



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority



NQF Snapshot

Q3 2024

November 2024

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

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Overview

NQF Snapshot Q3 2024 is ACECQA's 47th 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, streamlined version of the NQS commenced on 1 February 2018, which also made it more challenging for a service to achieve an overall rating of Exceeding NQS (see Figure 4).

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 October 2024.

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



Snapshot highlights

17,762	children's education and care services approved to operate under the NQF
16,253 (92%)	services with a quality rating
14,726 (91%)	services with a quality rating are Meeting NQS or above
7,197	providers approved to operate
5,679 (79%)	providers approved to operate only one service
28	services rated Excellent by ACECQA ¹
22,033	quality rating reassessments completed
68%	of services rated Working Towards NQS improved their overall quality rating at reassessment
15,481 (87%)	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

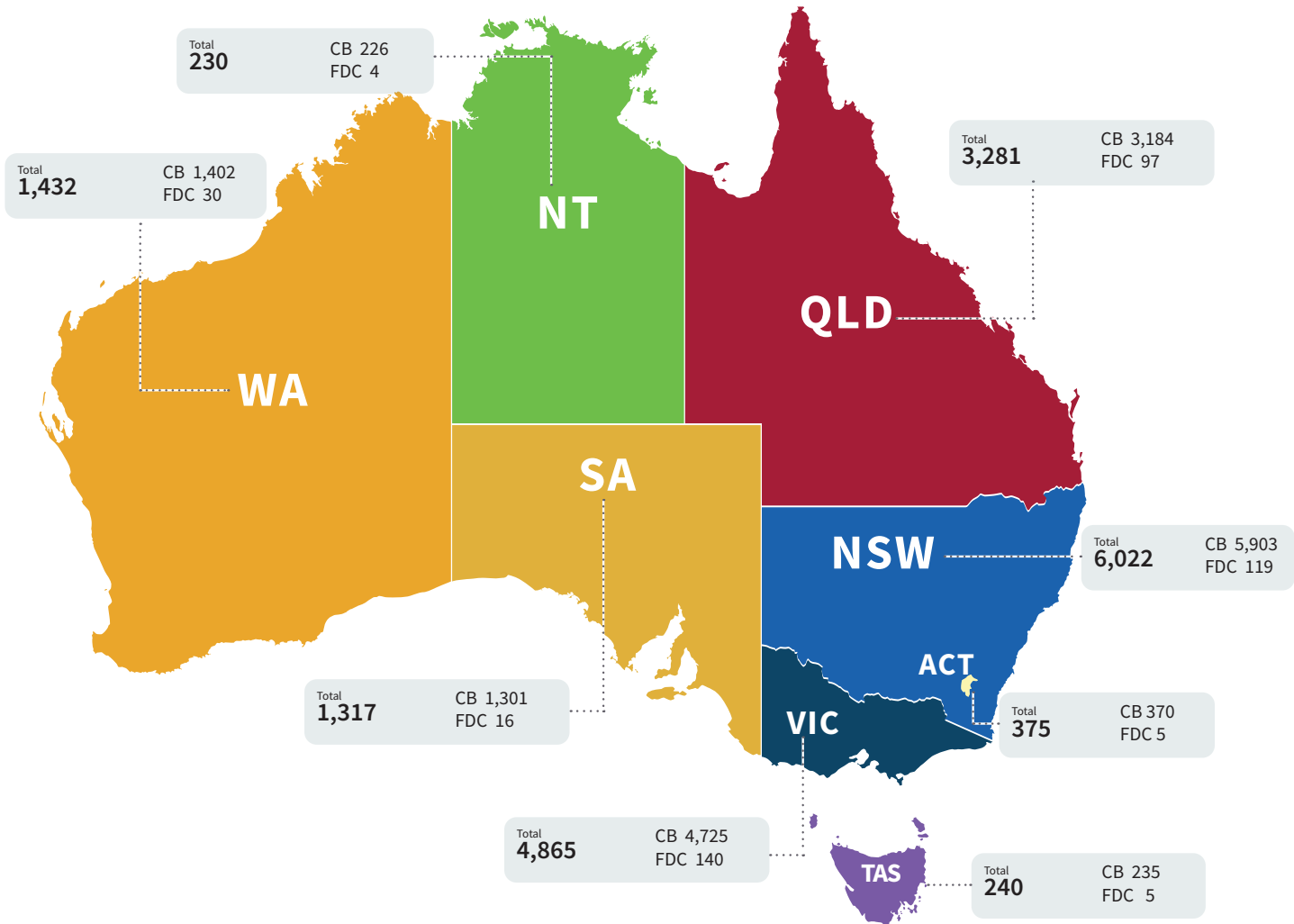
■ Number of services with a quality rating ■ Number of approved services



¹ The Excellent rating is awarded for a period of five years. Unless a reapplication for the Excellent rating is received, a service's rating will revert back to Exceeding NQS after this five 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>17,346 (98%)</p> <p>+2% Increase on Q3 2023</p>	<p>Total Family day care (FDC) ²</p> <p>416 (2%)</p> <p>-5% Decrease on Q3 2023</p>	<p>Total</p> <p>17,762</p> <p>+2% Increase on Q3 2023</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

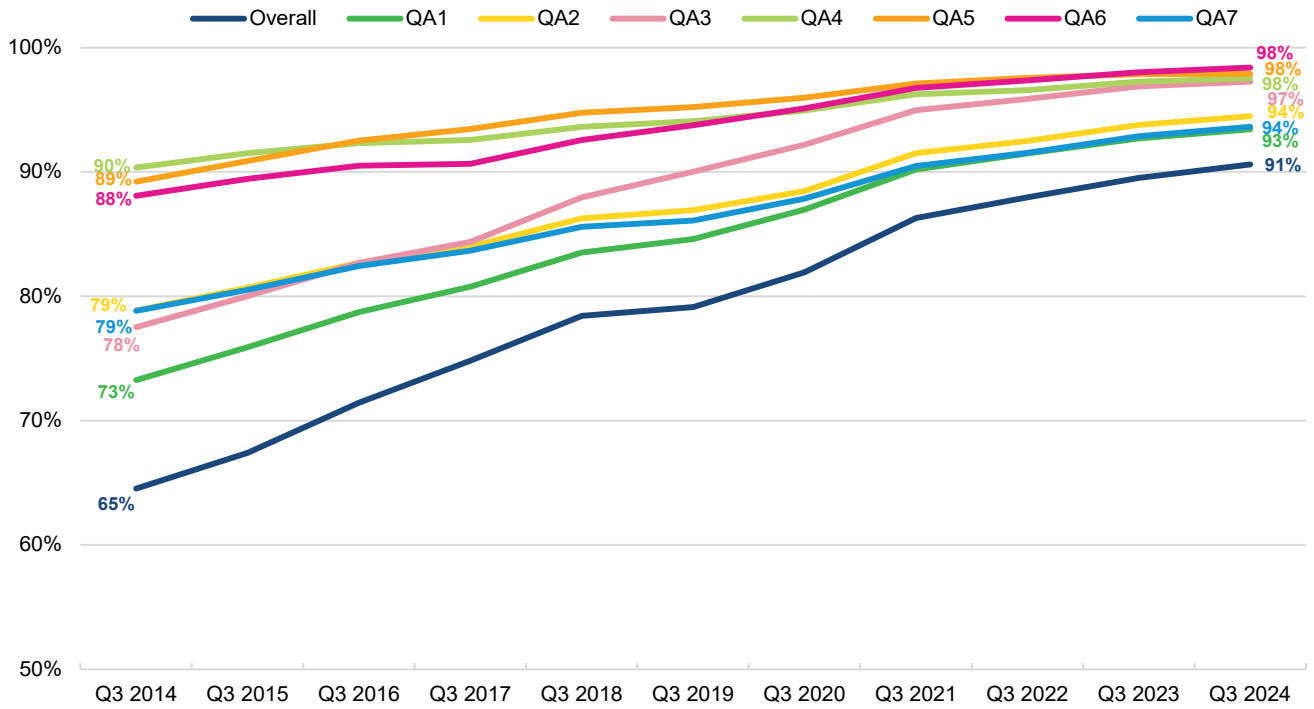


Figure 4: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS or above by overall rating and quality area

