

# TRANSCRIPT

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SECTOR IN VICTORIA

### **Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Victoria**

Melbourne – Monday 8 December 2025

#### **MEMBERS**

Anasina Gray-Barberio – Chair

Georgie Crozier

Michael Galea – Deputy Chair

Jacinta Ermacora

Melina Bath

Sarah Mansfield

**WITNESS**

Professor Jane Page, Associate Director, Research in Effective Education in Early Childhood Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne.

**The CHAIR:** Good afternoon, and welcome back to the committee's public hearings for the Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Victoria.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Aboriginal people, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on here today, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung country, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee and welcome any members of the public in the gallery or watching the live broadcast. I remind those in the room to be respectful of proceedings and to remain silent at all times.

All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

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For the Hansard record, can you please state your name and the organisations you are appearing on behalf of.

**Jane PAGE:** Thank you. My name is Jane Page, and I am a Professor with the REEaCh Centre at the Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Professor Page. We are now going to introduce the committee. My name is Anasina Gray-Barberio, the Chair and Member for Northern Metro Region.

**Michael GALEA:** Hello. Michael Galea, Deputy Chair, Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

**Georgie CROZIER:** Good afternoon. Georgie Crozier, Member for Southern Metropolitan Region.

**Melina BATH:** Hello there. Melina Bath, Eastern Victoria Region.

**Sarah MANSFIELD:** Sarah Mansfield, Member for Western Victoria.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I would now like to invite you, Professor Page, to make an opening statement, and if you can, please keep it to no more than 10 minutes. Thank you very much.

**Jane PAGE:** Thank you. I too would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung lands on which we are meeting today and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are joining the inquiry today.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at today's inquiry. My presentation addresses terms of reference (d), specifically educator wellbeing, retention and service quality, and draws on research that is outlined in the REEaCh Centre's submission to the inquiry, which presents a case that the safety of young children is best safeguarded in the context of high-quality early educational programs and practices. In our submission we set out four interrelated research-informed concepts that we believe are fundamental to quality early childhood education and will be pivotal to the effectiveness of future legislation, frameworks and reforms. These are the central place of the child, who is actively learning through ECEC service quality and educator child interactions, which are influenced by educator wellbeing, retention and workforce conditions, and occur within structures and systems.

All children have the right to safely engage in early childhood education, and this is especially important in the early years of life that are so foundational to young children's safety and wellbeing and learning now but also in the future.

Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us that children's rights and safety rely on authorities and adults, so securing the safety, rights and best interests of young children as a paramount consideration will involve a continuous commitment to working together across governments, peak bodies, organisations, but also, very importantly, in consultation with early childhood teachers, educators, leaders, service providers delivering early childhood education and care programs and the children and families attending Victorian early childhood services. Research highlights that quality can best be understood through three domains: system quality, which involves governance, regulatory standards and provision of services; structural quality, which are the learning environments and the professional qualifications and adult-child staff ratios; and process quality, which are the educational programs and practices and the teachers and educators, specifically teacher-child interactions. What we know from research on quality is that there is consistent evidence that process quality is especially impactful and drives positive child outcomes, and that system and structural supports are important levers for improving process quality.

Ensuring children's safety through quality requires an ongoing and concurrent investment in and scrutiny around the impact of system, structural and process quality reforms over time, and a multipronged approach to investing in the teachers, educators and leaders who are navigating constant change and implementing new policy directives. Practices supporting child safety are implemented through ECE teams and leaders, and in 2024 some colleagues at REEaCh engaged with 48 early childhood teachers and educators working in centre-based long day care and kindergarten services, and through surveys and interviews they asked them how they were implementing child safe standards. This research highlighted that child wellbeing and safety is a strong priority of Victorian teachers and educators, with 92 per cent rating the standards as very important. Of the teachers and educators who had completed training, they noticed it had supported practice change in alignment with the standards, including new practices around child assent, images of children and privacy, and it prompted them to think more deeply about child safety.

But there was variation in how teachers and educators reported the effectiveness of the implementation, with around a third believing that it was implemented very effectively, about a third effectively and around a third moderately effectively. They identified a number of implementation barriers, which included time constraints, competing priorities and lack of training, and noted difficulties in embedding standards into everyday practice, particularly with high staff turnover. They found that implementation of the Child Safe Standards was supported by whole-of-service ongoing training, leadership buy-in, alignment with the National Quality Standards and practical resources tailored to context, as well as strong teamwork and a reflective culture. Implementation required appropriate resourcing, training and effective leadership with oversight of policy adherence.

