

Child centres failing

Hundreds not meeting national standards

MORE than 600 Victorian childcare centres and pre-schools are not meeting national quality standards, latest data has revealed.

And while Early Childhood Australia says the figure was not alarming, the boom in childcare centres across the state means some have not been inspected by the Education Department since 2013.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's latest report revealed 623 centres had not achieved, but were "working towards", the standard in one or more of seven categories including education, health and safety, or staffing.

Of the 3987 centres assessed across the state, 33 per cent rated "exceeding NQS" overall, 51 per cent were "meeting NQS" and 16 per cent were "working towards" the standard but needed to improve.

Royal Family Day Care in Coolaroo was the only Victorian business to get the worst rating of "significant improvement required" — meaning the service posed a "significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children".

The Education Department shut down the Coolaroo centre in November 2017.

Nine Victorian providers were top of the class and received the highest overall rating of "excellent": Balnarring Preschool; Albert Park Preschool Centre; Clarendon Children's Centre Co-op in

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South Melbourne; Wesley College Glen Waverley Early Childhood Learning Centre; Jindi Woraback Children's Centre in St Albans; Bonkers Beat Music Kinder and Childcare in Aspendale; Cambrian Preschool in West Melton; Doveton Early Learning Centre; and Millville Childcare Centre in Colac.

Early Childhood Australia Victorian branch president Marie Howard said Victorian centres generally rated very well and a number of newer centres could often receive a "working towards NQS" rating in their first assessment.

While some centres had not been evaluated since 2013, Ms Howard said the "exponential" growth of the industry had put pressure on the department, saying it prioritised working with lower-rated services to bring them up to standard.

She said parents should visit childcare centres before signing up, to see the interactions between staff and children.

Education Department spokeswoman Linh Salisbury said Victoria had the equal highest proportion of early childhood services that met or exceeded national quality standards. "The overwhelming majority of Victoria's kindergartens and childcare centres do a fantastic job offering quality early childhood education and care for children," she said.

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