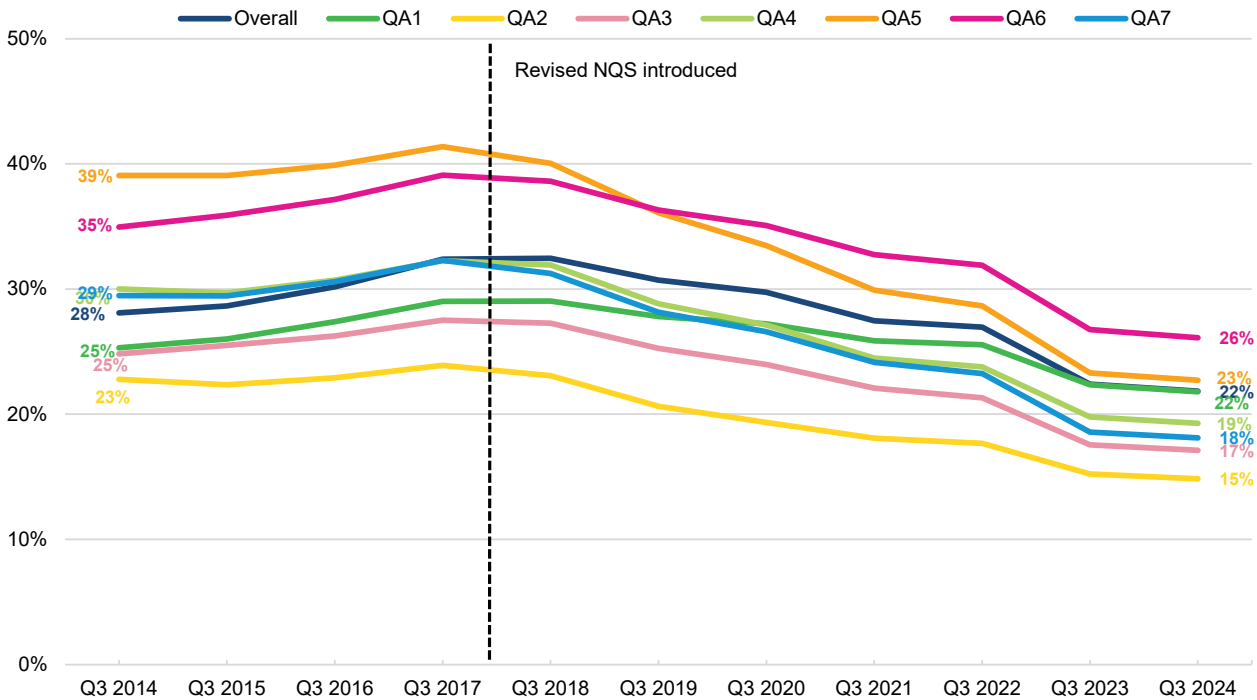


Figure 5: Proportion of services by service type and jurisdiction ^{1,2,3,4,5}

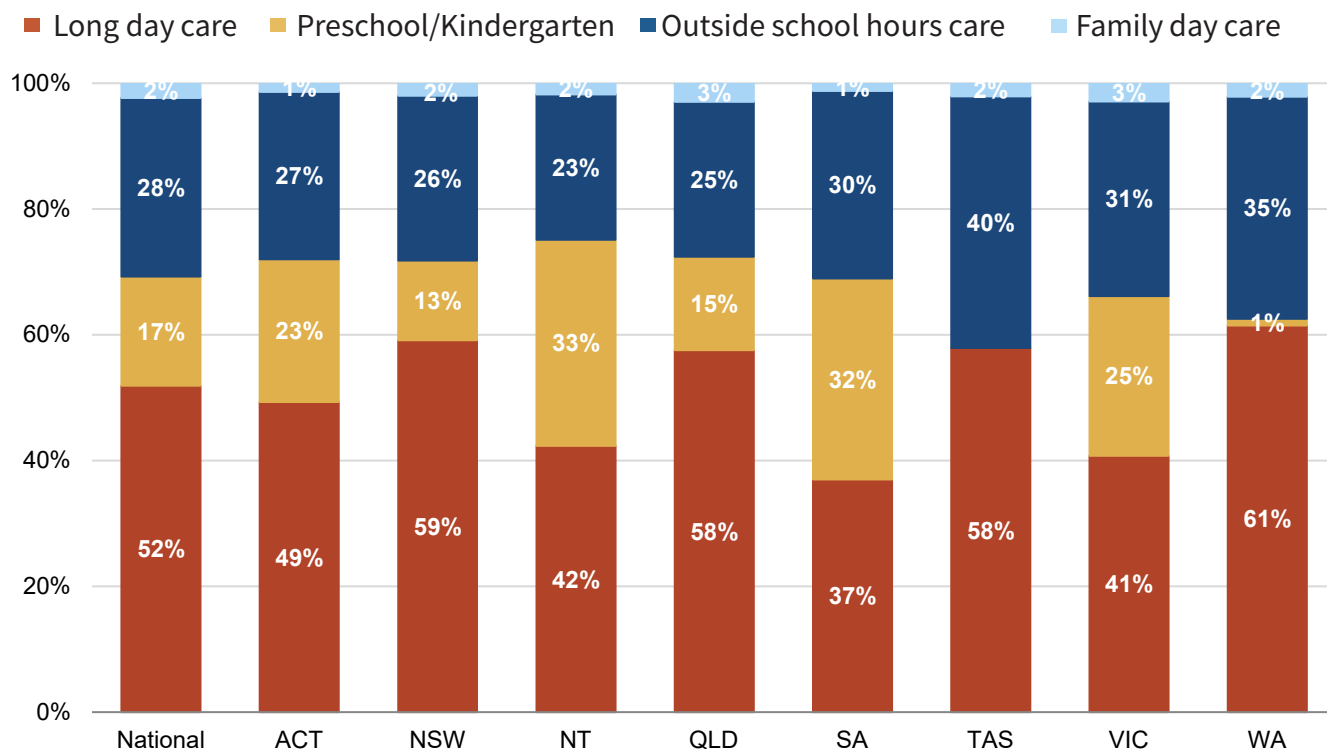


Table 1: Number of services by service type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/ Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	5	185	85	100	0	375
NSW	119	3,560	765	1,577	1	6,022
NT	4	97	75	53	1	230
QLD	97	1,889	487	808	0	3,281
SA	16	487	421	393	0	1,317
TAS	5	139	0	96	0	240
VIC	140	1,984	1,236	1,505	0	4,865
WA	30	880	15	506	1	1,432
TOTAL	416	9,221	3,084	5,038	3	17,762

1 NQA ITS data collected on service type is self-reported by providers when applying for service approval, and providers may choose multiple service 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: Number and proportion of services by provider management ^{1,2,3}

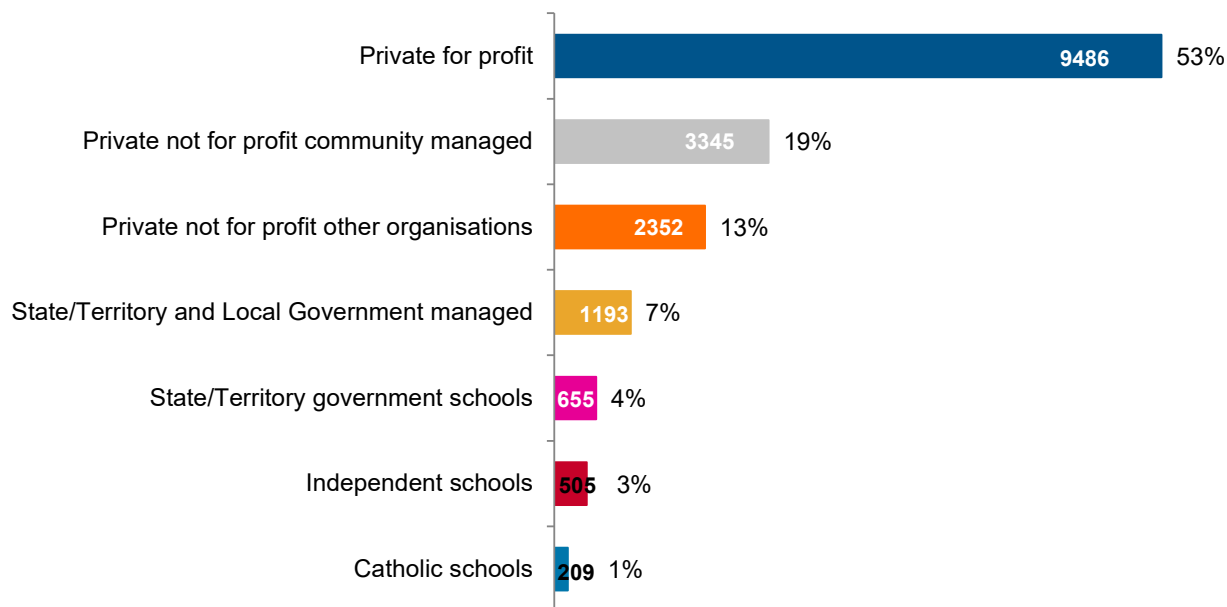


Figure 7 shows that 79% of approved providers operate a single service while 1% of approved providers operate 25 or more services.

Figure 7: Proportion of approved providers by size

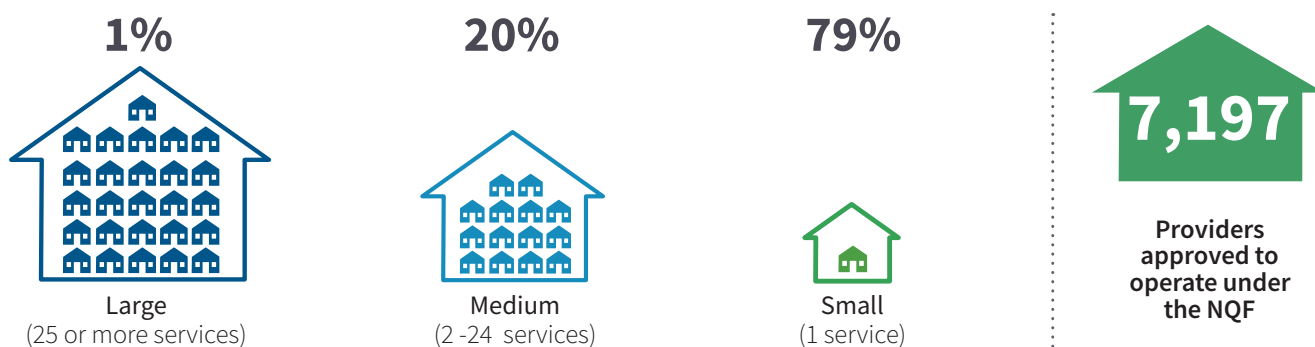
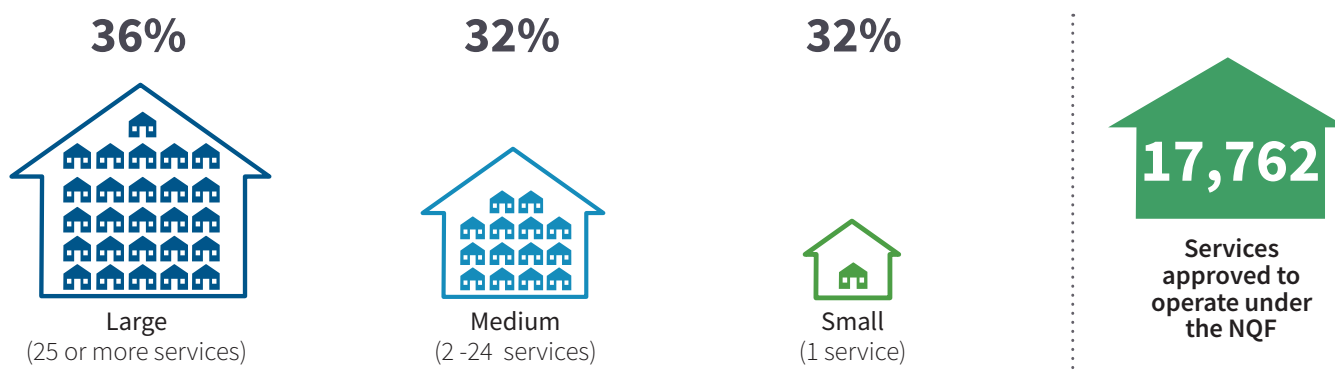


Figure 8 shows that 32% of approved services are operated by small approved providers while 36% of approved services are operated by large approved providers.

Figure 8: Proportion of approved services by provider size



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

Progress of assessment and rating

Table 2 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 assess and rate newly approved services within 9-18 months of operations commencing.

