



2026

Annual Report

Peak body for over 1,600 privately-owned predominantly small to medium-sized family-owned and operated businesses who provide early childhood education and care services in New South Wales.



An industry association of NSW-based Approved Providers, led by Approved Providers and serving Approved Providers and the early childhood education and care sector for over 45 years.





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Brighter Beginnings: The First 2,000 Days of Life

“Investing in early childhood produces a return on investment of 13% per year, per child, over a lifetime for every \$1 you put in.”

“Late intervention is estimated to cost \$15.2 billion per year through high-intensity and crisis services. These costs are borne across government sectors, including health, child protection, policing, and welfare, among others.”

NSW Department of Health

April 2021

President's Message

It is a personal honour and a privilege to have served as your President for the last ten years.

As a fellow Approved Provider, early childhood education and care is more than a profession. It is a calling, a life-long commitment to producing incredible children's outcomes that advance each and every one of them throughout their lives.

And while I am about to celebrate my 50th year as an Approved Provider, I trust that the ACA NSW Executive Committee and I (all as elected volunteers) have all contributed on your behalf, through ACA NSW's advocacies, agitations and supports in advancing our wonderful sector.

It continues to pain me, and I am certain my fellow Approved Providers too, when failures occur for children and their families. Not only are they wrong and devastating, they also do not represent the vast majority of our sector who are singularly committed to the safety, well-being and positive futures of all our children.

That is why ACA NSW continues to be courageous in our advocacies, unafraid of highlighting inconvenient truths with the sole objective of working with everyone who want to work with us to build better tomorrows.

As human beings, we will all continue to be imperfect. And yes, we are also reliant on others (financially and otherwise) to achieve our collective goals. But courage, truth and constructive collaborations are always needed, especially if we want to realise the inherent promises and potential of early childhood education and care.

The next few years are predicted to be turbulent, with reforms still unfolding, including how the sector could be financially structured.

But I cannot help but remain hopeful that our early childhood education and care profession, sector and systems will finally be appreciated by governments and the public for producing lasting dividends for children, their families as well as for NSW and Australia.

Executive Committee 2025-2026

President: Lyn Connolly
Vice-President: Nicole Upfold
Treasurer: Mark Wharton
Secretary: Eleni Wilson
Members: Donus Demir
Renae Donovan
Diane Saba
Joan Stone
Rita Totino
Nate Wang



Lyn Connolly
NSW President



NSW's Early Childhood Education & Care Sector

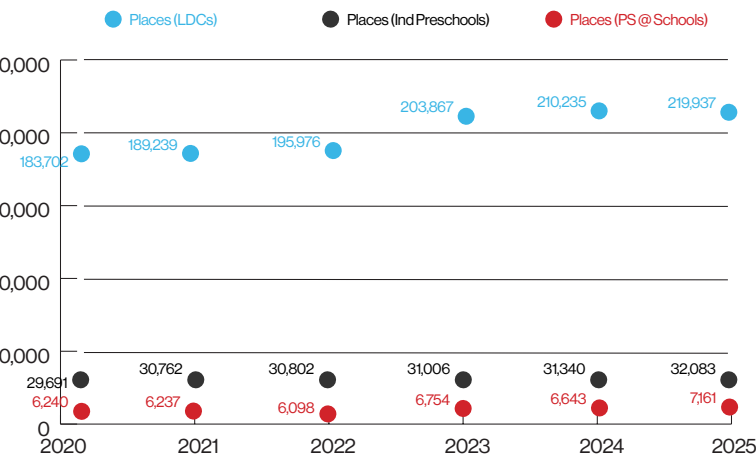
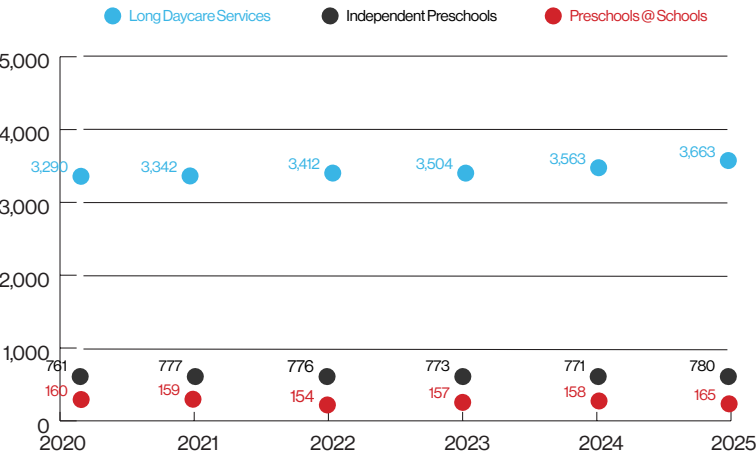
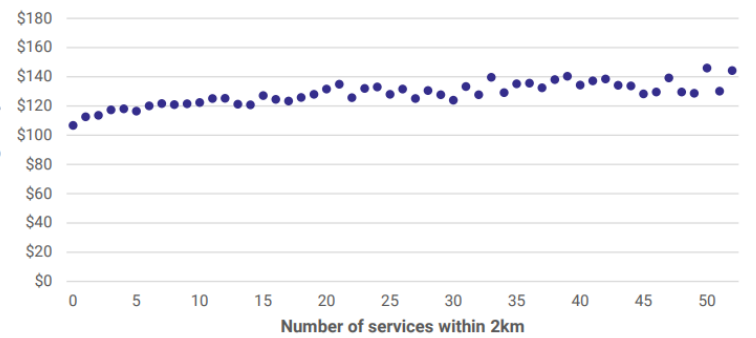


