

# Kids learn bad habits

## Childcare staff blamed

**Carly Hennessy**

CHILDCARE centres are teaching children poor hygiene habits and exposing them to dangerous items, a new report reveals.

One-quarter of Queensland centres do not get kids to wash their hands after toileting and before eating, while almost one-third of centres have potentially dangerous items accessible by children.

The high incidence of failure to wash hands is worrying, as children are dubbed "superspreaders" for their ability to rapidly transmit germs from child to child through sneezing, coughing and touching.

Assessors from the National Childcare Accreditation Council visited 318 Queensland centres, ranking them on hygiene, safety and education, between July and December 2009.

Centres must have their accreditation renewed every two years.

The just-published report notes of "particular concern" is the increasing number of centres which failed the test

on more than two consecutive occasions. Nationally, 64 centres have failed more than twice in a row.

But the NCAC refused to reveal how many Queensland centres had failed more than twice, saying it would unfairly compare state against state.

NCAC chief executive officer Denise Taylor said high staff turnover was often the culprit in letting down a centre's performance.

If staff were not experienced in the centre's behavioural policy, an assessor could easily mark them down for not dealing with the children in the stated way, she said.

"(Unsatisfactory ratings) can be as simple as children not washing their hands before eating or staff not washing their hands before preparing food," Ms Taylor said.

"Or a staff member may leave a bottle of cleaning liquid out on a table."

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