

Telephone:

Reference:

Disability Standards for Education Consultation
Department of Education
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via email:

Dear Consultation Committee,

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is pleased to submit this response in support of the proposed amendments with the Disability Standards for Education (DES), particularly the inclusion of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services and Outside School Hours Care. We believe these changes are vital for ensuring that children with disabilities receive equitable access to quality early childhood education, which is essential for their long-term development. We support proposed the planned use of gender-neutral terms to ensure inclusivity.

Our 2023 Queensland Child Rights report emphasised the importance of early intervention in improving outcomes for children with disabilities.¹ Early childhood education plays an important role in child development. Inclusive access to ECEC provides foundation for children to succeed in their educational journey. The proposed amendments will provide consistency in the support for children with disabilities from the very start of their education.

We also know that education, including early childhood education, is a protective factor as ECEC services provide a level of oversight of a child's wellbeing and facilitate access to additional secondary support services for families to meet the needs of their child.²

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in the developmental trajectory of children, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds or with additional needs. The QFCC recognises that investing in early childhood education is not only a key strategy for promoting academic success but also a vital means of supporting the holistic wellbeing of children. Quality ECEC fosters secure attachments and supports emotional, social, and cognitive growth.

¹ QFCC (2023), *Queensland Child Rights Report*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/childrights/report/2023>

² QFCC (2023), *Lessons from the life-story timelines of 30 Queensland children who have died*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/Lessons%20from%20the%20life-story%20timelines%20of%2030%20Queensland%20children%20who%20have%20died.pdf>

For children with disabilities, it provides essential accommodations and services to help them thrive.

In Queensland, the QFCC's research highlights the substantial benefits of early engagement with ECEC services, noting that children who participated in these services had better access to additional support systems, including medical and allied health services, compared to those who did not.³ This demonstrates how early childhood education can serve as a gateway to broader support networks, enhancing the wellbeing of children and their families.

Given the known benefits of early childhood education in supporting better outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable children, the QFCC advocates for a continued focus on these services, with a commitment to enhancing their accessibility to all children across Queensland, particularly in remote communities. Including ECEC services under the DSE is crucial for fostering an inclusive education system, ensuring children with disabilities can access early education without barriers. The amendments clarify provider obligations, promoting necessary adjustments in access, resources, and teaching strategies to support all children.

The QFCC also supports the requirement for ECEC services to consult with parents and carers about reasonable adjustments to support children with disabilities. This collaborative approach is vital in ensuring that the unique needs of each child are understood and met in a way that aligns with the priorities of families and values the expertise of parents.

If you have any queries in relation to this matter, please don't hesitate to contact me directly on [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission
February 2025

³ QFCC (2023), *Lessons from the life-story timelines of 30 Queensland children who have died*, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/Lessons%20from%20the%20life-story%20timelines%20of%2030%20Queensland%20children%20who%20have%20died.pdf>