Table 2: 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	375	2%	349	93%
NSW	6,022	34%	5,658	94%
NT	230	1%	216	94%
QLD	3,281	18%	3,062	93%
SA	1,317	7%	1,249	95%
TAS	240	1%	219	91%
VIC	4,865	27%	4,215	87%
WA	1,432	8%	1,285	90%
TOTAL	17,762	100%	16,253	92%

Table 3: Number of services with a quality rating by service type and jurisdiction

	Family day care	Long day care	Preschool/ Kindergarten	Outside school hours care	Other	Total
ACT	5	169	84	91	0	349
NSW	114	3,384	751	1,408	1	5,658
NT	3	90	73	49	1	216
QLD	76	1,762	463	761	0	3,062
SA	13	446	411	379	0	1,249
TAS	5	133	0	81	0	219
VIC	113	1,744	1,152	1,206	0	4,215
WA	29	786	14	455	1	1,285
TOTAL	358	8,514	2,948	4,430	3	16,253

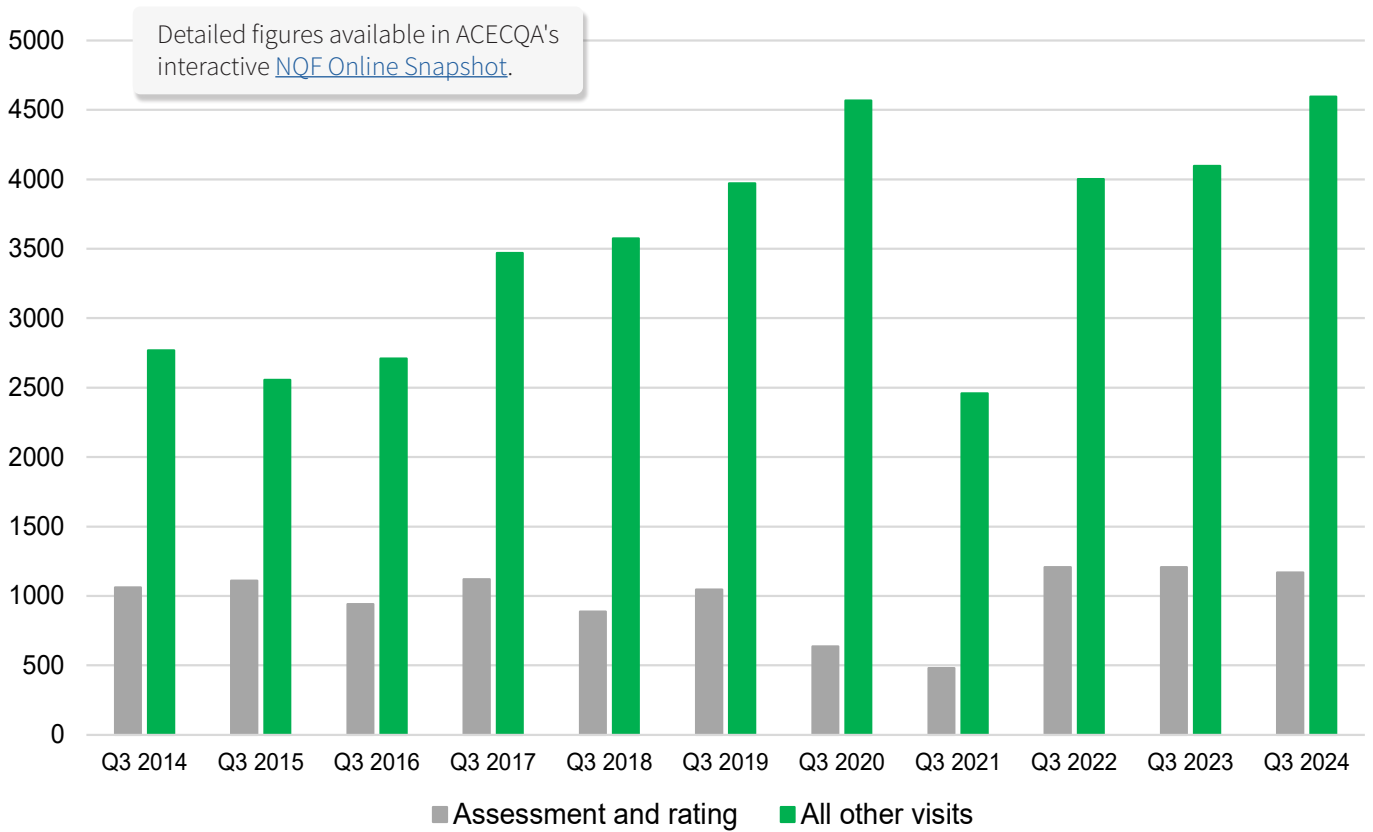
Service visits

Figure 9 shows the total number of quality assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits undertaken by state and territory regulatory authorities in equivalent quarters each year. 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 a stark decline in assessment and rating visits in Q2 2020.

Figure 9: Number of service visits (quality assessment and rating visits compared to all other visits)



Draft and final reports, and reviews

Table 4 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 94% of all overall quality ratings remain unchanged between the draft and final assessment and rating reports.

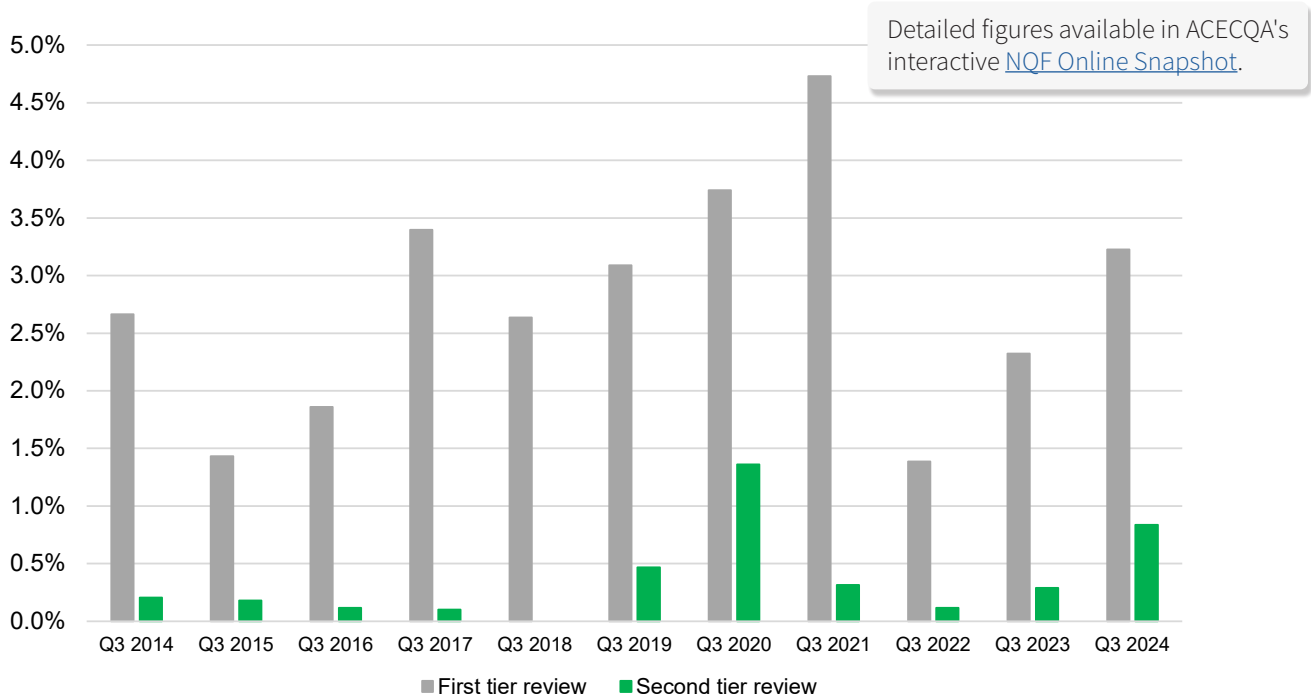
Table 4: Proportion of overall quality ratings that change between the draft and final assessment and rating report

Rating level	Change in rating	%
Higher	821	5.1%
Unchanged	15,404	94.9%
Lower	0	0.0%
Total	16,225	100%

Figure 10 shows the proportion of quality assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review in equivalent quarters each year.

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.

Figure 10: Proportion of quality assessment and ratings that result in a first or second tier review



Quality improvement

Table 5 presents a service's previous overall rating alongside its reassessed overall rating. For example, 4,525 services previously rated Working Towards NQS improved their rating to Meeting NQS after reassessment. While 2,403 services previously rated Working Towards NQS received the same rating again after reassessment.

Table 5: 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	21	87	17	0	125
	Working Towards NQS	64	2,403	4,525	815	7,807
	Meeting NQS	11	1,268	6,231	1,246	8,756
	Exceeding NQS	2	452	2,326	2,565	5,345
	Total	98	4,210	13,099	4,626	22,033

		Rating after reassessment				Improvement rate
		Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS	
Rating before reassessment	Significant Improvement Required	17%	70%	14%	0%	83%
	Working Towards NQS	1%	31%	58%	10%	68%
	Meeting NQS	0%	14%	71%	14%	14%
	Exceeding NQS	0%	8%	44%	48%	-

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					



RATED
WORKING TOWARDS
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD



RATED
MEETING
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD



RATED
EXCEEDING
NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD



RATED
EXCELLENT
by ACECQA

Table 6: Overall quality ratings by jurisdiction

	Significant Improvement Required		Working Towards NQS		Meeting NQS		Exceeding NQS		Excellent	Total
ACT	1	53	15%	142	41%	152	44%	1	349	
NSW	5	435	8%	4,101	72%	1,105	20%	12	5,658	
NT	0	40	19%	159	74%	17	8%	0	216	
QLD	0	320	10%	2,171	71%	564	18%	7	3,062	
SA	0	198	16%	619	50%	432	35%	0	1,249	
TAS	0	38	17%	135	62%	46	21%	0	219	
VIC	2	207	5%	2,848	68%	1,150	27%	8	4,215	
WA	0	228	18%	1,001	78%	56	4%	0	1,285	
TOTAL	8	1,519	9%	11,176	69%	3,522	22%	28	16,253	

