

One third of Queensland child care centres not up to scratch ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

One in three Queensland childcare centres has failed to meet national quality controls - including kids' health and safety standards.

But the sub-standard centres will not be given a deadline to measure up.

Official data to be released today reveals 121 of the 327 Queensland centres assessed under the national quality benchmarks have been rated as "working towards" the standards.

Queensland's 37 per cent failure figure is lower than the national average of 44 per cent.

And a third of Queensland centres "exceed" the national standards - so will now be able to apply for an official "excellent" rating.

Parents will be able to check the "report card" for individual childcare services today, when the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) publishes the first inspection results online.

ACECQA has assessed 1620 childcare services nationally - 13 per cent of the total - and has found one in four childcare providers nationally does not meet the national standard for children's health and safety.

One in three is below the standard for "educational program and practice" or for "physical environment".

And at least one in 10 does not meet the minimum staffing requirements, while one in six is below-standard for "relationships with children".

Childcare centres are being marked in seven areas - education, health and safety, physical environment, staffing, relationships with children, partnerships with the community, and leadership.

If they fail in just one field, they get a low "working towards" rating.

ACECQA board chairwoman Rachel Hunter said centres would not be given a deadline to meet the standards.

"This does raise the bar on quality," she said.

Federal Childcare Minister Kate Ellis said the publication of centres' ratings was "a watershed day for high quality childcare in Australia".

Ms Ellis yesterday launched a trial in Brisbane of the Government's \$5.5 million program to make childcare more flexible for shift workers.

-reprinted from the Courier-Mail

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