



NQF Snapshot

Q1 2023



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

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

May 2023

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Overview

NQF Snapshot Q1 2023 is ACECQA's 41st 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 has reduced from 18 to 15, and the number of quality elements has 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) at 00.30 on 1 April 2023.

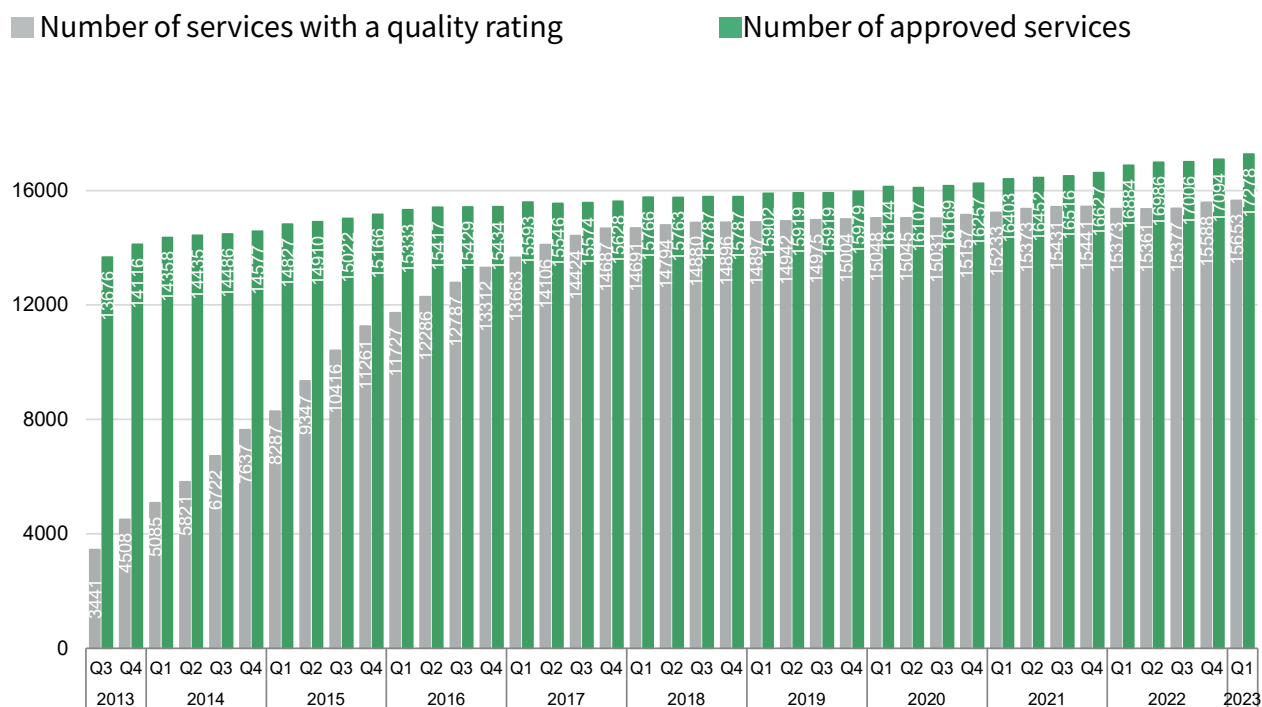
Due to rounding, individual percentages in the tables and figures may not add up to 100%.



Snapshot highlights

17,278	children's education and care services approved to operate under the NQF
15,653 (91%)	services with a quality rating
13,934 (89%)	services with a quality rating of Meeting NQS or above
7224	providers approved to operate
5733 (79%)	providers approved to operate only one service
35	services rated Excellent by ACECQA ¹
16,758	quality rating reassessments completed
68%	of services rated Working Towards NQS improved their overall quality rating at reassessment
13,149 (76%)	services with a quality rating against the 2018 NQS

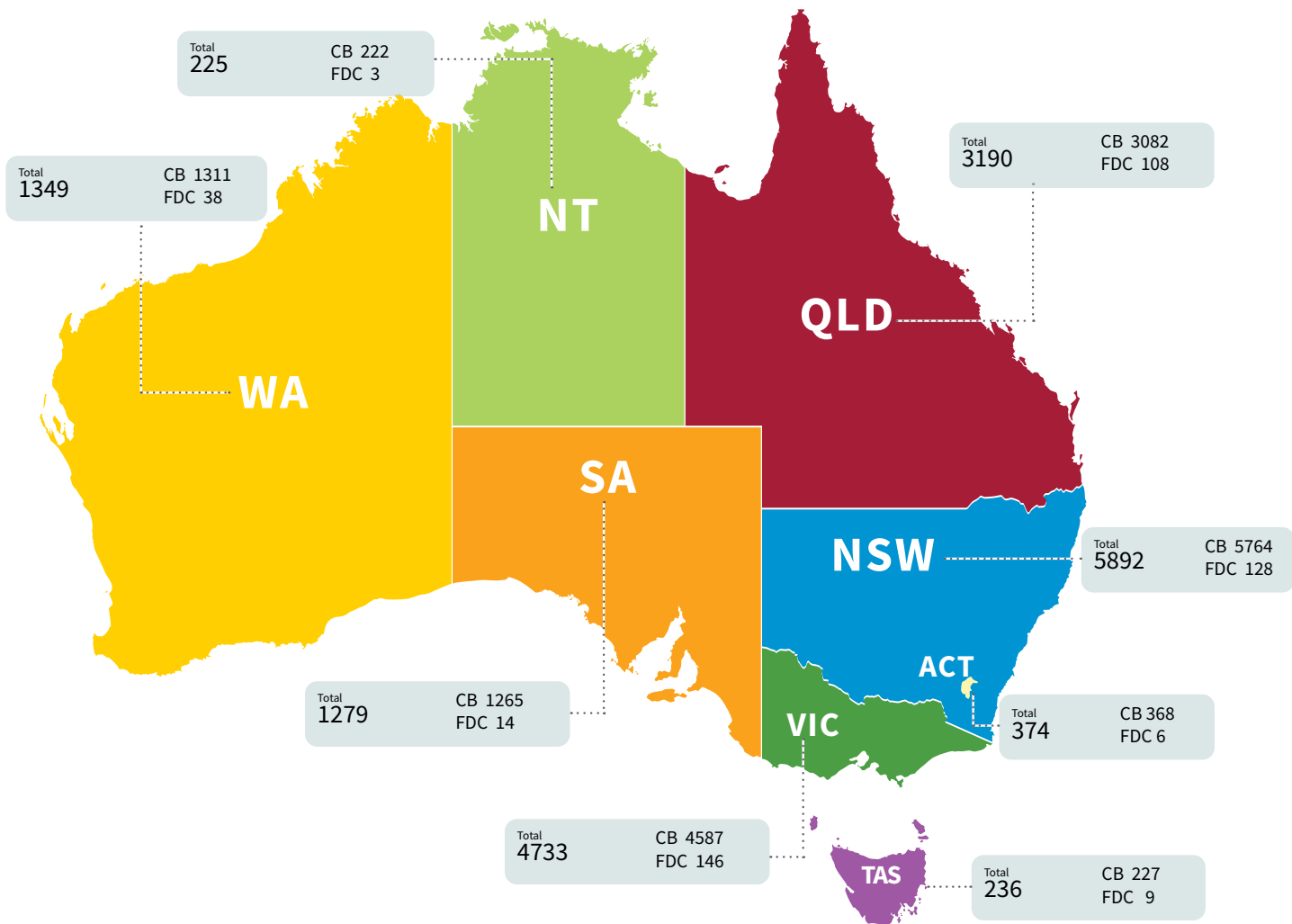
Figure 1: Number of approved services and number of services with a quality rating by quarter



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>16,826 (97%)</p> <p>3% Increase on Q1 2022</p>	<p>Total Family day care (FDC) ²</p> <p>452 (3%)</p> <p>11% Decrease on Q1 2022</p>	<p>Total</p> <p>17,278</p> <p>2% Increase on Q1 2022</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 Tasmanian preschools/kindergartens and most preschools/kindergartens in Western Australia that are outside the 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

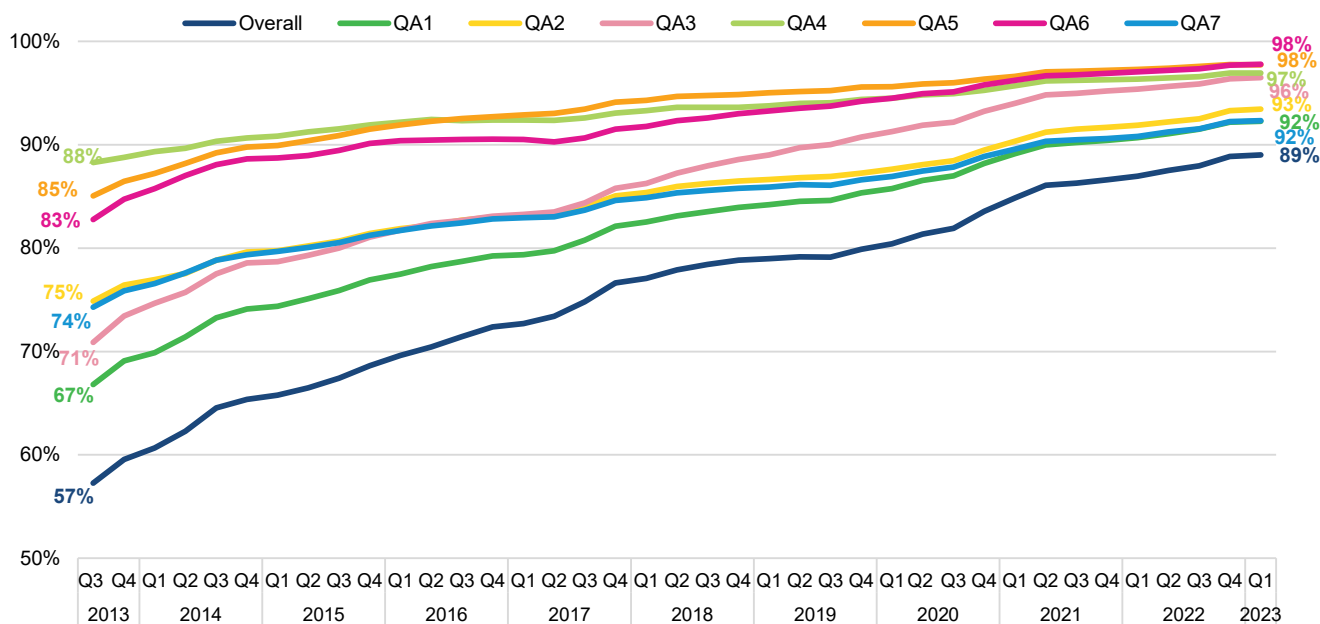


Figure 4: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS or above by overall rating and quality area