Figure 4.2: Average daily fee for centre based day care in New South Wales by number of services within 2km, December quarter 2022



Source: ACCC analysis of Department of Education administrative data.

It is worth noting that the early childhood education and care sector in New South Wales as a whole has continued to grow over the last 5 years. That said, it is also worth noting the trajectories of certain segments.

However, the impact of COVID's Work-From-Home, oversupply, intense negative media and persisting regulatory increases and complexities have thus far not produced any structural efficiency gains nor systemic children's outcomes.

Oversupply

ACA NSW was the first and lone peak body for years to publicly expose a system induced oversupply since the introduction of the then NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017 (now called the NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021).

Sadly, the then NSW Planning Minister ignored internal government recommendations to restore some planning powers to local councils.

It was finally confirmed by the ACCC in June 2023 that oversupply had been contributing to increasing fees by 40% or more.

Regrettably, successive governments have to date failed to address oversupply or even offer plausible solutions.

But in 2026, the Federal Minister for Education became the first to announce his intentions to address oversupply.

Quality Ratings & Children's Outcomes

While ACA NSW would never suggest the wholesale rejection of the National Quality Framework, ACA NSW has been the first and often lone peak body in NSW to publicly raise concerns that quality was subjective and inconsistently assessed and implemented.

After 14 years, quality became a most over-used term but almost always undefined, especially by governments and regulators. Worse, governments were using policies that contradicted, for example Quality Rating results and the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

Child Safety & Regulatory Failures

Hence, Operation Tenterfield and successive governments' investigations exposed not only weaknesses in child safety, such came at the expense of early childhood education and care services that were legally obliged to the National Law, National Regulations and more.

Even the NSW Government's independent Wheeler Report discovered that the then NSW Regulatory Authority had regarded 66.6% of sampled services rated Exceeding the National Quality Standards to also be regarded by the same NSW Regulatory Authority as High Risk if not Very High Risk.

Financial & Operational Sustainability

While we all must remember the then union's objective to increase educators' pay by up to 72%, all are in-principle not opposed to paying our amazing early childhood educators and teachers more, it was always about how that can be achieved without negatively impacting on parents and families.

Likewise, reforms are needed but must be conducted with financial and operational sustainability in mind. And that includes our workforce's skills, abilities and human workloads.

	2012	2015	2018	2021	2024
POPULATION: Enrolled preschool children in the year before school (NSW)	Not Available	Not Available	85.03%	86.69%	86.99%
QUALITY AREA 1: Services with Meeting NQS or higher (NSW)	Not Available	69.76%	84.63%	92.06%	95.42%
OVERALL RATING: Services with Meeting NQS or higher (NSW)	Not Available	58.53%	79.85%	87.96%	92.00%
AEDC: Children Not Developmentally On Track Upon Starting School (NSW)	43.90%	44.20%	42.80%	44.50%	45.80%



Goodbye Apple Watch: Childcare educators fume over mobile phone ban 'overreach'



The Sydney Morning Herald

Childcare workers vote to walk off the job

Members of the United Voice union are fighting a landmark case in the Fair Work Commission, pushing for pay rises of between 39 per cent and 72 per cent. They are arguing that the 80,000-strong workforce is paid woefully less than men with similar qualifications because of an outdated notion that childcare is viewed as 'women's work in the home'.

Advocacies, Actions & Adventures

In late 2025, ACA NSW was ranked #7 in the Daily Telegraph's Top 20 education power rankings.

It more accurately reflects the continuous and assertive efforts of ACA NSW advocacies and engagement with governments, bureaucrats, political parties, policy influencers as well as the media ... relative to others.



