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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Lands across Australia. We also acknowledge and extend our respect to Elders, past and present. We recognise and celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, including their role in the education and care of children. We also acknowledge and recognise the rich histories and diverse cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the valuable contribution their diversity brings.

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1. Foreword

The [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#) opens with a simple, powerful statement – ‘Education has the power to transform lives’. It commits all Australian governments to work with the education community to attract, develop, support and retain high quality teachers, educators and leaders in Australia’s education system.

Children’s education and care is an integral part of that system and sets the foundations for lifelong learning and development.

Investment in the sector and its workforce leads to a range of important benefits – improved and more equitable educational and developmental outcomes for children; increased intergenerational social mobility; and higher female labour market participation. Quality outcomes for children depend upon a highly skilled, well supported and professionally recognised workforce.

Australian governments and sector stakeholders have closely collaborated to develop this ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high-quality children’s education and care workforce. Representatives from all main stakeholder groups have been involved throughout the development process, and will continue to be involved to deliver the strategy over the next decade.

Thanks in particular to the following stakeholders for their ongoing involvement, support and expertise, as well as their commitment to the actions contained within this strategy:

- Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities
- Australian Childcare Alliance
- Australian Community Children’s Services
- Australasian Council of Deans of Education
- Australian Early Childhood Teacher Education Network
- Australian Education Union
- Children’s Education and Care Industry Reference Committee
- Community Connections Solutions Australia
- Early Childhood Australia
- Early Learning and Care Council of Australia
- Early Learning Association Australia
- Family Day Care Australia
- Independent Education Union of Australia
- National Outside School Hours Services Alliance
- Outside School Hours Care Council of Australia
- Queensland Early Childhood Teacher Education Network
- Regional Early Education and Development Inc
- TAFE Directors Australia
- The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
- United Workers Union.

Thanks also for all of the significant contributions from across the children’s education and care sector, including teachers and educators who took the time to ensure that their voices were heard.

2. Overview



In December 2019, at the same time as finalising the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#), Education Ministers endorsed the development of a new ten-year national workforce strategy as a joint partnership between all governments, the children’s education and care sector, and other key stakeholders.

The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), on behalf of all governments, coordinated the development of this new strategy. The development process aligned with the principles of co-design, as agreed by Education Ministers.

Extensive consultations with national sector stakeholders and government representatives informed the development of potential actions and initiatives aimed at alleviating longstanding and increasingly pressing workforce challenges.

In May 2021, national public consultation on the potential actions and initiatives provided insight into those the sector considered would provide the greatest support and relief.

National sector stakeholders and government representatives subsequently collaborated to finalise 21 actions, to be implemented over the lifespan of this strategy.

The actions are divided into categories that allow for implementation in the short (within 3 years), medium (within 6 years) and long (within 10 years) term, ensuring there is meaningful progress over the next decade.

‘Shaping Our Future’ is intended to be a roadmap for ongoing collaboration and partnerships between sector stakeholders – governments, service providers, education and training providers, peak associations, regulatory bodies, and educators and teachers and their representative bodies.

A vital factor in the delivery of high-quality education and care is an ongoing, experienced and well qualified workforce.



Overarching Vision

The children's education and care sector has a sustainable, high-quality workforce of teachers and educators that is highly respected and valued by the broader community.

3. Call to action

'Shaping Our Future' represents a ten-year commitment to, and by, the children's education and care sector.

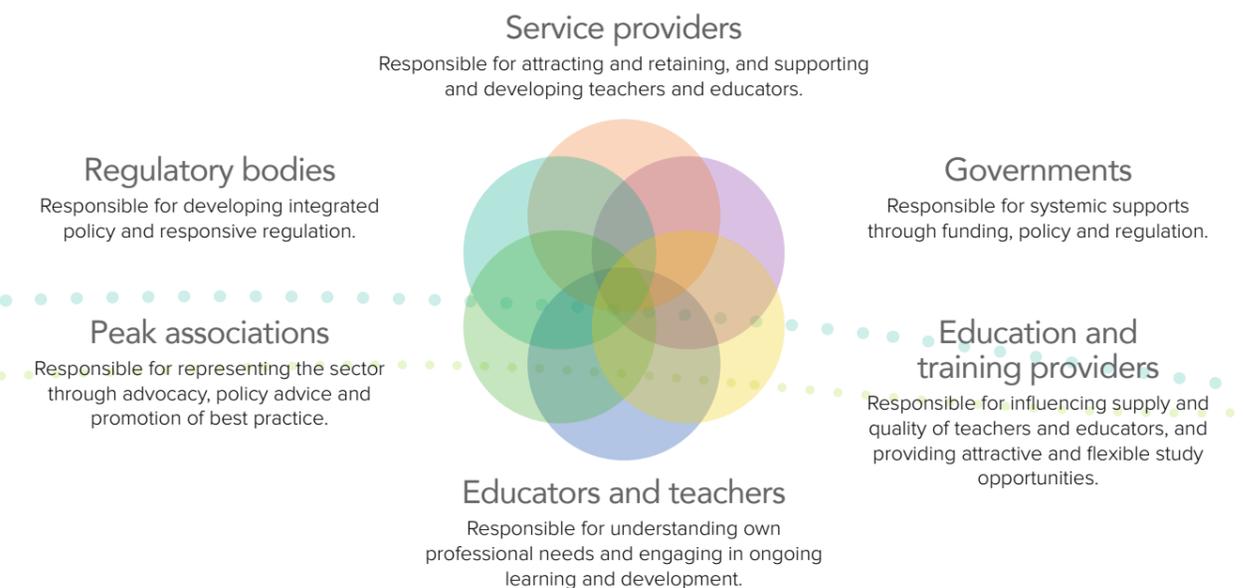
The timeframe is intended to be both ambitious and allow sufficient time to consider and address the complex and longstanding workforce challenges experienced by the sector. Although there has been substantial growth in the number of qualified educators and early childhood teachers, workforce shortfalls are reported across all jurisdictions, particularly in regional and remote areas. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised the critical importance of the children's education and care sector and its workforce.

No single stakeholder group can or should be responsible for all of the actions contained within this strategy. The most effective and sustainable change will come about through collective will and action, and an ongoing commitment to progress.

All stakeholders have a role to play, and interlinking responsibilities, in advancing the goal of a sustainable, highly skilled and professionally valued workforce.



Governments, service providers, peak associations and other sector stakeholders continue to invest in a range of workforce supports and initiatives. This strategy is not intended to duplicate those efforts, but instead provide actions that can lead to national, system level improvements.





The strategy is structured around six interrelated focus areas. Setting the timeframe over the next decade allows actions within each focus area to be pursued over the short (within the next three years), medium (within the next six years) or long (within the next ten years) term.

It also allows for the strategy to be regularly monitored, evaluated and revised as required. The latter is particularly important to ensure that it remains contemporary and reflects any emerging workforce challenges and needs.

The six focus areas are interrelated, in that opportunities and challenges relating to one will often impact on others.

Professional recognition

Workforce professional standing, including pay and conditions, registration, and community perceptions and value.

Data and evidence

Enhanced national data collection, analysis, and strategic discussion.

Qualifications and career pathways

Supporting quality, improving consistency and reducing complexity, as well as enabling flexible career progression.



Summary of Actions 2022–2031

'Shaping Our Future' includes 21 actions (see Chapter 8 for more detail) that will be progressed over three horizons:

- 13 short-term actions, to be progressed within three years
- Seven medium-term actions, to be progressed within six years
- One long-term action, to be progressed within ten years.

Code	Action	Timescale
FA1-1	Investigate options for improving workforce pay and conditions	Short (within 3 years)
FA1-2	Implement early childhood teacher registration in every state and territory	Short (within 3 years)
FA1-3	Enhance mentoring and induction support for new teachers	Short (within 3 years)
FA2-1	Review and develop targeted programs to support studies and placements for specified groups of potential educators and teachers	Short (within 3 years)
FA2-2	Review and streamline existing application and approval processes for overseas trained educators and teachers	Short (within 3 years)
FA2-3	Develop an accessible suite of resources highlighting the careers and career pathways available within the children's education and care sector	Short (within 3 years)
FA3-1	Improve access to core professional development for educators and teachers	Short (within 3 years)
FA3-3	Investigate options for a national professional practice network for educators and teachers	Short (within 3 years)
FA4-1	Investigate options for improved wellbeing supports	Short (within 3 years)
FA4-2	Promote wellbeing resources for educators and teachers	Short (within 3 years)
FA5-3	Continue the ongoing focus on the quality of vocational education and training	Short (within 3 years)
FA6-1	Undertake a national workforce census at least every three years	Short (within 3 years)
FA6-3	Commit to an evaluation plan for the national workforce strategy	Short (within 3 years)

4. Sector profile

Code	Action	Timescale
FA1-4	Promote the importance of a career in children's education and care through a national communications campaign	Medium (within 6 years)
FA1-5	Agree and consistently use contemporary terminology to describe the children's education and care sector, and its workforce	Medium (within 6 years)
FA1-6	Develop options for a national registration system for educators who are not teachers	Medium (within 6 years)
FA3-2	Improve access to an increasing range of micro-credentials for educators and teachers in areas of identified need	Medium (within 6 years)
FA4-3	Initiate and promote research monitoring the wellbeing of educators and teachers	Medium (within 6 years)
FA5-1	Review staffing and qualification requirements under the NQF, with a focus on early childhood teachers and outside school hours care educators	Medium (within 6 years)
FA5-2	Review requirements for early childhood teaching programs under the National Quality Framework	Medium (within 6 years)

Code	Action	Timescale
FA6-2	Develop options for a live national workforce database	Long (within 10 years)

The [National Quality Framework](#) (NQF) was introduced in 2012 as an outcomes focused system of regulation for the children's education and care sector. Under the NQF, service providers are expected to retain a highly skilled workforce through mandatory qualification and staffing requirements.

