



Australia's National Early Education and Care Commission

Building the foundations for every child to thrive



The first five years shape a child’s lifelong capacity to learn, form relationships and be resilient. For many families, early education and care plays an important role in establishing these foundations. But despite the extraordinary work of educators, the system supporting ECEC’s success isn’t fit for purpose.

THE PROBLEM: RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT COORDINATION

ECEC is funded by the Commonwealth, regulated by states and territories and delivered by thousands of providers – with no single body accountable for how the system performs as a whole.

- The result:
- States and territories carry responsibility for safety and quality without control over funding or subsidies
 - Oversupply in some communities, gaps in others.
 - Inconsistent workforce and service viability pressures
 - Safety risks managed reactively, not prevented.

The system is patched together, not designed. That’s what lets serious problems take hold.

WHY IT MATTERS

The economic case

- 90% of brain development happens before age five
- Every \$1 invested in early learning returns \$2 over a child’s lifetime
- Failing to identify health and developmental issues early cost taxpayers \$22.3 billion in 2024
- Lifting our lowest-performing providers to match the top 20% would, by 2060, add \$15.7 billion to GDP, create 84,000 jobs and generate \$2.1 billion in government revenue.

The confidence case

- Educators need a system that values and supports their work
- Governments need confidence that public investment is delivering real outcomes
- Families must be able to trust that the ECEC services they rely on are safe and high-quality.

As it stands, regulators work jurisdiction by jurisdiction and providers operate across borders. A Commission will give governments a national line of sight so they can spot risks early, share intelligence effectively and coordinate planning to the benefit of communities, families and their children.

“Both of us need to work to support our family. Knowing our children are safe, having fun and in trusted hands when we’re at work is everything to us.”

-Lena, mum of two, NSW

WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE IN YOUR JURISDICTION*

NSW
Nearly **42,500 jobs** and **\$7.9 billion** in economic growth. An additional \$117 million in State Government revenue.

QLD
More than **16,000 jobs** and **\$3 billion** in additional GDP. An additional \$60 million in State Government revenue.

VIC
Almost **14,000 jobs** and **\$2.6 billion** in economic gains. An additional \$95 million in State Government revenue.

WA
Over **6,300 jobs** and **\$1.2 billion** in economic growth. An additional \$36 million in State Government revenue.

SA
More than **2,500 jobs** and **\$477 million** in GDP gains. An additional \$18 million in State Government revenue.

ACT
Close to **1000 new jobs** and **\$183 million** in economic growth. An additional \$8 million in Territory Government revenue.

TAS
Over **750 jobs** and **140 million** in GDP gains. An additional \$5 million in Territory Government revenue.

NT
An additional **676 jobs** and **126 million** in GDP growth. An additional \$2 million in Territory Government revenue.

WHAT A COMMISSION WOULD DO

Steward the system as a whole – not another regulator, not a takeover of state responsibilities. It would:

- Bring together and analyse national data to guide planning and investment
- Identify emerging risks and system gaps before they become crises
- Coordinate the early childhood workforce - projecting supply, identifying shortages and informing training and pipeline decisions
- Advise governments and report publicly on system performance
- Plan for the early childhood workforce - projecting supply, identifying shortages and informing training and pipeline decisions.

WHAT IT WOULDN’T BE

- **Another layer of bureaucracy** -it cuts duplication by coordinating effort, not adding to it
- **A second ACECQA** -ACECQA supports the National Quality Framework; a Commission looks across workforce, funding, inclusion, safety and whole-of-system performance
- **Commonwealth overreach** -a joint national institution, co-designed by governments, the sector and families, with powers settled through that process.

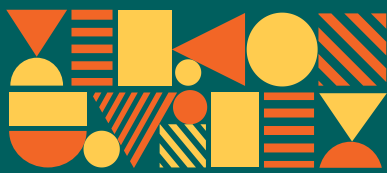
WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Independent and expert-led. Evidence-driven. Fiscally responsible and implementation-ready. Bold on the structural problems but with a clear path to delivery. Universal access fairly delivered, with national coordination and shared accountability.

**Based on modelling by Mandala and The Front Project in the April 2025 ‘Using microdata to better understand provider performance in the ECEC sector’ Report.*



**THRIVE
BY FIVE**



A national campaign representing more than 50 organisations, calling for universal access to high-quality early childhood education and care. info@thrivebyfive.org.au