In all our research projects with teachers and educators they repeatedly stress the need for strong leadership and ongoing whole-of-service professional learning during times of change. In 2022 and 2023 kindergarten teachers, educators and directors implementing three-year-old kindergarten programs during the early rollout of the Best Life Best Life reforms noted that professional learning and leaders' and colleagues' knowledge and experience is key to the effective implementation of three-year-old programs. In a three-year Victorian research study, the Victorian Advancing Early Learning Study, where we tested the impact of a professional learning model which included training to build knowledge and ongoing coaching to support implementation of evidence-informed teaching strategies for children from birth to five years of age in their services, we learned that impactful professional learning needs to be in situ, involve the whole team and have ongoing training and coaching support for teachers and educators to keep building knowledge and to keep experimenting with how to translate and embed that knowledge into everyday practice. It needed both individual and collective approaches that were framed within a shared vision for quality programs and practices, and it needed to be driven by clear threshold conditions that enabled everyone to fully participate in the professional learning. In addition, it needed to be tracked and monitored to support reflection on impact.

An early childhood education system in Victoria that protects and promotes children's safety, wellbeing, learning and development is reliant on educator wellbeing. In 2020, during the pandemic, we engaged with around 232 Australian early childhood teachers, educators, educational leaders and directors, 70 per cent of whom were Victorian, working in centre-based long day care and kindergarten services. This research was

undertaken following consultation with our REEaCh Centre's Network of Early Childhood Professionals on their research priorities. They identified the wellbeing of children and educators as top research priorities. They completed a survey and some an interview. What we found from that data were three factors that contributed to teachers' and educators' wellbeing – their sense of belonging and connection in the workplace; their views of themselves as professionals in terms of their perceived impact; and their perception of workplace safety, which encompassed physical, financial and emotional security in the workplace. We also found that educators with low professional wellbeing had a poor sense of belonging and connection, a negative view of their professional impact and weak job satisfaction. A decreased sense of safety and a below-average sense of belonging and connectedness contributed to turnover intention.

A secure, consistent workforce is critical to safeguarding child safety. Young children benefit from continuous high-quality relationships with teachers and educators. Policies and practices that support professional wellbeing and help combat the threats to wellbeing are needed to address high turnover of early childhood professionals in Victoria and to attract and retain new teachers and educators into the profession. Lack of public recognition also influences professional identity, and we need to be more vigilant in promoting the value and importance of early childhood education. I quote the Early Childhood Professorial Advisory Council's early childhood education call for action here. We need to:

Recognise, govern, talk about, and fund early childhood education as a vital public good and the foundational stage of Australia's education system.

And we need to recognise early childhood teachers as professionals.

In conclusion, we need to build an evidence base that draws from published quality research but is also informed by the lived experiences and perspectives of children, family members, kinship carers, teachers, educators, leaders, managers, service providers and government agents supporting teaching teams in the field. This is key to building more nuanced understandings of the impacts of reform across a range of communities and contexts in Victoria. We need to continue to build understandings of the active ingredients of successful programs and gather robust datasets that track the impact of child safety reforms over time. Securing the safety, rights and best interests of young children requires a robust, strategic, systematic approach. We need to invest in funding models that support sustainable high-quality programs and practices that embed better work conditions for teachers and educators that support workforce stability and reflect community vision and values for young children. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you so much, Professor Page. I might kickstart our committee questions this afternoon. Your research evaluates the impacts of professional learning and coaching on teacher-child interactions. Based on that work, how well do you think current Victorian early childhood education and care standards support educators to be better equipped with the knowledge to detect and respond to child safety concerns?

**Jane PAGE:** The standards themselves?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Jane PAGE:** The standards outline what is required, but I think what we found in our research is that for effective professional learning to occur – and I think you touched on this earlier today – you need to build knowledge around what that learning is and what it means. But then implementing it into practice is actually quite difficult. So we need strong leaders and teams to work together and to on the ground ask, 'Well, what does this mean in practice? What does this look like in practice for our children and our community?' We do need the knowledge, but we also need targeted coaching and support. I think there is value in thinking about training for leaders who are building the cultures of implementation and actually supporting teams to reflect deeply on the child safe standards in practice.

