Statement by the CEOs of nine quality large NFP early learning providers

Much progress has made to child safety reforms in the last year

We are appalled at any reports of child abuse highlighted by last night's ABC Four Corners report and our thoughts are with the children and families affected.

We remain committed to delivering services that provide quality experiences for children and families and to supporting hundreds of thousands of qualified, dedicated educators across the nation to do everything possible to keep children safe.

We remain committed to working with governments and as providers report any incidents where we have concerns about our services, to be more transparent and open to regulators reviewing what we do.

The early learning and care sector has made considerable progress improving child safety in the past year but eternal vigilance underpinned by a well trained workforce, robust systems and effective regulators is crucial.

Any service receiving government funding should be regulated under the National Quality Framework and be required to meet qualification and facility requirements, be rated and assessed so parents have information about the service.

The sector has been working closely with State and Commonwealth Governments on significant action to address child safety. Policy measures implemented in the last year include:

- Overhaul of the National Law governing early learning to make children's wellbeing and safety the paramount consideration for all providers;
- Fines trebled on providers and educators breaching the National Law;
- Doubled funding for State regulators with 1538 compliance actions taken in the June quarter, double the number for the previous year;
- Banned personal devices in centres;
- Mandated new child safety training now completed by over 99% of educators;
- Established a National Early Childhood Workers Register and overhauled working with children checks systems;
- Improved transparency with parents able to view the quality and safety compliance record of every service on the Starting Blocks website.
- The Commonwealth and States have commenced actions against providers that repeatedly fail to meet the National Quality Standard or have poor safety records;
- The Commonwealth has made meeting the National Quality Standard on safety a condition for accessing the 15% wages subsidy system;
- The proportion of services meeting the National Quality Standard now sits at a record high of 92%, and the proportion needing a waiver from staffing requirements dropped from 8% to 4%;

Changing laws and regulatory actions are important but only go so far.

As quality non-profit providers, we are doing everything we can to ensure our educators understand their responsibilities to keep children safe and are supported to do so.

All providers must do the same.

We know that the vast majority of our 200,000 strong educator workforce is sickened and appalled by the abuse revelations occurring over the last couple of years. They are deeply committed to ensuring that every child in their care is safe and provided with great learning experiences.

For those who are not, our message for you is simple: there is no place for you in early childhood education and care, where the rights and safety of very young children are paramount.

It is also clear that more is required to build a system that knits together to ensure strong child safety and quality outcomes – from service planning and approvals, to who gets to work in the sector, to how regulators work with providers to address issues when they arise.

A National Early Education and Care Commission is urgently required and could take a lead role in driving consistently world class access, quality, and safety across the nation.

As purpose-driven organisations, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to child safety and wellbeing. We stand firmly in the belief that quality and safety are one in the same and believe that safeguarding children is not just a regulatory obligation - it is a moral imperative.

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27 October 2026