

Submission to the Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Victoria

G8 Education Ltd

28 November 2025





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The Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector
Parliament House
Melbourne VIC 3000

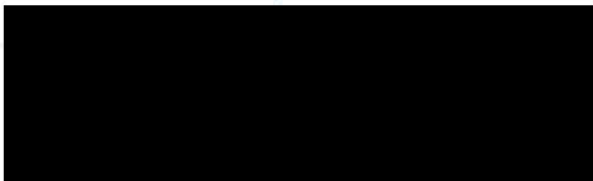
Dear Committee Members

On behalf of G8 Education Ltd (G8), I am pleased to submit our response to the Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in Victoria. G8 is a leading provider of early childhood education services, supporting more than 35,000 children each week.

We welcome the Victorian Parliament's focus on strengthening quality and safety across the ECEC sector. We also support recent Commonwealth and State Government reforms to child safety, and endorse practical, nationally consistent solutions—many of which align with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission Inquiry.

Our submission addresses each Term of Reference, offering observations and recommendations based on our experience as a provider operating across multiple jurisdictions. We look forward to contributing to the ongoing improvement of Victoria's ECEC system.

Should you require further information or wish to discuss our submission, please contact me directly.



Pejman Okhovat
CEO & Managing Director

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www.g8education.edu.au



Introduction and approach towards completing the submission

G8 is a leading provider of early childhood education services, supporting more than 35,000 children each week. As an organisation we are guided by our values and our purpose – to nurture the greatness in the children in our care to grow, thrive and learn. G8 aspires to be a long-term, leading participant in the sector, delivering an essential service for families across Australia. We aim to share insights and experience to proactively support finding long-term solutions to sector challenges. Our response has been developed consistent with this ambition.

G8's foremost priority is the health, safety, protection and wellbeing of children in our care. We support strong, consistent regulation; a skilled, stable and supported workforce; transparent data and reporting; and funding settings that sustain quality across communities.

We welcome recent Commonwealth and State Government steps to strengthen child safety and urge that these reforms maintain national consistency. Fragmented approaches risk undermining the integrity of the National Quality Framework (NQF) and creating unnecessary complexity for providers operating across multiple jurisdictions. Unified standards are critical to safeguarding children, supporting workforce mobility, and reducing compliance burden.

Consistent with the direction of the Productivity Commission (PC) Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care, we endorse practical, nationally consistent solutions that lift capability, reduce fragmentation, and ensure equitable access, especially where they bolster workforce capacity, improve regulatory consistency, and enhance transparency.

During the following sections, G8 provides observations on each of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference (ToR) and extends, where relevant, to making recommendations for consideration by the Committee.

Observations and recommendations for each ToR

a) Adequacy of Current Quality and Safety Standards

G8 strongly supports reforms that maintain and strengthen the NQF as a unified and consistent, national system. Implementation and enforcement can vary by jurisdiction and service type. Fragmented approaches risk undermining the integrity of the NQF and creating unnecessary complexity for providers operating across multiple jurisdictions.

Workforce shortages, particularly in rural and lower-income areas, continue to impact ratios and capabilities.

Psychological safety for children and educators requires ongoing attention, given the prevalence of behavioural incidents and complex family situations. G8 Education commends existing programs and supports currently available through programs like School Readiness Funding and the Be You Program, however additional early intervention supports are needed to lift children's outcomes as highlighted through the Australian Early Development Census data.

Key findings and recommendations

- Prioritise nationally consistent standards and processes, ensuring that reforms enhance alignment rather than introduce divergence. Consistency is critical to safeguarding children, supporting workforce mobility, and reducing compliance burden.
- Strengthen regulatory oversight and funding for state-based regulators to expand provider training and support.



- Targeted professional development and support in relation to health, mental health, behaviour guidance support, and access to referral pathways prioritising rural and low-SES areas. The AEDC data highlights the increasing support needed to ensure children have a successful transition to school and positive life outcomes.
- An Inclusion Support Model that is not reliant on diagnosis to access funding. The current KISS and ISP funding models need review to be more responsive to meeting the needs of children, families and team. Families are waiting extensive periods to access diagnosis or choose not to access support in some instances. Centre supports are required whilst families navigate referral pathways.
- Universal health screening to support early intervention and quality outcomes for children.
- Enhanced supports for educators to collaborate with health and other providers to respond in trauma informed ways to meet complex needs of children and families.
- Accelerate the establishment of a National Educators Register and strengthen Working With Children Checks (WWCC), including national continuous checking and capturing past disciplinary history.
- Improve cross-agency alignment between Police, Regulators, and child safety bodies for faster, more transparent interventions.
- National safety resources and consistent risk-management approaches across jurisdictions.
- Systems change that collaborates to support the needs of children and families including early learning, schools, health, child protection, justice, housing and other related services.

b) Quality and Oversight of Educator Training, Professional Development, and Qualifications

The quality of educator training and professional development is central to service quality and child outcomes.

There are ongoing concerns about the effectiveness of some Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and the robustness of Working With Children Checks.

