

30 March 2026

The Secretariat

Select Committee on the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Victoria
Legislative Council Committees
Parliament of Victoria



By your side

By email: earlyeducation@parliament.vic.gov.au

Question Asked:

Are there certain councils that are more problematic or more at risk than others according to your members?

Karen DOUGLAS: I can take that on notice. Nothing springs to mind. They actually are all really excelling in the provision of care.

ASU RESPONSE

Risk is created by poor managerial oversight, underfunding and insecure work. We note in our submission circumstances of poor working conditions arising from insufficient financial investment and managerial approaches that overlook safety standards. These conditions create risk that ECEC professionals manage. More care and consideration from managers is necessary to manage risks to workers, see page 14 of our submission conveying harm caused to workers by inadequate funding and managerial responsibility.

Local government ECEC services provide high quality, professional early childhood and education care and support to children and their families and carers. Our members support vulnerable children whose lives may be impacted by a range of factors including disability and unstable family circumstances.

Workers in councils are highly qualified and are paid above Award wages. Our submission notes some services have insufficient resources available to maintain ratio, but others implement child safety structures enabling ratios to be maintained. This demonstrates that better work environment and care for children is achievable when employers are determined to provide safe conditions.

Case study two in our submission sets out the difficulties of a large service with many children with a variety of challenging behaviours. This is a service known by Child Protection for the high-quality services provided, and for staff who are experienced in managing family units under stress. In this example, more ECEC professionals, more one-to-one support staff, more allocated time for Preschool Field Officers and more attention from management to the physical layout of play areas that enabled children to be separated when necessary was required.

Additionally, local government are at the forefront of innovative research. The Melbourne Medical School have convened a study with educators at the Ballarat Rowan View service. This review is considering the high-quality services delivered by local government providers via the Safe Haven program. This involves reviewing the role of onsite child psychologists, lower educator to child ratios and greater support of educator. The research will produce recommendations for children's development progress.

¹ Melbourne Medical School, '*Changing the Trajectories of Australia's Most Vulnerable Children- The Early Years Education Program Randomised Controlled Trial*'.