**The CHAIR:** You just mentioned in your answer there that there seems to be a gap between practice or knowledge and implementation. What do you think the barriers are in the system or the sector as to why there is no connection point there? It seems quite clunky, from what you are saying or describing.

**Jane PAGE:** Well, I think it is highly nuanced work. In early childhood I think the churn and turnover of the workforce is actually extremely impactful. You build knowledge together as a team, but people leave, and then how do you rebuild that knowledge again? You need some really robust mechanisms that are going to build a sense of belonging within the sector but also at the same time retain colleagues so that we do not have this

constant turnover. I think with all our reforms we are also seeing a number of beginning teachers entering the workforce, and given it is a complex place in which to work we need to really have those mechanisms in place to support them. So I think it is a combination of different levels of experience and also of teachers and educators leaving the sector.

**The CHAIR:** I just want to put on the record – and I am sure there is consensus amongst the committee – the incredible work that our educators are doing –

**Jane PAGE:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** in very complex conditions.

**Jane PAGE:** Very complex.

**The CHAIR:** I just want to acknowledge our educators and the environments they work in, because so many are doing the right thing.

**Jane PAGE:** And to build on that, Chair, if I may just say, in every research study we have undertaken it has been so clear that teachers and educators come every day to work absolutely dedicated to providing high quality programs and committed to optimizing children's safety, wellbeing and learning.

**The CHAIR:** Absolutely. Why do you think early childhood educators are not revered in the same sort of position as teachers, like primary school teachers and high school teachers. Why is there a lack of professionalisation of early childhood educators?

**Jane PAGE:** This would be a really good issue to understand, wouldn't it? I do not understand it. I mean, we know the early years are the most important for children's learning and development now but also in the future. We have many studies that highlight what happens in the early years has enormous benefits for learners now and later in life. I think the pandemic was an interesting time in that we acknowledged early childhood teachers and educators as essential workers, and it is a shame we have not been able to build on that and consolidate that – I think in part because we do not have a formal school-like curriculum, which could in some respects build a perception that in the early years children are not learning formally. But we know that there are such rich learning experiences implemented in early childhood services, so in part I think it is about education on what learning looks like in the early years.

**The CHAIR:** Because right now it is not mandated – between 0 to three – whereas with kinder there is obviously a more structured curriculum. Is that correct?

**Jane PAGE:** We have an approved early years learning framework the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, which is from birth to eight, and we have a set of evidence informed practice principles, and learning and development outcomes and intentional practices that we work towards, and within that framework we embed and teach rich learning experiences and concepts to children.

**The CHAIR:** But it falls behind in recognising the workforce, would you say?

**Jane PAGE:** No, I think the framework actually acknowledges the skills and expertise of the workforce. It is a different model to a school model, where children are sitting and learning specific content every day. We draw on children's learning progressions and develop-rich learning programs on the basis of what we know children can do and are ready to learn in different developmental areas every day.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you so much, Professor Page. Mr Galea.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Professor Page. Chair, you have just segued beautifully to me because I was going to ask about the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*. How important is this for supporting our workforce? And also, how does it compare to other states?

**Jane PAGE:** It is a very important framework. It aligns with the national framework. We have a Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, and we have the same child learning outcomes as the national framework. It has a set of practice principles and has a really strong vision around early childhood

education and why it is important. It is made up of evidence informed practice principles as well as child learning and development outcomes. I think it is a really important document, and it is in the process of being reviewed, so there will be scope, I am sure, to embed child safety into the document even further.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you. I also wanted to ask – you have touched on the importance of good staff training for quality as well. This morning we heard from Pam White, one of the authors of the rapid review, that she is really advocating for the federal government to implement mandatory training days that will be paid through the child care subsidy. Is that something that you would support?

**Jane PAGE:** Yes. I think the way Pam White framed it was that mandatory reporting gives us some confidence that there is evidence-informed content that everyone in a service will have access to. It is important to start thinking about actually providing time for that training. Five o'clock in the evening might be quite late to do the training however. I would argue that training provides content knowledge, and so what can we do in Victoria to support the embedding of that training even further? What are the resources needed? What are some of the ways in which we can support a whole-of-service approach to embed, to share, to track and to monitor how the implementation of the standards is being managed within different services?

