

Dissenting Report by Labor Senators

1.1 Labor Senators make the following dissenting report in relation to the Chair's report.

1.2 Labor Senators support the maintenance of effective and evidence based regulation of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, to safeguard the quality and safety of all ECEC services and the educational development of children. The National Quality Framework (NQF) was agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009 and introduced to lift the educational and quality standards of the sector. Labor Senators strongly support the NQF. The NQF was developed based on international evidence and best practice. This evidence is regularly reviewed. The evidence confirms that staff ratios lead to better educational and safety outcomes for children. Since the introduction of the NQF, 77 per cent of ECEC services have received a quality rating of meeting or exceeding the National Quality Standards (NQS). The NQF is a world leading system that a majority of witnesses to the inquiry fully endorsed and supported.

1.3 Labor Senators believe that the greatest risk to the viability of ECEC services is this government's failure to adequately fund the sector, not overly burdensome regulation. Labor calls on the Government to restore the \$20 million it cut from the NQF funding in the 2018–19 Budget. This funding supports the safety and compliance work in the states and territories that supports the NQF. Labor calls on the Government to commit funding to the national preschool program for four years olds—the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. The Government has refused to fund the program beyond the 2019 school year and this is adding to the difficulties being faced by ECEC services and families.

1.4 Labor also notes the Government's new child care system introduces greater complexity and red tape to the system for both ECEC services and families. Families and services now have to account for activity, income, hours of care, and complete numerous forms to access subsidies from the Government. Families and services had to re-register for the new system launch in July 2018 at their own expense, which for services were considerable in both time and resources.

Senator Murray Watt

Deputy Chair