As at 1 July 2021, state and territory governments regulate around [16,500 children's education and care services](#) as part of the NQF, including around:

- 8,000 long day care services, which typically cater for very young children until they start formal schooling
- 3,000 preschools/kindergartens, which typically cater for children in the year or two years before they start formal schooling
- 500 family day care services, which cater for small groups of young children in an educator's home
- 4,500 outside school hours care services, which typically cater for school aged children before and after they attend school, as well as during the school holidays.

Around [1.5 million children](#) in Australia attend these services, with individual children attending anywhere from a few irregular hours to more than 50 hours every week.

In the region of [200,000 teachers and educators](#) work in the children's education and care sector, with most of the sector workforce being [certificate III and diploma qualified educators](#), but an increasing proportion being degree trained teachers.

The National Skills Commission's five-year [employment projections](#) show that growth in the sector will continue to increase over the five years to November 2025, with employment expected to increase by around 16,000

educators (an 11% increase) and 8,000 teachers (a 17% increase). Projected growth for the sector remains above the national projected employment growth of 7.8% for all occupations.

In the context of [declining enrolments](#) in approved educator and teacher qualifications, [increasing demand](#) for early childhood teachers and a growing shortage of primary school teachers, the children's education and care sector continues to face significant and increasingly urgent workforce challenges.

The very diverse makeup of the sector also adds significant complexity. [For example, as at 1 July 2021:](#)

- there are more than 7,000 providers approved to operate children's education and care services, with more than four-fifths (81%) approved to operate a single service
- just over one-third (34%) of all services are operated by large providers (those that operate more than 25 services), with a similar proportion (36%) operated by single service providers
- for profit providers operate more than two-thirds (68%) of long day care services, three-fifths (60%) of family day care services and almost half (48%) of outside school hours care services, compared to only 1% of preschools/kindergartens
- there are no national qualification requirements for outside school hours care educators, with state and territory requirements varying significantly (New South Wales and Tasmania do not have any qualification requirements for outside school hours care educators)
- Tasmanian preschools/kindergartens and most preschools/kindergartens in Western Australia are out of scope of the NQF, as are some other types of services nationally, such as occasional and in-home care.

Long day care

At a glance – as at 1 July 2021

- ✔ More than **8,000** approved services under the NQF – more than half of all approved services nationally
- 68%** for profit
- 25%** not for profit
- ★ **87%** rated Meeting National Quality Standard or above

Long day care services make up more than half of all services approved under the NQF. Because long day care services typically operate for at least eight hours per day and 48 weeks per year, they employ the majority of educators and teachers in the children's education and care sector. They are also typically larger than preschools and kindergartens (on average, long day care services are approved to educate and care for up to 70 children), often catering for very young children right up until they commence formal schooling. Increasingly, long day care services also provide integrated preschool programs.

There are around 4,500 different approved providers of long day care services under the NQF, with more than 80% of providers approved to operate a single service and a further 10% approved to operate two services. The six largest providers are each approved to operate more than 50 long day care services, with Goodstart (more than 650 services), G8 (more than 450 services) and Affinity (more than 150 services) each approved to operate more than 100 services.

As at 1 July 2021, more than one in ten (11.7%) long day care services have a temporary waiver in place for one or more of the staffing requirements under the NQF, most often the early childhood teacher related requirements. This is one indicator of the significant workforce related challenges

being experienced by long day care service providers.

Two-thirds of long day care services are operated by for profit providers, with a further quarter operated by not for profit providers.

Long day care service providers, particularly many small providers, can find it challenging to attract and retain high quality educators and teachers. There are myriad reasons for this, including the more favourable pay and conditions available in both preschools and kindergartens, and primary schools, as well as challenges associated with attracting and retaining key staff in low and high socioeconomic, and regional and remote areas.

Limited public understanding of the value of play based learning for very young children also has a negative impact, with educators and teachers in long day care services often feeling undervalued and underappreciated for the essential service that they provide.

Case study: Big Roles in Little Lives

In February 2021, members of the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) launched Big Roles in Little Lives, a two-month marketing campaign.

The campaign promoted careers in early childhood education and care to Australians aged 18–34 years, particularly those experiencing unemployment or underemployment due to the impact of COVID-19, as well as those considering a career change.

The campaign reached millions of people through digital marketing, social media and news coverage. While it was not designed to deliver immediate recruitment results, the campaign prompted more than 400 jobseekers to contact ELACCA members, many of which recruited new staff as a result.



“Given the complexity behind the early learning sector’s workforce shortage, there is no instant panacea. Instead it requires a collective effort from the various levels of government through to employers, working together to remove barriers and incentivise prospective educators and teachers to enter the sector. We have a clear opportunity to promote the promising career paths available in the early learning sector to those seeking long-term, rewarding, professional employment.”

**Paul Mondo,
President of Australian
Childcare Alliance**



“Historically, the work of early childhood educators has been undervalued. Professionals working with young children since the 1930s have struggled with the misunderstanding that they are merely caring for young children to allow parents to work when in fact they are providing rich early learning experiences that have lifelong benefits. That misunderstanding is the basis of why pay rates for qualified teachers working in early education settings are typically well below parity with other parts of the education sector.”

**Samantha Page,
CEO of Early Childhood Australia**

“ELACCA members have worked collectively to raise public awareness of careers in early learning and care, and to explain how the work of teachers and educators impacts children’s lives. We need to explain to the general public that this is sophisticated work, based on pedagogy and research, and that it matters to children and their families and to the whole of Australia.”

**Elizabeth Death,
CEO of Early Learning and Care Council
of Australia**



Case study: Achieving workforce sustainability and longevity

A third-generation service provider located in Sydney employs teachers who have been working for her family for more than three decades. This success is down to a range of factors, including giving educators agency in their day and time management, but most importantly cultivating students and flexibility.

The centre remains open to students on practicum placements all year round, offering experience with children from all age groups and from a wide range of backgrounds, including those with additional needs. When working with these students, employment relationships can be formed with an educator who already has a love of learning.

The opportunity to work part-time has also proven very successful in achieving a healthy work/life balance and minimising staff turnover. As has being able to take a ‘mental health day’ and accommodating personal needs.

Case study: Improving pay and conditions

In July 2021, Goodstart Early Learning implemented a new enterprise agreement for its 16,000 staff offering improved pay and conditions. As part of negotiations, Goodstart surveyed its workforce to identify the key issues employees wanted included in the agreement, with improved pay, more non-contact time, rostered days off and paid parental leave featuring heavily.

The new agreement provides for pay rates that meet starting salaries for teachers in government schools and moves educators to pay rates set 5% above the award rate. The agreement also provides additional non-contact time, up to six weeks of paid parental leave, staff discounts at Goodstart services, a trial of rostered days off, more flexible working arrangements, and clear principles to improve rostering practices.

Outside school hours care

At a glance – as at 1 July 2021

- ✔ More than **4,500** approved services under the NQF – more than a quarter of all approved services nationally
- 48%** for profit
- 34%** not for profit
- ★ **82%** rated Meeting National Quality Standard or above

Outside school hours care services make up more than one quarter of all services approved under the NQF. They typically cater for primary school aged children in the hours before and after school, as well as during school holidays. On average, outside school hours care services are approved to educate and care for up to 72 children.

Outside school hours care service providers experience significant workforce challenges due to the split shift structure of the work. This is particularly so in states and territories that have higher staffing and qualification requirements. Unlike other types of children's education and care service, there are no national qualification requirements for outside school hours care services under the NQF, with state and territory based requirements varying significantly.

Most outside school hours care educators work part-time, with university students making up an important part of the overall workforce. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly acute for many outside school hours care service providers, with the loss of many casual and part-time educators, coupled with many parents deciding not to use outside school hours care services while working from home.

There are around 1,500 different approved providers of outside school hours care services under the NQF, with more than 80% of providers

approved to operate a single service. The seven largest providers are each approved to operate more than 100 outside school hours care services, with Camp Australia (around 600 services) and Junior Adventure Group (around 450 services) each approved to operate more than 400 services.