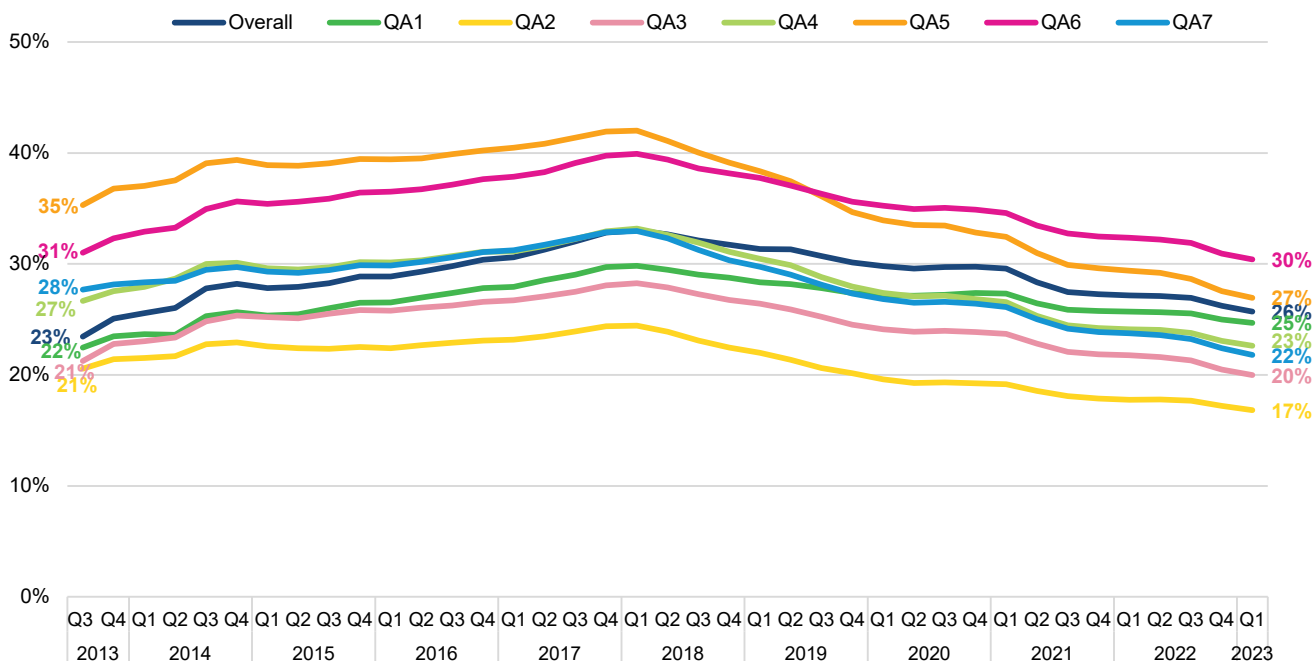


Figure 5: Proportion of services by service sub-type and jurisdiction ^{1,2,3,4,5}

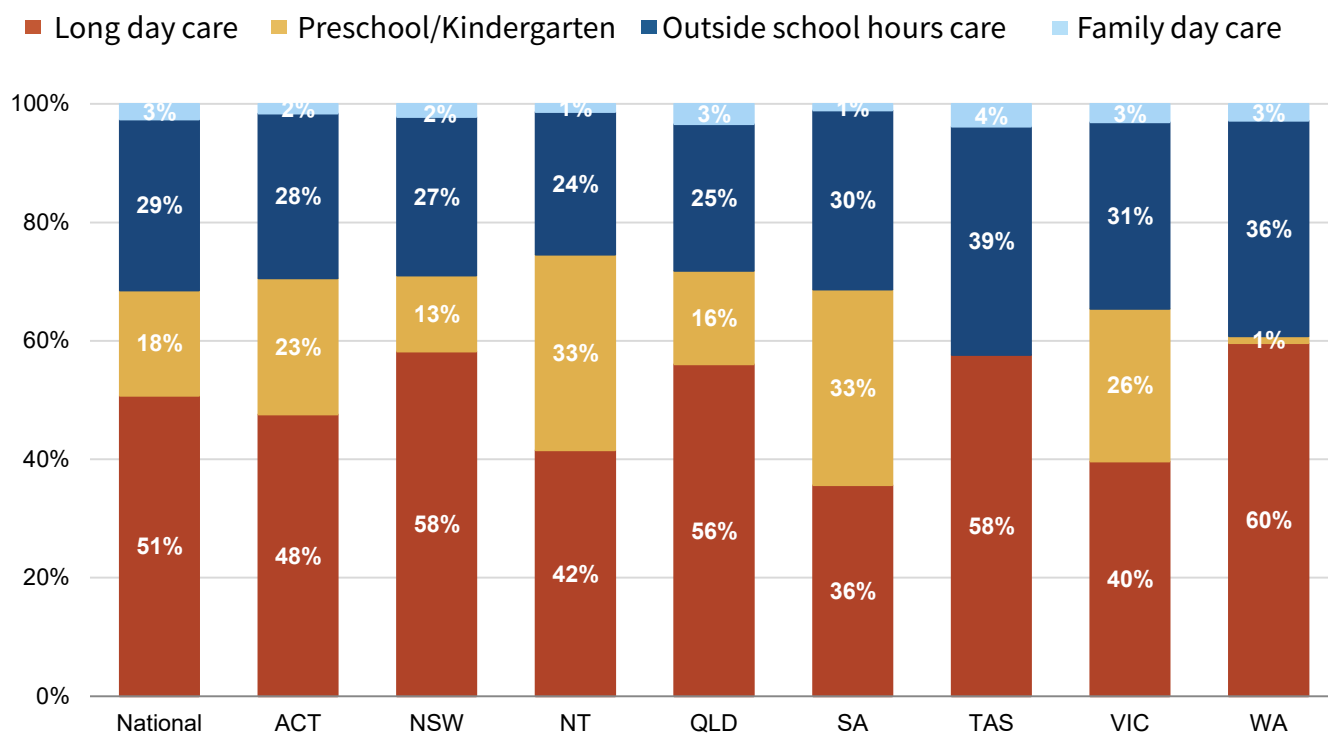


Table 1: Number of services by service sub-type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/ Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	6	178	86	104	0	374
NSW	128	3430	756	1578	0	5892
NT	3	93	74	54	1	225
QLD	108	1788	504	790	0	3190
SA	14	456	422	387	0	1279
TAS	9	136	0	91	0	236
VIC	146	1877	1220	1490	0	4733
WA	38	803	16	490	2	1349
TOTAL	452	8761	3078	4984	3	17,278

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 Tasmanian preschools/kindergartens and most preschools/kindergartens in Western Australia that are outside the 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}

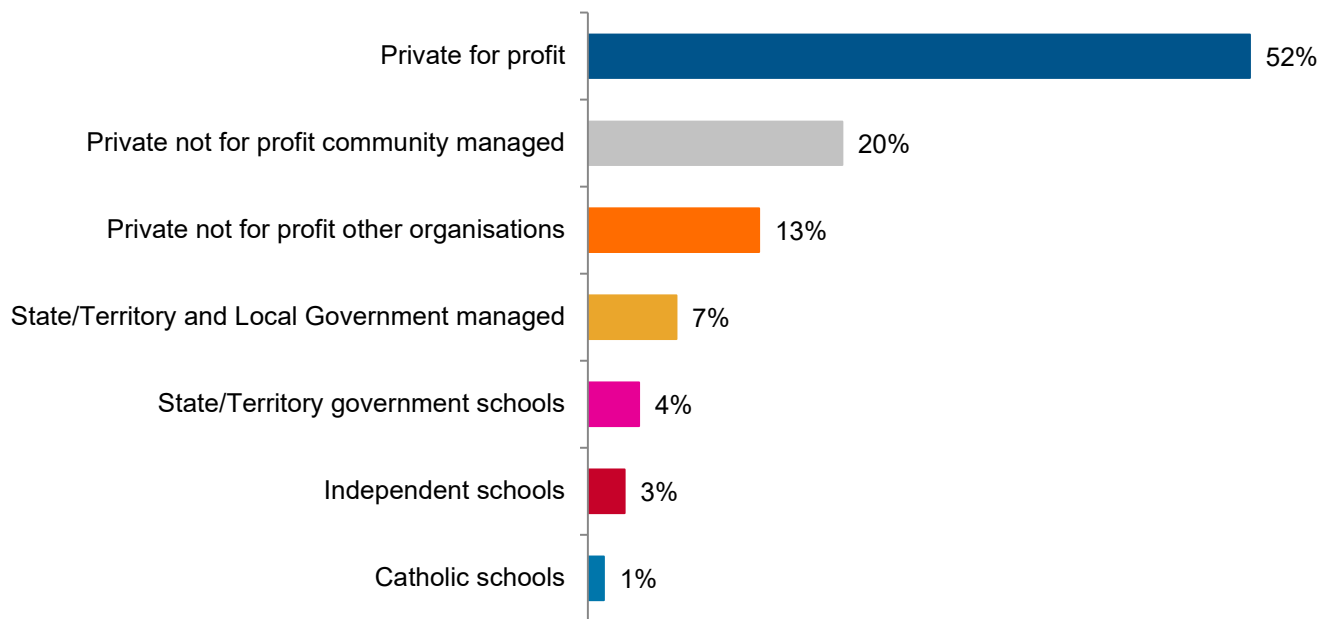


Table 2: Number and proportion of services by provider management type

Provider management type	Number of services	Proportion of services
Private for profit	8928	52%
Private not for profit community managed	3429	20%
Private not for profit other organisations	2310	13%
State/Territory and Local Government managed	1193	7%
State/Territory government schools	691	4%
Independent schools	496	3%
Catholic schools	216	1%
Not stated/Other	15	0%
Total	17,278	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 79% 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

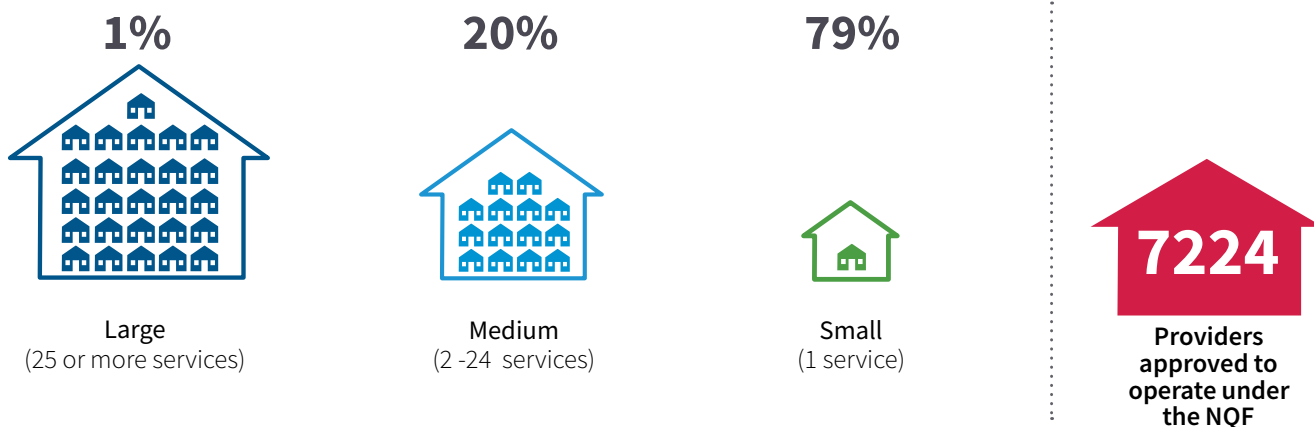


Figure 8 shows that 33% of approved services are operated by small approved providers while 35% of approved services are operated by large approved providers.

