
Quality Area 4 - Staffing arrangements	2	717	10,372	4066
Quality Area 6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	0	639	9229	5289
Quality Area 5 - Relationships with children	1	553	9625	4978

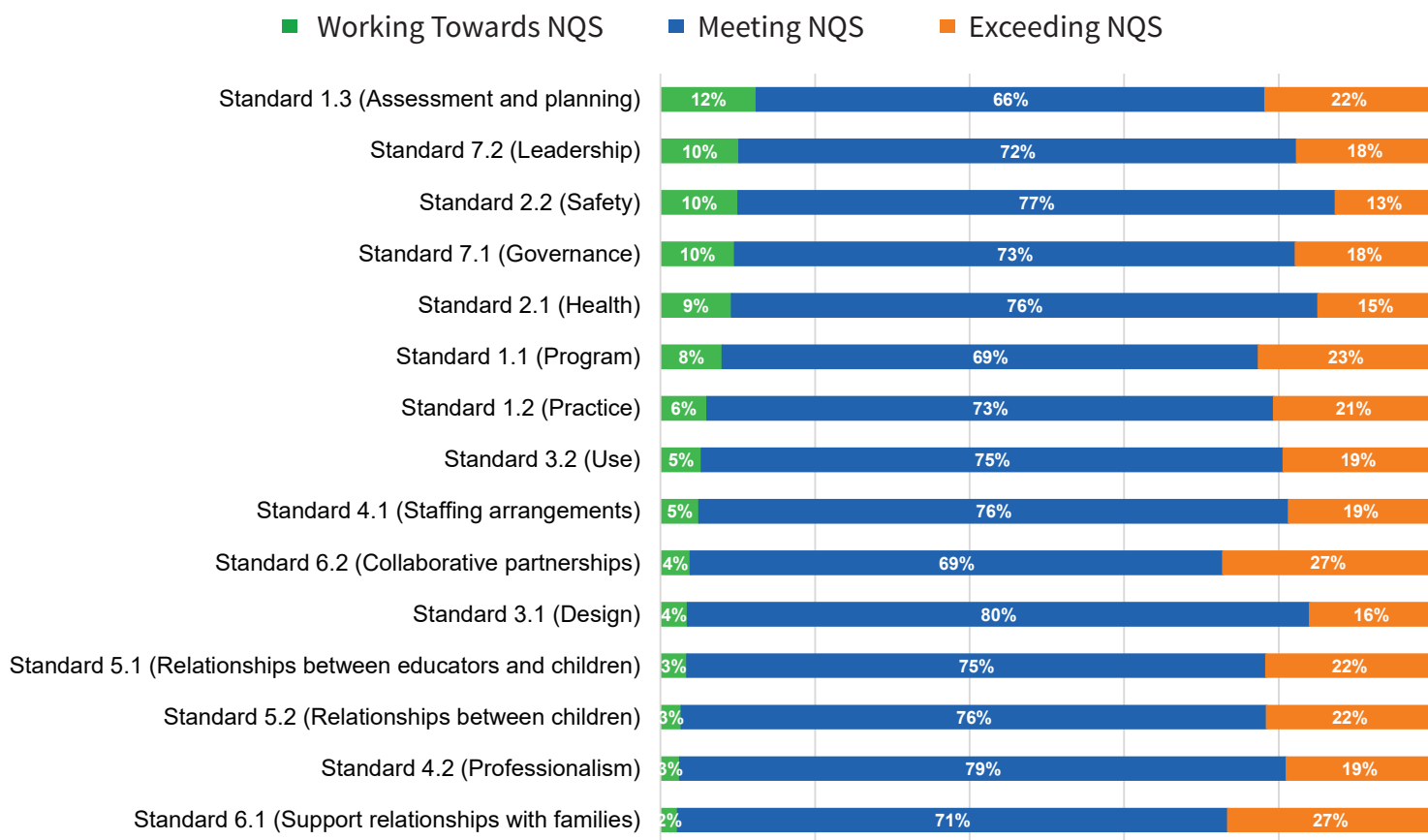
Figure 15: Quality area ratings



Standard level ratings under the 2018 NQS

Figure 16 ranks the 15 standards of the 2018 NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each standard.

Figure 16: Standard level ratings under the 2018 NQS



Element level results under the 2018 NQS

Table 9 ranks the 40 elements of the 2018 NQS in descending order, based on the proportion of services that do not meet each element.

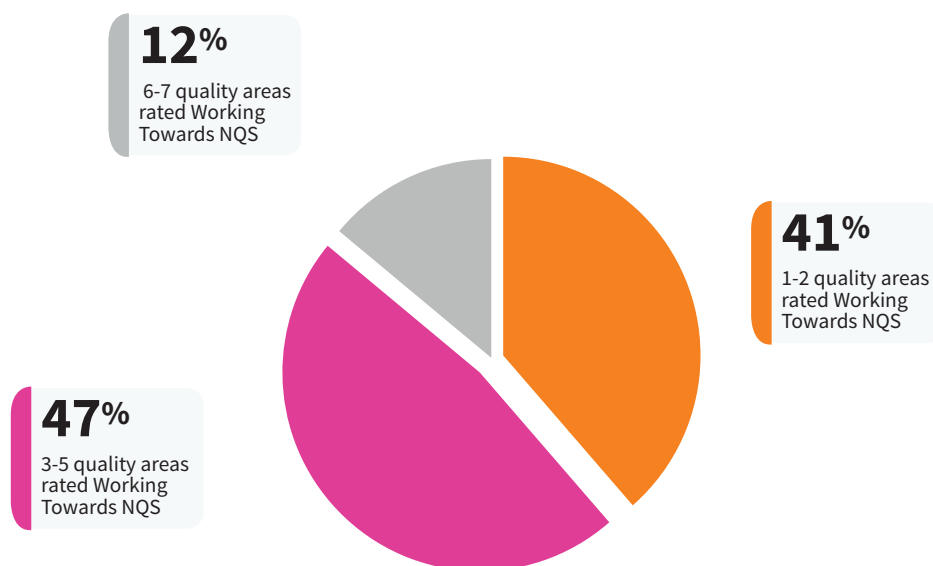
Table 9: Element level results under the 2018 NQS