- Enhance monitoring and transparency of RTOs offering ECEC qualifications, with stricter penalties for non-compliance and protections for whistleblowers.
- Expand access to scholarships, grants, and fee-free training programs.
- Include practical, real-world scenarios in training materials as well as skills testing.
- Support the implementation of PC recommendations for regular evaluation of ECEC-related VET qualifications.
- Create a “higher bar” for WWCC, including national continuous checking and capturing past disciplinary history.

c) Impacts of Victoria's Predominantly Privatised ECEC System

All providers, regardless of ownership model, operate under the same regulatory framework and should be assessed by outcomes and compliance history.

Private providers have played a significant role in expanding access and offering greater choice and flexibility for families, including enabling female workforce participation.

A diverse mix of provider types and operating models is crucial to meet the capacity needs and care types of Victorian families.

Recommendation

- Maintain a consistent and fair regulatory playing field across all ECEC providers, with outcomes-based transparency.
- Encourage innovation that demonstrably lifts safety and quality (e.g., technology that supports supervision, compliance, and family communication).
- Support PC recommendations for needs-based funding and supply-side investment to expand access in underserved areas.

d) Impact of Workforce Conditions on Educator Wellbeing, Retention, and Service Quality

Stable, well-supported teams are the critical component of safe, high-quality services, directly impacting child safety, education, and care.

Appropriate remuneration is essential to attract and retain skilled educators. We note the positive impact of the Commonwealth's Worker Retention Payment (WRP) scheme in reducing vacancies and stabilising the workforce. Any abrupt changes to educator wages following the expiry of WRP grants could destabilise the sector.

Positive employment practices, including job security, reasonable workloads, and professional development, are linked to lower turnover and better outcomes for children.

The sector faces persistent workforce shortages and challenges in attracting and retaining qualified educators.

While stronger child safety measures are essential, reforms must be implemented in a way that supports educator wellbeing and procedural fairness. Increased penalties and regulatory changes, if not accompanied by clear guidance, risk creating fear and uncertainty among educators and centre leaders that may increase current workforce challenges.

Recommendations

- Align and fast track national workforce strategies with the NQF, focusing on capability, stability, and leadership development as outlined in the ACECQA Workforce Strategy.
- Create a coordinated approach to workforce funding that avoids sudden wage shocks and supports long-term sustainability.
- Harmonise teacher registration requirements across states and territories.
- Consider opportunities to review qualification mix of what makes a centre team and the current skills required to operate an early childhood centre. For example, a mix of inclusion and early childhood

qualifications within a team or a funded family support model embedded within a program to respond to meeting complex family needs.

- Enhance monitoring and transparency of RTOs and support practical, hands-on training and competency assessment for new educators.
- Retention-focused levers, such as recognition pathways and paid professional development, tied to quality outcomes.
- Lead a collaborative approach—bringing together regulators, sector representatives, unions, and police—to develop practical guidance on responding to allegations, ensuring compliance with workplace laws and maintaining confidence in the system.

e) Adequacy of Staff-to-Child Ratio Regulations

Staff-to-child ratios are critical to ensuring safety and quality, but averaging ratios across entire services rather than per room can undermine effective supervision.

Workforce shortages can make compliance challenging, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas.

G8 supports exploration of innovative strategies to enhance supervision and child safety. We note there isn't a readily apparent "silver bullet" and a combination of initiatives will be required to solve in a manner that does not give rise to unintended consequences.

Recommendations

- Maintain and enforce effective ratios that ensure quality, effective supervision and safety.
- Provide targeted support and incentives to services in areas facing workforce shortages.
- Regularly review ratio regulations to ensure they reflect best practice and sector needs.
- Further investigation into the feasibility of supporting more effective child supervision, without exacerbating workforce shortages.

f) Oversight of the Department of Education

Effective oversight by the Department of Education is essential for maintaining child safety and quality standards.

There is a need for greater transparency and consistency in regulatory practice and reporting.

Recommendations

- Increase funding and resources for the Department to scale support visits and timely assessment and rating.
- Improve transparency and public reporting of breaches, visit outcomes, and investigations.
- Regular reviews and training of authorised officers to calibrate practice and drive national consistency.

g) Other Matters: Data and Transparency

Data and transparency are essential for building trust and driving improvement in the ECEC system. G8 supports reforms that deliver nationally consistent, accessible, and meaningful data on service quality, safety, and workforce capability.

Fragmented data systems and inconsistent reporting limit the sector's ability to monitor and improve quality and safety.

- Strengthen cross-jurisdictional data integration with consistent definitions and accessible dashboards.
- Standardise public reporting of ratings, incidents, and workforce metrics. Reporting should also distinguish between incident types to provide clear context for families and regulators.
- Enable secure provider access to relevant regulatory data for continuous improvement.
- Encourage collaboration with high-quality providers to model strong reporting cultures, reinforcing that data-sharing is a safeguard for children and a cornerstone of sector professionalism.
- Continue national alignment on child-safe policies and tools, and sector-wide collaboration on data, guidance, and capability building.