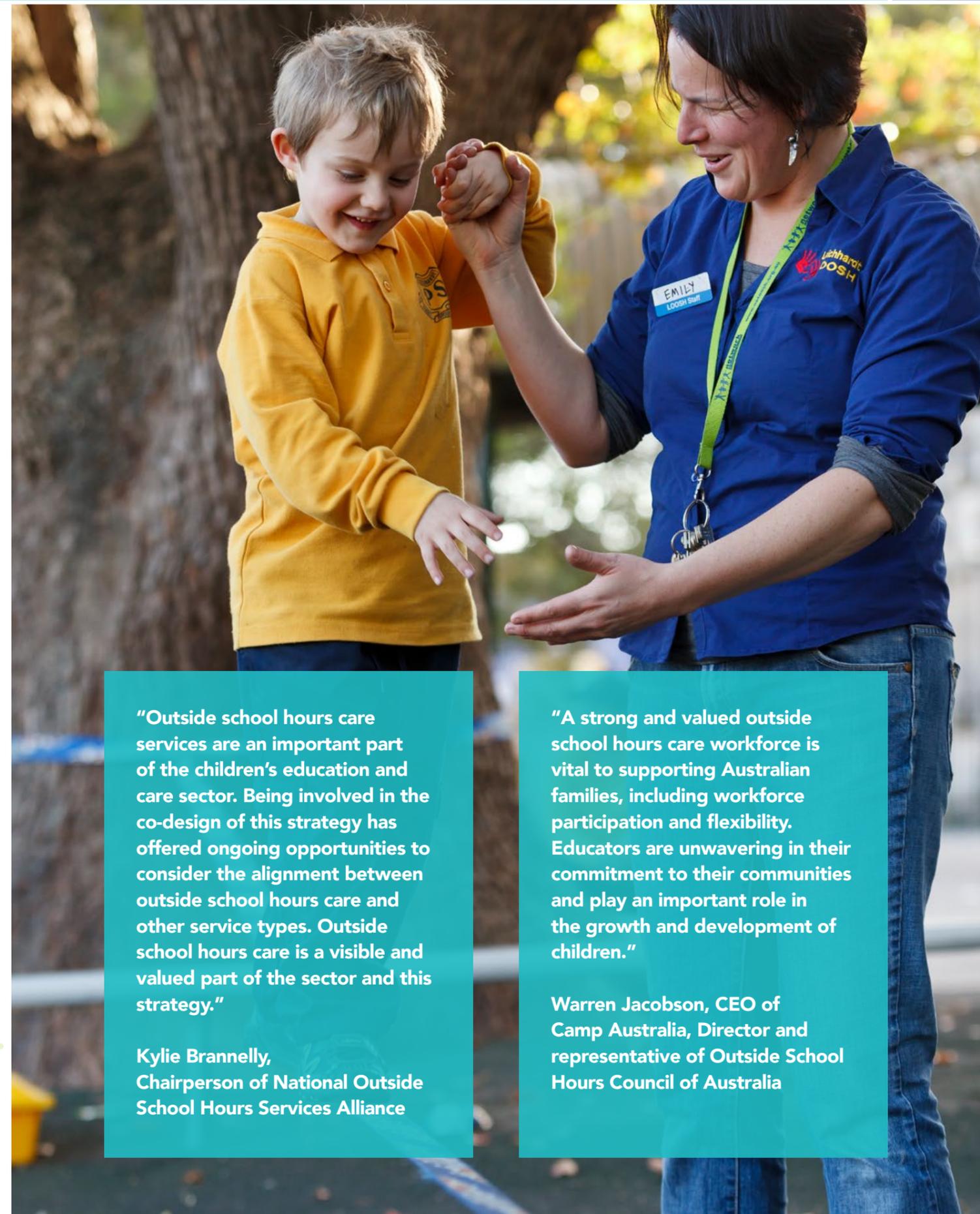
Almost half of outside school hours care services are operated by for profit providers, with more than a third operated by not for profit providers.

The often transient nature of the workforce combined with competition from other parts of the children's education and care sector, particularly the long day care sector where full-time hours are much more readily available, can contribute to very high staff turnover. Some outside school hours care providers are actively looking at business models aimed at improving staff retention, such as permanent part-time contracts, along with financial and other incentives based on performance and tenure.

With most outside school hours care services operating on school sites, the relationship between the school and the service is crucial to ensure high quality children's education and care. When the relationship is strong and collaborative, it is mutually beneficial.

Case study: Career progression and longevity

Expansion in both the number and size of outside school hours care services has resulted in a variety of emerging career paths. The diversity of outside school hours care providers creates an equally diverse need for strong leadership and management skills. The sector now offers more permanent employment opportunities including Service Managers, Regional Managers, Educational Leaders and Senior Educator roles. These enable more educators to consider outside school hours care as a meaningful, rewarding and long-term career.



“Outside school hours care services are an important part of the children’s education and care sector. Being involved in the co-design of this strategy has offered ongoing opportunities to consider the alignment between outside school hours care and other service types. Outside school hours care is a visible and valued part of the sector and this strategy.”

**Kylie Brannelly,
Chairperson of National Outside
School Hours Services Alliance**

“A strong and valued outside school hours care workforce is vital to supporting Australian families, including workforce participation and flexibility. Educators are unwavering in their commitment to their communities and play an important role in the growth and development of children.”

**Warren Jacobson, CEO of
Camp Australia, Director and
representative of Outside School
Hours Council of Australia**

Preschools/Kindergartens

At a glance – as at 1 July 2021

- ✔ More than **3,000** approved services under the NQF – almost a fifth of all approved services nationally
- 60%** not for profit
- 32%** government run
- ★ **95%** rated Meeting National Quality Standard or above

Preschools and kindergartens (the terminology varies by state and territory) make up almost a fifth of all services approved under the NQF. They typically cater for children in the year or two years before formal schooling. On average, preschools/kindergartens are approved to educate and care for up to 39 children, with children tending to attend for fewer hours per week and per year than those children attending long day care services.

Tasmanian preschools/kindergartens and most preschools/kindergartens in Western Australia are outside the scope of the NQF.

While preschool/kindergarten staff generally experience more favorable working conditions than their long day care colleagues, preschool teachers are typically paid less than their counterparts in primary schools, despite often holding the same qualifications.

There are around 1,300 different approved providers of preschools/kindergartens under the NQF, with almost 90% of providers approved to operate a single service. The nine largest providers are each approved to operate more than 50 preschools/kindergartens, with the South Australian Government (approaching 400 services) and C&K (around 150 services)

each approved to operate more than 100 services. The New South Wales, ACT and Northern Territory governments also operate several preschools/kindergartens. Government run preschools/kindergartens tend to experience fewer workforce challenges than other service providers.

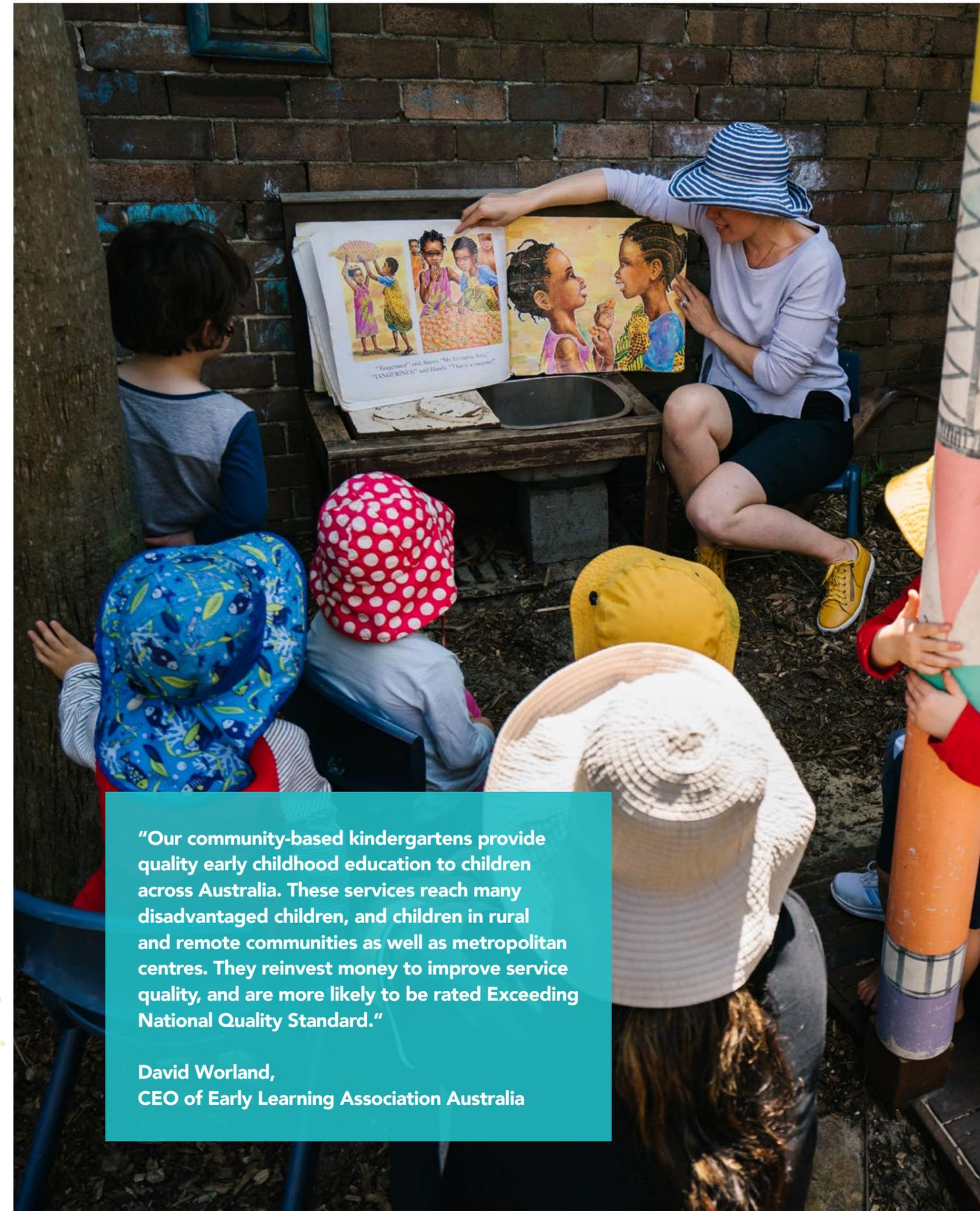
Three-fifths of preschools/kindergartens are operated by not for profit providers, with just under a third operated by governments.

Case study: Improving pay and conditions

In July 2021, the Fair Work Commission approved the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement (VECTEA) 2020. The agreement provides improved pay and conditions for early childhood staff in Victorian kindergartens. Under the agreement, experienced teachers can earn in excess of \$100,000 per annum. All educators and teachers receive above award pay increases.

Key changes in the agreement include increased employer-paid parental leave for primary caregivers, 20 days of paid family and domestic violence leave, and increased paid personal/carers' leave to 15 days for each year of service (pro-rata). The agreement also recognises the need for workforce wellbeing. As a result, staff will have access to a Wellbeing Support Program.