	% Not Met		% Not Met
1.3.1 (Assessment and planning cycle)	10.4%	3.2.1 (Inclusive environment)	2.7%
1.3.2 (Critical reflection)	10.1%	5.1.2 (Dignity and rights of the child)	2.7%
7.1.2 (Management systems)	8.6%	7.1.3 (Roles and responsibilities)	2.7%
2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures)	7.9%	7.1.1 (Service philosophy and purpose)	2.6%
2.2.1 (Supervision)	6.8%	5.2.2 (Self-regulation)	2.6%
7.2.3 (Development of professionals)	6.7%	2.2.3 (Child protection)	2.5%
7.2.2 (Educational leadership)	6.6%	2.1.3 (Healthy lifestyle)	2.5%
1.1.3 (Program learning opportunities)	5.9%	3.2.2 (Resources support play-based learning)	2.3%
2.2.2 (Incident and emergency management)	5.4%	4.2.2 (Professional standards)	1.9%
4.1.1 (Organisation of educators)	4.8%	5.1.1 (Positive educator to child interactions)	1.9%
1.1.1 (Approved learning framework)	3.9%	6.2.2 (Access and participation)	1.8%
7.2.1 (Continuous improvement)	3.9%	2.1.1 (Wellbeing and comfort)	1.6%
1.1.2 (Child-centred)	3.7%	3.1.1 (Fit for purpose)	1.5%
1.2.2 (Responsive teaching and scaffolding)	3.6%	4.2.1 (Professional collaboration)	1.3%
1.2.3 (Child directed learning)	3.6%	6.1.3 (Families are supported)	1.3%
3.2.3 (Environmentally responsible)	3.3%	6.2.1 (Transitions)	1.3%
1.3.3 (Information for families)	3.3%	6.1.1 (Engagement with the service)	1.1%
1.2.1 (Intentional teaching)	3.2%	6.1.2 (Parent views are respected)	1.0%
3.1.2 (Upkeep)	2.8%	4.1.2 (Continuity of staff)	0.9%
6.2.3 (Community engagement)	2.8%	5.2.1 (Collaborative learning)	0.7%

Services rated Working Towards NQS

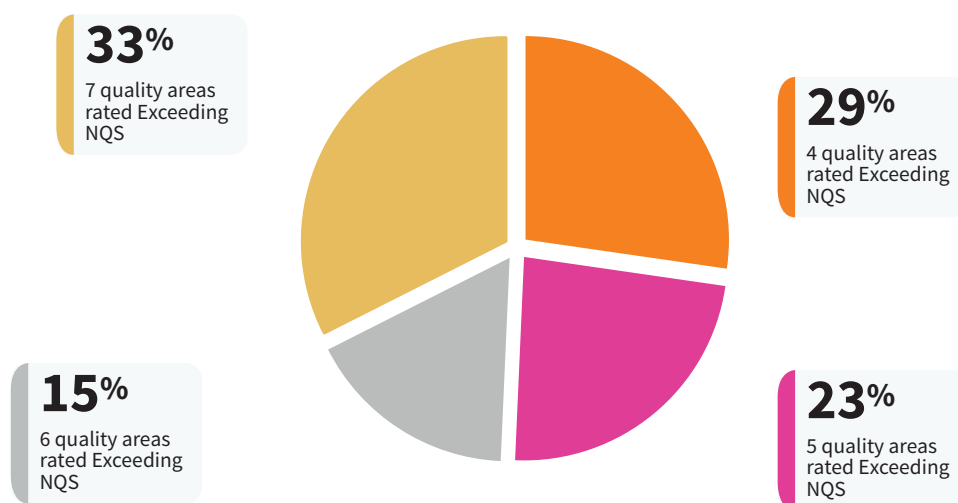
A service receives an overall rating of Working Towards NQS if any of the seven quality areas are rated Working Towards NQS. A quality area is rated Working Towards NQS if any of the standards within that quality area are rated Working Towards NQS.

