



Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council  
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Dear Secretary

## **STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS FOR THE REGULATORY AUTHORITY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE**

I am pleased to provide you with the Statement of Expectations for your role as the designated Regulatory Authority under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Children's Services Act 1996*, and their respective regulations. Your delegated powers, duties and functions, exercised through the Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) of the Department of Education, are critical to maintaining high quality and safeguarding children across Victoria's early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

Since the previous Statement of Expectations in September 2024, the Victorian Government has committed to urgent reforms to strengthen child safety across the ECEC sector. The government has accepted all recommendations of the independent Rapid Child Safety Review (Rapid Review) released on 20 August 2025 and endorsed national regulatory reforms agreed by Education Ministers.

The Victorian Government's priority is ensuring all children attending ECEC services are safe from harm, abuse and neglect. As the regulatory authority, QARD plays a critical role in safeguarding children and supporting high quality early childhood education. The Victorian Government is committed to supporting QARD with the resources and authority to support effective regulation.

The Government has committed to establish a new, independent and strengthened regulator for ECEC by the end of 2025, to increase the frequency of compliance visits, and to strengthen the regulator's focus on providers' staff recruitment and induction processes. In addition to this, the capability review, as recommended by the Rapid Review, will seek to modernise regulatory approaches to address the challenges of rapid sector growth and a more complex provider mix, while ensuring a strong focus on child safety.

Within this context, this Statement of Expectations clarifies my immediate expectations for QARD in the lead-up to establishment of the new independent ECEC regulator and during the period of its initial operation. Throughout this document, references to QARD should be understood to include the new independent regulator from its commencement date. I will

issue a further Statement of Expectations following establishment of the independent regulator.

### **Current legislative framework**

As Minister for Children, I am responsible for administering the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Children's Services Act 1996*. This Statement of Expectations should be read in the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in these Acts.

QARD operates in the context of nationally applied laws and is jointly responsible for implementing the National Quality Framework, along with the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, other state and territory Regulatory Authorities, and the Commonwealth Department of Education.

QARD is also the integrated sector regulator for the Child Safe Standards under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, as they apply to Victorian ECEC services.

### **Emerging risks and priorities**

This Statement of Expectations outlines key priorities and expectations focused on urgent improvements to child safety and should be read alongside other legislative and non-legislative obligations on QARD.

#### *Supporting implementation of Rapid Review recommendations*

I expect QARD, in its role as the Regulatory Authority, to support implementation of relevant Rapid Review recommendations.

In particular (relating specifically to Recommendation 5 of the Rapid Review), QARD must increase its focus on approved providers':

- recruitment of new staff, casuals and labour-hire, including undertaking background checks; child safety questions in interviews; and checking at least 2 previous employers, including when not listed as referees
- induction of staff, casuals, labour hire and volunteers, so that staff know their responsibilities to keep children safe, staff codes of conduct, expected behaviours, and how to report or raise concerns; and
- child safe cultures, including their leadership, governance, and codes of conduct.

Furthermore, I expect QARD to work towards increasing the frequency of compliance visits and quality assessments. This will include recruitment and onboarding of Authorised Officers for the purpose of increasing the frequency of unannounced compliance visits to every 12 months.

To enhance transparency and help families make informed choices, I expect QARD to commence the development of a modified ratings certificate for services and increase the frequency of publishing compliance and enforcement activity on its website.

*Establish a strengthened, independent regulator underpinned by a capability review*

I expect QARD to undertake a capability review to ensure the regulator has the skills and capacity needed in a changing regulatory environment. This review should explore modernising and strengthening regulatory tools to consistently identify and manage risk, drawing on contemporary evidence and modern data insights.

Following this review, I expect QARD to develop a strengthened, modernised risk assessment framework, tools and training. This process should also include identifying any additional resourcing requirements necessary to support these enhancements.

*National regulatory reforms*

I expect QARD to actively support and implement National Law reforms agreed by Education Ministers.

**Planning, reporting and review**

QARD should publish this Statement of Expectations on the Victorian Government's website as soon as practicable after receipt of this letter.

I request QARD to incorporate these expectations into its business planning processes, including milestones for when these expectations will be met. Progress in meeting these expectations should be reported publicly in QARD's annual report.

The business plan should include appropriate milestones about the administrative completion of the transition to the new independent regulator.

I look forward to QARD continuing to work towards achieving best practice in its critical role as the regulator of ECEC services in Victoria.

Yours sincerely



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