Figure 11: Overall quality ratings by service type

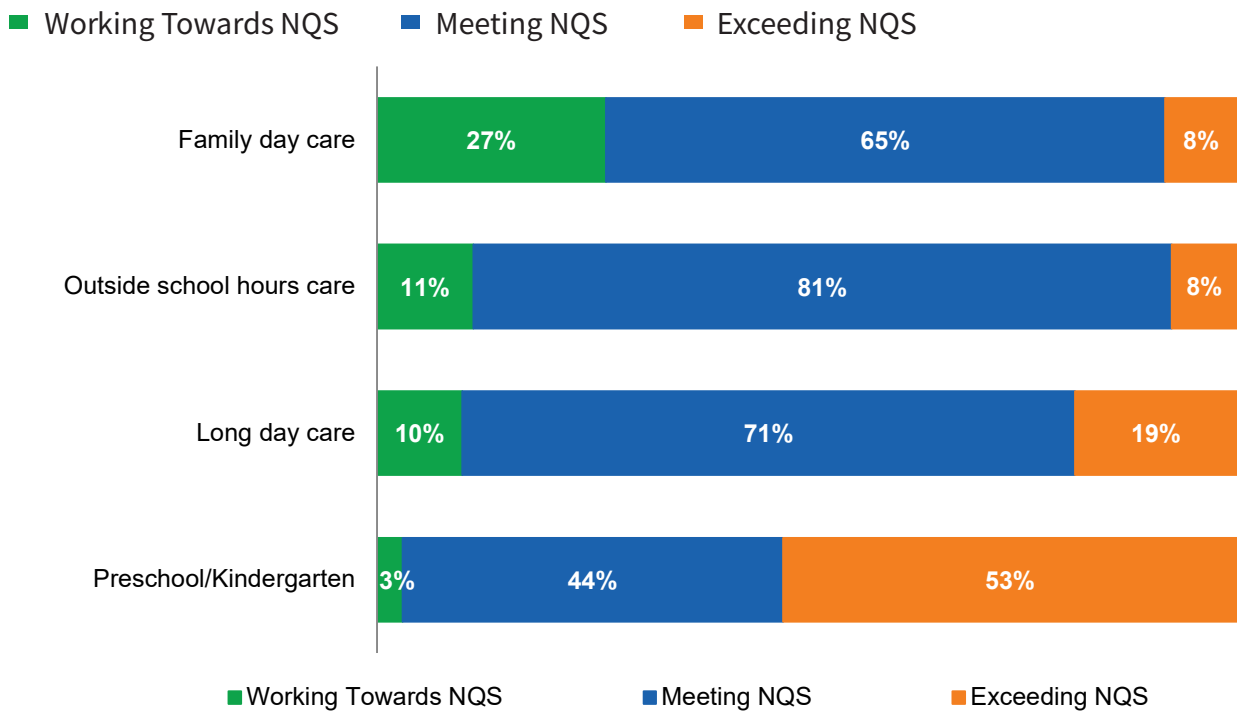
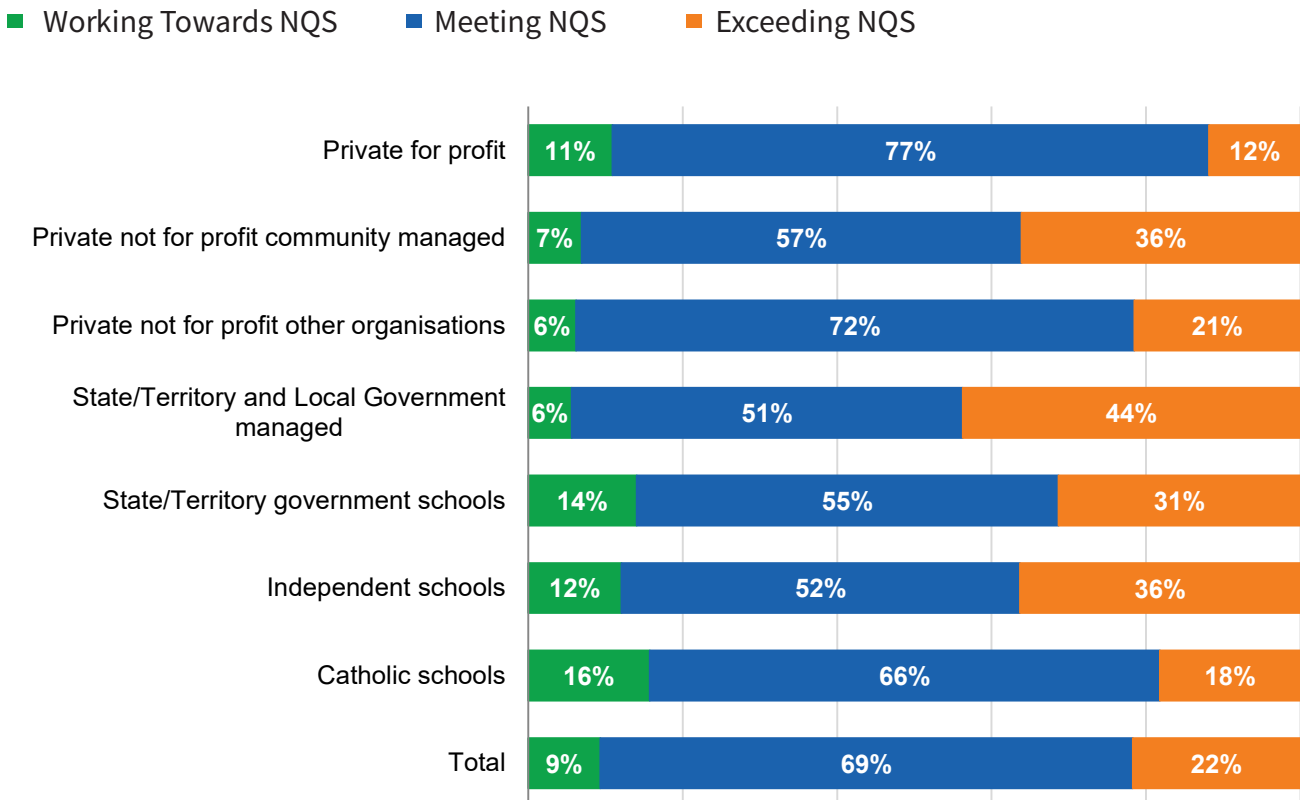


Figure 12 shows the variation in spread of quality ratings between provider management types.

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 11). In contrast, preschools/kindergartens make up only 1% of ‘Private for profit’ services.

Figure 12: Overall quality ratings by provider management type¹



¹ 16 providers categorised as ‘Not stated/Other’ excluded for graphical purposes.

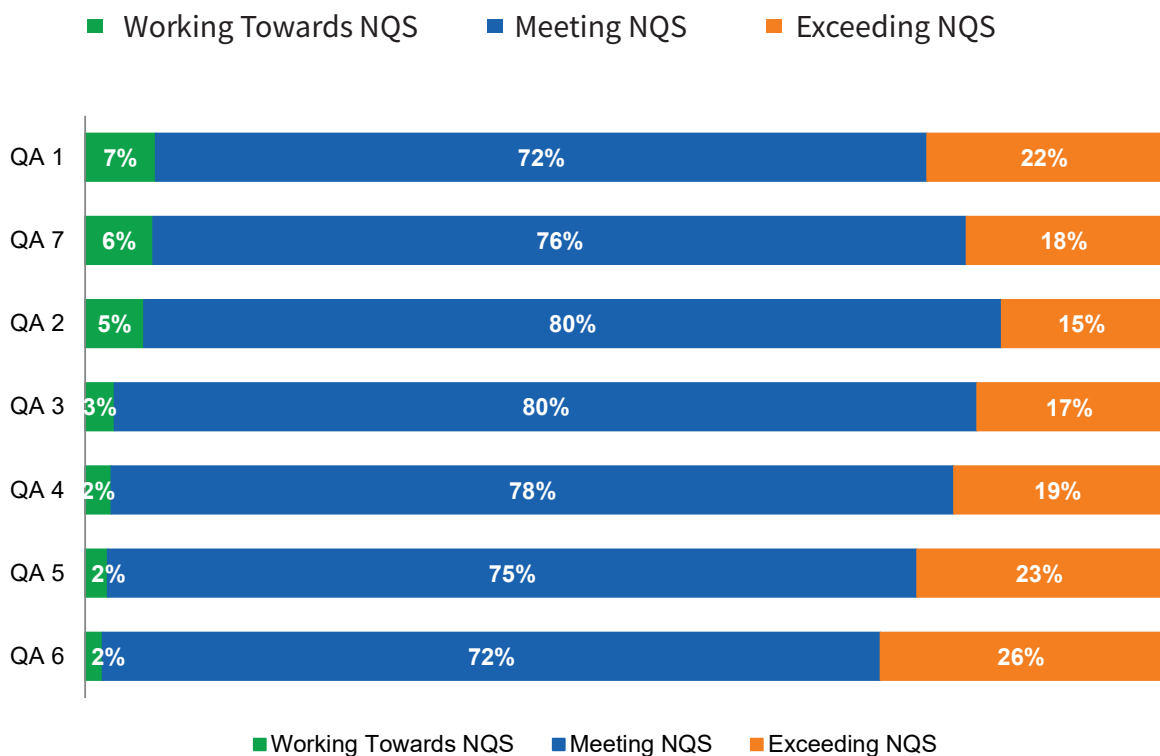
Quality area ratings

Table 7 and Figure 13 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 7: Quality area ratings

	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards NQS	Meeting NQS	Exceeding NQS
Quality Area 1 - Educational program and practice	1	1,069	11,642	3,541
Quality Area 7 - Governance and leadership	7	1,029	12,274	2,943
Quality Area 2 - Children's health and safety	8	888	12,946	2,411
Quality Area 3 - Physical environment	1	446	13,024	2,782
Quality Area 4 - Staffing arrangements	1	398	12,720	3,134
Quality Area 5 - Relationships with children	2	340	12,220	3,691
Quality Area 6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	0	263	11,748	4,242