Figure 17: Proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS by number of quality areas rated Working Towards NQS



Services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 18: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS by number of quality areas rated Exceeding NQS

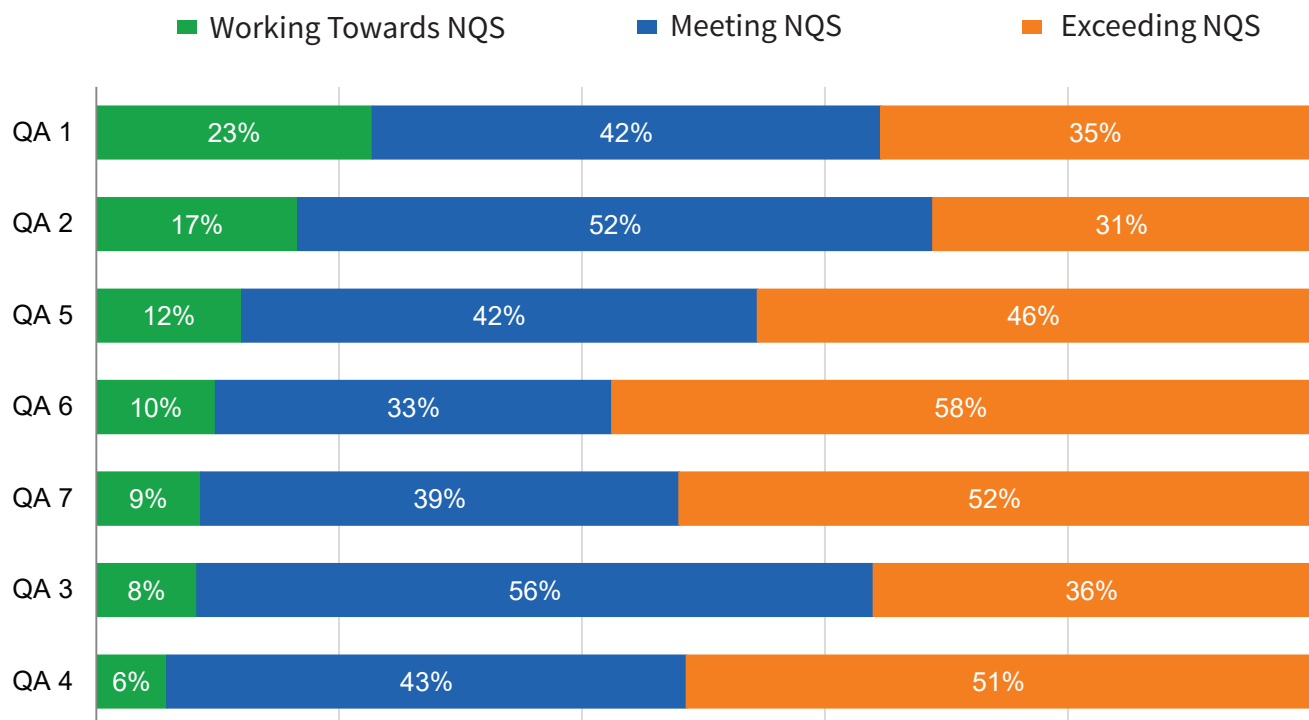


Australian Capital Territory summary

364	services comprising 356 centre-based services and eight family day care services
325 (89%)	services with a quality rating
81	services rated Working Towards NQS
91	services rated Meeting NQS
151	services rated Exceeding NQS
2	services rated Excellent by ACECQA

Figure 19 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 19: Quality area ratings



Contact details

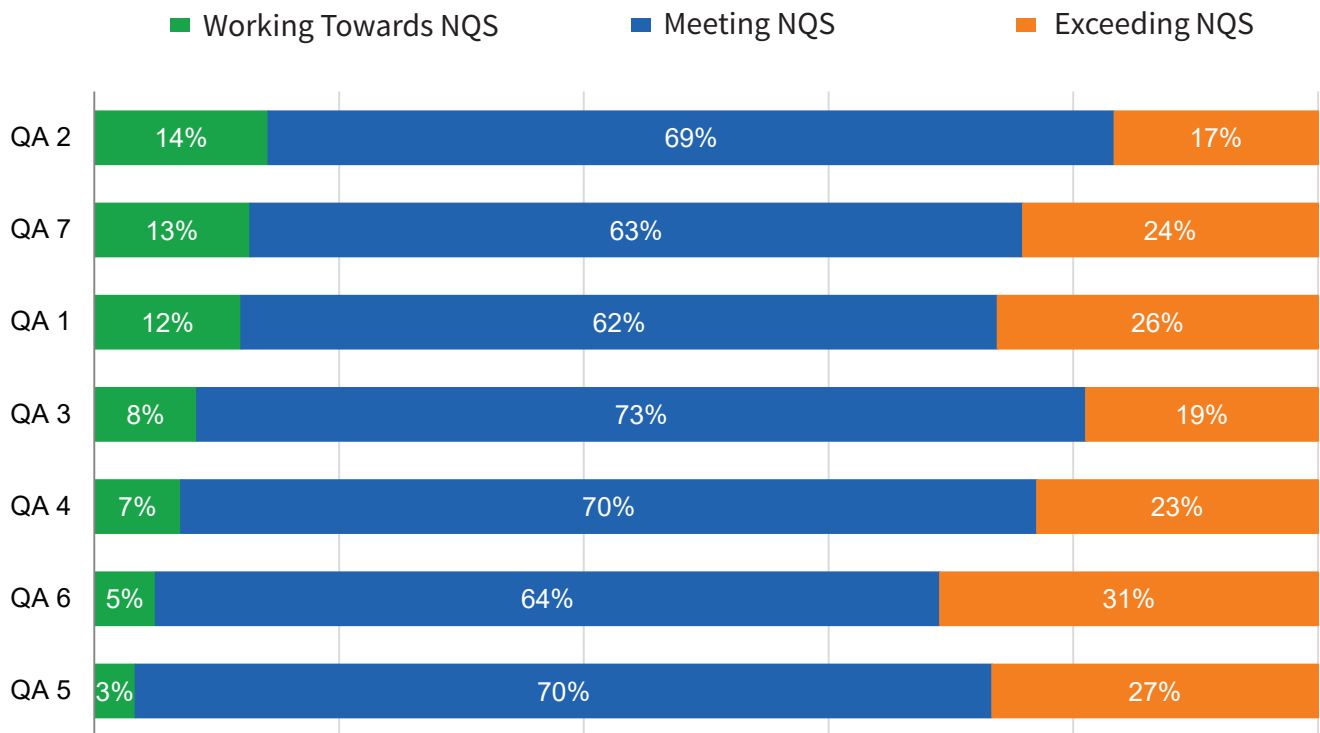
Education Directorate
 Children's Education and Care Assurance
www.education.act.gov.au/early-childhood