**Michael GALEA:** Every workplace has its own unique culture, and this is undoubtedly true of the ECEC sector as well. When it comes to a team – especially if you have a small team and particularly if it is in a regional area, but it could be anywhere – they might socialise together, and there might be one employee exhibiting behaviours that might be at the lower end but might be questionable. How do you give colleagues the confidence or the impetus or the requirement – how do you make them speak up in such a setting?

**Jane PAGE:** I think a strong vision around the work you do and why it is important is absolutely critical. When we put children front and centre, that is the core vision that we follow. We are all in early childhood because we know how important it is. It really requires a leader who develops a shared vision with the team and sets high standards and expectations for behaviours. We are professionals working together for a specific outcome, and that is what drives our work every day.

**Michael GALEA:** I can clearly see how the respect for the profession plays into that and would support and enable that as well. But it sounds clearly like you are saying it comes from the top, and whether that is in a for-profit or not-for-profit sector, that is the same. It comes from the top – the leadership of the centre, their leadership above them. That is, in your mind, the key determinant of having a culture that facilitates and fosters an open culture of reporting compared to one that does not?

**Jane PAGE:** I think it is contingent on a number of factors. I think it is also contingent on the culture. Leaders are very important in relation to that, but when you bring a team along with you, then it becomes a joint endeavour and a collective purpose. How you build that collective purpose is really important.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you. I am not sure how much time I have left.

**The CHAIR:** Forty seconds.

**Michael GALEA:** Forty seconds – just quickly then. In your view, Professor Page, how important is the broader environment too in terms of other supports, whether it is maternal and child health, whether it is playgroup services or whether it is at the other end in the early primary school system? How important are things like geographical co-location with these services or integration in some other way towards fostering that positive culture for staff and for children?

**Jane PAGE:** I think there are some key principles that will work across all communities, but we do need to build evidence of what that means and looks like in different communities. I mean, we have heard today about some of the challenges in rural settings, and I do feel the principles that we have discussed today are applicable across all contexts. But it might mean bringing different communities together where there are not as many people. So how do you build networks of practice alongside communities of practice?

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Galea. Over to you, Ms Crozier. Thank you.

**Georgie CROZIER:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Professor Page, for being before us this afternoon. You have spoken a lot about quality and the complex environment some of these organisations are in and the importance of child safety. Have you done any research looking at the private, the not-for-profit and the public sectors?

**Jane PAGE:** No.

**Georgie CROZIER:** No breakdown? Okay. I am just wondering in relation to some of those more complex environments with children with disability, or we are hearing more and more – I think the latest stats are that 16 per cent of boys are on the NDIS at the age of six. Is there any support for early educators to be supporting those children or having additional support to identify and perhaps give greater support, or do you think there is a gap in that too? And is that having an impact on child safety elements within the sector?

**Jane PAGE:** So what we do know from research is that when we work in partnership with other professionals we can build a much more nuanced understanding of children, and when families, specialists and early childhood educators set goals collaboratively and work together on strategies, that can have a very positive impact for everybody involved. I think most services would seek to do that, and there is funding through the Victorian SRF menu to bring specialists into the service to support teachers in embedding work for children. We also have a new National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention, which is evidence informed, which is going to be a really useful resource moving forward for thinking deeply around how we can support every child in early childhood settings. But partnerships I think are absolutely critical as well.

**Georgie CROZIER:** Some of this horrific behaviour is being perpetrated on some of these young, vulnerable kids – often they are kids that have got a disability or are vulnerable or they have got some other learning difficulty. Have you done any research on that behaviour from the perpetrators maybe targeting the more vulnerable children in these settings?

**Jane PAGE:** No.

**Georgie CROZIER:** Okay. Thank you. That is all.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Ms Crozier. Over to you, Dr Mansfield. Thank you.

**Sarah MANSFIELD:** Thank you so much for appearing today and for sharing some of that work that you have done. I am interested in any of the gaps that you feel may exist in current training or professional development that may leave educators underprepared or not properly equipped to detect serious risks or unusual patterns of concern amongst children.