Figure 13: Quality area ratings

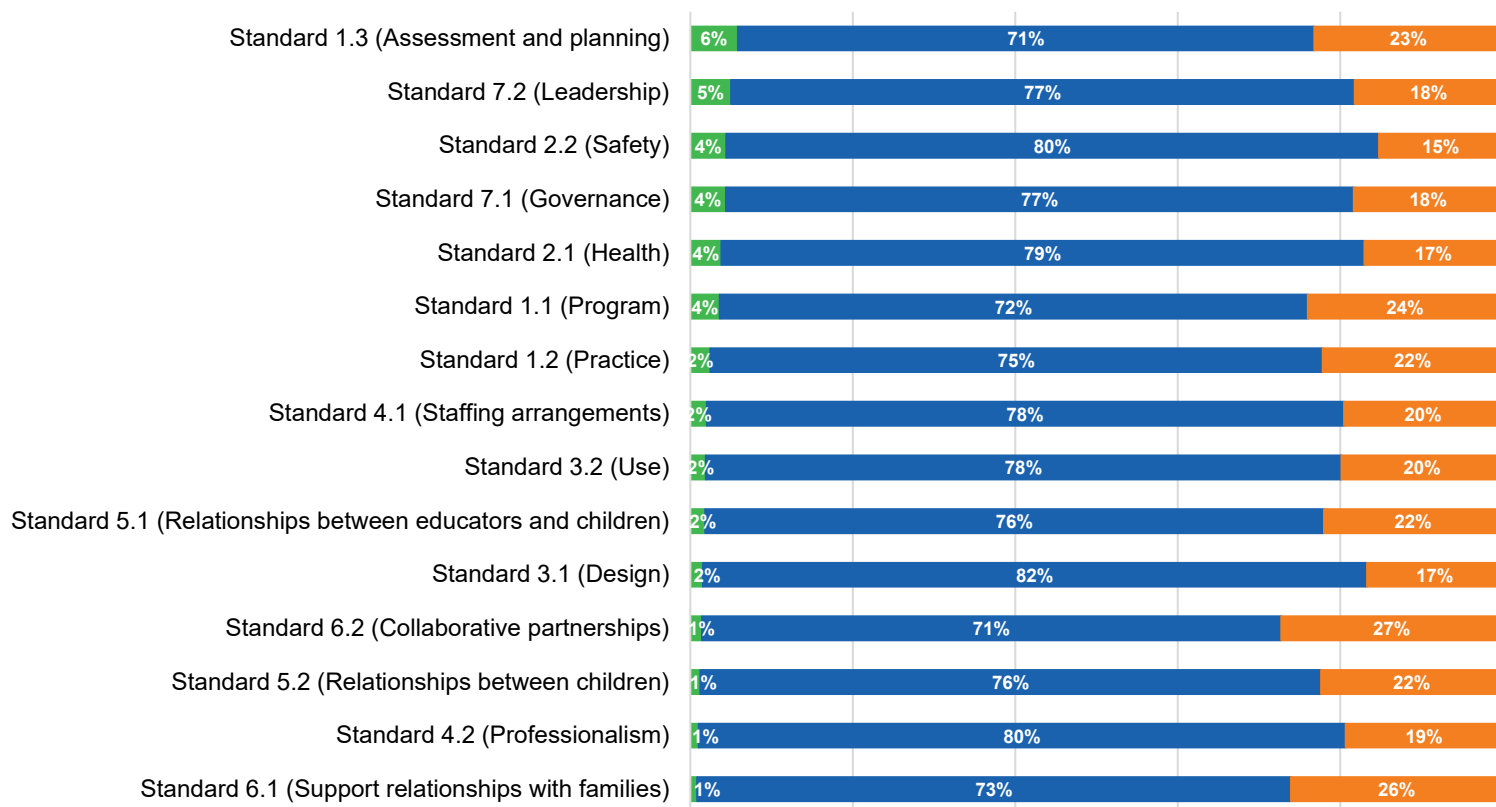


Standard level ratings

Figure 14 ranks the 15 standards of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS for each standard.

Figure 14: Standard level ratings

■ Working Towards NQS ■ Meeting NQS ■ Exceeding NQS



Element level results

Table 8 ranks the 40 elements of the NQS in descending order, based on the proportion of services that do not meet each element.

Table 8: Element level results

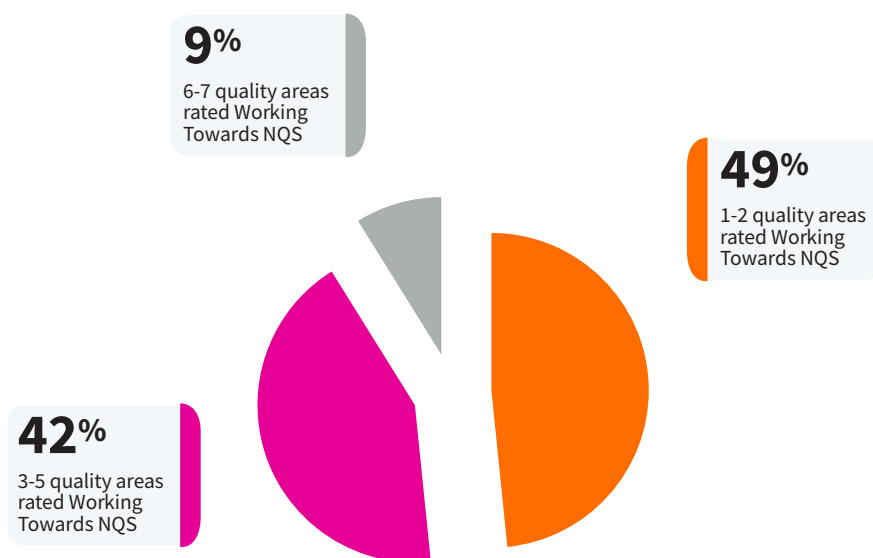
NQS Element	% Not Met
1.3.1 (Assessment and planning cycle)	5.0%
1.3.2 (Critical reflection)	4.9%
7.1.2 (Management systems)	3.9%
7.2.2 (Educational leadership)	3.6%
2.2.1 (Supervision)	3.4%
2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures)	3.3%
7.2.3 (Development of professionals)	2.9%
1.1.3 (Program learning opportunities)	2.5%
2.2.2 (Incident and emergency management)	2.1%
4.1.1 (Organisation of educators)	1.9%
1.1.1 (Approved learning framework)	1.9%
7.2.1 (Continuous improvement)	1.8%
1.2.3 (Child directed learning)	1.5%
5.1.2 (Dignity and rights of the child)	1.5%
1.3.3 (Information for families)	1.5%
1.1.2 (Child-centred)	1.4%
1.2.2 (Responsive teaching and scaffolding)"	1.4%
7.1.1 (Service philosophy and purpose)	1.3%
1.2.1 (Intentional teaching)	1.3%
3.1.2 (Upkeep)	1.3%

NQS Element	% Not Met
3.2.3 (Environmentally responsible)	1.3%
7.1.3 (Roles and responsibilities)	1.2%
5.2.2 (Self-regulation)	1.2%
5.1.1 (Positive educator to child interactions)	1.1%
6.2.3 (Community engagement)	1.0%
2.1.1 (Wellbeing and comfort)	1.0%
2.1.3 (Healthy lifestyle)	0.9%
3.2.2 (Resources support play-based learning)"	0.9%
4.2.2 (Professional standards)	0.9%
2.2.3 (Child protection)	0.8%
6.2.2 (Access and participation)	0.8%
3.2.1 (Inclusive environment)	0.7%
4.2.1 (Professional collaboration)	0.6%
3.1.1 (Fit for purpose)	0.6%
6.1.3 (Families are supported)	0.5%
6.1.2 (Parent views are respected)	0.5%
6.2.1 (Transitions)	0.4%
4.1.2 (Continuity of staff)	0.4%
6.1.1 (Engagement with the service)	0.3%
5.2.1 (Collaborative learning)	0.3%

Services rated Working Towards NQS

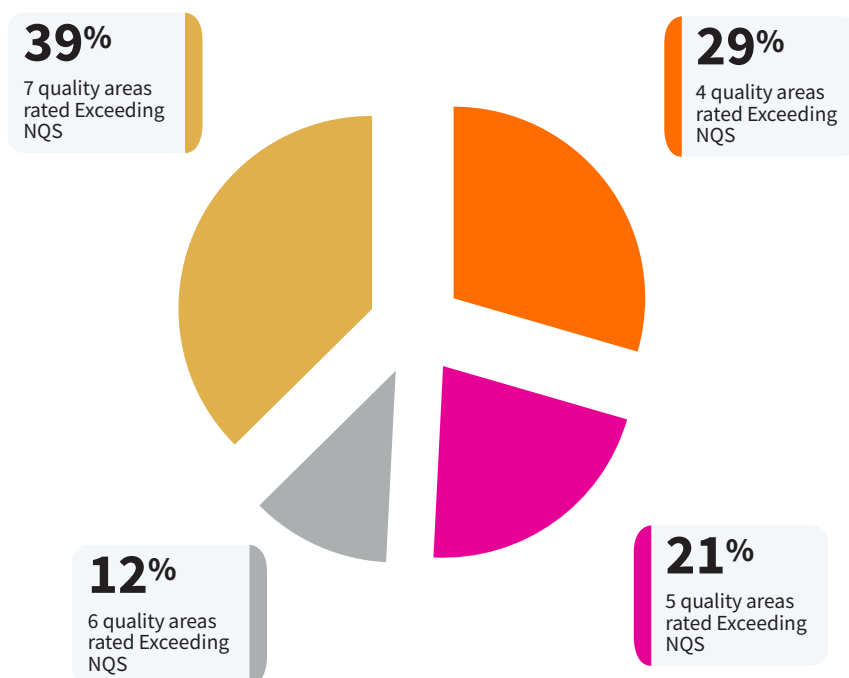
A service receives an overall rating of Working Towards NQS if any of the seven quality areas are rated Working Towards NQS. A quality area is rated Working Towards NQS if any of the standards within that quality area are rated Working Towards NQS.

Figure 15: Proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS by number of quality areas rated Working Towards NQS



Services rated Exceeding NQS

Figure 16: Proportion of services rated Exceeding NQS by number of quality areas rated Exceeding NQS



