

## Response to ACCC Inquiry into Childcare

29 October 2023  
via submission portal

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) GPO Box 3131 Canberra ACT  
2601 Australia

Dear Members of the ACCC Inquiry Team,

I am writing on behalf of Australian Community Children's Services SA (ACCS SA) in response to the ACCC Inquiry into Childcare, with specific reference to the data and recommendations presented by the South Australian Royal Commission in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

We wish to emphasise the importance of integrating this valuable data into the ongoing inquiry and offer additional insights regarding the not-for-profit sector, planning controls for for-profit providers, and the workforce shortage exacerbated by the establishment of new services.

We deeply appreciate the ACCC's dedicated efforts and the substantial findings from the South Australian Royal Commission in ECEC, which shed light on various aspects of early childhood education and care, particularly in the not-for-profit sector. These findings have the potential to significantly influence the future direction of the sector.

In light of this data, I would like to present some additional insights and recommendations, building upon the information shared by the South Australian Royal Commission:

- 1. Not-For-Profit Services:** The data from the South Australian Royal Commission emphasises the critical role that not-for-profit childcare services play in ensuring accessibility and affordability. The ACCC inquiry should explore ways to strengthen and support these organisations, with a focus on preserving their mission-driven commitment to quality early childhood education and care.
- 2. Affordability and Equity:** The findings from the Royal Commission underline the critical issue of affordability and its impact on equity. The ACCC inquiry should examine how to make early childhood education and care more affordable and accessible, particularly for families in need, while maintaining high-quality standards.
- 3. Quality Assurance:** The data underscores the importance of quality assurance measures in early childhood education and care. It is essential for the ACCC to delve into ways to maintain and improve quality standards, considering the lessons learned from not-for-profit services and their commitment to excellence.
- 4. Transparency and Accountability:** The data from the South Australian Royal Commission highlights the need for increased transparency and accountability in the early childhood education and care sector. The ACCC inquiry should focus on

developing mechanisms for improved transparency, enabling parents and guardians to make informed choices regarding early childhood education and care providers.

5. **Government Support and Regulation:** The findings stress the significance of government support and regulatory frameworks in sustaining not-for-profit early childhood education and care services. The ACCC should explore how government policies can promote the growth and stability of these vital services.
6. **Community Engagement:** As emphasised by the Royal Commission's data, community engagement and collaboration are essential for successful early childhood education and care services. The ACCC inquiry should encourage ongoing dialogue with families, educators, providers, and communities to ensure that policies align with the needs and values of the diverse Australian population.
7. **Planning Controls for For-Profit Providers:** In addition to the not-for-profit sector, planning controls and regulations for for-profit early childhood education and care providers should be carefully examined. Ensuring that for-profit providers meet rigorous quality and safety standards is paramount, and appropriate controls should be in place to achieve this.
8. **Workforce Shortage and Service Expansion:** The establishment of new early childhood education and care services has been contributing to the ongoing workforce shortage in the sector, as highlighted by the South Australian Royal Commission's data. The ACCC inquiry should address this issue, considering measures to attract and retain qualified early childhood educators while expanding service capacity.

The ACCC's dedication to this inquiry is commendable, and the data from the South Australian Royal Commission in ECEC has enriched our understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the early childhood education and care sector. I look forward to the final report and believe that the recommendations arising from this inquiry have the potential to bring about substantial improvements, making early childhood education and care more accessible, affordable, and of higher quality for Australian families.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to addressing this critical issue and incorporating the insights of the South Australian Royal Commission, while also considering workforce shortages exacerbated by the establishment of new services.

Sincerely,



Carrie Johnson  
Convenor ACCS SA