Figure 8: Proportion of approved services by provider size

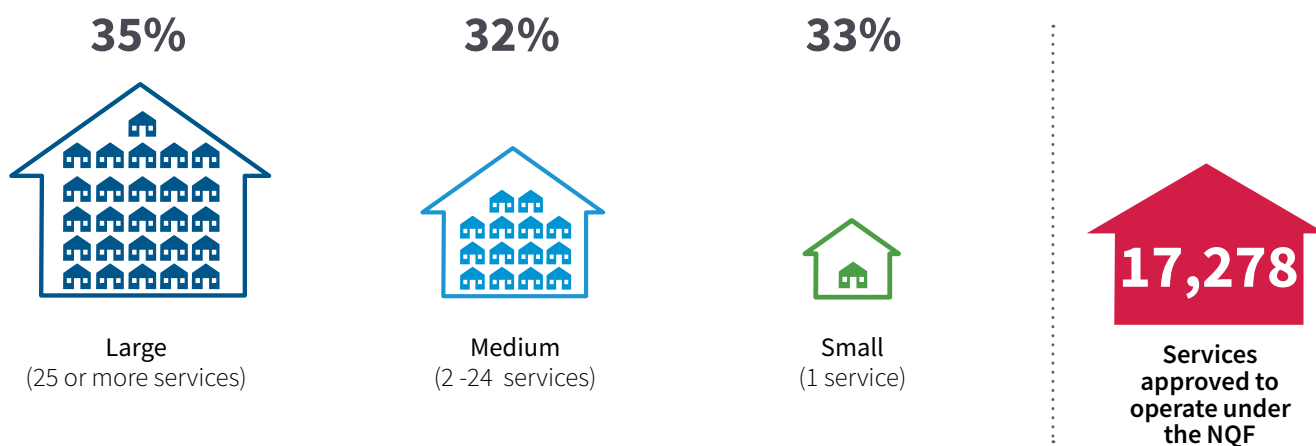
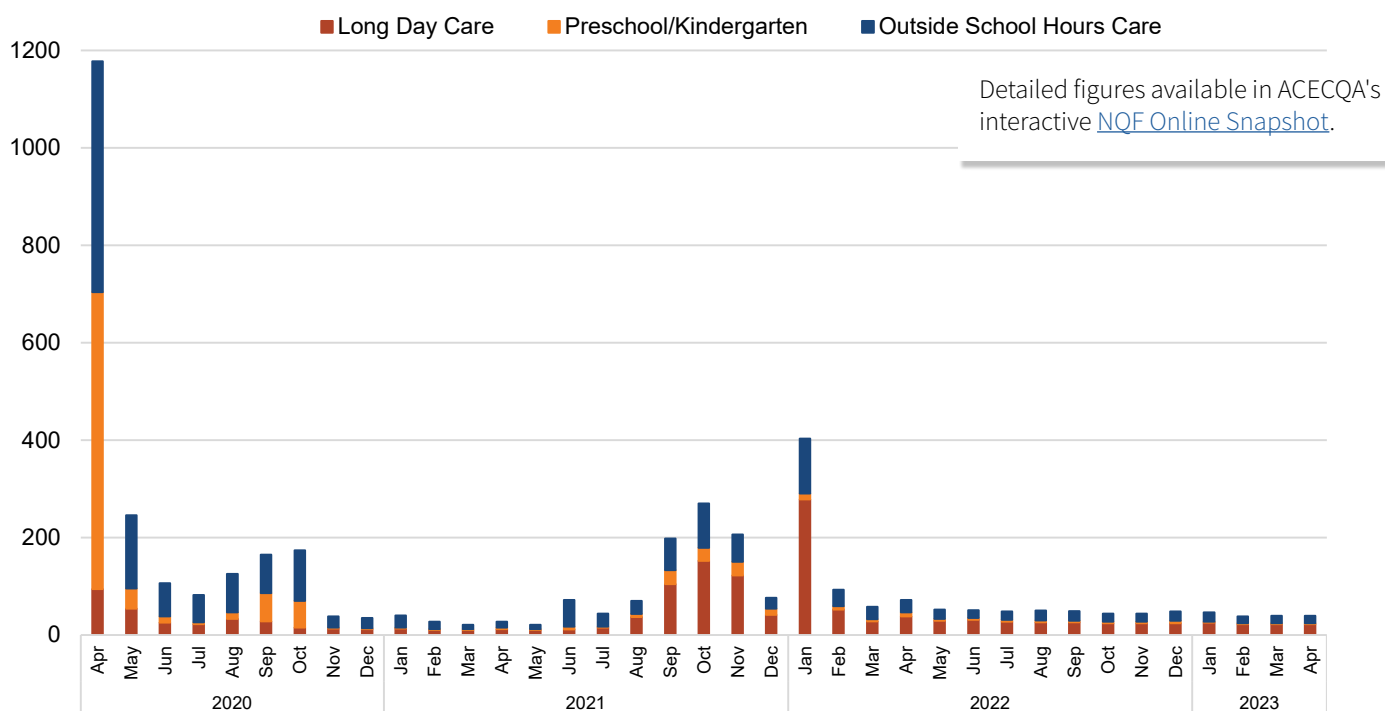


Figure 9 shows the total number of centre-based services closed at the start of each month from April 2020, where the closure is related to the impact of COVID-19.

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 1100 centre-based service closures related to the impact of COVID-19 were recorded in the NQA ITS at the start of April 2020, with the majority of these being preschools/kindergartens, followed by outside school hours care services. There were 39 centre-based service closures at the start of April 2023, with the majority of these being long day 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 month, 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	374	2%	348	93%
NSW	5892	34%	5489	93%
NT	225	1%	213	95%
QLD	3190	18%	2984	94%
SA	1279	7%	1225	96%
TAS	236	1%	213	90%
VIC	4733	27%	4076	86%
WA	1349	8%	1105	82%
TOTAL	17,278	100%	15,653	91%

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	168	82	92	0	348
NSW	125	3264	738	1362	0	5489
NT	3	86	73	50	1	213
QLD	92	1688	462	742	0	2984
SA	12	431	409	373	0	1225
TAS	8	126	0	79	0	213
VIC	119	1655	1135	1167	0	4076
WA	30	667	13	394	1	1105
TOTAL	395	8085	2912	4259	2	15,653

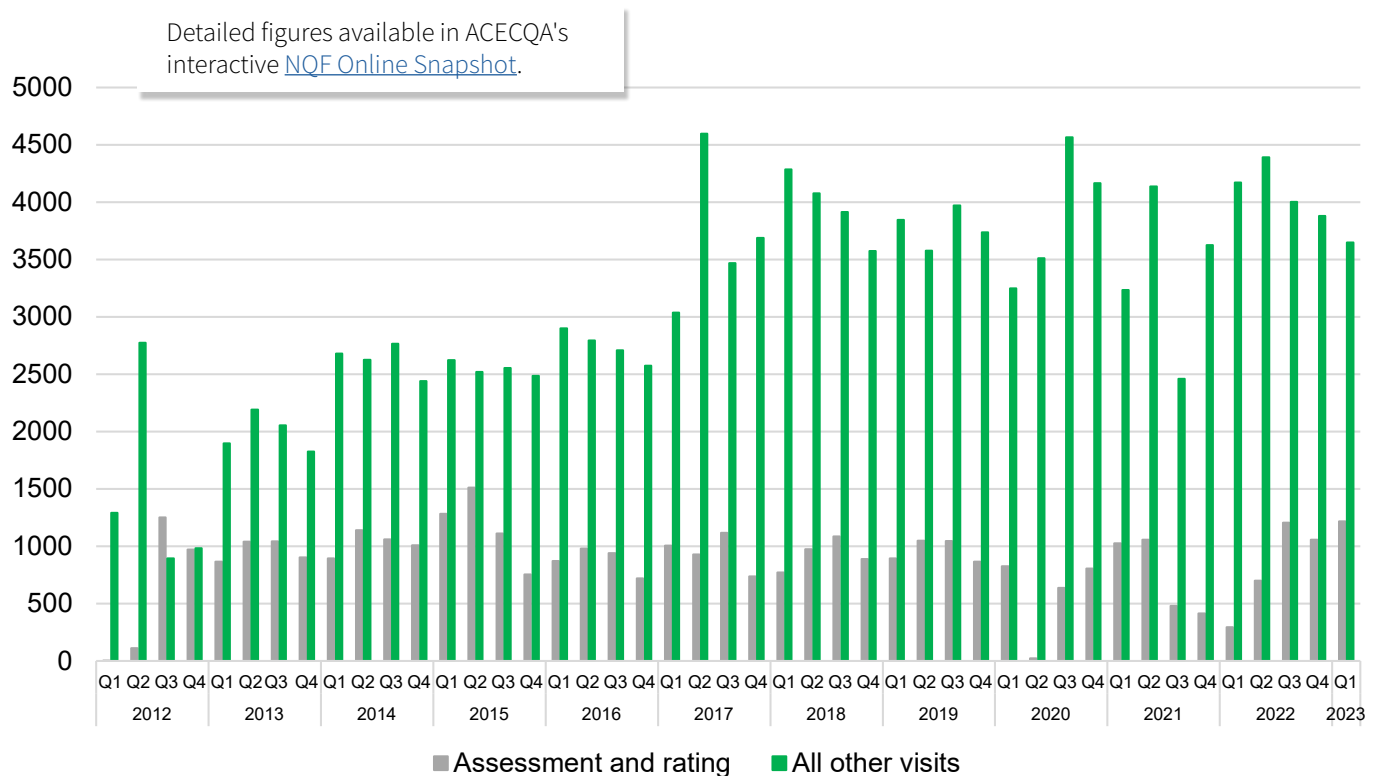
Service visits

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)



Draft and final reports, and reviews

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

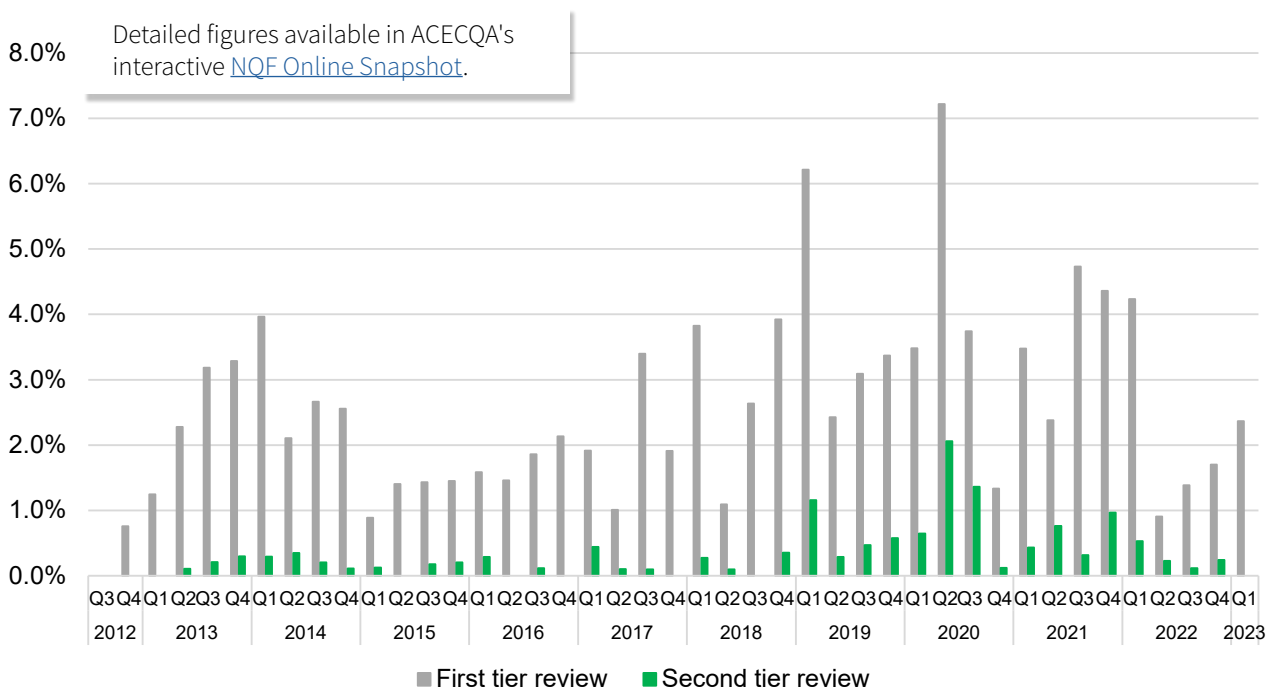
Rating level	Change in rating	%
Higher	981	6.3%
Unchanged	14,636	93.7%
Lower	1	0.0%
Total	15,618	100%

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 may 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 in recent years. This may reflect a number of factors, including changes introduced with the 2018 NQS which made it more challenging for a service to achieve an overall rating of Exceeding NQS. In addition, most services have now been quality assessed and rated more than once, with a lower subsequent rating more likely to be challenged by a service provider.