**Jane PAGE:** I think what we have learned is that continuous education is important. Once you finish your degree and you become, in a sense, inducted into the profession, you still need ongoing training and support. So I would argue very much that investing in that ongoing training is going to be a way to support those gaps moving forward. There has been a recent publication in the *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* where an Australian scholar has looked at how child safety education is positioned within Australia's accelerated graduate diploma programs, and there have been some gaps noted there. So I think scrutiny around all our programs is important, and also thinking about education as a lifelong process and how do we continue to build and invest in providing ongoing educational opportunities, particularly in the light of, as we have discussed, high turnover of staff?

**Sarah MANSFIELD:** Absolutely. Do you have any specific recommendations about the type of education or training that might be useful for educators in that space?

**Jane PAGE:** Do you mean in terms of content or in terms of what it is made up of?

**Sarah MANSFIELD:** Yes.

**Jane PAGE:** When we look at process quality and we think of teacher-child interactions, we know that children's learning requires a presence of emotional support within the room. There are a number of adult-child interactions that involve building positive climates, enhancing teacher sensitivity and having a regard for children's perspectives that actually build that presence and attunement to young children. What we know from

research is when you have got a high presence of that level of support, then that is going to support children's learning of concepts and other ideas as well – content knowledge.

**Sarah MANSFIELD:** Thank you. I would be interested to get your views on how current structures and workplace practices, perhaps with respect to the number of educators that might be present or the administrative burden that educators are dealing with, might then impact things like being present and being able to engage with children.

**Jane PAGE:** It is very interesting, because as you have noted yourself, teachers have multiple responsibilities during the day; they are taking observations of children and they are writing observations for families and they are busy engaging with children. What we have found from our research is that when you have a collective core focus, you begin working alongside each other and you attend to that focus together and you start tracking and monitoring. We found that actually coming together and monitoring and providing evidence of the impact of that work was a really important way of keeping focused on the task but also providing some feedback to teachers on the impact of their work. I think really looking for ways of how we can monitor, impact and provide that feedback to teaching teams is a critical way of ensuring that quality attunement moving forward.

**Sarah MANSFIELD:** Coming back to some of the workplace conditions, salaries and all those sorts of things that also contribute to how staff might feel with respect to being valued and being part of a team and a profession, what is your view on some of the new legislation that has been introduced, with respect to its impact on the workplace conditions or support that might be available for the sector, with a view to whether that will impact retention of staff?

**Jane PAGE:** I think retention is quite a complex issue, so it is going to require multiple measures. I think what is great is that teachers and educators, everyone is celebrating the work of the Australian and Victorian governments – with reforms including the recent passage of the Bill in the Victorian Parliament, all those reforms send a signal to teachers and educators that there will be measures put in place to ensure that children are safe. So that is really important. I think it is worth reflecting on to what extent the measures are actually supporting a change in workplace burden, for want of another word – how are we lifting and providing space to actually allow teams to engage in professional learning and work together? Some of the measures are going towards that, but we probably need to think more deeply around how we can invest in ongoing forms of professional learning to support that work.

**Sarah MANSFIELD:** This probably circles back to some of your earlier responses, but in terms of investing in some of that ongoing professional work, what might that look like from a systemwide perspective?

**Jane PAGE:** We already have – Victoria has – so many wonderful resources for teachers in terms of professional learning. We have the SRF menu, which provides funding for services for teams to get involved in evidence informed professional learning. I think what we can do is keep thinking about what the content knowledge is that is important to build at this point in time, but then how we can support the embedding of that through those programs, so embedding more coaching programs as well as professional learning content programs into the menu. I think also there is a lot of online training which is being set up through the Teaching Excellence Approach, and that is going to be really valuable and thinking about how we can build on that through an implementation support package that sits alongside that professional learning.

**The CHAIR:** We are at time. Thank you, Dr Mansfield. I would like to invite Ms Bath.

**Melina BATH:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your very informed and interesting contribution today, Professor. I start this line of questioning not with joy by any stretch, and I put that there should be natural justice and equality before the law. But I just want to identify that some of the alleged perpetrators that have instigated this inquiry are male, and they are a small cohort in a larger, very large industry, meaning that the majority of the workforce are women. What recommendation or what insights would you provide government, or this committee for government, around early detection and prevention of, we will say, potential perpetrators in this industry or this sector? Or should we just look at them as people rather than genders?