New South Wales summary

5616	services comprising 5455 centre-based services and 161 family day care services
5297 (94%)	services with a quality rating
5	services rated Significant Improvement Required
966	services rated Working Towards NQS
2915	services rated Meeting NQS
1396	services rated Exceeding NQS
15	services rated Excellent by ACECQA

Figure 20 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 20: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education
 Early Childhood Education Directorate
www.education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education

Northern Territory summary

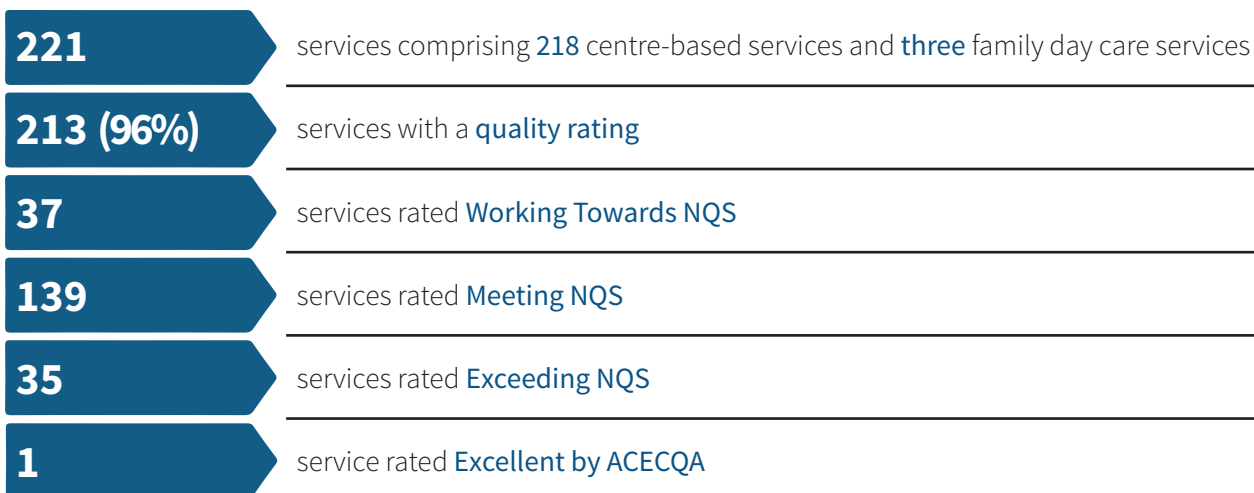
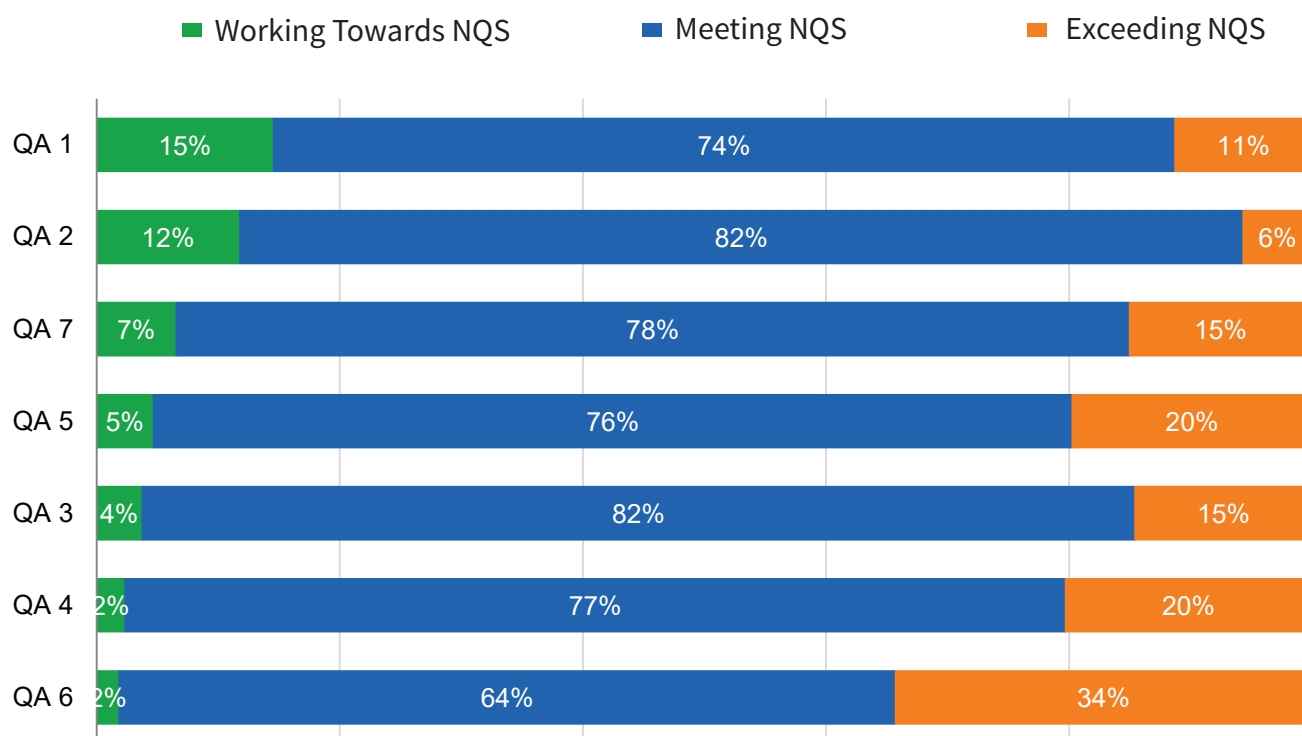


