



Select Committee on the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Victoria

Hearing Date: 8 December 2025

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Professor Jane Page OAM

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1. **Melina BATH, p. 72**

Question Asked:

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.

Response:

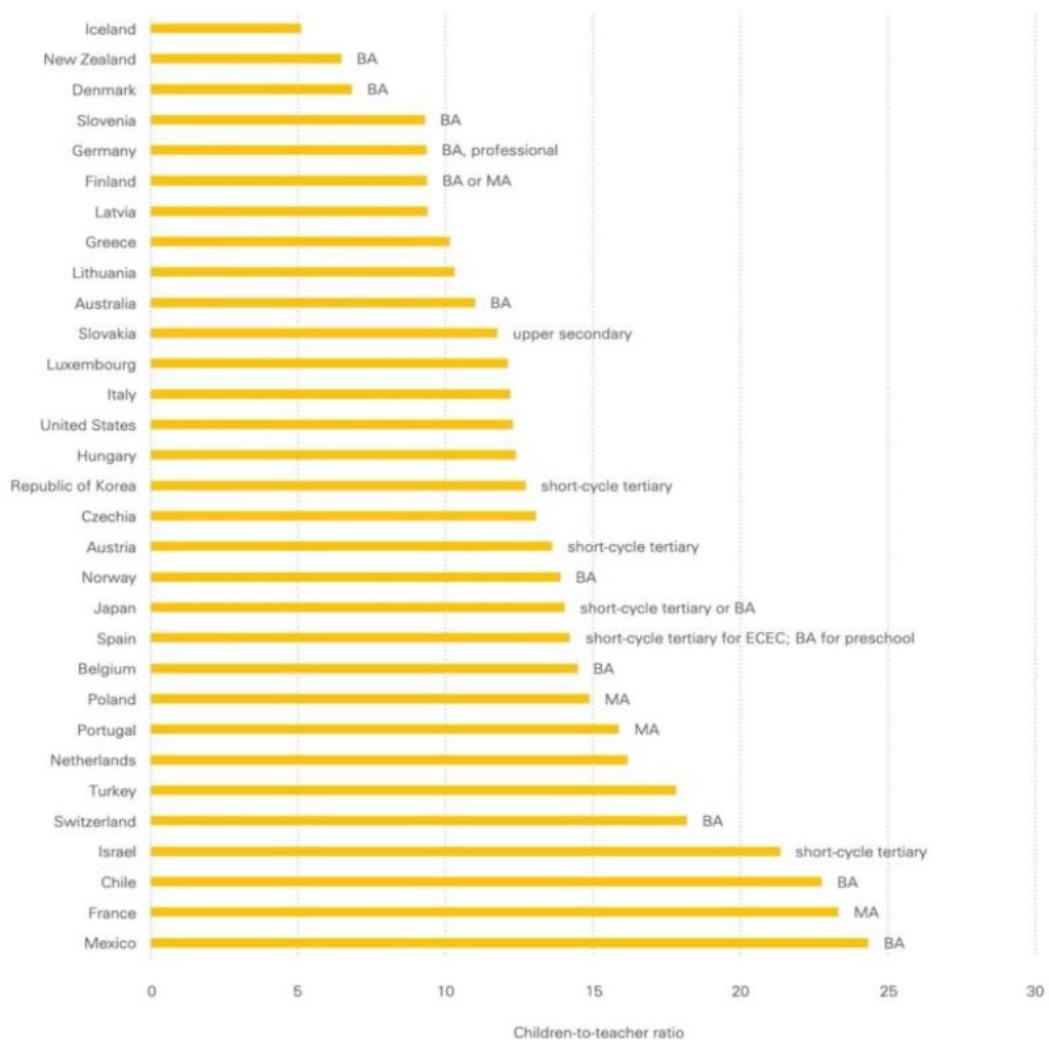
Notes on the practices of countries highly regarded for child safety for the Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Victoria

Identifying the countries that are highly regarded for child safety in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is challenging because key measures have complex, sometimes nation-specific, patterns of relations with each other and with the characteristics of different types of ECEC and the composition of children in settings (OECD, 2025). A core underlying construct is *structural quality*, which encompasses quality and safety standards, educator training, professional development and qualifications, workforce conditions, educator-child ratios, oversight, and enforcement. This is related to *process quality* (i.e., strong learning programs, teaching practices and responsive educator-interactions), which is central to positive child outcomes. Regulatory requirements are necessary but not sufficient for consistent ECEC quality, although support for the benefits of centre-based ECEC is usually confined to countries with strong regulations involving educator-child ratios, group sizes and educator qualifications (Duncan et al., 2023; OECD, 2025). Based on the assumption that educator attention enhances child safety and development, a 2021 UNICEF report compared 19 rich countries and reported considerable variation in child-to-staff ratios and educator qualifications (See Figure 1, Gromada &

Richardson, 2021). Further development in the monitoring and measuring of ECEC quality is vital to allow for more fine-grained and comprehensive national and international investigations (Raikes et al., 2023).

Kagan (2020) investigated ECEC in Australia, England, Finland, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea as examples of good practice, highlighting the importance of national context, comprehensive services and strong governance. Kagan characterised different approaches to comprehensive early childhood services in terms of variation in (a) public ECEC funding, (b) public/private ECEC provision, (c) national curriculum frameworks and dominant pedagogies, (d) formal child and program monitoring, and (f) public funding for health care and child protection. Kagan also suggested that effective ECEC governance involves alignment among: (a) ministries and departments (horizontal); (b) federal and state, and community levels (vertical); and (c) the public and private sectors (sectorial). Concerning horizontal alignment, England and Finland consolidate services for young children in a single ministry while other countries establish short-term coordinating entities to address specific governance issues, such as South Korea's ECEC Integration Committee. Regarding vertical alignment, Hong Kong, Singapore and England are relatively centralised, and authority is distributed to state or local authorities in Australia, Finland and South Korea. With respect to sectorial alignment, Kagan (2020) argued that growth in the hybridisation of public and private sectors can contribute to reform, if strategically managed.

The literature suggests that ensuring child safety requires attention to structural and process quality, context specific investments/initiatives, measurement and ongoing monitoring.



Note. This figure is from Gromada and Richardson (2021). Data source: OECD (2020)

References

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