Largest Awards for Early Learning

ACA NSW continues to host the largest Awards platform recognising early childhood educators, teachers, teams, leaders, services and Approved Providers.

At almost 800 attending and still growing, the Excellence in Early Childhood Education Awards is the signature annual sector event in NSW.



The Daily Telegraph

We're for you.

NSW education power rankings: The leaders who shape our students, schools and universities

We've ranked the 20 most influential education figures in NSW, from prominent principals to policy heavyweights and uni visionaries. See who tops the list.



Early Learning and so much more!

Notwithstanding our primary advocacies on behalf of Approved Providers and early childhood educators and teachers, ACA NSW had the privilege of being directly involved in payroll taxes, workers compensation reform, housing for essential workers, fire protection and small business.



Wheels on the Bus Tours

Two bus tours continue to be run each year visiting three exemplary long daycare services each Saturday.

Early childhood educators, teachers, Educational Leaders, Nominated Supervisors and their Approved Providers engage with extraordinary services and each other about their successes with children beyond quality ratings. successes



Inner Circle evenings

ACA NSW's Inner Circle evenings have a distinct reputation where the sector engages with governments, bureaucrats, parliamentarians and sector leaders on early childhood education and care issues and challenges.

It is one of the rare opportunities where everyone are encouraged to share but more importantly seek solutions to positively and quantifiably advance children's outcomes and the early childhood education and care profession.



Celebrating our Educators & Teachers!

Our early childhood educators and teachers are not only vital to our children, they are also the key recipe in any successful and effective early childhood education and care service.

Lead by ACA National, ACA NSW continues to bring public and political attention especially on Early Childhood Educators' Day. NSW and Australia says thank you!

ACA NSW conducts and facilitates many more functions and activities for members and the sector, including Members-Only Meetings, Regional Meetings, Succession Planning sessions, Supplier Sector Insights as well as regularly updated policy documents and templates, as well as industrial, regulatory, commercial and crisis advice and assistance/referrals.

Not one but two conferences

With gratitude to our two conference partners, ACA NSW now hosts two 2-day conferences each year: the National Childcare & Early Learning Leaders Summit, and the National Early Childhood Education Summit!

Canvassing across the professional through to the pedagogical, both have become signature annual events for the NSW and Australian ECEC sector.



New Entrants evenings

To engage prospective new Approved Providers, ACA NSW hosts New Entrants evenings so as to ensure they understand the early childhood education and care sector. This includes current and potential future reforms, oversupply as well as potential changes to funding arrangements.

That said, engaging new entrants before they become Approved Providers are to maximise their successes as well as the sector for the benefit of all children and families.



Strong Financial Year

Growth came mainly from our partnerships and commercial income, which rose 234% and now makes up 81.5% of total income. Membership income grew 64% to its highest level of the last decade. Lower professional, event and national contribution costs more than offset increases in staffing and infrastructure. The result strengthens members’ funds and gives ACA NSW the reserves to keep advocating for the sector with confidence.



Surplus Margin, FY2016–FY2026
Surplus as a share of total income in each financial year



Where ACA NSW revenue came from
Share of FY2026 revenue and change on FY2025.