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, 3907 services previously rated Working Towards NQS improved their rating to Meeting NQS after reassessment. While 2174 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	20	78	16	0	114
	Working Towards NQS	51	2174	3907	787	6919
	Meeting NQS	6	980	4052	911	5949
	Exceeding NQS	2	352	1575	1847	3776
	Total	79	3584	9550	3545	16,758

		Rating after reassessment				Improvement rate
		Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	
Rating before reassessment	Significant Improvement Required	18%	68%	14%	0%	82%
	Working Towards NQS	1%	31%	56%	11%	68%
	Meeting NQS	0%	16%	68%	15%	15%
	Exceeding NQS	0%	9%	42%	49%	-

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.

1 Educational program and practice	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	Excellent
2 Children's health and safety	<p>Service does not meet one of the seven quality areas or a section of the legislation and there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>The regulatory authority will take immediate action.</p>	<p>Service provides a safe education and care program, but there are one or more areas identified for improvement.</p> 	<p>Service provides quality education and care in all seven quality areas.</p> 	<p>Service goes beyond the requirements of the National Quality Standard in at least four of the seven quality areas.</p> 	<p>Exceeding rated services that promote exceptional education and care, demonstrate sector leadership, and are committed to continually improving.</p> <p>This rating can only be awarded by ACECQA.</p> 
3 Physical environment					
4 Staffing arrangements					
5 Relationships with children					
6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities					
7 Governance and leadership					

Table 7: Overall quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Significant Improvement Required		Working Towards NQS		Meeting NQS		Exceeding NQS		Excellent	Total
ACT	0	68	20%	129	37%	149	43%	2	348	
NSW	3	554	10%	3675	67%	1241	23%	16	5489	
NT	0	35	16%	151	71%	27	13%	0	213	
QLD	0	284	10%	1952	65%	741	25%	7	2984	
SA	0	180	15%	531	43%	511	42%	3	1225	
TAS	0	36	17%	125	59%	52	24%	0	213	
VIC	1	357	9%	2612	64%	1099	27%	7	4076	
WA	0	201	18%	736	67%	168	15%	0	1105	
TOTAL	4	1715	11%	9911	63%	3988	25%	35	15,653	

Figure 12: Overall quality ratings by service type

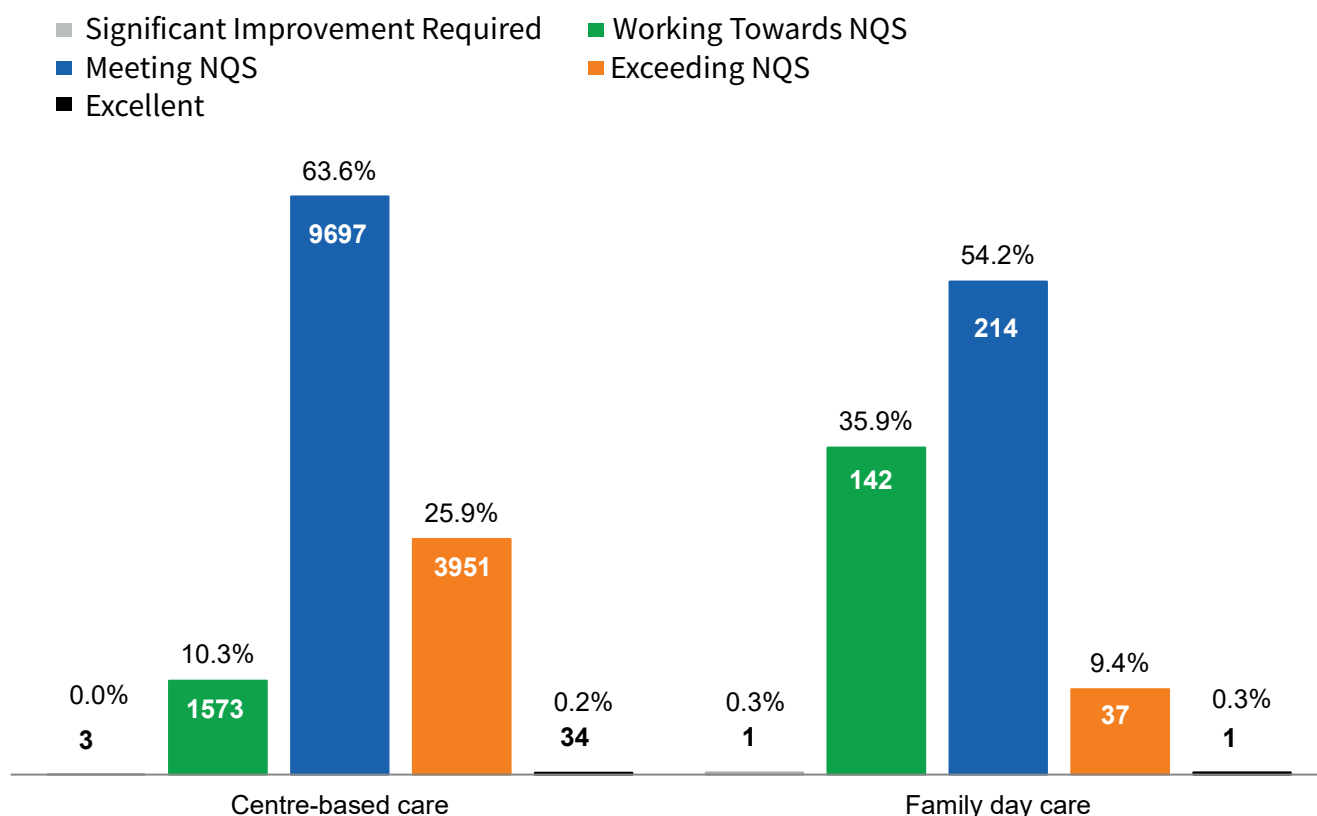


Figure 13: Overall quality ratings by centre-based service sub-type

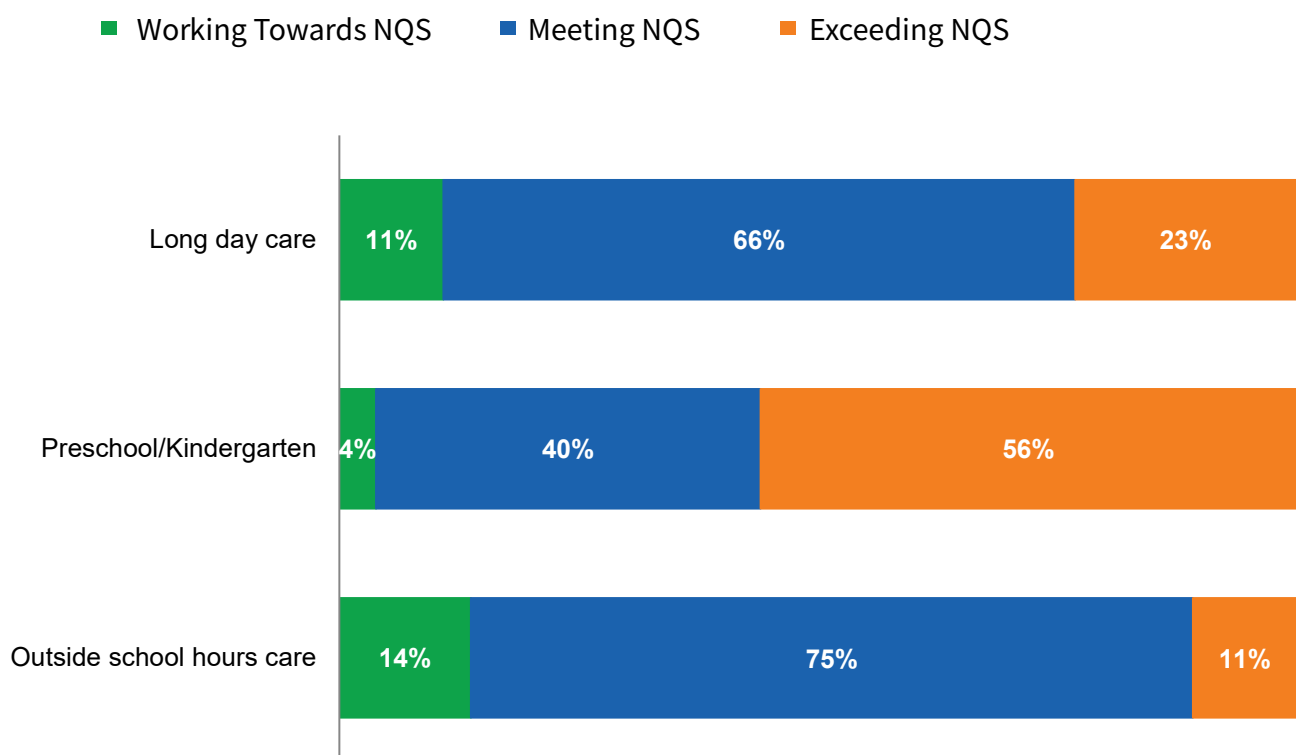
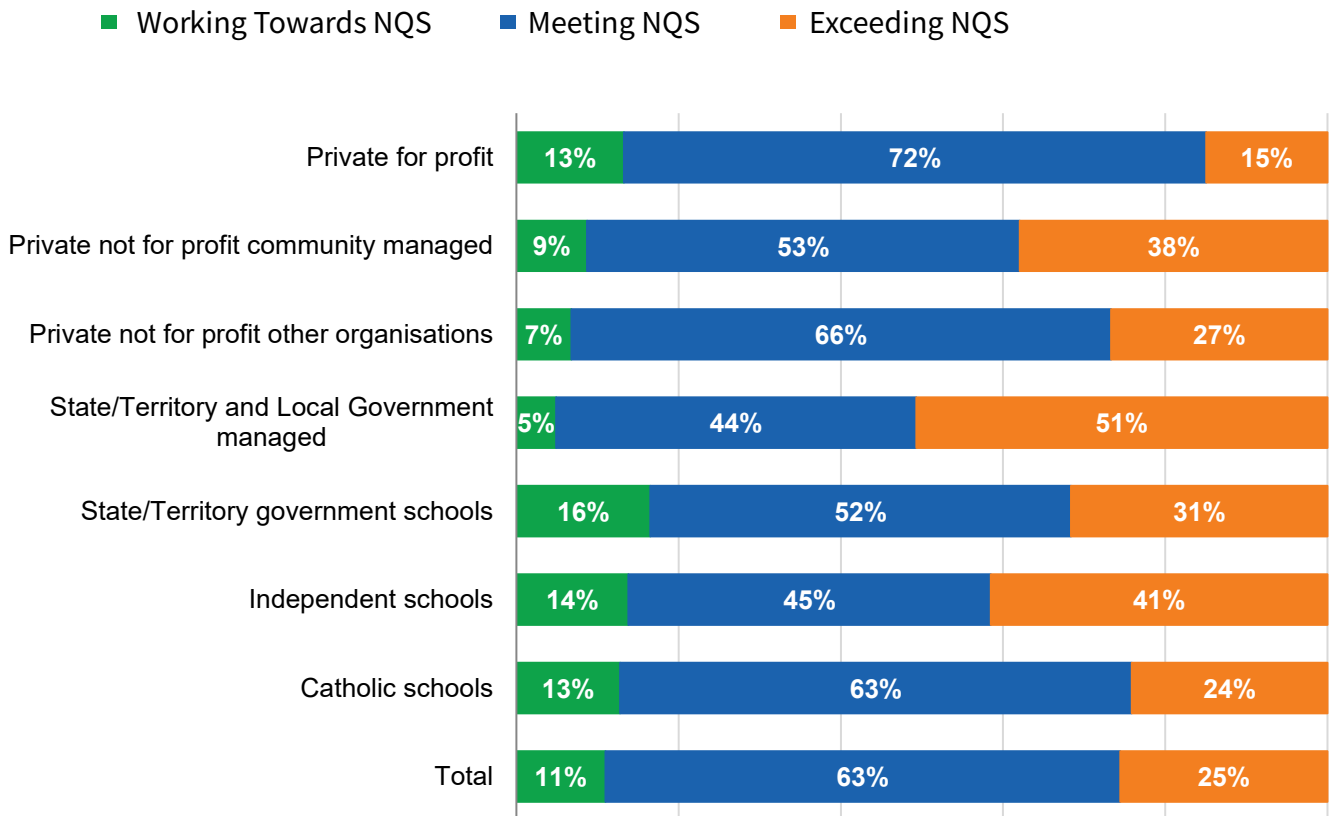


Figure 14 shows the variation in spread of quality ratings between provider management types.

