

## Pushed to the COVID brink, Vic not-for-profit early learning rates better

As the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to devastate the Victorian early education and care sector, not-for-profit, community-owned services have reported outstanding results in recent national quality benchmarks when compared to private providers.

The sixth *Trends in Community Children's Services Survey* (TICCSS) of Australian not-for-profit (NfP) early education and care services reported that more than 48 per cent of Victorian NfP services are rated as 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' against the National Quality Framework, compared with just 11 per cent of private providers.

Released this week, other key survey findings showed:

- Not-for-profit services have maintained or improved on their already high quality ratings.
- Not-for-profit services have higher numbers of educators and teachers than legally required. Low ratios and small groups mean every child gets the attention they need, which enhances their safety, development and learning.
- Not-for-profit educators are highly engaged in study to improve their qualifications. Better qualified educators translates to better quality teaching, which boosts children's learning and development, both now and into their school years.

Julie Price, Executive Director of Community Child Care Association (CCC), the report's project lead, says that "in the face of the COVID-19 Delta outbreak, Victorian NfP services have worked hard to maintain impressive quality standards."

"TICCSS shows that the pandemic has had a really concerning impact on NfP early education and care services, which also happen to be some of the highest quality and most established services in some of our most vulnerable communities," she said.

"For example, TICCSS shows that close to three quarters (71%) of Victorian service respondents needed to waive families' fees, compared to the national average of 54 per cent, while 58 per cent experienced withdrawn enrolments and more than 30 per cent had higher than usual staff absences. Half were concerned about the wellbeing of children in their care. Less than a quarter of services (24%) believed they would be better off in the year ahead."

"With reports that children are particularly vulnerable to the Delta variant and a lot of families choosing to keep their children at home, many services have been pushed to the wall.

We see this especially in Victoria where many educators and teachers have only just become eligible for vaccinations, and rules around which families can access education and care have exposed staff and communities to unnecessary risk," adds Ms Price.

"It is imperative that these services are adequately supported through COVID to maintain their standards, as studies show that having access to quality early education and care helps to minimise disadvantage, not just at school, but throughout a child's life."

[Read the full report.](#)

**For more information or to arrange an interview with CCC Executive Director Julie Price, contact Caitlyn Robertson on 0455 021 197.**



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