Figure 21 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 21: Quality area ratings



Contact details

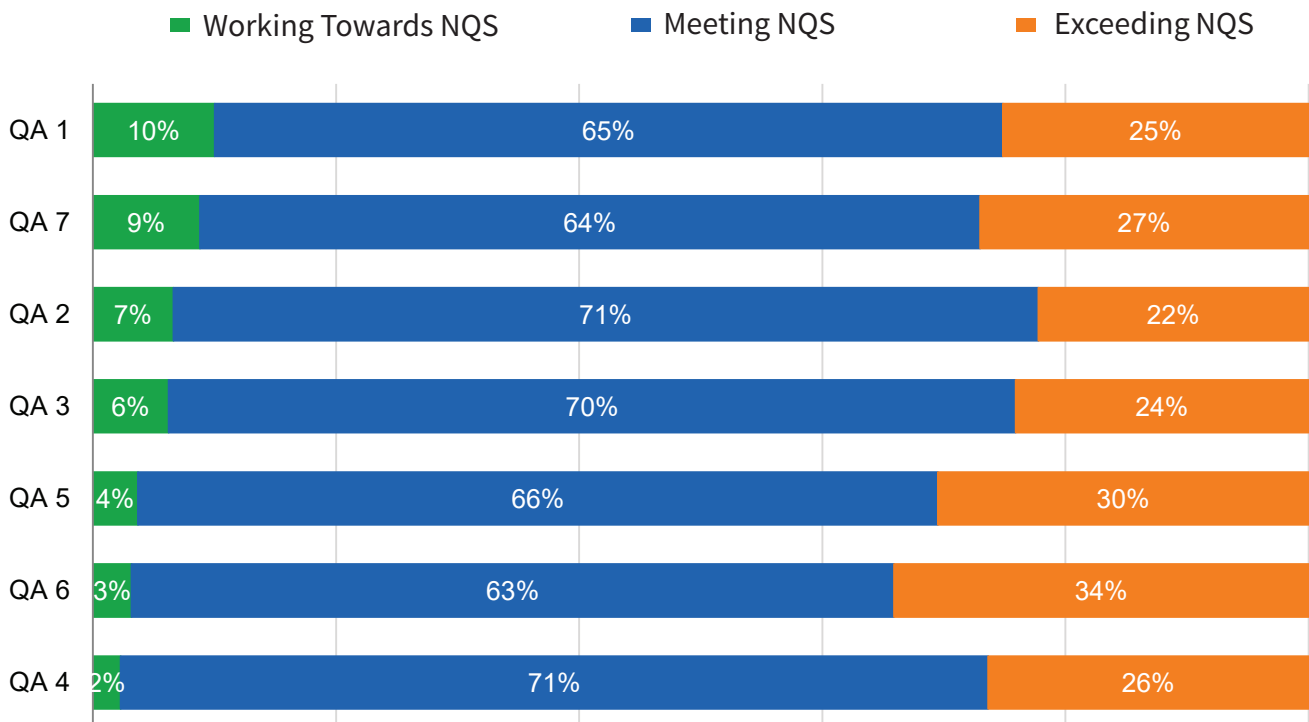
Department of Education
 Quality Education and Care NT
www.nt.gov.au/learning/early-childhood

Queensland summary

3062	services comprising 2947 centre-based services and 115 family day care services
2857 (93%)	services with a quality rating
361	services rated Working Towards NQS
1663	services rated Meeting NQS
825	services rated Exceeding NQS
8	services rated Excellent by ACECQA

Figure 22 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 22: Quality area ratings