Additional time is also available for educational leaders for planning, and child-free days also support the workforce to plan and deliver quality services.



"Our community-based kindergartens provide quality early childhood education to children across Australia. These services reach many disadvantaged children, and children in rural and remote communities as well as metropolitan centres. They reinvest money to improve service quality, and are more likely to be rated Exceeding National Quality Standard."

**David Worland,
CEO of Early Learning Association Australia**

Family day care

At a glance – as at 1 July 2021

- ✓ Almost **500** approved services under the NQF
- 60%** for profit
- 24%** not for profit
- 16%** government run
- ★ **55%** rated Meeting National Quality Standard or above

Family day care services are made up of individual educators providing education and care to small groups of children, usually in the educator's own home. The educators are engaged by an overarching co-ordination scheme which monitors and provides support.

The family day care business model can offer a range of benefits and opportunities. For example, for families who prefer for their children to be educated and cared for in much smaller groups and in a home-style environment. The model can be flexible and responsive to the needs of local communities, particularly in regional and remote areas where it may not be economically viable to establish a long day care service. The compound benefits to such communities can also be significant, with an increasing number of family day care educators offering an increasing number of opportunities for parents to return to work, which in turn brings with it broader economic and societal benefits.

Family day care services also play a vital role in providing education and care to children outside of the normal operating hours of other service types. This is particularly beneficial to shift, frontline and emergency workers.

However, the family day care sector has experienced significant issues over the lifetime

of the NQF. Nationally, the number of family day care services approved under the NQF rose sharply between 2013 and 2016, from 472 services (as at 1 April 2013) to 1,100 services (as at 1 July 2016). This rapid rise led to a reduction in overall service quality across the family day care sector. Since then, the number of services has reduced to 488 (as at 1 July 2021), with an increase in overall service quality.

A sizeable portion of the services that contributed to the rapid rise may have been approved, but not commenced operation in the required timeframe, with others being operated by providers that had been found to be unsuitable or incapable.

Governments have introduced increased scrutiny and assessment of approval applications to prevent potentially unscrupulous providers entering the sector. Such measures are important, not least of all to protect the reputation of the many high quality family day care service providers in operation.

Case study: Orange City Council, New South Wales

Financial considerations are one of the biggest challenges educators face in setting up a family day care business. In a recent survey thirty eight percent (38%) of educators indicated that cost was the biggest challenge in setting up their business. As part of its Employment and Economic Development Committee initiatives, Orange City Council has committed to assisting prospective educators with start-up costs by providing a one-off payment of \$2000. The funding is expected to boost the local economy and assist with the long waiting list for children needing home-based child care in the region.



"Family day care is an essential element of Australia's early childhood education and care landscape. Not only does the sector enable flexible workforce participation, playing a particularly important role in regional communities, but it also represents an opportunity for greater engagement of Australians in small business - family day care educators currently comprise one of Australia's largest networks of women in small business."

**Andrew Paterson,
CEO of Family Day Care Australia**

5. Sector workforce

The [National Workforce Census](#) is a nationwide survey of children’s education and care services that collects information about service usage and staffing. It provides key information about the profile of the sector workforce, including demographics such as age, gender and diversity, as well as sector experience and service tenure.

According to the most recent [published](#) census, conducted in 2016 (preschools/kindergartens were not included as part of the 2016 census):

- a quarter of the workforce are aged under 25, half are 25 to 44 years old, with the remaining quarter aged 45 and over
- the vast majority (91%) of the workforce identify as female, with the proportion

highest in long day care services (96%) and lowest in outside school hours care services (82%)

- almost two-fifths (39%) of the workforce have over six years of experience in the children’s education and care sector
- almost a quarter (23%) of the workforce have been at their current service for less than one year.

Attracting, developing and retaining a high quality children’s education and care workforce continues to be a significant and increasing challenge across the sector. The challenge is more acute for specific parts of the workforce, notably the regional and remote workforce, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

Regional and remote workforce

Equitable access to quality services can be adversely affected by a range of factors – a lack of available services, the geographic distance required to be travelled, as well as a lack of suitably qualified and experienced educators and teachers.

Regional and remote service providers face a number of specific contextual workforce challenges, including attracting and retaining staff, as well as often limited access to training, professional development and networking opportunities.

To illustrate these challenges, as at 1 July 2021, around 10% of services in outer regional, remote and very remote areas have a temporary waiver in place for one or more of the staffing

requirements under the NQF, compared to around 6% of services in inner regional areas and major cities.

A [2019 survey](#) undertaken by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) highlighted that many education professionals in remote and regional settings experienced difficulties accessing professional learning opportunities, exacerbated by the cost of travel and the required travel time. There are also associated difficulties with accessing backfill, as well as inadequate technology to take advantage of online study opportunities. The frequent lack of experienced mentors also presents a challenge for newly qualified educators and teachers.



“Establishing and growing an early childhood workforce in rural and remote communities requires flexible and innovative thinking, attractive incentives, serious investment and a commitment to long-term initiatives through collaboration with government and organisations.”

**Meg Mendham,
CEO of Community Connections
Solutions Australia**

Case Study: Child Australia and BHP Billiton workforce development program ‘Thriving Futures’, Western Australia and South Australia

In 2020, Child Australia supported by BHP founded Thriving Futures to address the ongoing shortage of child care availability in the Pilbara so that all children can have access to high quality early learning experiences. The program has since expanded to include Roxby Downs in South Australia. Thriving Futures works collaboratively with local communities, government stakeholders and early learning centres to recruit, train and develop a sustainable early learning workforce through scholarships and professional development for locals seeking to upskill or retrain, supported by formal mentoring programs and business development support.

Case Study: Technology to support geographically remote and isolated early career teachers: Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership ‘My Induction app’

Induction is critical to new teachers’ professional growth and development. To support early career teachers, particularly in areas where they may not have access to an on-site mentor, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership developed the ‘My Induction app’. The application provides a platform for geographically or physically isolated teachers to access and engage with resources, activities and advice from mentor teachers.

The app also includes a tracker which allows users to regularly assess and monitor their professional enthusiasm, self-efficacy, stress and support.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and teachers have a crucial role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to grow up strong in their culture. Their presence has also been found to increase attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families at education and care services.

Based on the most recent available national workforce census data, just over two per cent of the children's education and care workforce identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. While the majority of these educators hold at least a certificate III level qualification, they continue on to higher level vocational and degree-level qualifications at a lower rate than their non-Indigenous colleagues.

Case study: The rural and remote early childhood teacher scholarship program (RATEP), Queensland

This community-based teacher education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and pre-service teachers is offered across Queensland through locally based programs, support and co-ordination in community. It uses a combination of on-line and intensive residential learning, and provides ongoing individual study support. Scholarship recipients are offered pathways through the Certificate III and Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, and a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care) delivered in partnership between vocational training provider TAFE Queensland and higher education institute James Cook University.

Potential factors that may impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals studying and completing early childhood education and care qualifications include:

- a lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in tertiary institutions
- the level of cultural competence amongst staff in tertiary institutions
- any assumption that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are the same, including any deficit assumptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander capability
- possible stigma regarding tertiary study in home communities
- a lack of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural commitments and obligations to family and community
- any culturally unsafe professional placement sites.

There are a range of programs that have supported the skills development and qualification attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and educators, from regional and state-wide programs to community and service-level programs and partnerships. Common characteristics that have been identified as important to their success include:

- a strengths-based approach
- a combination of on country, online and on-campus tuition
- local mentors and/or study groups
- face-to-face visits from lecturers/trainers
- financial support for study costs, including food, accommodation and transport
- close involvement of academic staff specialising in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

Linkages with other strategies and policy frameworks

This national workforce strategy supports and complements broader national strategies, such as Closing the Gap and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy. The latter strategy, being developed concurrently with this strategy, will provide a long-term approach to inform future policy and enable stronger whole of government collaboration and coordination, refocus policy investment, and highlight the centrally important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and services have in responding to the needs of children, families and communities, alongside the critical roles of governments and mainstream services.



6. Sector qualifications

The quality of the children’s education and care workforce is critical to the success of the NQF. Higher qualifications are strongly associated with improved child outcomes as appropriately qualified educators and teachers are better able to involve children, stimulate positive interactions, and use a range of strategies to extend and support learning and development.

A fundamental feature of the NQF is the requirement for service providers to retain a highly skilled workforce through mandatory standards for formal qualifications. Since the commencement of the NQF, the proportion of qualified educators and teachers has increased across all service types.

