

# A new report has found that a massive 70 per cent of childcare courses take less than a year to complete <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Parents could be forced to pay even more for childcare after a damning report has found the majority of staff in centres are being inadequately trained.

News Corp Australia can reveal the Australian Skills Quality Authority review into childcare standards has found training providers are significantly fast-tracking courses and leaving students vastly underprepared to take care of children in registered childcare facilities.

A whopping 70 per cent of Certificate III courses are being delivered in programs of less than one year's duration, when the Australian Qualifications Framework stipulates 12 to 24 months as the minimum requirement.

Even more concerning is that 20 per cent of Certificate III programs are being delivered in 26 weeks or less.

The AQF requirement stipulates 1200 hours of training for a Certificate III, however the average in Registered Training Organisations audited was just 750 hours.

Of the 77 sample RTOs audited nationally, only 26 per cent were found to be fully compliant with the required national training standards, leaving 74 per cent failing to meet requirements.

With a national shortage of childcare workers, parents may have to bear the brunt if they decide to boost the level of training for their employees in-house or boost salaries to attract better trained staff.

"Some services may choose to pass on costs if they pay staff higher wages to attract those that are better trained, or if they look at boosting the on-site training provided," Shane Lucas, CEO of the Early Learning Association of Australia told News Corp Australia.

However, Mr Lucas said ultimately the costs would likely be met by government or absorbed.

Executive Director of The Parenthood, Jo Briskey, agreed it should be government, not parents, that ultimately bear the weight of any extra cost from increased training.

"Our kids deserve the highest quality of childcare and this is where the government needs to step up," Ms Briskey said.

"This is education and the government has to take on this responsibility. I would be extremely concerned if parents have to face even higher childcare costs as a result of this.

"That's just not acceptable to Australian parents."

Sam Page, CEO of Early Childhood Australia, said fixing up the training provider system could actually result in lower costs for parents.

"It will mean providers have to spend a lot less time and money on recruitment," Ms Page said.

"It's incredibly frustrating when centres hire someone who turns out to not have the adequate training. Centres either have to invest money training that person or recruit again."

The ASQA report will be announced today in Canberra by Assistant Minister For Education and Training Simon Birmingham, with the government poised to announce a suite of responses.

Those responses include increasing audits on child care training organisations, considering more on the job training, enforcing the use of penalties and establishing a 'preferred provider' scheme similar to the Heart Foundation Tick.

Donna Bush, General Manager of Canberra Early Learning which the Minister will visit today, said a preferred provider system would be "really helpful".

"It would make things much easier and would be a great way for us to take back some control," Ms Bush said.

Senator Birmingham told News Corp Australia yesterday he would work with the sector to ensure adequate training standards.

"Child care providers have told me they have 'black-banned' graduates of specific training organisations because they do not have confidence in the competency of their graduates, particularly where those courses are 'miraculously' short, which leaves graduates of those courses with less chance of getting a job," Senator Birmingham said. p

"I want students to know what training organisations are well regarded by childcare employers and to be able to make an informed choice that gives them the best chance of future employment."

He said if Registered Training Providers were not providing the adequate services, they should be slapped with fines or shut down.

"If short cuts are being taken, then I expect penalties to be applied," Senator Birmingham said.

"Quality training is a critical component of growing the economy and helping more Australians into jobs which is why our governments is firmly focused on reforms to improve the relevancy and quality of training providers."

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**Region:** Australia and New Zealand <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** qualifications <sup>[4]</sup>

childcare workforce <sup>[5]</sup>

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