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

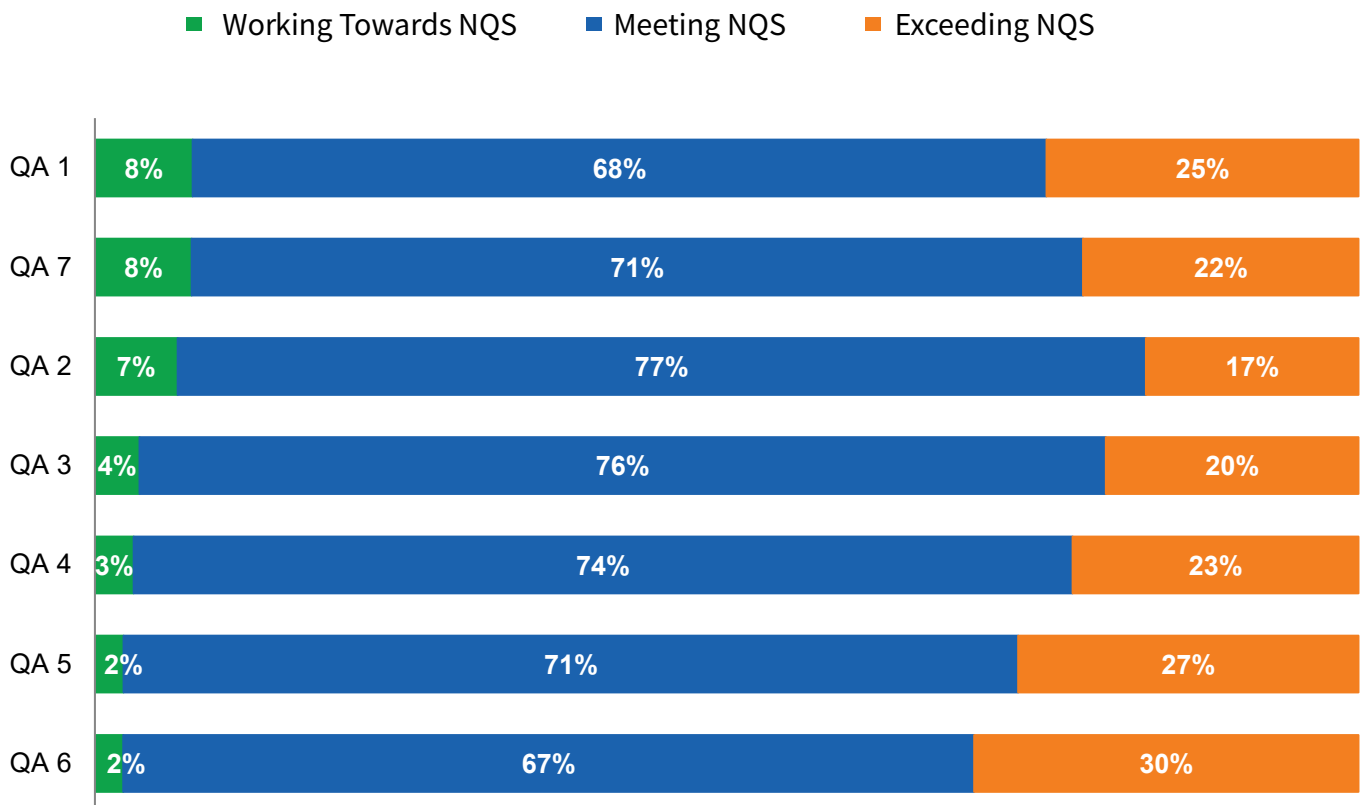
Quality area ratings

Table 8 and Figure 15 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	1211	10,576	3866
Quality Area 7 - Governance and leadership	2	1198	11,041	3412
Quality Area 2 - Children's health and safety	3	1023	11,993	2634
Quality Area 3 - Physical environment	1	550	11,972	3130
Quality Area 4 - Staffing arrangements	0	478	11,633	3542
Quality Area 5 - Relationships with children	0	355	11,080	4218
Quality Area 6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	0	348	10,544	4761

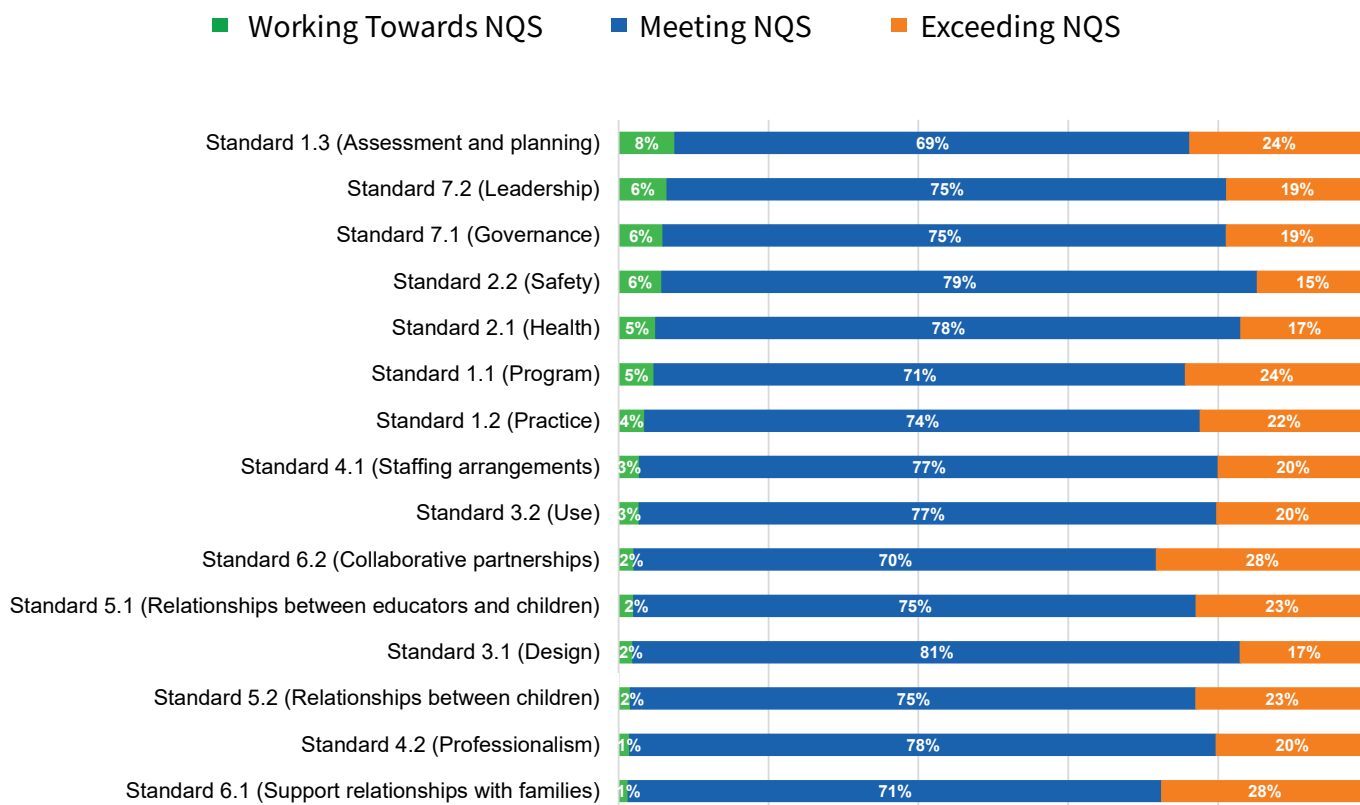
Figure 15: Quality area ratings



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 2018 NQS

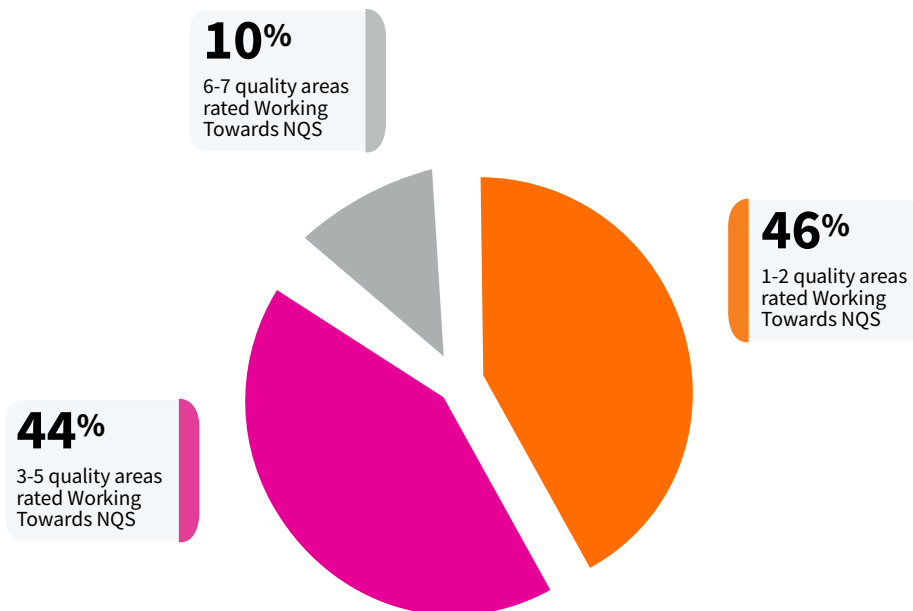
2018 NQS Element	% Not Met
1.3.1 (Assessment and planning cycle)	6.4%
1.3.2 (Critical reflection)	6.3%
7.1.2 (Management systems)	5.3%
7.2.2 (Educational leadership)	4.4%
2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures)	4.4%
2.2.1 (Supervision)	4.1%
7.2.3 (Development of professionals)	4.1%
1.1.3 (Program learning opportunities)	3.4%
2.2.2 (Incident and emergency management)	2.9%
4.1.1 (Organisation of educators)	2.7%
7.2.1 (Continuous improvement)	2.4%
1.1.1 (Approved learning framework)	2.3%
1.2.3 (Child directed learning)	2.1%
1.1.2 (Child-centred)	2.0%
1.2.2 (Responsive teaching and scaffolding)	2.0%
1.3.3 (Information for families)	1.9%
1.2.1 (Intentional teaching)	1.7%
3.2.3 (Environmentally responsible)	1.7%
5.1.2 (Dignity and rights of the child)	1.7%
7.1.1 (Service philosophy and purpose)	1.7%

2018 NQS Element	% Not Met
7.1.3 (Roles and responsibilities)	1.6%
5.2.2 (Self-regulation)	1.6%
3.1.2 (Upkeep)	1.6%
6.2.3 (Community engagement)	1.4%
3.2.1 (Inclusive environment)	1.4%
2.1.3 (Healthy lifestyle)	1.3%
2.2.3 (Child protection)	1.3%
3.2.2 (Resources support play-based learning)	1.3%
5.1.1 (Positive educator to child interactions)	1.2%
4.2.2 (Professional standards)	1.2%
6.2.2 (Access and participation)	1.1%
2.1.1 (Wellbeing and comfort)	0.9%
6.1.3 (Families are supported)	0.8%
4.2.1 (Professional collaboration)	0.8%
3.1.1 (Fit for purpose)	0.7%
6.1.2 (Parent views are respected)	0.6%
6.1.1 (Engagement with the service)	0.6%
6.2.1 (Transitions)	0.5%
4.1.2 (Continuity of staff)	0.5%
5.2.1 (Collaborative learning)	0.4%