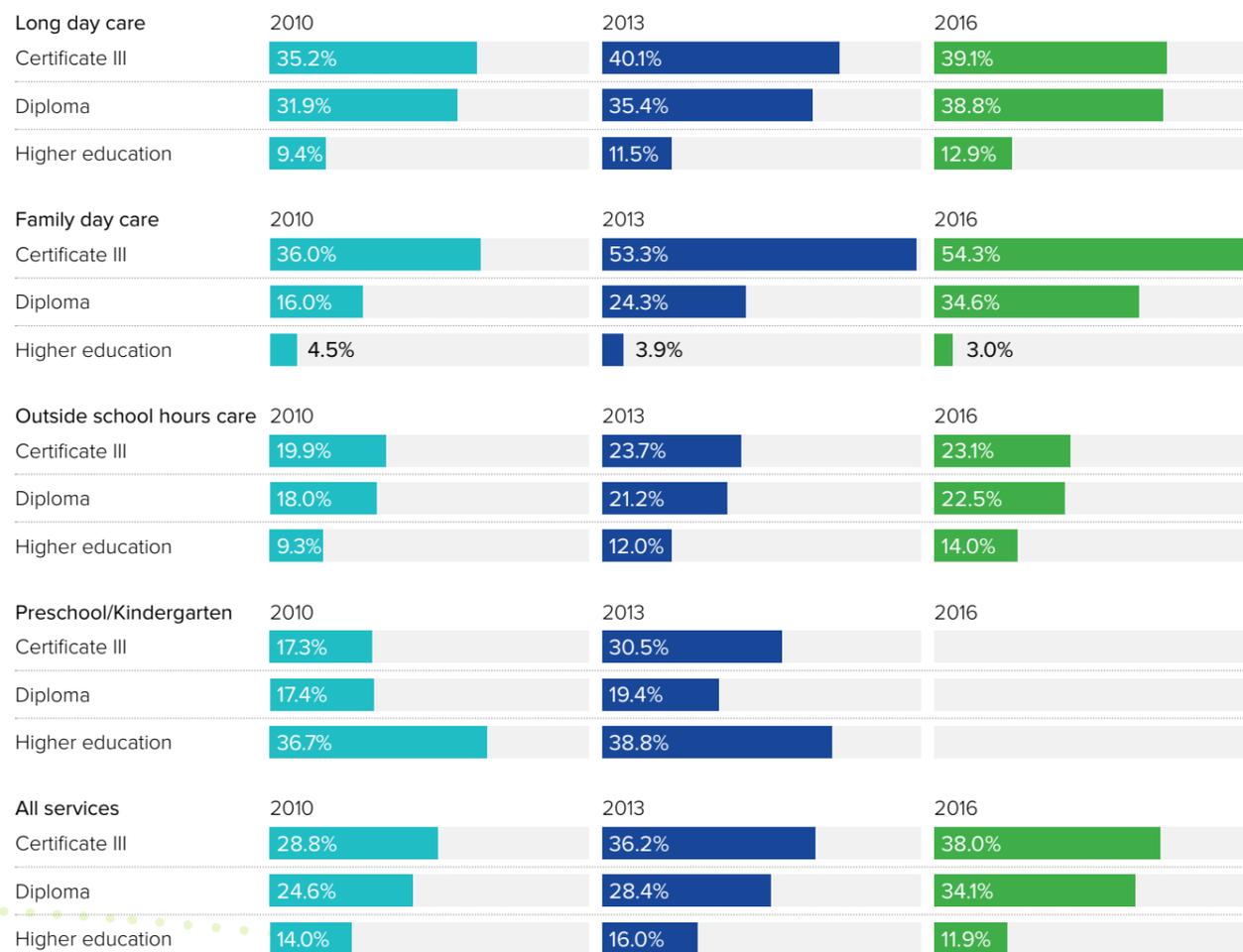


Figure 1: Proportion of qualified educators and teachers (Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census 2010, 2013 and 2016)

Note: Preschools/Kindergartens not included as part of the 2016 National Workforce Census.

Vocational education and training

The majority of educators in the children’s education and care sector hold vocational education and training (VET) level qualifications.

More than 300 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are [approved](#) to deliver the nationally recognised children’s education and care qualifications published in the national training package. Courses range from six months to two years in duration and incorporate a combination of foundational skills and knowledge, with work-place assessment and mandatory work placements.

While some of the approved children’s education and care [vocational education and training qualifications](#) have experienced modest increases in enrolments in recent years, enrolments in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, a crucial qualification for much of the sector due to the qualification requirements under the NQF, have declined by more than 25 per cent.

Accessing a consistent supply of high quality, job ready educators remains a challenge across all service types. Despite a number of reforms over the past five years aimed at improving quality, many service providers continue to report that some vocationally trained educators can lack fundamental skills and knowledge, and may not have realistic expectations about working in children’s education and care.

Inappropriately short duration qualifications, variable RTO quality and insufficient knowledge of the NQF are the most commonly cited reasons for poor quality graduates. Many large providers have either established their own RTO, or established a formal partnership with one or more RTOs, to ensure an ongoing supply of higher quality graduates.

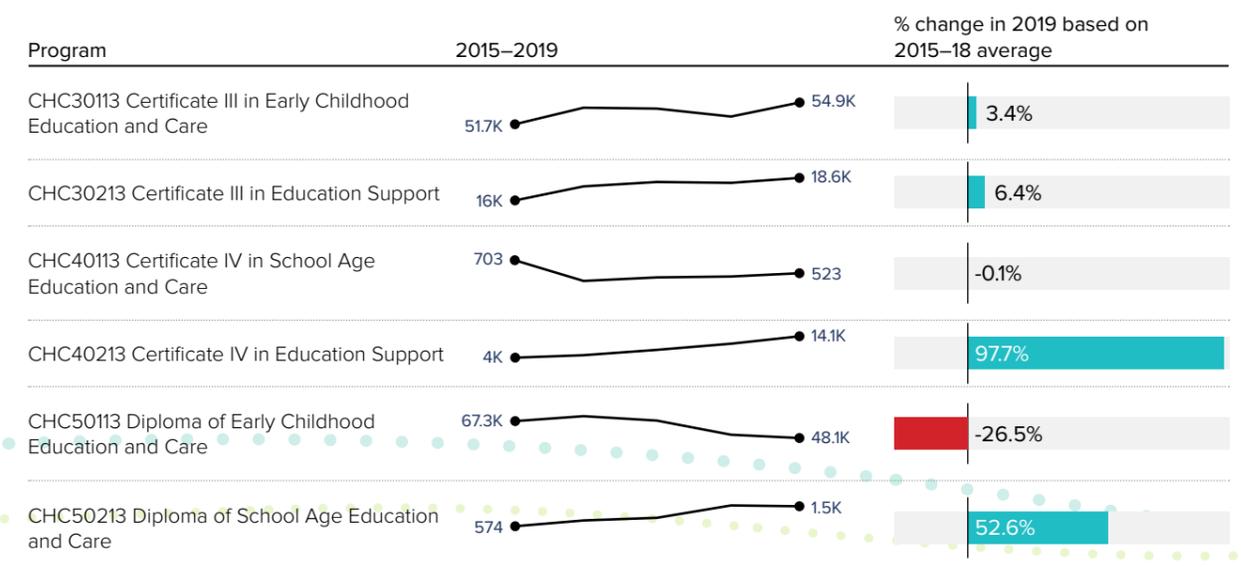


Figure 2: Change in enrolments in approved VET qualifications, 2015–2019 (Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research Total VET Activity data 2019 accessed through VOCSTATS)

Review of the National Training Package

In 2017, the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) commissioned SkillsIQ to review the national children's education and care vocational qualifications.

The new training package was approved by the AISC in February and April 2021.

As part of the review, a number of key changes have been made, including:

- strengthened assessment requirements
- increased work placement hours
- new entry requirements for the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care

In April 2021, the AISC also agreed:

- to the development of resources to support RTOs to undertake Recognition of Prior Learning for students with experience in the sector or other education-related qualifications
- that research be commissioned to examine the impact of the Certificate III entry requirement to the Diploma on Diploma enrolments/completions



"It is critical that educators of our children, in whatever setting, are prepared for this important role through quality vocational education. The VET sector must rise to the challenge and be able to guarantee the quality of its programs for these workers, regardless of the provider they choose."

Craig Robertson, CEO of TAFE Directors Australia

Expert review of the Australian VET sector

In 2018, the Australian Government commissioned an independent, expert review of the VET system. The subsequent report highlighted concerns about whether the current system can deliver the outcomes needed for the Australian economy.

Slow qualification development, complex and confusing funding models, and ongoing quality issues were cited as issues that needed addressing. Careers education, VET in schools and access for disadvantaged learners were also identified as key issues.

Skills Ministers have agreed to progress reforms under the Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform, including enhanced industry engagement, qualifications and quality reforms.



Case study: Developing a certificate III level qualification in outside school hours care

The National Outside School Hours Services Alliance (NOSHSA) together with the Outside School Hours Council of Australia (OSHCA) recognise the importance of developing a highly skilled workforce. In 2020, the opportunity arose to collaborate on the identification of foundation and entry level skills required of outside school hours care educators.

NOSHSA is leading the development of Australia's first Certificate III in Outside School Hours Care. The new accredited course will support educators to obtain the skills and qualifications required for employment as a qualified educator in an outside school hours care service.

Higher education

Initial teacher education (ITE) aims to ensure that graduates start their teaching career with the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to be successful.

The majority of NQF approved early childhood teaching programs cover children aged birth to eight years of age or birth to 12 years of age, qualifying graduates to teach in both early childhood and primary school settings. These programs must meet both ACECQA's requirements and the *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia*:

Attracting, retaining and sustaining early childhood teachers: an ecological conceptualisation of workforce issues and future research directions

A recent study (Fenech et al, 2021) identified that ECT workforce issues in Australia are attributable to a range of interconnected factors that impact the workforce at an individual level as well as more broadly at a system level. This reinforces the importance of looking at workforce issues through a holistic frame that considers action at an individual, organisational and broader sector level.