Australian Capital Territory summary

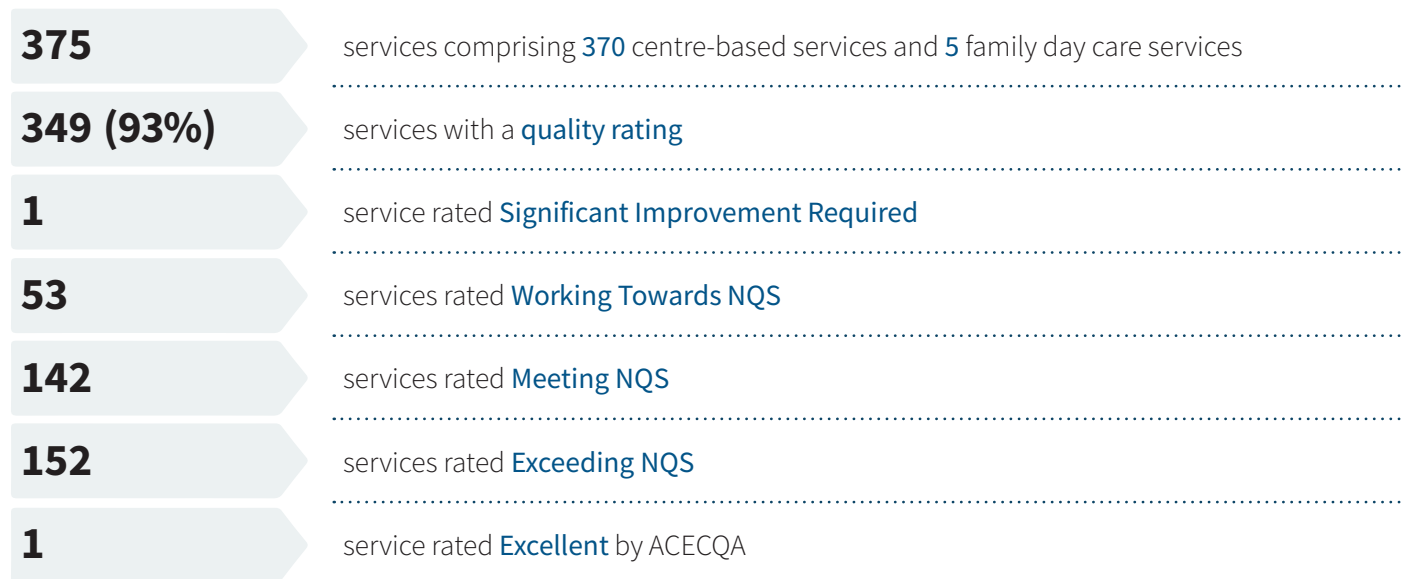
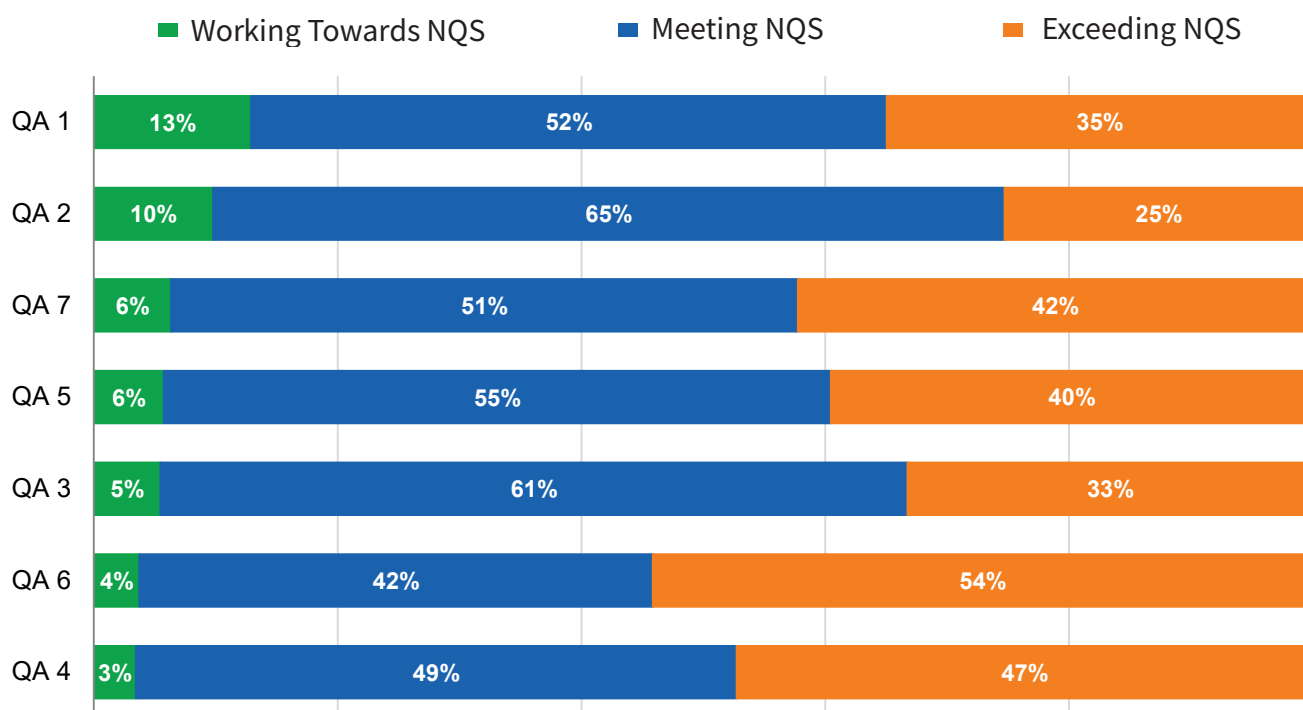


Figure 17 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 17: Quality area ratings



Contact details

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

New South Wales summary

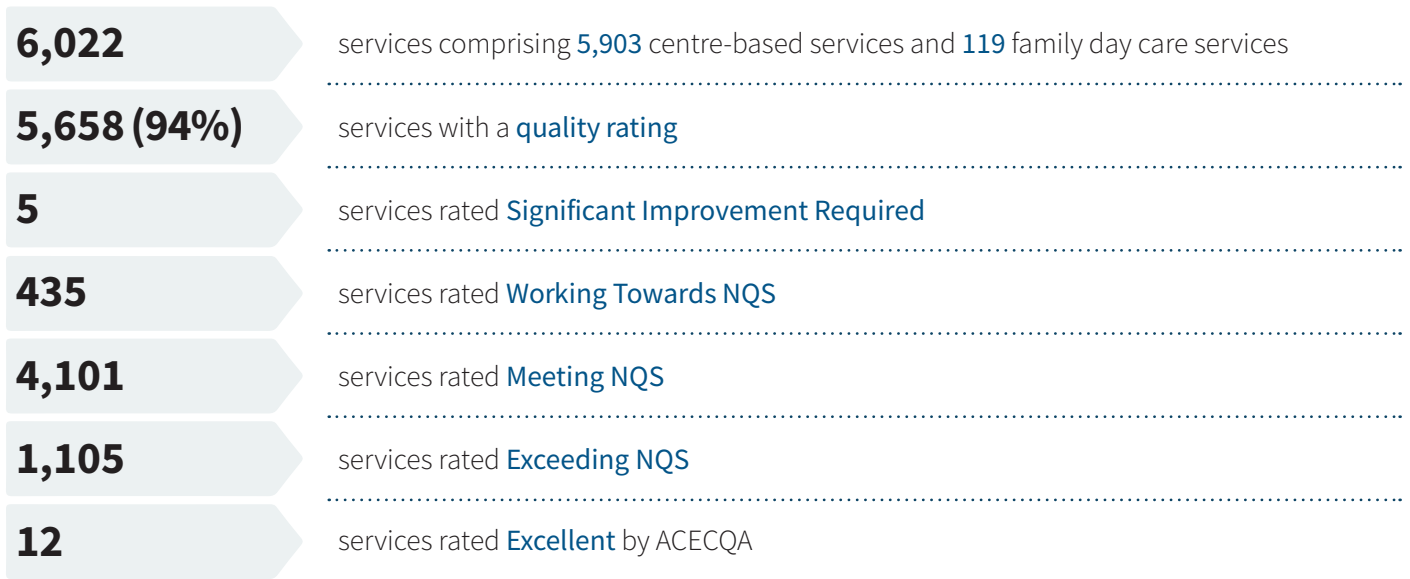
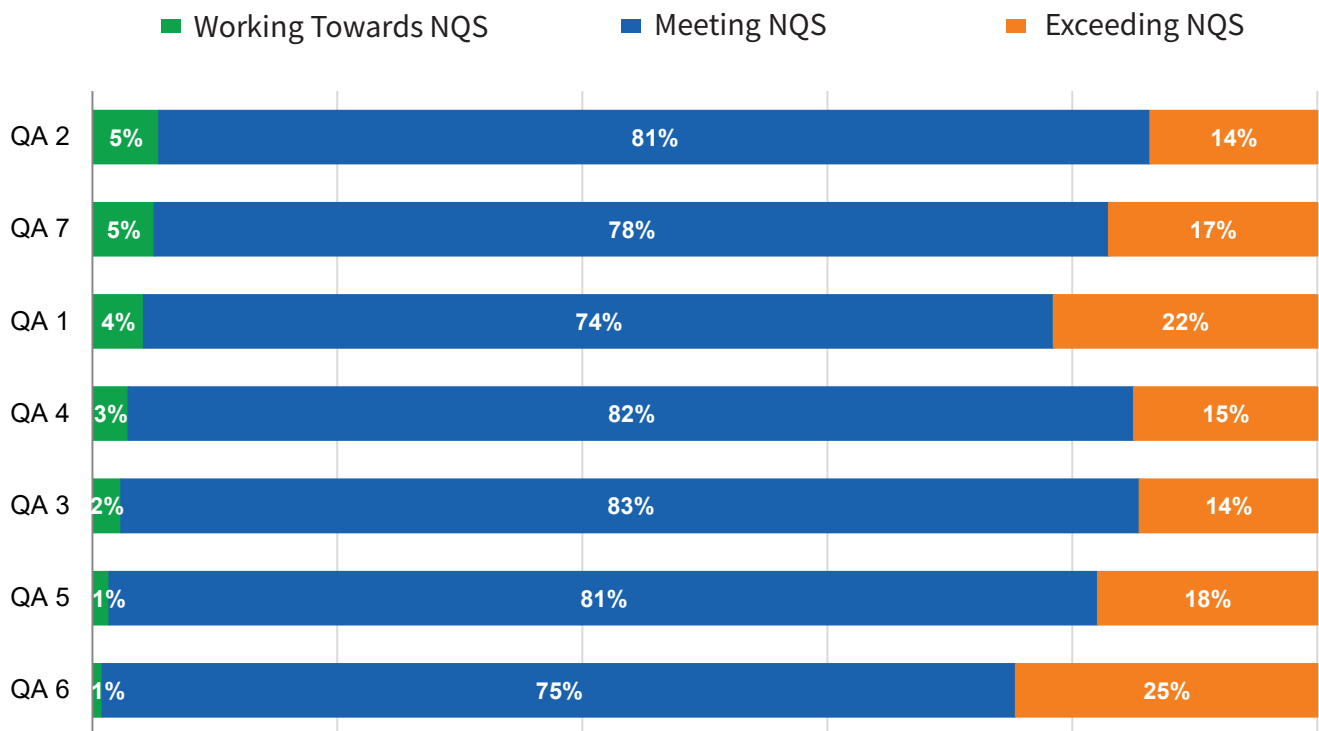


Figure 18 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 18: Quality area ratings



