

3 October 2025

Ms Gabrielle Sinclair

CEO

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

Level 14, 1 Oxford Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Australia

Via email: enquiries@acecqa.gov.au

Dear Ms Sinclair,

Educator and parent postcards call for urgent action on under-the-roof staffing loophole

United Workers Union (UWU) represents thousands of early childhood educators across Australia, who are passionate about building an early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector that is high-quality, safe, and provides every child with the support they need to thrive.

Today, I write to formally submit an initial collection of 1,260 postcards from educators and parents calling for urgent action to close the under-the-roof staffing loophole in ECEC services.

These postcards highlight the risks posed by the current interpretation of educator-to-child ratios, which allows centres to meet staffing requirements “under the roof” while leaving individual rooms understaffed and children without adequate supervision.

Educators have consistently reported that this practice compromises the safety and wellbeing of children. It also places immense pressure on staff, contributing to burnout and exacerbating workforce shortages.

As one educator wrote:

“Children are being placed in risky situations while their parents believe they are receiving quality education and care. If it wasn't the wrong thing to do then parents would be fully made aware of the misuse of the under the roof ratios. It's clearly wrong, unsafe and downright dodgy.”

Another educator told us:

“As an early childhood leader, I see every day how under-the-roof ratios fail children and educators. On paper, they meet regulations, but in reality, they leave rooms under-staffed, disrupt relationships, and increase stress. Children miss out on consistent care, and educators burn out trying to cover gaps. Ending under-the-roof ratios would ensure fairness, stability, and quality education for every child.”

The misuse of under-the-roof ratios has become an all-too-common practice that undermines the safety of children in early learning. Parents would be shocked to learn that centres appearing compliant on paper may, in reality, be operating below the legally required staffing levels in individual rooms.

We welcome the Federal Government's decision to task ACECQA with reviewing supervision practices and urge you to take this opportunity to close staffing loopholes such as under-the-roof ratios. The postcards enclosed represent a unified call for reform: to ensure that every child receives the care and supervision they deserve, and that educators are supported to deliver high-quality education in safe and sustainable environments.

Further postcards are expected to be submitted in the coming weeks, as educators and parents continue to raise their voices on this critical issue.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Carolyn Smith
Director, Early Childhood Education and Care
United Workers Union