How revenue mix has changed
Share of revenue by stream over ten years

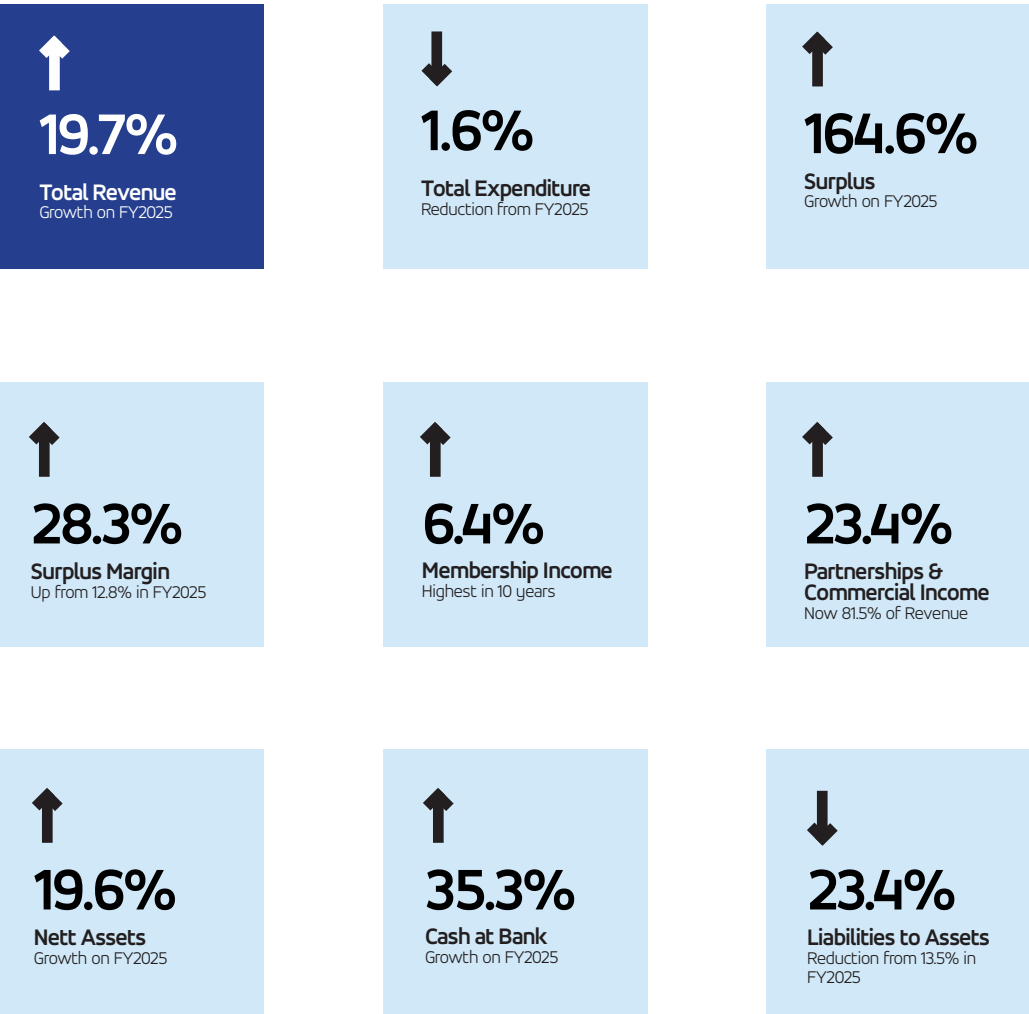
“Members continue to be assured of ACA NSW’s prudent financial management as well as building of and astutely using resources properly and effectively as your stewards.”

Mark Wharton
NSW Treasurer



FY2026 at a glance

Each figure compares the year ended 30 June 2026 with the year ended 30 June 2025.



Expenditure Distribution

Share of FY2026 and change from FY2025

CATEGORY	SHARE	CHANGE
People (staff and super)	47.7%	+4.9%
Governance, board and ACA National	14.9%	-9.0%
Infrastructure	13.6%	+12.2%
Events and training	9.8%	-17.2%
Finance, legal and professional	7.5%	-28.4%
Digital infrastructure	3.5%	+34.8%
Other	2.9%	+7.6%

Extract of the Independent Auditor’s Statement

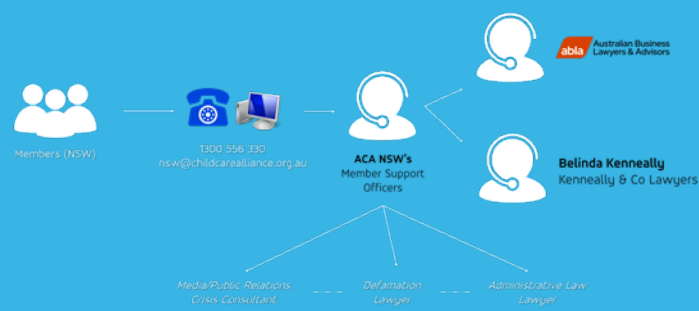
“In our opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects (or gives a true and fair view of the financial position of Assn of Quality Child Care Centres of NSW Inc as at 30 June 2026 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (NSW).”

KS Black & Co, Chartered Accountants – 4 September 2026

Full Financial Statements

Financial members can receive a copy of the full audited financial statement by e-mailing their request to nsw@childcarealliance.org.au

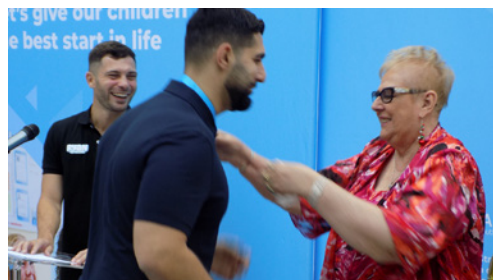
Supporting our Members



Supporting our members and their services require an effective while lean and efficient infrastructure and allies.

ACA NSW continues to be an incorporated industry association in New South Wales.

Members benefit effectively through ACA NSW's one-stop-shop to access regulatory, industrial, commercial, legal advice and assistance, as well as its vast website resources for latest news, tools, solutions, events and so much more.



Our Partners



Our Supplier Members





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