**Jane PAGE:** A lot of important and necessary mechanisms have been put in place already by the federal and Victorian government to try to ensure that perpetrators do not come into the system. We have some professional male teachers in the sector. –

**Melina BATH:** Absolutely.

**Jane PAGE:** and the danger that we hear is that they will not want to enter the profession because they will not feel secure.

I have heard anecdotally that it is very difficult to place male students in services at the moment to complete placements, so we are also at risk of some of our professional male trainee teachers not being able to complete their studies. Also I think the number of people in a room and the line of sight is really going to be of continued importance.

**Melina BATH:** Within the centre itself?

**Jane PAGE:** Within the centre itself.

**Melina BATH:** Having capacity for coverage.

**Jane PAGE:** Yes.

**Melina BATH:** As well as respect, but coverage.

**Jane PAGE:** Absolutely.

**Melina BATH:** I just wanted to flesh that out. If you have any other thoughts on that, by all means provide them to us. You said professional development is a key driver of quality, and that is very sound advice to us all. Noting that, maybe if you want to section them out, the private sector is a large component of this sector and there are some that have been in there for a long time and are – and I can think of some in my own region – very respected, what could government do to use those respected entities in the system? ‘Respected’ might have a qualification; there would be criteria for that. But how could we actually utilise people, not just academics, not just upstream, which is very important, but in the system, to be part of that professional development and key driver of quality?

**Jane PAGE:** We find that narratives from the field and from the sector are some of the most powerful ways of learning, so I think developing case studies of quality practices and promising practices that are happening within the sector can be a really powerful way of building knowledge within and across the sector. You would have a lot of that evidence of the services that would be able to contribute to those sorts of case studies as well, through your government agents visiting services.

**Melina BATH:** I guess from my anecdotal evidence in the field, being an MP, it is also about breaking through some of those barriers that you see. This is a really good operation and it needs to have a criterion for that to be labelled, but how does that provide content to government? I think that needs to evolve. That was a comment rather than a question, but you are welcome to question it or challenge it.

In terms of – I have spoken about this – rural and regional childcare deserts, are we doing enough? And what could be done from an educational point of view to facilitate that workforce in general in the regions?

**Jane PAGE:** I think universities and tertiary institutions could certainly continue to look at having placements in regional areas, and we have actually found that to be really valuable in the past. When you actually have a placement in a service, that is a real attraction to staying in a community. And thinking about different incentives to attract teachers into different regions.

**Melina BATH:** Professor, that is a universal issue that we all grapple with, I think. Where else, in other parts of the nation or other overseas jurisdictions, are we doing education well and are we doing child safety well? Where is a standout? Take it on notice if you need to, but in international jurisdictions, which countries are doing well?

**Jane PAGE:** In terms of child safety, I will take that on notice, thank you.

**Melina BATH:** That is good. I have just mooted an idea in my head about child safe standards in childcare centres and early learning centres and having a tiered approach. So it could be labelled – and it needs to be labelled – bronze, silver and gold. A bronze might be ‘Okay, but needs improvement; here are the gaps,’ and

then a silver and a gold. Parents, assuming that there is not a childcare desert, could actually assess that, because parents are a very important part of this. Is that something that you have ever investigated or would consider?

**Jane PAGE:** It is not something we have investigated. I think part of the issue with three-year assessments alongside a high churn and staff turnover is: would you have confidence that those services are still at that level? We already have categories in place, but I think some consideration towards that would need to be taken into account.

**Melina BATH:** Are they redundant –

**Jane PAGE:** By very virtue of the fact –

**Melina BATH:** without knowing it, or have they improved in that three years but they have got a lower status? Okay. That is a good comment. Thank you very much. I think I have exhausted my questions. Thank you, Chair. Thanks very much, Professor.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Ms Bath, and right on time too. Well, that brings our session this afternoon to a close. Professor Page, on behalf of the committee I would like to say a huge thanks for your time and your insights and for sharing those with the committee this afternoon. You will receive a copy of the transcript within a week for review before it is published on the website.

We are now going to take a short break to reset for the next witness. Thank you so much.

**Jane PAGE:** Thank you.

**Witness withdrew.**