Services rated Working Towards NQS

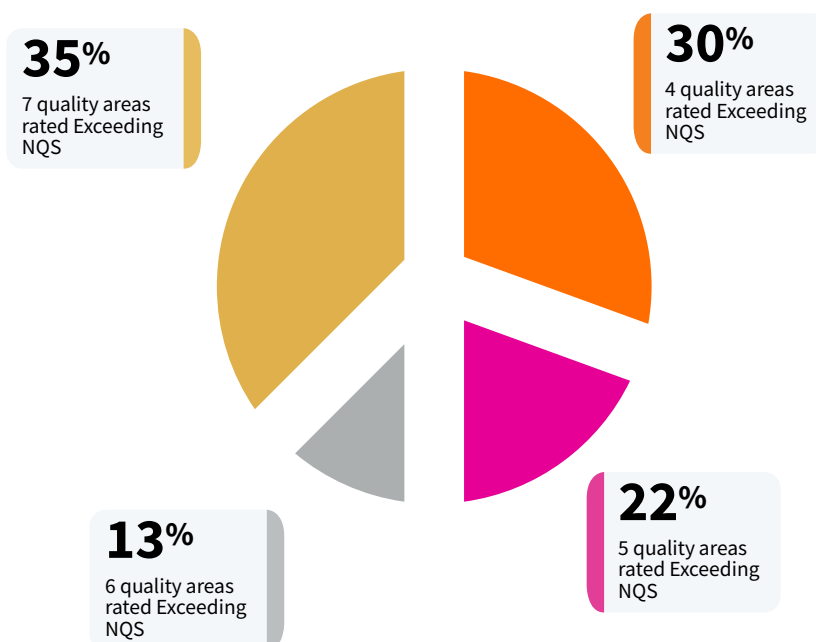
A service receives an overall rating of Working Towards NQS if any of the seven quality areas are rated Working Towards NQS. A quality area is rated Working Towards NQS if any of the standards within that quality area are rated Working Towards NQS.

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

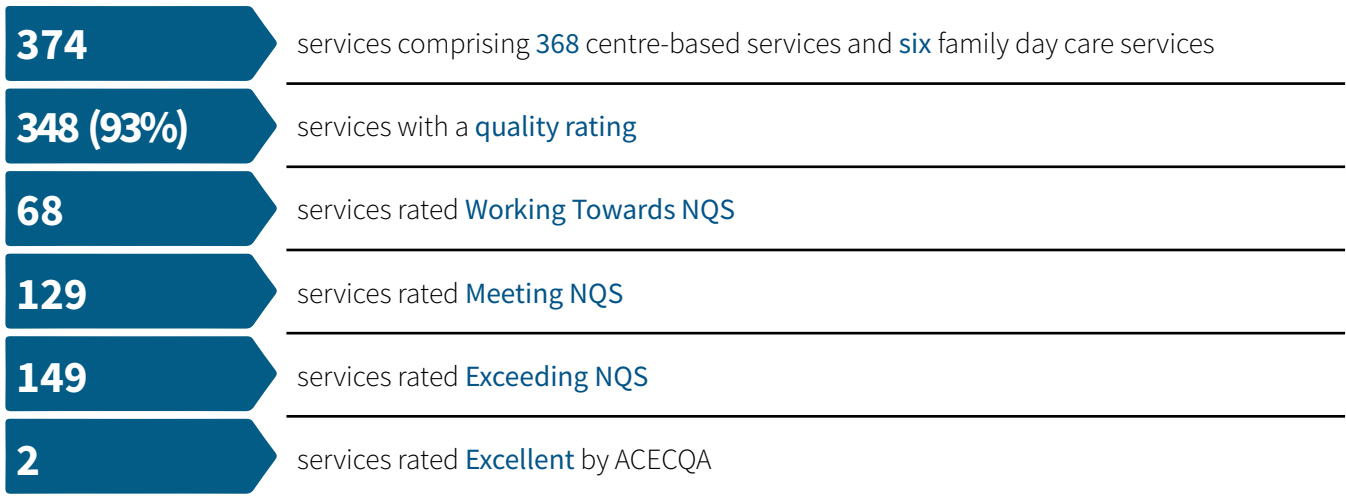
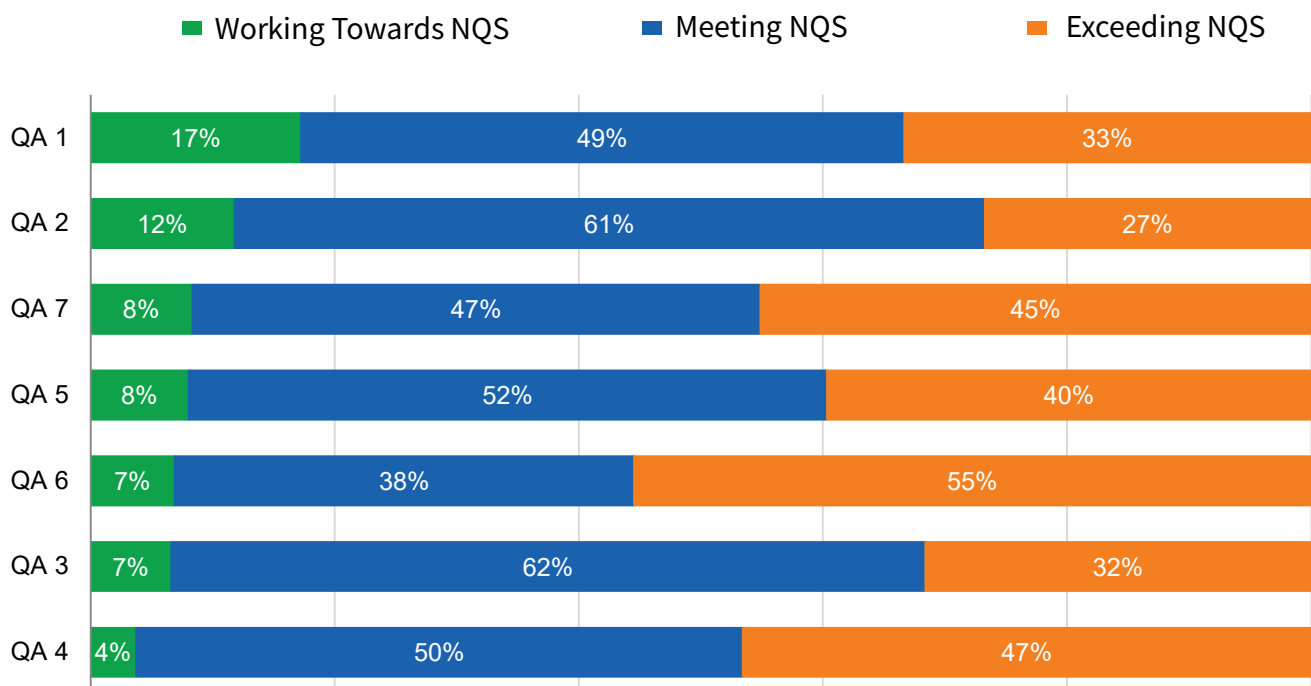


Figure 19 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 19: Quality area ratings



Contact details

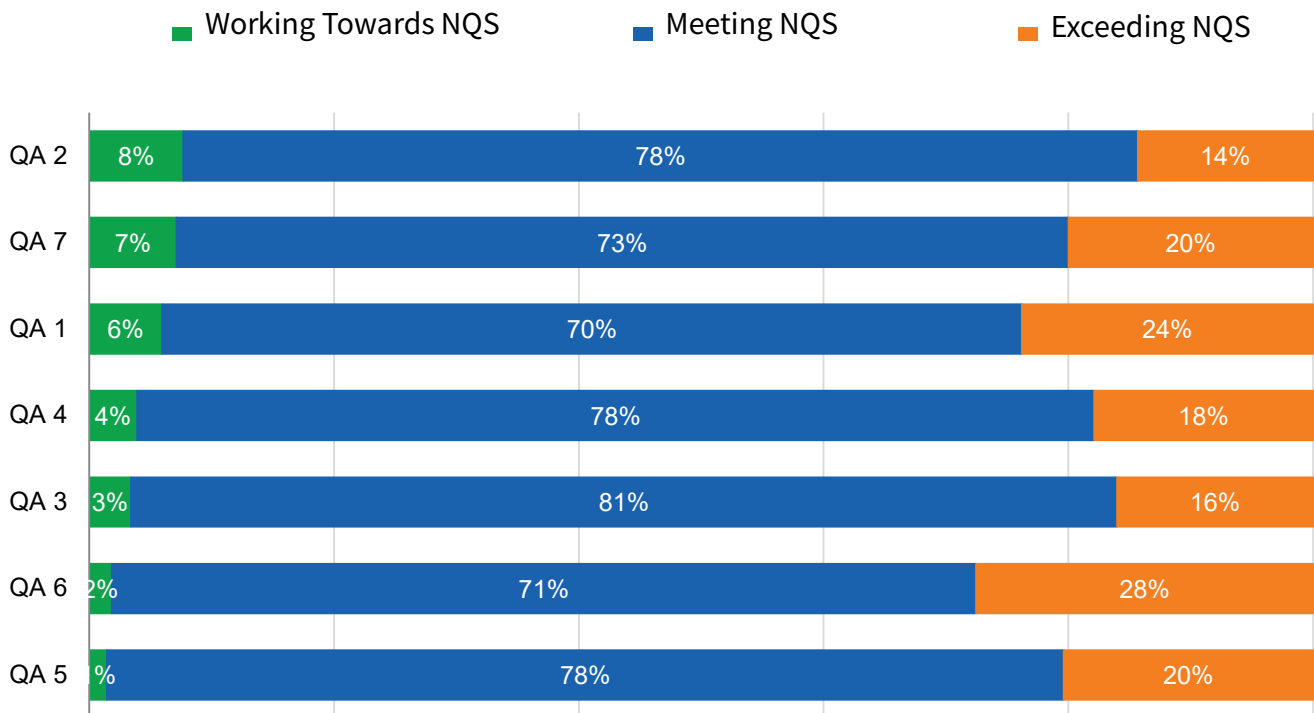
Education Directorate
 Children's Education and Care Assurance
www.education.act.gov.au/early-childhood

New South Wales summary

5892	services comprising 5764 centre-based services and 128 family day care services
5489 (93%)	services with a quality rating
3	services rated Significant Improvement Required
554	services rated Working Towards NQS
3675	services rated Meeting NQS
1241	services rated Exceeding NQS
16	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