Contact details

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

Northern Territory summary

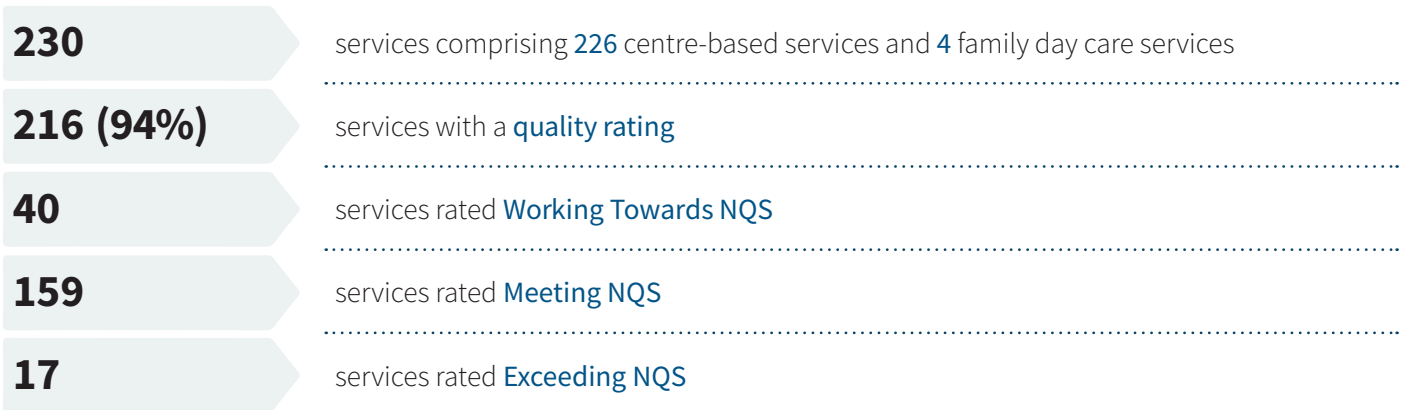
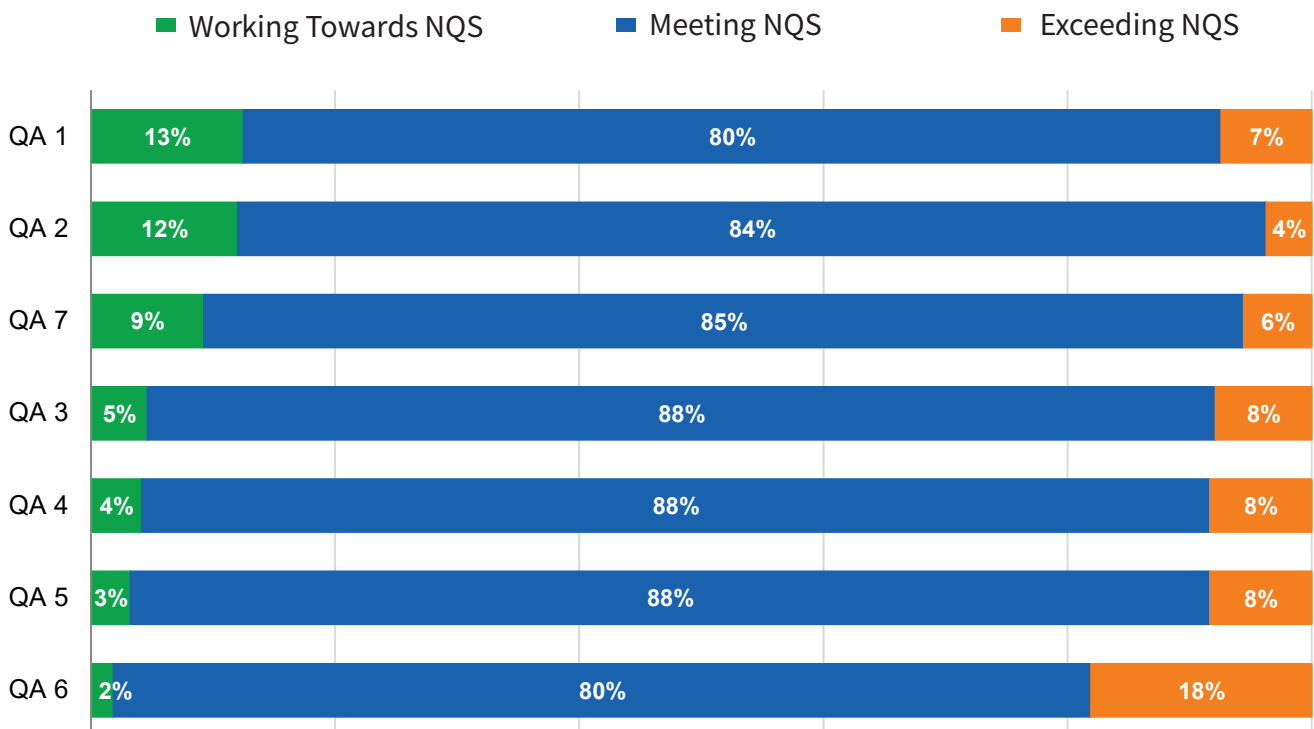


Figure 19 ranks the seven quality areas of the NQS in descending order based on the proportion of services rated Working Towards NQS in each quality area.

Figure 19: Quality area ratings



Contact details

Department of Education
Quality Education and Care NT

<https://education.nt.gov.au/committees-regulators-and-advisory-groups/quality-education-and-care-nt>

Queensland summary

3,281

services comprising **3,184** centre-based services and **97** family day care services

3,062 (93%)

services with a **quality rating**

320

services rated **Working Towards NQS**

2,171

services rated **Meeting NQS**

564

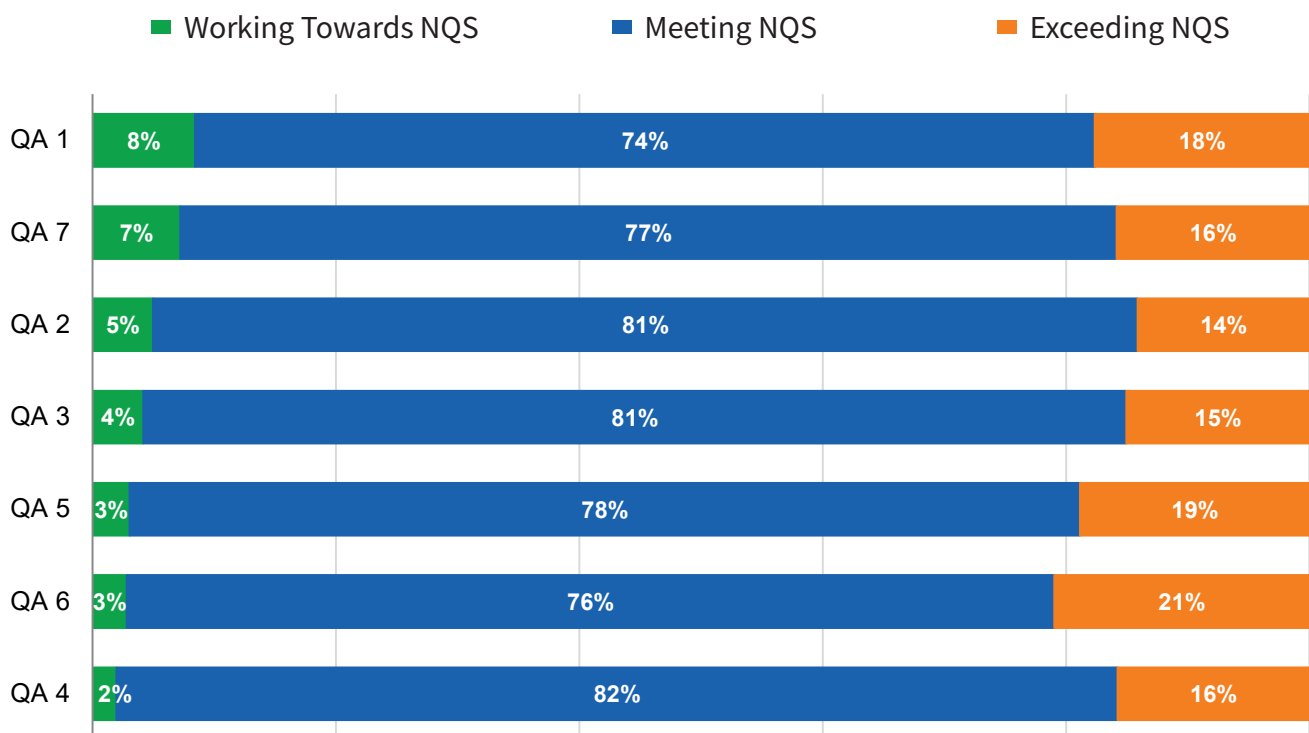
services rated **Exceeding NQS**

7

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 Regulatory Authority
www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au

South Australia summary

1,317

services comprising **1,301** centre-based services and **16** family day care services

1,249 (95%)