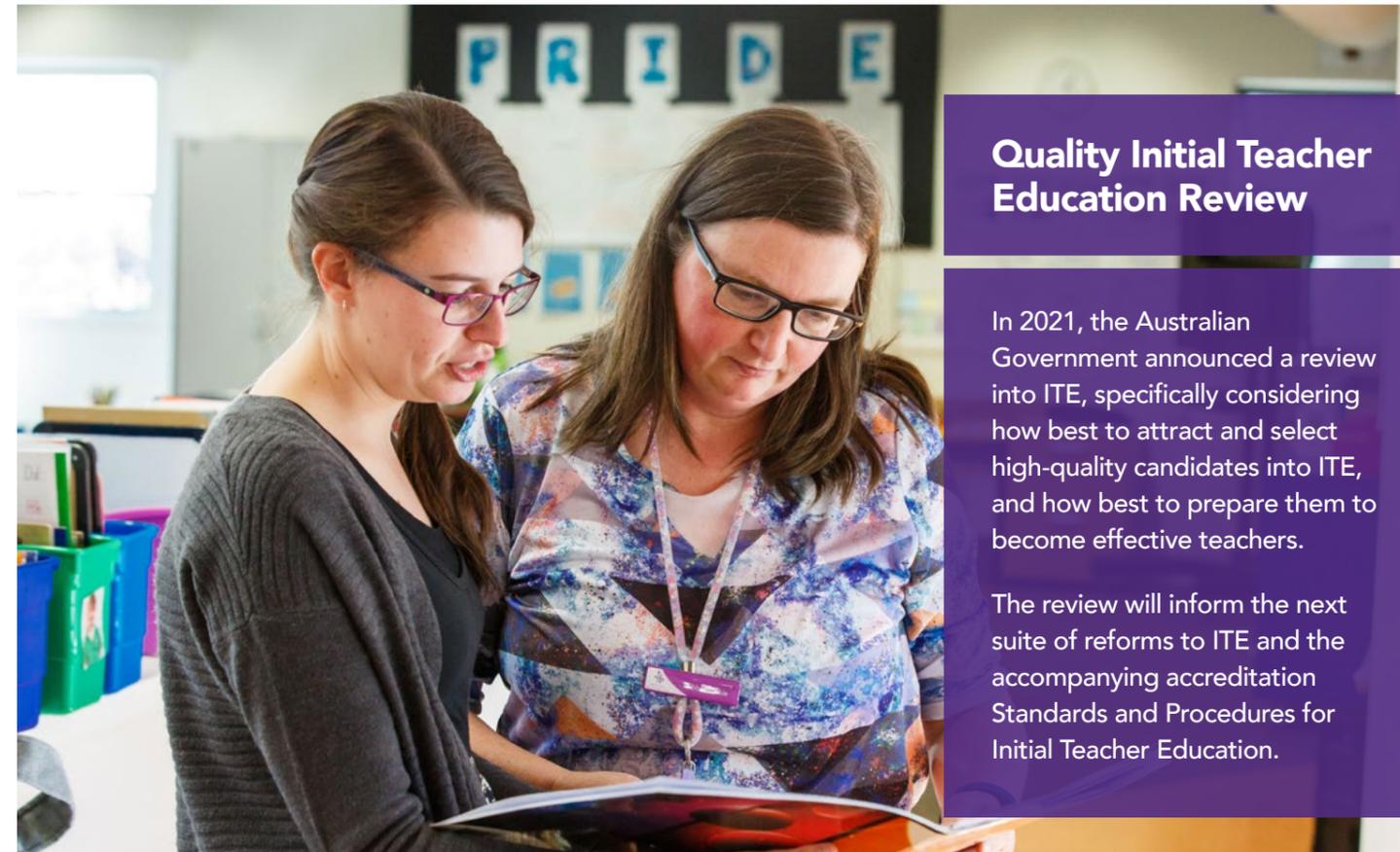
Source: Fenech, M., Wong, S., Boyd, W., Gibson, M., Watt, H., & Richardson, P. (2021, online first). Attracting, retaining and sustaining early childhood teachers: An ecological conceptualisation of workforce issues and future research directions. Australian Educational Researcher. doi:10.1007/s13384-020-00424-6

Standards and Procedures endorsed by Education Ministers and implemented by state and territory teacher regulatory authorities. While there are many complementary aspects to the two sets of requirements, the Standards and Procedures are largely silent on requirements for ITE programs that incorporate practice and pedagogy in non-school settings, such as long day care services.

Early childhood teaching programs that cover children aged birth to five qualify graduates to teach in early childhood settings only, with these programs only needing to meet ACECQA's requirements to be approved under the NQF.

In recent years, reforms to ITE have placed additional requirements on birth to eight and birth to 12 teacher education degrees, most notably increased entry requirements, requirements for an additional specialisation and a standardised teaching performance assessment. While these elements in isolation should not detrimentally impact a program's early childhood components, some higher education providers report increasing pressure to negotiate less early childhood content in order to satisfy the additional requirements and broader fiscal and resourcing constraints.

Higher education providers [report](#) that up to 80% of students express a preference for a career in the school sector, rather than the early childhood sector. Of the students who teach in non-school settings upon graduation, the majority may still continue to actively seek employment in schools.



Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

In 2021, the Australian Government announced a review into ITE, specifically considering how best to attract and select high-quality candidates into ITE, and how best to prepare them to become effective teachers.

The review will inform the next suite of reforms to ITE and the accompanying accreditation Standards and Procedures for Initial Teacher Education.

Case study: Partnerships between higher education and early childhood education and care

Shine Bright EYM, a leading provider of early years education across Central and Northern Victoria, has partnered with Latrobe University to encourage dual degree (primary and early childhood education) students to consider a career in early childhood education.

The initiative involves matching students with mentor teachers, introducing students to centres and children from early in their course, and providing them with enriched professional experience placements. Initial findings suggest that the initiative has encouraged the majority of students to consider a career in early childhood.

Case study: An early childhood teacher working in a standalone community-based long day care service

"I became an early childhood teacher because I understand and value the importance of children's first five years of life. Whilst my university degree means that I am qualified to work in both prior to school settings and the early phase of school, I choose to work in early childhood education and care. We know that children's earliest experiences create the foundation for all future learning, and it is here that I feel I can make the greatest contribution and set children up for success in school and life. My centre values and supports all staff. We are paid above award wages, and have additional paid holiday leave, non-contact time and professional development opportunities. But, the fact remains, I would be paid more to teach young children in a school setting."

Early childhood teacher registration

The registration of early childhood teachers by state and territory teacher regulatory authorities formally recognises their work as part of the broader teaching profession. All state and territory jurisdictions register early childhood teachers where they meet their registration requirements. State and territory regulatory authorities' processes consider a teacher's qualifications to determine the educational setting where they can teach. Currently, four jurisdictions (South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales) require the registration (or accreditation in New South Wales) of all early childhood teachers working in both school and non-school settings. Apart

from in South Australia, this is a relatively new requirement, with Western Australia introducing mandatory registration in December 2012, Victoria in September 2015 and New South Wales in July 2016.

More than three-quarters of the long day care services and preschools/kindergartens approved to operate under the NQF are located in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia, meaning that most early childhood teachers are required to be registered. Teacher registration requirements are underpinned by the National Framework for Teacher Registration with the

associated processes guided by state and territory legislation. The distinct role of early childhood teachers in non-school settings is not fully contextualised.

Early childhood teachers who are required to be registered must maintain their registration and progress their teaching career with reference to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). The APST were developed before the commencement of the NQF and at a time when only one jurisdiction, South Australia, required early childhood teacher registration. They are framed firmly in terms of primary and secondary teaching, with teachers in the school system the intended audience. Some jurisdictions have since developed additional resources to support early childhood teachers in non-school settings to navigate the APST, such as evidence guides. Key challenges still remain, for example, finding early childhood mentors and support for early childhood teachers in non-school settings to progress through the career stages of the APST.

Additionally, there are often high expectations from service providers for newly graduated early childhood teachers to 'hit the ground running'. This is in contrast to the far more structured and supported program of induction and mentoring often available in the school sector. Newly graduated early childhood teachers can also often find themselves in senior positions within a long day care service, planning and developing curriculum for large numbers of children, and dealing with families around complex service management issues, sometimes without sufficient support.

Case study: Support for new and provisionally-registered teachers

Moving from provisional to full registration is an important step in a teacher's career and can be a deeply involved process. It requires focus, skill and a significant investment of time from both the provisionally-registered teacher and their mentor. The Victorian Department of Education and Training provides grants of up to \$2,872 to support this transition. The grants can be used flexibly by services, including to cover the cost of professional learning for mentors, or to employ staff to backfill positions to allow mentors and provisional teachers the time they need to work through the inquiry process.

To ensure experienced early childhood teachers are appropriately qualified and equipped with mentoring skills, the Department has also partnered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching and Cambridge Education to deliver the Effective Mentoring Program. The program provides two-days of professional learning throughout the year to train experienced teachers to become mentors to support provisionally registered teachers at the beginning of their careers and guide them through the Victorian Institute of Teaching's process to become fully registered.



"The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) oversees the processes of teacher accreditation for all NSW teachers, including early childhood teachers. Accreditation provides a structure through which teachers are recognised as meeting the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

It safeguards the integrity and accountability of the teaching profession and strengthens the quality, professionalism and status of teaching."

Merise Bickley, Lead, Early Childhood, NESA

7. Recent actions (2020–21)

Governments, individual service providers and other sector stakeholders have significantly invested in a range of workforce supports since December 2019.

These initiatives, in combination with the agreed actions over the next decade (see Chapter 8), form the overarching response to sector workforce issues. The agreed actions will complement and build upon the existing initiatives, including by leveraging and targeting specific supports.

The existing initiatives include:

- tertiary scholarships
- funded traineeships
- grants programs
- financial incentives for students and employers
- professional learning programs
- targeted support for teachers located in regional and remote areas
- mental health and wellbeing programs
- communication campaigns to raise the profile of the sector
- new university, vocational education and training, and short course opportunities
- initiatives to connect job seekers with potential employers
- census and data collection activities
- professional learning opportunities
- mentoring programs
- incentives to upskill, such as employer sponsored scholarships
- offering above award pay and conditions.

Governments

Following Education Ministers' endorsement to develop a new national workforce strategy in December 2019, governments continue to support the children's education and care sector through a range of initiatives and actions. These are summarised below.