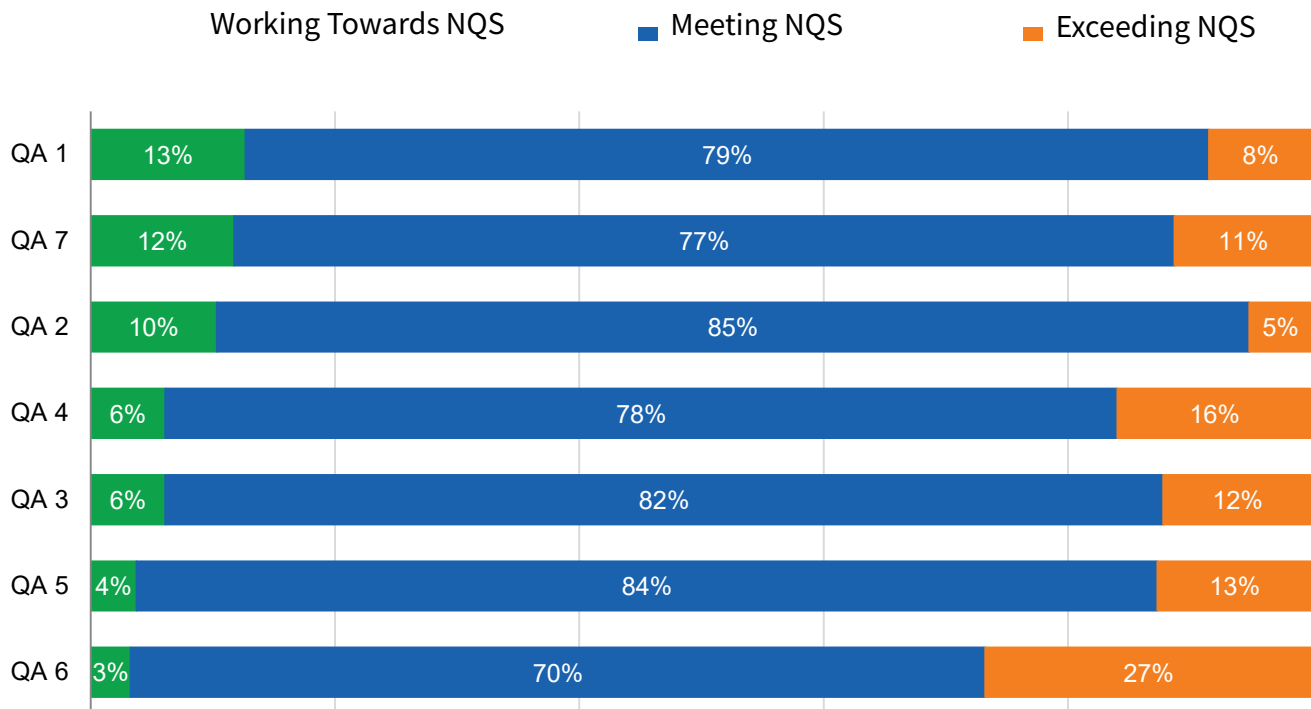
Department of Education
 Early Childhood Education Directorate
www.education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education

Northern Territory summary

225	services comprising 222 centre-based services and three family day care services
213 (95%)	services with a quality rating
35	services rated Working Towards NQS
151	services rated Meeting NQS
27	services rated Exceeding NQS

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

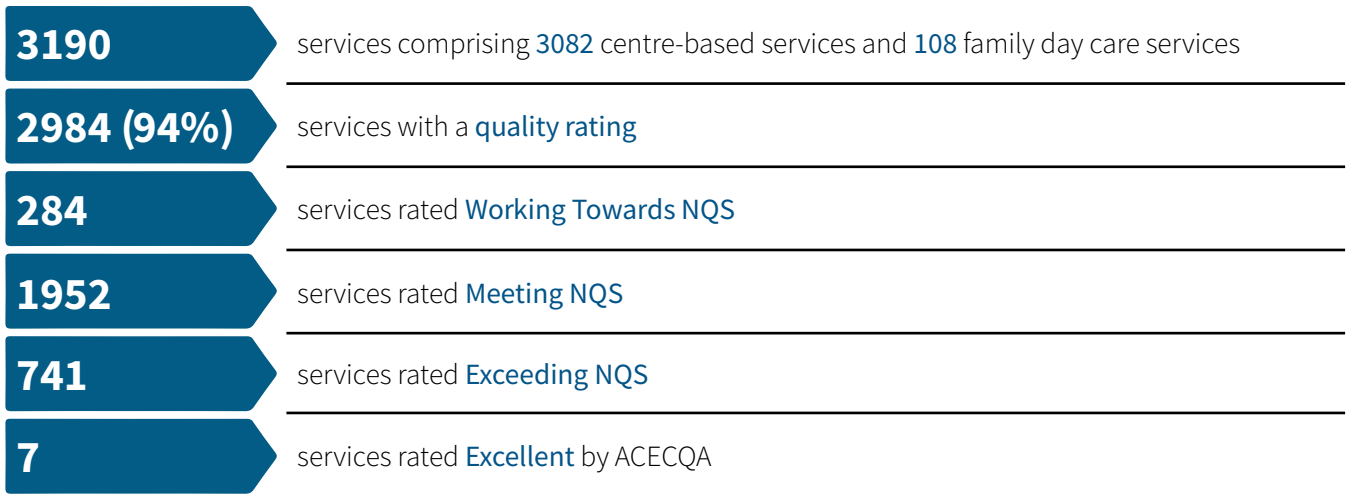
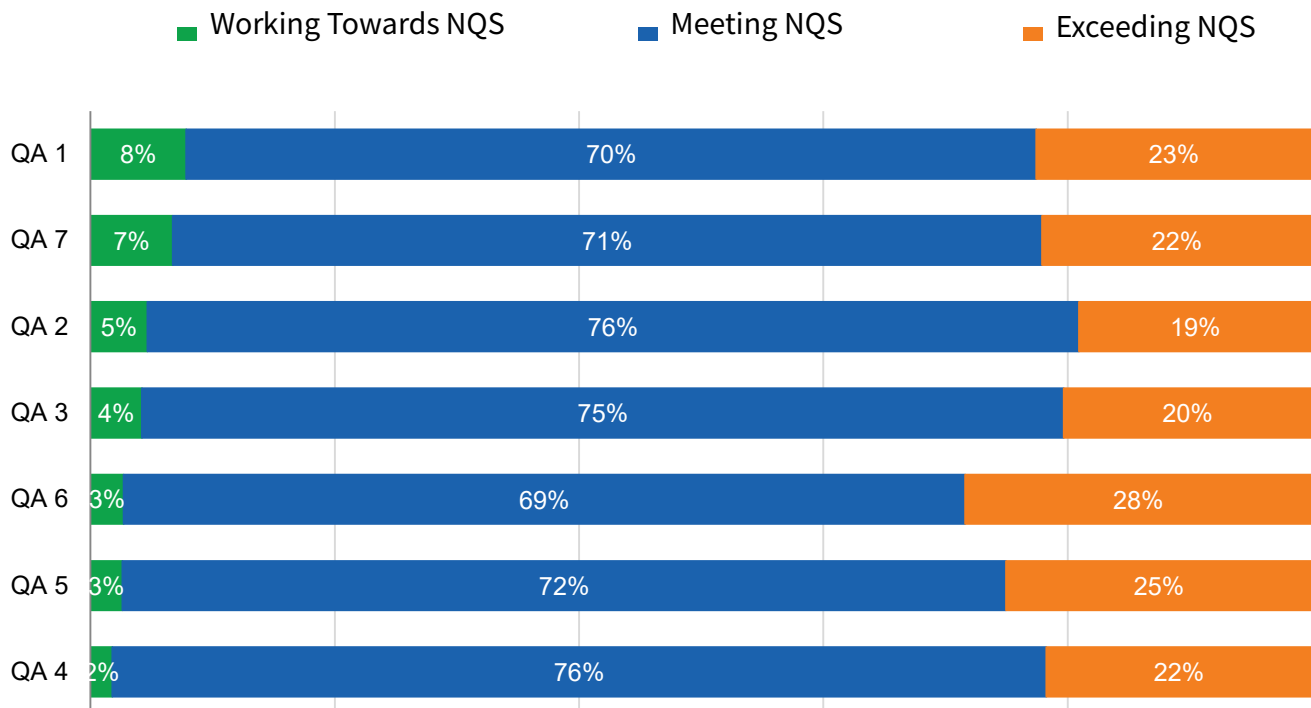


Figure 22 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 22: Quality area ratings



Contact details

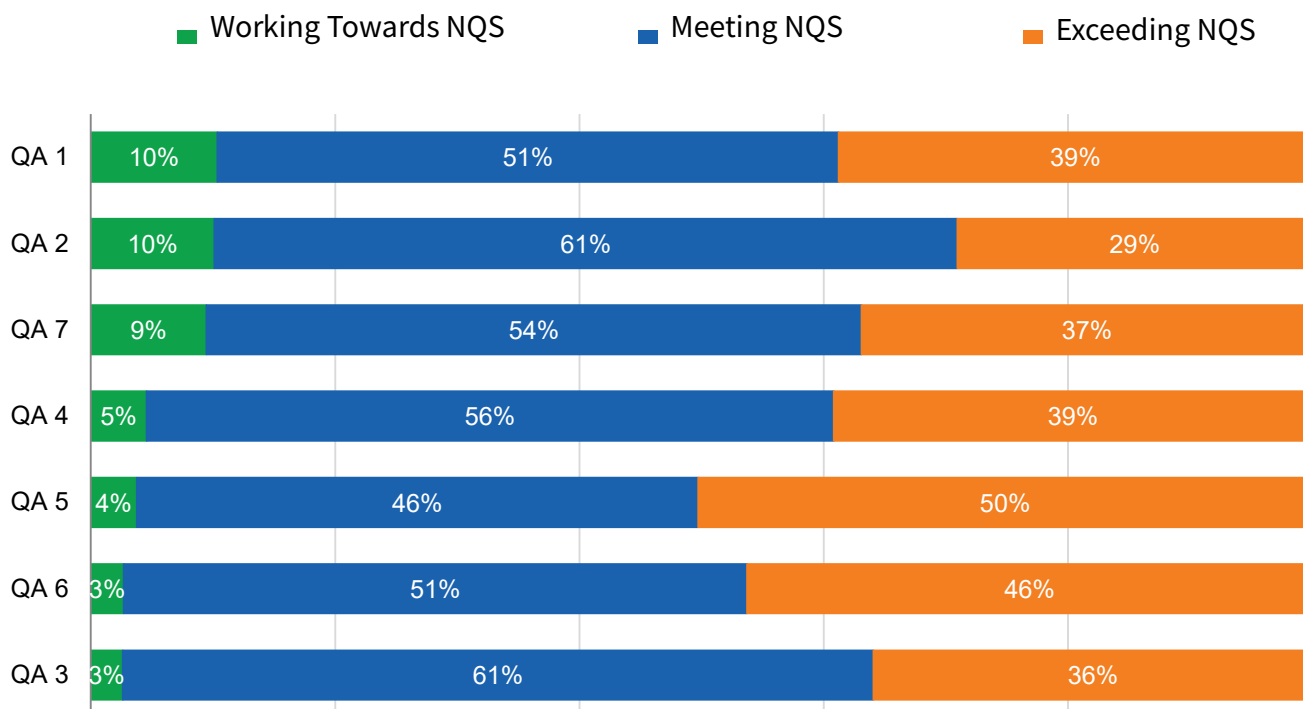
Department of Education
 Early Childhood Regulatory Authority
www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au

South Australia summary

1279	services comprising 1265 centre-based services and 14 family day care services
1225 (96%)	services with a quality rating
180	services rated Working Towards NQS
531	services rated Meeting NQS
511	services rated Exceeding NQS
3	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