Contact details

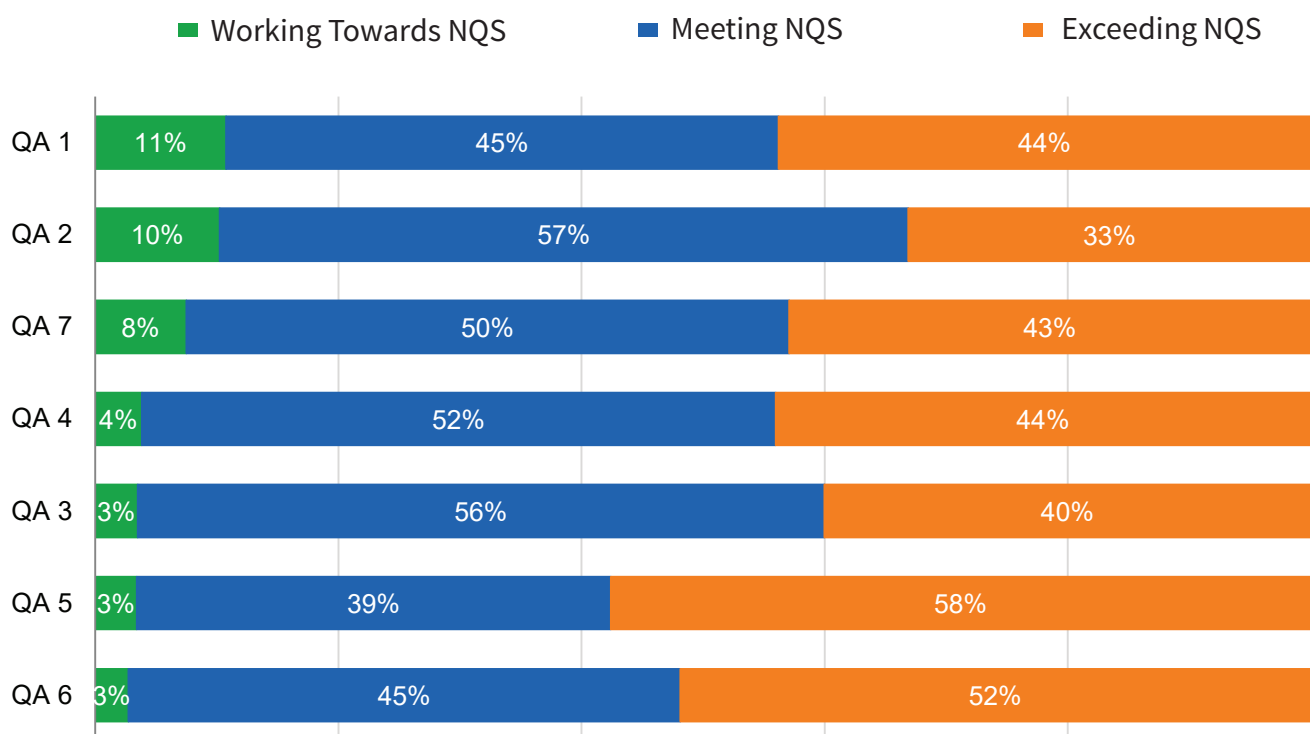
Department of Education
 Early Childhood Education and Care
www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au

South Australia summary

1222	services comprising 1209 centre-based services and 13 family day care services
1172 (96%)	services with a quality rating
164	services rated Working Towards NQS
450	services rated Meeting NQS
550	services rated Exceeding NQS
8	services rated Excellent by ACECQA

Figure 23 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 23: Quality area ratings



Contact details

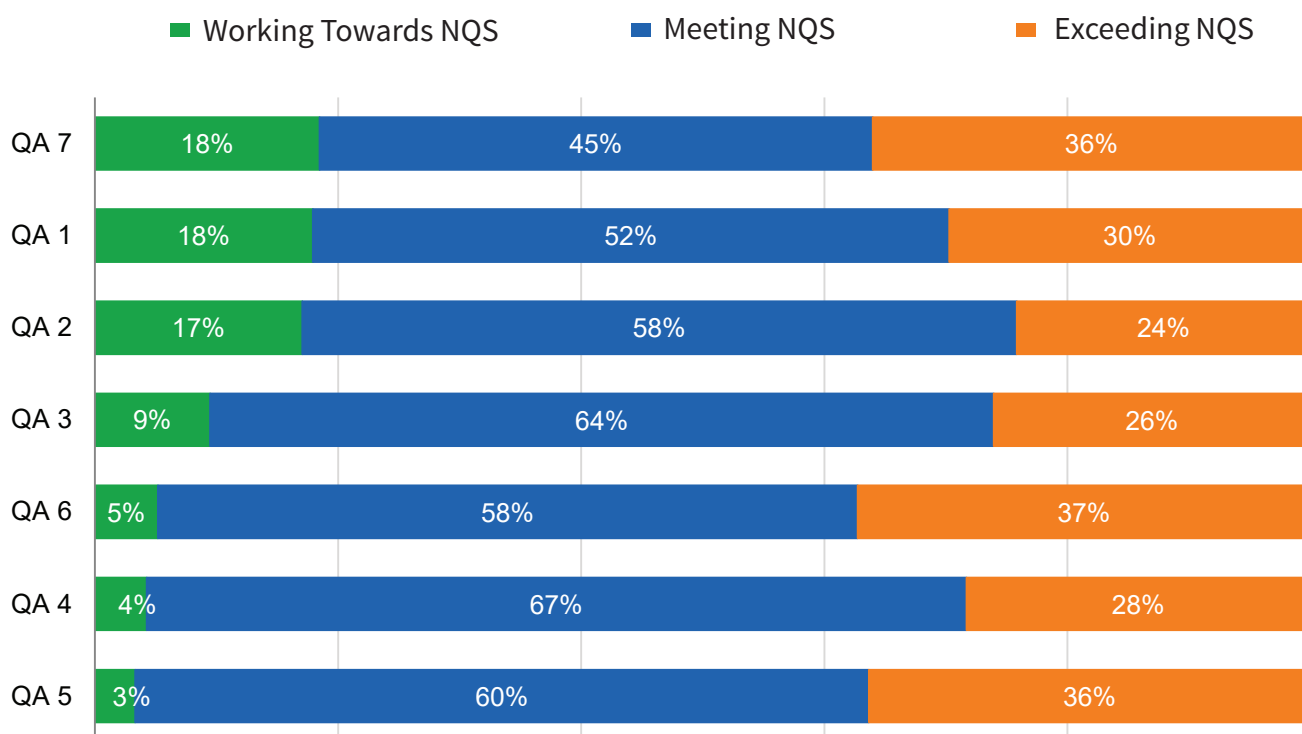
Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards
Board of South Australia
www.esb.sa.gov.au/early-childhood