Australian Government

The Australian Government funds a range of initiatives to support the children's education and care workforce including funding to support providers to attract and recruit educators and teachers. Recruitment assistance is available to employers from government funded employment services providers, such as jobactive, Transition to Work and Disability Employment Services. These providers can identify and pre-screen job seekers and organise pre-employment checks. Job seekers can be supported to build the skills they need through pre-employment programs such as Launch into Work or through the Local Jobs Program. Wage subsidies may be available for some new starters referred by an employment services Provider. Employers can advertise their vacancies for free on government run websites such as jobsearch.gov.au and the Jobs Hub. The Workforce Contact Centre is also available to help employers navigate the range of services available to them.

The Australian Government is also contributing to the training and upskilling of vocationally trained educators. The Government recently announced additional investment in the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidy over four years from 2020-21 to provide additional support to employers who take on an Australian Apprentice completing a Certificate II or higher qualification, including in the children education and care sector, who has a training contract that is formally approved by the state training authority.



In addition, the Australian Government recently committed additional resources to extend and expand the JobTrainer Fund until December 2022, providing access to free or low fee vocational children's education and care qualifications for young people and job seekers.

For prospective early childhood teachers, the Australian Government is providing additional university funding under the Job-ready Graduates Package to create more university places and provide additional support for students in regional and remote Australia. The package will ensure better university funding arrangements, a better integrated tertiary system, targeted investments in national priorities, improved transparency and accountability, and more opportunities for regional, remote and Indigenous students.

The Australian Government supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at university through the Indigenous Student Success program (ISSP). The Commonwealth provides around \$72 million in supplementary funding to 40 universities to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students get into and through university. Through ISSP universities provide scholarships, tutorial assistance, mentoring and other cultural appropriate support to help students complete their studies.

The Australian Government is also funding initiatives to support the wellbeing of the children's education and care workforce. 'The Mental Health in Education initiative, BeYou, led by Beyond Blue, in partnership with Early Childhood Australia and Headspace, provides educators and teachers with training and resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of children, families and their colleagues.

Australian Capital Territory

In 2020, the ACT Government released [Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT](#), a ten-year plan for early childhood education and care in the ACT and part of the Territory's [Future of Education Strategy](#).

Workforce underpins one of the four foundation streams of the strategy, recognising the need to support the ongoing professionalism of educators and teachers, as well as their contributions to children's lives. The strategy identifies immediate challenges such as improving coaching, mentoring and training, and improving pathways into the profession, as well as opportunities to contribute to systemic change at a national level through the national workforce strategy.

New South Wales

The NSW Government continues to work to ensure that support under the [Early Childhood Education Workforce Strategy 2018–2022](#) remains responsive in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The key focus areas of the strategy include promotion of the role of early childhood educators and teachers as a critical part of a child's educational journey, and early education as an attractive and meaningful career; supporting the workforce to obtain qualifications and experience to prepare them for the workplace; building the skills and capability of the workforce by supporting educators and teachers to participate in professional development; and, supporting all service types to embed sustainable practices that contribute to workforce stability and reduce the impact of staff turnover.

Under the NSW ECE Workforce Strategy, the NSW Government has provided additional support for early childhood educators and teachers through the provision of scholarships, professional development and financial support for educators upgrading their qualifications. The NSW Department of Education is currently working to identify best practice approaches and consulting with the sector on new initiatives

and improvements to existing programs for all service types, including Outside School Hours Care providers, for implementation throughout 2021 and 2022.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory's [Starting Early for a Better Future](#) plans to shape decision making about children over the next ten years. It focuses on the shared responsibility between governments, non-government organisations and community. The plan details four key themes, one of which is a Quality Early Childhood Development System. Targets under this theme include:

- Increasing the number of qualified professionals in the early childhood development workforce, including the proportion of Aboriginal people in the workforce
- Developing a workforce action plan, providing innovative workforce development opportunities.

Queensland

The Queensland Government has funded a range of early childhood workforce initiatives and programs across Queensland and in targeted priority locations. In 2020-21, grant funding was provided directly to NQF approved early childhood education and care services to support the qualification progression and attainment of educators working at their service.

Through the Department of Education, Queensland has provided further workforce support to the sector in priority locations such as:

- Mentoring ECTs pilot program to provide Early Childhood Teachers with access to a mentor to support them in their transition to full registration in two education regions;
- Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) – a community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education program offered in Queensland's remote, rural and urban areas; and
- Residential blocks to provide students living in rural and remote areas access to training.

In addition, the Queensland Government will be providing the sector with free online workforce planning modules, focused on identifying and implementing local and contextualised workforce planning strategies in their services and has worked with the sector to develop an Early Childhood Workforce Careers Campaign targeted at attraction, retention, diversity and sustainability.

South Australia

The South Australian Government continues to deliver ongoing support to reflect global knowledge and contemporary evidence-informed teaching and learning practices for preschool settings, through strengthened professional development programs and supporting resources. There are commitments in the [Early Learning Strategy 2021 to 2031: All Young Children Thriving and Learning](#) to developing high-quality educational preschool programs, as well as the skills of, and support for, preschool leaders and educators.

As one of the largest providers of preschool education, the Department for Education funds a number of employer-level initiatives, workforce programs and career development pathways for its early years teacher workforce. For example:

- The Early Career Teacher Development program - supports beginning teachers to move from the graduate to the proficient career stage of the teacher standards and achieve full teacher registration. The program involves a range of induction resources, professional learning modules, workshops and ongoing mentoring. Funding is provided to preschools to release early career teachers to participate and to support their mentoring.
- The Future Leaders Program - identifies future leadership potential and capability, and facilitates a targeted development focus for emerging leaders. The program supports four cohorts of aspiring leaders each year, with one cohort specifically dedicated to early childhood leadership.

- Orbis – the Department for Education's approach to professional learning – delivers capability building professional learning programs for preschool leaders and teachers. The current programs focus on literacy and numeracy learning for young children, through a blended approach including face to face intensives, coaching and applied learning in preschool settings.

The Department for Education is developing a department wide [workforce strategy](#) to support the long-term attraction and ongoing development of high quality teachers, leaders and support staff.

The South Australian Government has also invested in the development of skills in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector through a range of Vocational Education and Training (VET) approaches including:

- Subsidised Training - since 2018-19 to June 2021, the South Australian Government has subsidised training to support around 7,500 people to access skills in the ECEC sector, including qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care, School Age Education and Care and Education Support.
- Courses/Micro-credentials - In addition to qualifications required by the ECEC sector, the South Australian Government subsidises a range of short courses in areas including Early Childhood Education and Care, Education Support Work, Lead and Mentor and Peer Leadership. For example, the Introduction to Early Childhood Skills Set - Care Practices is an introductory short course to working with young children in a childcare setting. The course covers some essential skills in baby, toddler and childcare which will count towards a future qualification.

■ Skilling South Australia (SSA) Projects - The South Australian Government has partnered with ECEC employers to co-design six projects, including projects to upskill existing workers in the Diploma of ECEC and entry level pathways through pre-traineeships and the Certificate III in ECEC. Project activity has included pre-traineeship activities,

non-accredited units of training and units of competency from the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and upskilling for existing workers with additional non-accredited training in specialised topics sought by employers, Diploma in Early Childhood and Care traineeships and upskilling for supervisors and team leaders to increase their management, leadership and mentoring techniques.

Tasmania

In Tasmania, the [Early Years and School Age Care Sector Workforce Plan 2017–2020](#) is managed by the Early Childhood Australia Tasmanian Branch. To date, the plan has implemented a number of initiatives, including an 'Innovation Network', exploring current issues and trends within the Tasmanian workforce, and an 'Innovation Hub', an online hub with associated resources to support the implementation of the plan. Consultation has occurred with the education and care sector to formulate a refocused Workforce Strategy for 2021 and beyond, building on the established initiatives. The revised Strategy is due for release shortly.

Victoria

The Victorian Government has implemented a range of initiatives to support and expand the workforce ahead of the statewide roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in 2022. The Government has funded an extensive \$209.9 million workforce package to attract and retain staff and support high-quality practice, including financial incentives and scholarships to support study and work in early childhood, accelerated and supported pathways, a targeted communications campaign and early-career supports.

In April 2021, the Victorian Government published [Victoria's early childhood workforce strategy](#) to-date and has been consulting with the sector on next steps, including roles and responsibilities, innovation and ideas for new partnerships to support and grow the early childhood workforce.

Western Australia

The Western Australian Department of Communities continues to work with the sector and the Western Australian Department of Education to help build an evidence base for future workforce decisions.

From 2020 to 2025, the Western Australian Government has significantly reduced the course fees for the Certificate III and Diploma Early Childhood Education and Care qualifications with the aim of increasing the supply of early childhood educators.

As part of the Western Australian Government's commitment to improving access to education and care services in the regions, a \$1 million grants program will be provided to regional local governments to support them in attracting and retaining early childhood educators.

The Department of Education has implemented the Professional Practice Project (PPP) to increase the quality, supply of and support for pre-service teachers (PSTs), with a focus on regional and remote public schools and Science, Technology, English and Mathematics education. PPP offers a range of incentives, including funding for PSTs and provides coordination between schools, universities and the Department of Education.

