

## **ELAA urges cultural shift to strengthen child safety in national review**

11 June, 2025

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) has made a formal submission to the national *Child Safety Review* under the National Quality Framework (NQF), calling for more robust, consistent, and clearer approaches to safeguarding children across the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector.

Driven by our vision of excellence and equity in early childhood education and care, ELAA's submission was developed in consultation with our diverse membership. It reflects the lived experiences and insights of ECEC providers, who are deeply committed to fostering safe, respectful, and supportive environments for children.

"At Early Learning Association Australia, we believe child safety is everyone's responsibility," said Dr Karina Davis, CEO of ELAA.

"We have long advocated for a culture that respects children and ensures their safety and wellbeing in all aspects of their learning and care."

The review comes at a critical time, with recent media reporting placing child safety in our sector into the national spotlight. This has again highlighted the need for these important conversations, not only about the gaps in current systems, but also about the opportunities to strengthen regulation, increase accountability, and foster safer environments across our sector.

"Our members are doing their best to prioritise children's safety and wellbeing every day," Dr Davis said,

"But to do this effectively, they need clear, consistent national guidance, and strong support from our regulatory bodies. It's not only about compliance, it's about collaboration, and empowering services and staff to create environments where every child can thrive."

ELAA's submission responds to the six key themes of the review. Among its top priorities are

- Tighter controls on use of digital devices.
- Consistent mandatory training for all ECEC staff - including those without direct child-facing roles.
- Establishing consistent national positions on mandatory reporting, child safe standards, and training, including making inappropriate behaviour subject to mandatory reporting.

- A fundamental review of the Working with Children Check (WWCC) system.
- Stronger oversight of temporary premises waivers.
- Strengthen monitoring and regulation of 'related providers'.

In addition to these core recommendations, ELAA recognises that effective reform depends on **cultural change across the sector**. We believe it is pivotal to clarify what child safety means in the sector. Rather than narrowly focusing on child protection, ELAA calls for a broader understanding — one that also includes emotionally secure, supportive, and inclusive environments where every child can feel safe and joyful in learning.

Importantly, ELAA notes that realising this reform will require appropriate funding and comprehensive training. We also acknowledge the existing challenges our sector currently faces, including workforce shortages, an overworked and low-paid workforce, and the additional pressures faced by small, independent service providers.

Read ELAA's complete submission [HERE](#).

To arrange an interview with ELAA CEO, Dr. Karina Davis, contact Yao Cheng, Communications Lead at [ycheng@elaa.org.au](mailto:ycheng@elaa.org.au), 03 9411 4114.

#### **ENDS**

*ELAA is a national peak body for not-for-profit providers of early childhood education and care. Our vision is Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care. [www.elaa.org.au](http://www.elaa.org.au)*