

Submission
No 28

**INQUIRY INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND
CARE SECTOR IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 31 March 2025

Partially
Confidential

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this submission as an experienced professional in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) industry, having dedicated the past 15 years to this field. I commenced my journey as a trainee and have since progressed to the role of Centre Manager. In addition to my leadership role, I have also worked as a Trainer and Assessor, supporting students in their journey to becoming qualified educators. However, my experiences over the past few years, particularly in the training sector, have left me deeply concerned about the integrity and quality of the industry.

Concerns About the Integrity of ECEC Qualifications

Two years ago, while working as a Trainer and Assessor, I encountered firsthand the growing issue of students relying on artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT to complete their assignments. On multiple occasions, we identified direct ChatGPT links left within responses, making it evident that students were not engaging in the learning process but instead outsourcing their work. Despite this clear misconduct, we were informed that our only recourse was to warn these students, with no further action available to ensure the integrity of their qualifications. This lack of accountability severely undermines the credibility of the qualifications being issued and, by extension, the competency of the educators entering the workforce.

Another concerning trend is the perception that ECEC is an easy pathway for international students to gain entry into Australia. Many of these students exhibit extremely poor written and verbal English skills, making it highly unlikely that they are completing their qualifications independently. This becomes particularly evident during job interviews, where candidates struggle to demonstrate even a basic grasp of the language necessary for effective communication with children, families, and colleagues. Without stricter entry requirements and language proficiency assessments, the industry risks being inundated with educators who lack the fundamental skills necessary to provide quality care and education.

The Need for Stricter Entry Requirements and Better Pay

The accessibility of ECEC courses needs to be more closely scrutinized to ensure that only dedicated and competent individuals enter the sector. The current system, which allows individuals to obtain qualifications with minimal oversight, is devaluing the profession and compromising the quality of education provided to young children.

A key factor in improving the quality of educators is increasing pay across the board. The industry is currently struggling with high turnover rates and a lack of experienced professionals willing to pursue higher qualifications. If wages were significantly increased, more educators would be motivated to invest in further education, thereby raising the overall standard of the workforce. In turn, this would allow us to eliminate the current waiver rules and "working towards" provisions, which have become a loophole for unqualified individuals to work in the industry, ultimately reducing the quality of education and care.

Regulatory Authority Failures and the Proliferation of Low-Quality Services

Another critical issue is the failure of the Regulatory Authority to adequately oversee the establishment and operation of ECEC services. There has been a surge in the number of services being opened by operators who already manage multiple centers that are consistently rated as "Working Towards" meeting the National Quality Standard (NQS). Rather than addressing existing quality issues, these operators are expanding their businesses, perpetuating a cycle of substandard care.

The lengthy gaps between assessments further exacerbate this problem. Some services go years without reassessment, allowing poor practices to persist unchecked. Additionally, the lack of random spot checks enables non-compliant services to prepare solely for scheduled visits rather than maintaining consistent quality at all times. More frequent and unpredictable assessments are necessary to ensure that services are meeting the required standards continuously.

The ECEC sector plays a fundamental role in shaping the future of young children. However, the issues outlined above are jeopardizing the integrity and effectiveness of the industry. Immediate action is required to:

- Implement stricter entry requirements for ECEC qualifications, including rigorous English proficiency assessments.
- Strengthen measures to prevent academic dishonesty and the misuse of AI in completing assignments.
- Increase educator wages to attract and retain highly qualified professionals.
- Eliminate waiver rules and "working towards" provisions that allow underqualified educators to enter the field.
- Enhance regulatory oversight, including more frequent assessments and random spot checks, to prevent the proliferation of low-quality services.

These changes are necessary to protect the integrity of the industry and ensure that children receive the high-quality care and education they deserve. I urge policymakers and regulatory bodies to take these concerns seriously and implement the necessary reforms to uphold the standards of the ECEC sector.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any further discussion on these matters.

Sincerely,

Centre Manager, Qualified Trainer and Assessor