Tasmania summary

223	services comprising 213 centre-based services and 10 family day care services
212 (95%)	services with a quality rating
1	service rated Significant Improvement Required
48	services rated Working Towards NQS
96	services rated Meeting NQS
67	services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 24 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 24: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education
Education and Care Unit
www.educationandcare.tas.gov.au

Victoria summary

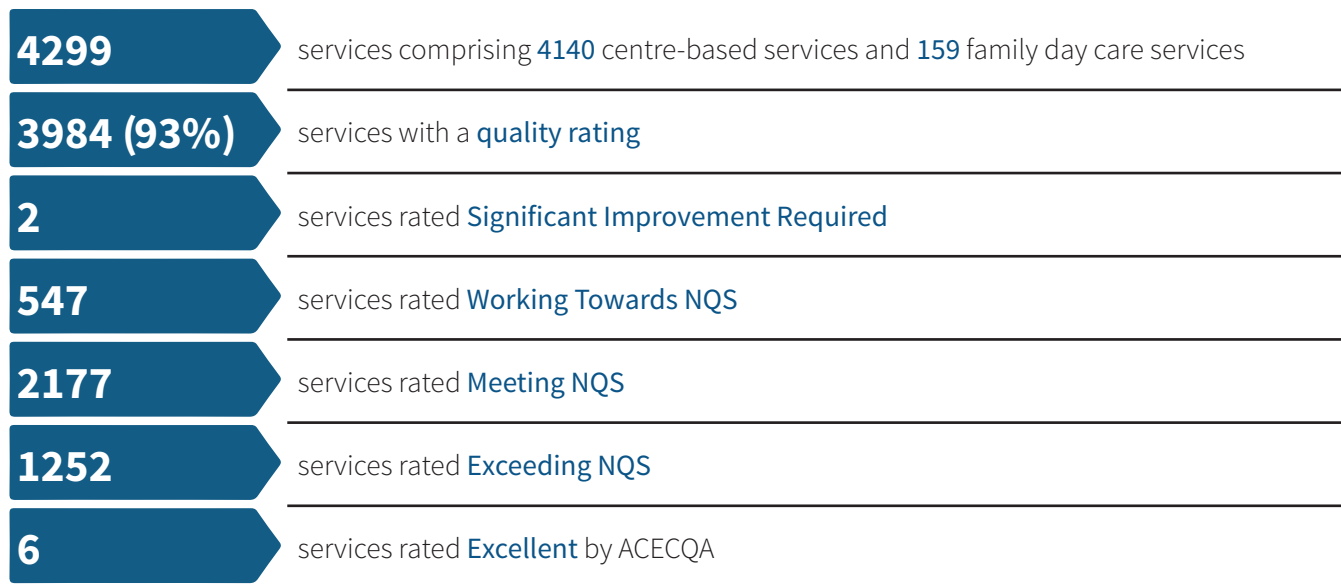
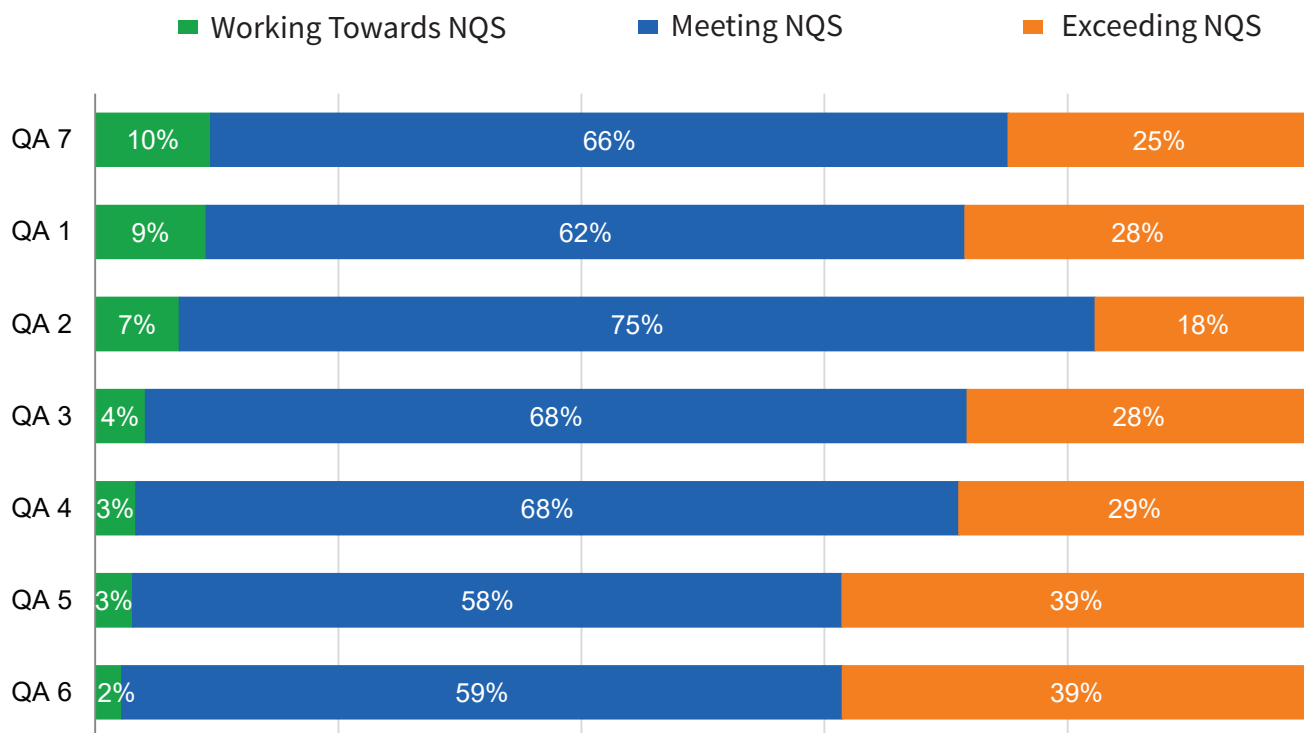