services with a **quality rating**

198

services rated **Working Towards NQS**

619

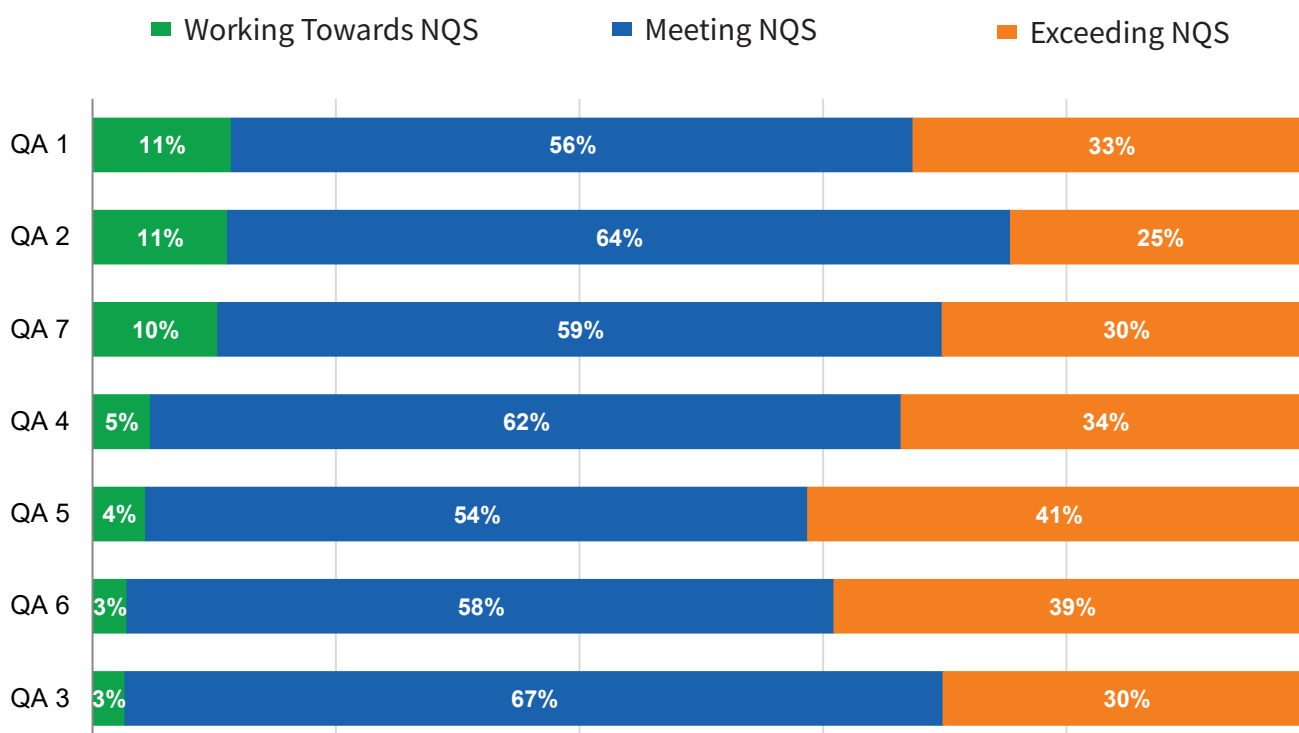
services rated **Meeting NQS**

432

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

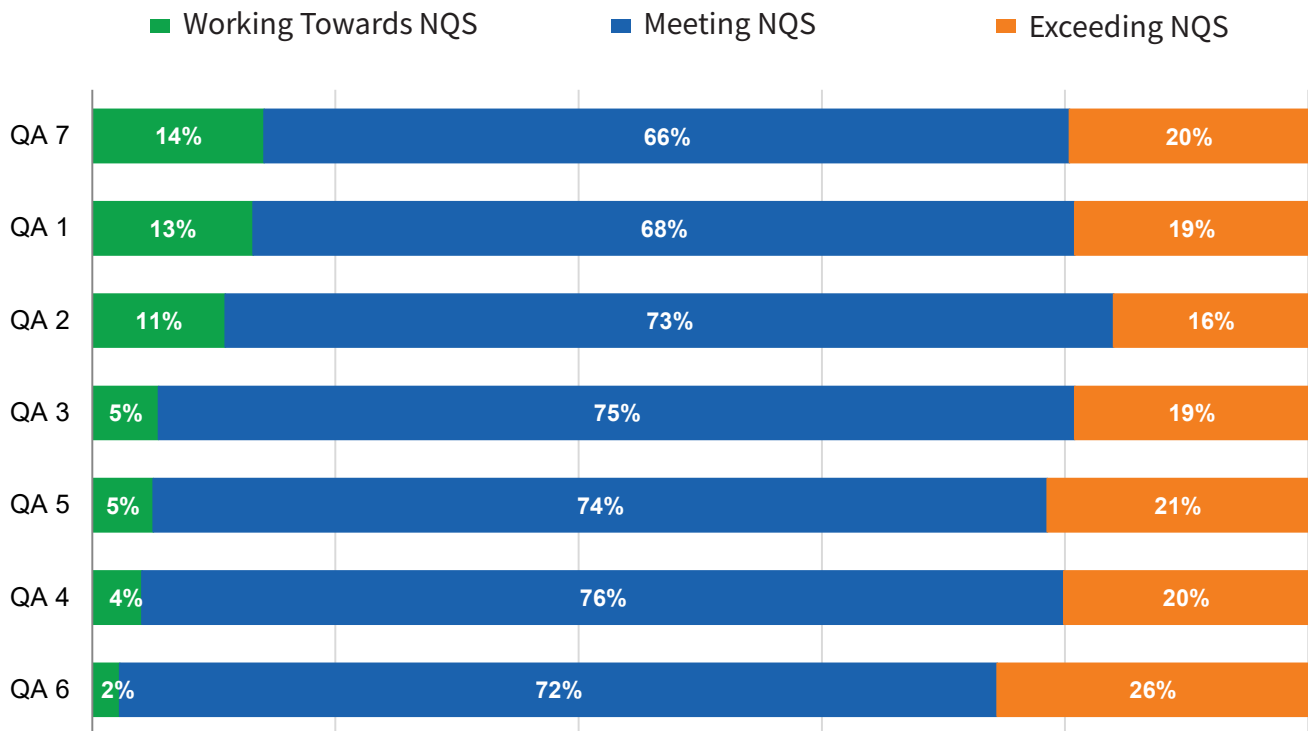
Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of South Australia
www.esb.sa.gov.au/early-childhood

Tasmania summary

240	services comprising 235 centre-based services and 5 family day care services
219 (91%)	services with a quality rating
38	services rated Working Towards NQS
135	services rated Meeting NQS
46	services rated Exceeding NQS

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 for Education, Children and Young People
Education and Care Unit

www.educationandcare.tas.gov.au

Victoria summary

4,865

services comprising 4,725 centre-based services and 140 family day care services

4,215 (87%)

services with a quality rating

2

services rated Significant Improvement Required

207

services rated Working Towards NQS

2,848

services rated Meeting NQS

1,150

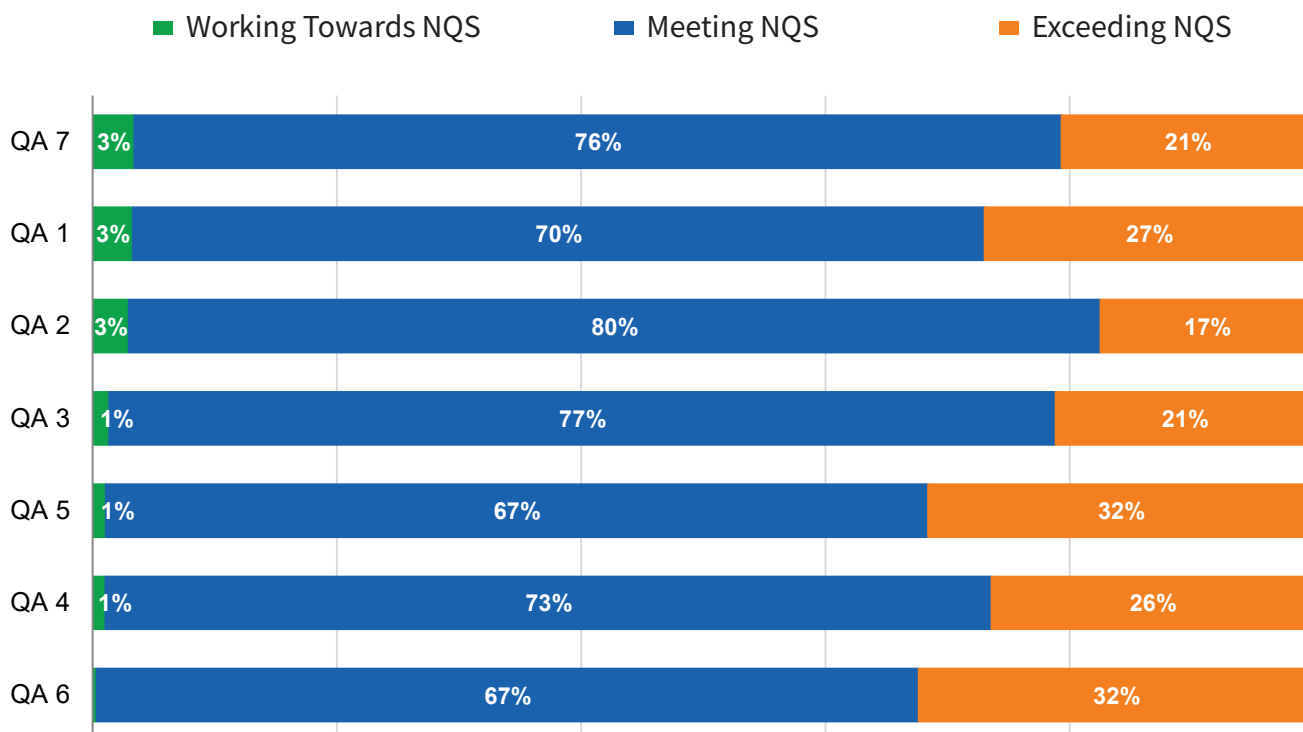
services rated Exceeding NQS

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

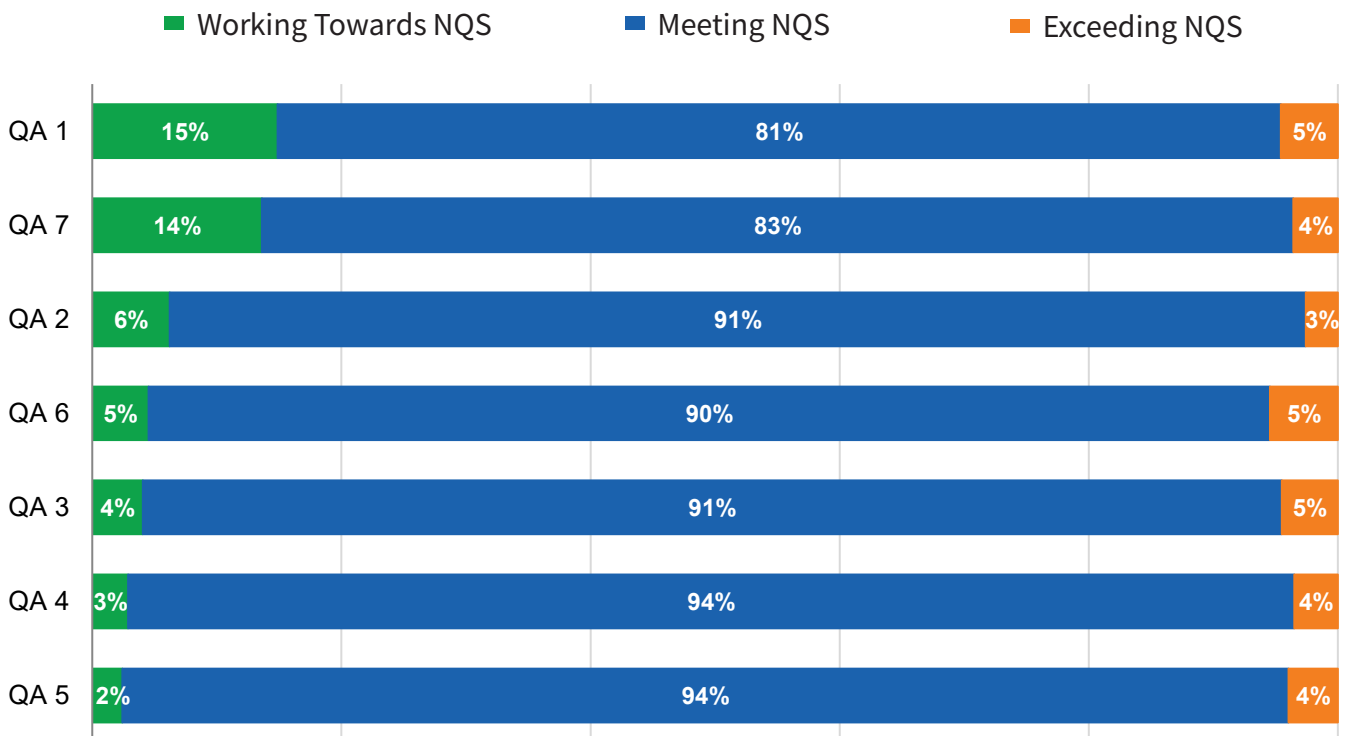
Department of Education and Training
 Quality Assessment and Regulation Division
www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation

Western Australia summary



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 Communities
 Education and Care Regulatory Unit
www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/education-and-care-regulatory-unit



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