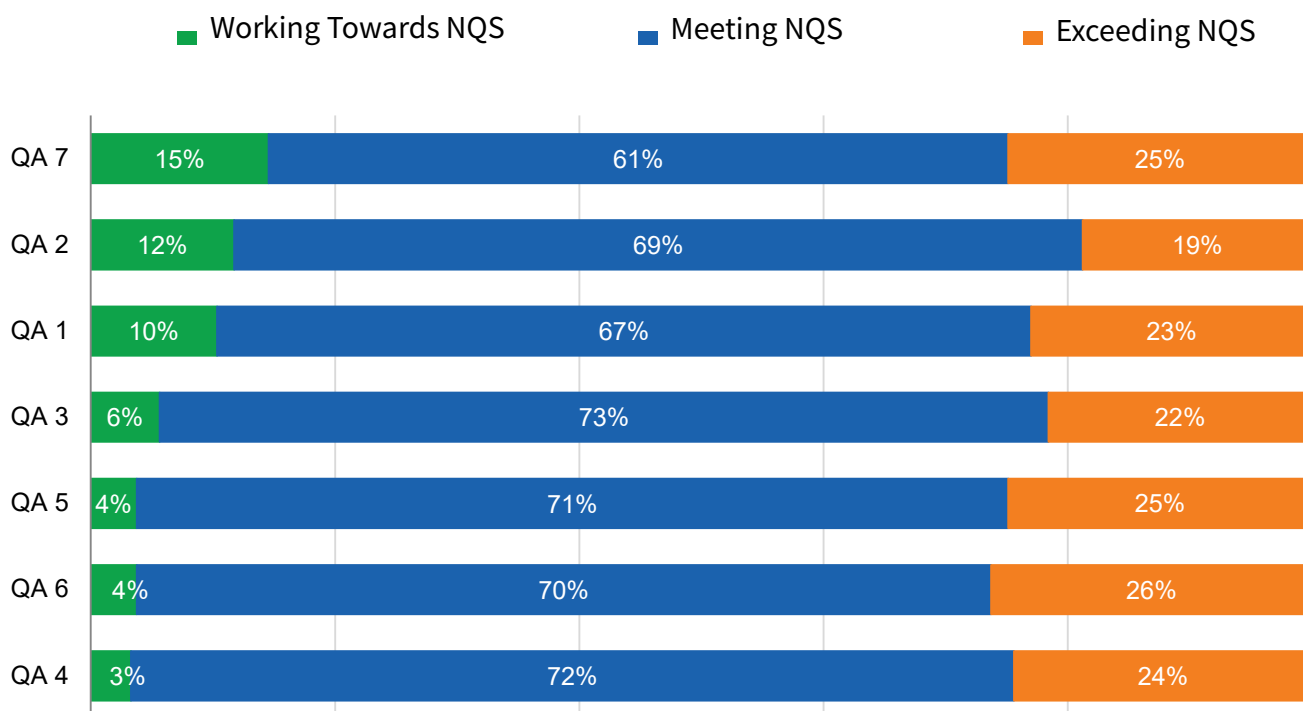
Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards
Board of South Australia
www.esb.sa.gov.au/early-childhood

Tasmania summary

236	services comprising 227 centre-based services and nine family day care services
213 (90%)	services with a quality rating
36	services rated Working Towards NQS
125	services rated Meeting NQS
52	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 for Education, Children and Young People
Education and Care Unit

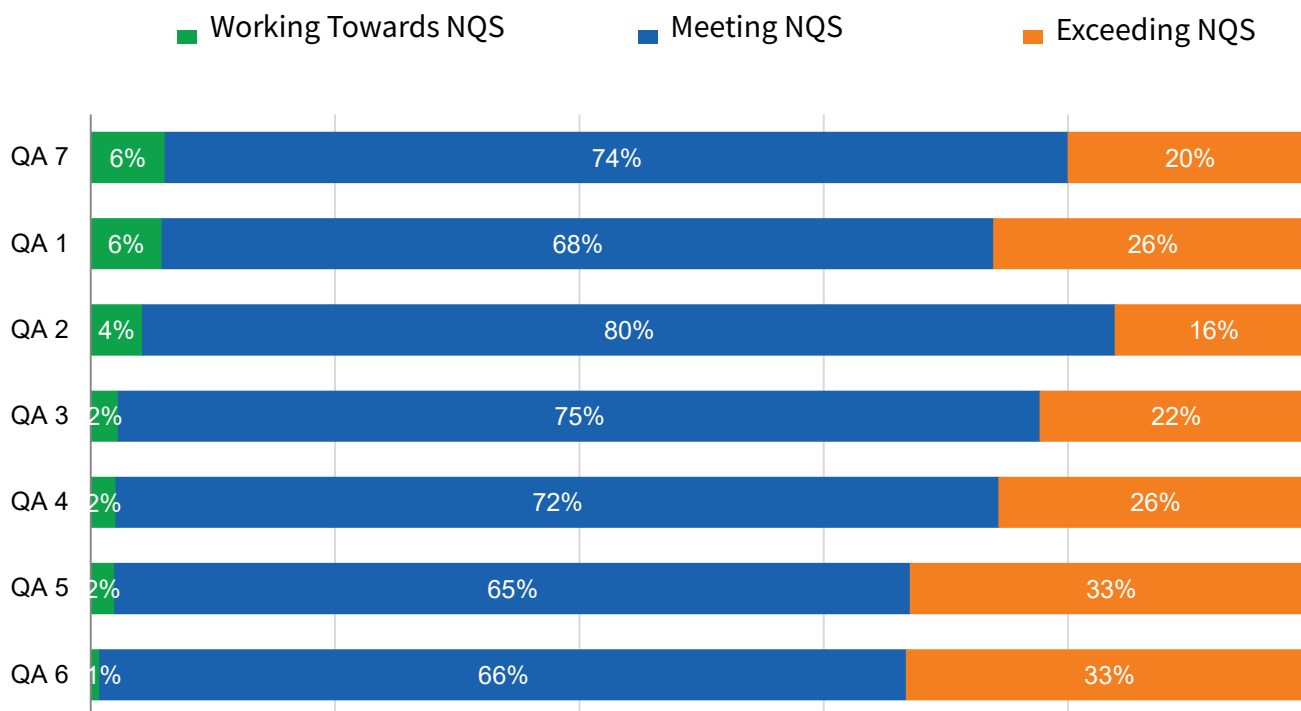
www.educationandcare.tas.gov.au

Victoria summary

4733	services comprising 4587 centre-based services and 146 family day care services
4076 (86%)	services with a quality rating
1	service rated Significant Improvement Required
357	services rated Working Towards NQS
2612	services rated Meeting NQS
1099	services rated Exceeding NQS
7	services rated Excellent by ACECQA

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

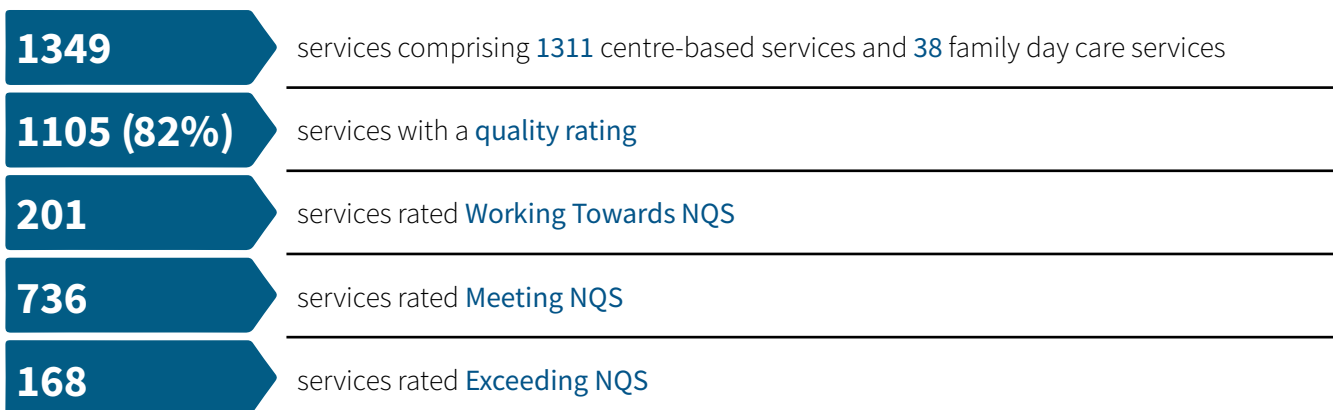
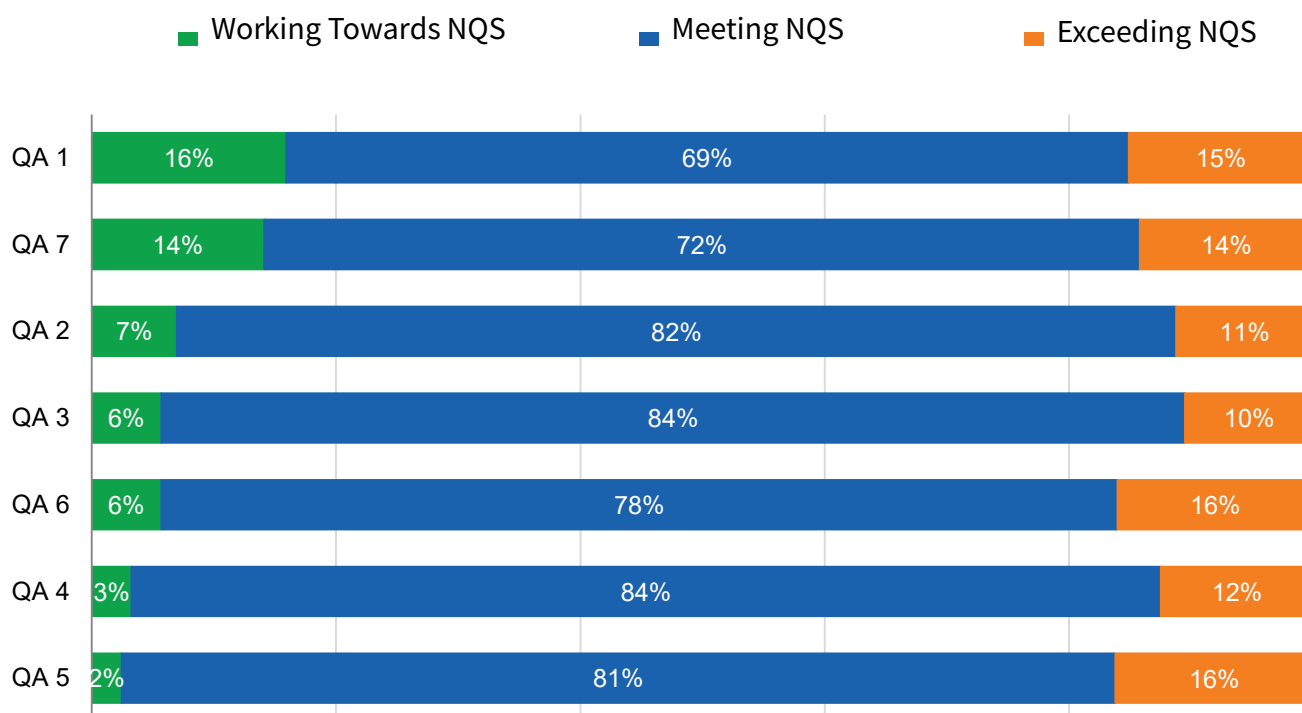


Figure 26 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 26: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Communities
Education and Care Regulatory Unit

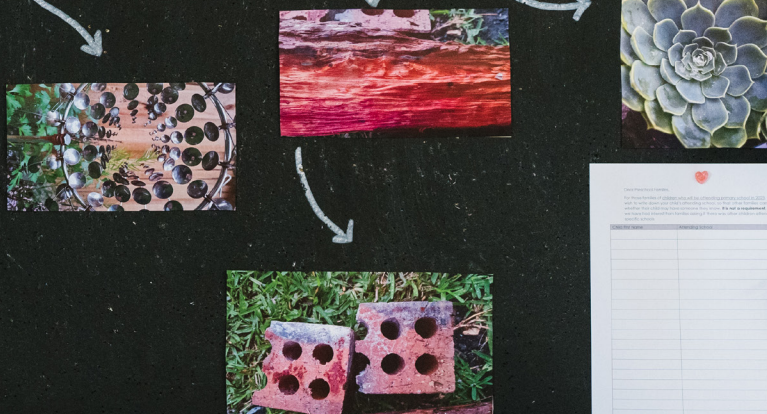
www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/education-and-care-regulatory-unit

What's Been Happening...

We have been exploring patterns in our environment. I wonder what patterns you can find around your home?



Here are some patterns from our preschoolers homes!



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