

One in four preschools fail to meet quality standards – report ^[1]

Author: Medhora, Shalailah

Source: The Guardian

Format: Article

Publication Date: 19 Apr 2016

AVAILABILITY

[Read online](#) ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Nearly one in four preschools have failed to meet childcare quality standards, a new report finds, and warns that the gulf between educational outcomes for children from wealthy families and worse-off ones is growing.

One-third of children do not attend the requisite hours of preschool, meaning they start primary school on the back foot, the report from Victoria University's Mitchell Institute says.

Moreover, children from poor or disadvantaged communities have fewer high-quality preschool options.

"Access and quality are still skewed by socioeconomic status, meaning that we are missing opportunities to extend access to quality early education to the children who stand to benefit most," the report says.

"Each year, 15% of the children from the lowest socioeconomic quintile and around 60,000 children in total enter school developmentally vulnerable. Quality early educational opportunities are a vital strategy for reducing these numbers."

One in four – or 26% – of preschools and daycare centres have not yet been assessed on whether they meet the standards set out in the national quality framework. Of the ones that have been assessed, 31% failed to meet benchmarks and were deemed to be "working towards" standards.

"This is not sufficient to drive continuous improvement in the sector, or to encourage excellence," the report said. "The benefits of the current investment in the [early childhood] sector will be muted if higher levels of quality are not achieved, particularly for the most disadvantaged children."

The commonwealth and state governments agreed to the quality framework, which sets out educational benchmarks and teacher ratios, and it was brought into force in 2012.

The federal government contributes \$61m over three years to the framework but assessment and implementation of the standards are the responsibility of the states.

"Australia does not have a coherent or equitable policy framework and service delivery platform for children and their families in the early years," the Mitchell Institute report says. "The system is complex, fragmented, and unequal access to effective services further entrenches health, social and economic inequalities."

The Queensland government in March asked the commonwealth for more money, saying it could not keep up its assessments of preschools because funding did not match the spike in the number of early childhood centres.

The federal education minister, Simon Birmingham, said in March that state governments should stop complaining. "Our priority is to provide assistance that helps families, not state and territory bureaucrats," he said.

"State regulatory costs are a pittance compared to the billions the Turnbull government provides to help families with the cost of care, and although we give the states some support for their costs, they are more than capable of meeting the remaining costs themselves."

The government unveiled its childcare assistance package in November but tied its funding to cuts made to family tax benefits. Without support from Labor, the Greens or the majority of the crossbench, the family tax benefits have stalled in the Senate, leaving the childcare package in limbo.

Under the policy, the rebates families get back will be tied to their incomes, with lower income earners getting back 85% of childcare costs as long as parents meet minimum hours of work, training or study.

Indigenous children, who already have lower rates of childcare enrolment, would be disadvantaged by the so-called activity test, providers warn.

-reprinted from The Guardian

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[3]

Tags: quality ^[4]

child outcomes ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/04/one-four-preschools-fail-meet-quality-standards-%E2%80%93-report>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/04/one-four-preschools-fail-meet-quality-standards-%E2%80%93-report> [2]

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/20/one-in-four-preschools-fail-to-meet-quality-standards-report> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/australia-and-new-zealand> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-outcomes>