Figure 25 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 25: Quality area ratings



Contact details

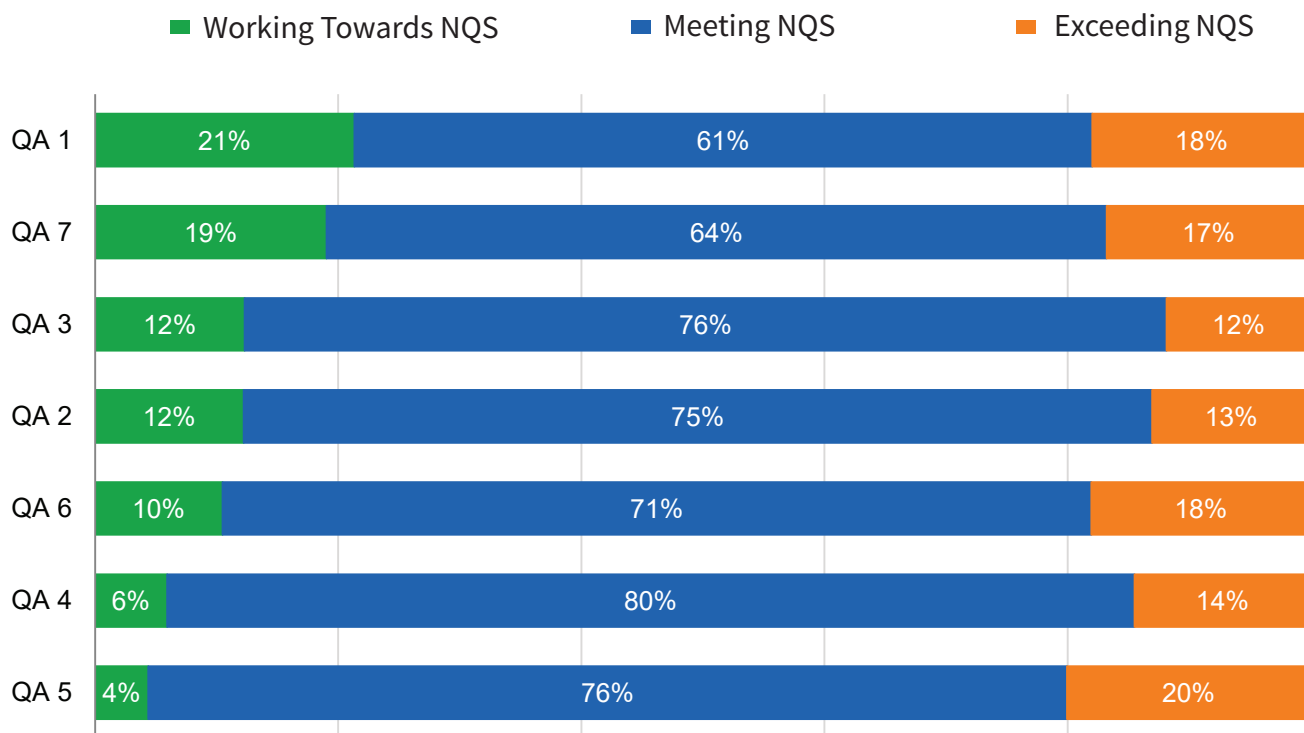
Department of Education and Training
 Quality Assessment and Regulation Division
www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation

Western Australia summary

1250	services comprising 1212 centre-based services and 38 family day care services
1097 (88%)	services with a quality rating
278	services rated Working Towards NQS
625	services rated Meeting NQS
194	services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 26 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 26: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Communities
 Education and Care Regulatory Unit
www.communities.wa.gov.au



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