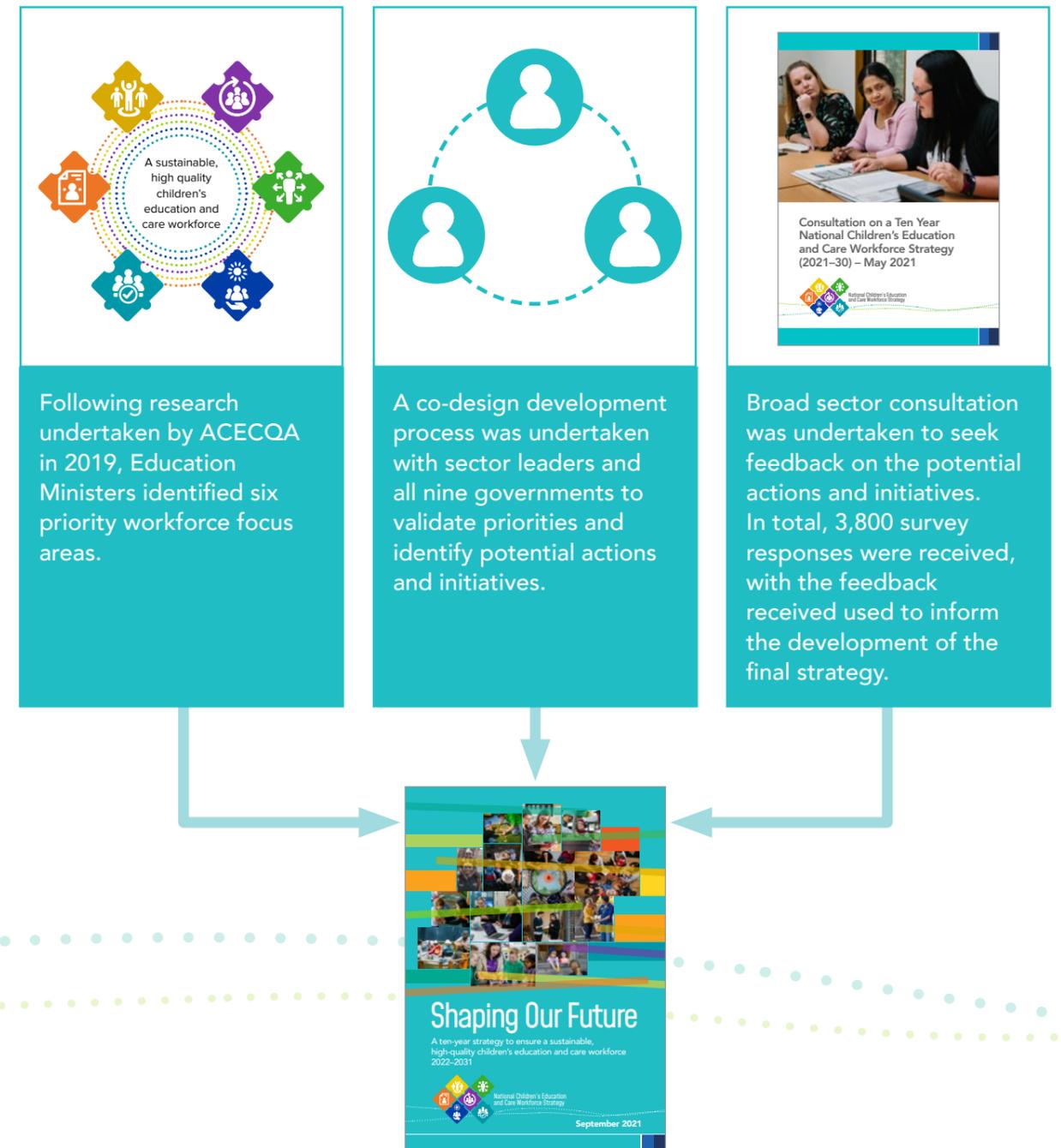
The Department of Education's Remote Connection Program is a retention and workforce mobility strategy to enable teachers and school leaders to experience living and working in the Remote Teaching Service (RTS). The program aims to increase the number of applications from experienced educators to improve outcomes for students in remote communities.

The Department of Education, as per the School Education Act Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2019, provides incentive allowances for teachers and administrators employed in schools that form part of the Country Teaching Program and the RTS. Also, the Public Service CSA General Agreement 2019 provides payment of an allowance per annum for employees located in 13 remote locations.

8. Actions for the next decade (2022–31)

The following actions have been identified through extensive consultations and co-design discussions with national sector stakeholders and government representatives, and validated through public consultation.

In combination with recent actions (see Chapter 7), they form the overarching response to sector workforce issues.



Focus area 1 – Professional recognition



Professional recognition

Workforce professional standing, including pay and conditions, registration, and community perceptions and value.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA1-1 Investigate options for improving workforce pay and conditions	Short (within three years)	95% of respondents strongly support (76%) or support (19%) [n=3,349] Ranked as the most important of all 21 actions [n=2,192]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparatively lower pay and less favourable conditions contribute to attrition of qualified educators and teachers to other sectors, notably the school sector There are key structural barriers that impact the sector's ability to provide flexibility in relation to base remuneration and opportunities for career progression Some service providers have demonstrated their ability to retain highly trained educators and teachers, which offers the opportunity for sharing best practice and key learnings 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Commission research to explore and identify the structural barriers to, and strategies for, improving pay and conditions in the sector</p> <p>The research will include benchmarking and comparative analysis across the sector, as well as with the school sector. It will also include case studies demonstrating where employers have been able to retain highly trained educators and teachers.</p> <p>The research will review and consider successful large scale industrial agreements, for example the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement (VECTEA), as well as their applicability to be implemented on a national scale.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA1-2 Implement early childhood teacher registration in every state and territory	Short (within three years)	85% of respondents strongly support (49%) or support (36%) [n=3,349]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher registration lifts the professional identity of early childhood teachers. State and territory legislated registration processes differ across the country, and the supporting frameworks are not inclusive of all aspects of early childhood teaching practice, particularly for those working in non-school settings 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Review jurisdiction specific requirements to enable the registration of all early childhood teachers, including those working in non-school settings</p> <p>The review will have regard to the Automatic Mutual Recognition (AMR) deregulation initiative to improve occupational mobility. It will also consider how the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers can reflect teaching practice in early childhood contexts and how early childhood teachers working in non-school settings will be enabled to progress through the career stages of the Professional Standards.</p>		



Professional recognition

Workforce professional standing, including pay and conditions, registration, and community perceptions and value.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA1-3 Enhance mentoring and induction support for new teachers	Short (within three years)	89% of respondents strongly support (53%) or support (36%) [n=3,349]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing professional development and career progression are key elements in improving professional recognition ■ Newly qualified teachers may predominantly have theoretical, rather than practical, skills and experience ■ The nature of the sector makes it more difficult for new graduates to access experienced mentor teachers 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Consider the appropriateness of national early career teacher mentoring and induction support, following a review of existing supports that are available at jurisdictional and local levels</p> <p>The review will consider how effective and successful mentoring and induction support, particularly for early childhood teachers working in non-school settings, could be consistently implemented.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA1-4 Promote the importance of a career in children's education and care through a national communications campaign	Medium (within six years)	88% of respondents strongly support (54%) or support (34%) [n=3,349] Ranked as the second most important of all 21 actions [n=2,192]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a clear link between the children's education and care sector's ability to attract high quality educators and teachers, and broader community perceptions of the sector and its value ■ The children's education and care sector has made a very significant contribution throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic, and will continue to play a significant role in the post COVID-19 economic recovery of Australia ■ It is also important to ensure that the vital role that high quality early childhood education and care plays in children's future educational and developmental outcomes is not devalued or overshadowed 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Coordinate a multi-channel, multi-year communications program initially promoting the societal value of children's education and care, followed by promoting careers within the sector</p> <p>The campaign will be jointly owned by a cross section of sector stakeholders, reflecting the shared responsibility and commitment to the future of the workforce.</p> <p>Prior to the national communications campaign, previous initiatives will be reviewed and evaluated, including the recent Big Roles in Little Lives campaign by ELACCA and the Best Start, Best Life campaign by the Victorian Government, with the key learnings from these to be considered.</p> <p>The timing and staging of the campaign will also be carefully considered, as well as how it complements the other actions contained within this strategy.</p>		



Professional recognition

Workforce professional standing, including pay and conditions, registration, and community perceptions and value.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA1-5 Agree and consistently use contemporary terminology to describe the children's education and care sector, and its workforce	Medium (within six years)	91% of respondents strongly support (66%) or support (25%) [n=3,349] Ranked as the third most important of all 21 actions [n=2,192]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Broader community understanding and value of children's education and care impacts the professional identity of the workforce ■ Terms such as 'childcare' and 'childminding' reinforce outdated views about the role of early learning and diminish the professional worth of educators and teachers 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Agree and adopt contemporary, unified language to describe the children's education and care sector</p> <p>Language to be considered includes 'teachers and educators', as well as deciding upon 'children's education and care', 'early learning and care' or 'early childhood education and care'.</p> <p>The agreed language will be used in all future national communications campaigns, government programs and projects.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA1-6 Develop options for a national registration system for educators who are not teachers	Medium (within six years)	87% of respondents strongly support (51%) or support (36%) [n=3,349]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Just as teacher registration is lifting the professional recognition of early childhood teachers and supporting them to undertake in-service professional development each year, a national registration system for educators may also achieve the same desirable outcomes ■ A national registration system has the potential to provide real time workforce data, as well as benefits for employers, such as the need to undertake individual checks of qualifications 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Commission research to identify options for a national registration system for certificate III and diploma level educators, including considering any appropriate international examples of successful registration systems in similar sectors</p> <p>The research will also consider the appropriate scope for the potential new system, including professional development requirements and supports, as well as the ongoing cost and burden.</p>		

Focus area 2 – Attraction and retention



Attraction and retention

Workforce diversity, including attracting the right people into the sector, and valuing and retaining high calibre staff.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA2-1 Review and develop targeted programs to support studies and placements for specified groups of potential educators and teachers	Short (within three years)	83% of respondents strongly support (36%) or support (47%) [n=2,689]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce diversity is important, both to raise the professional profile of the sector and to deliver quality outcomes for all children Targeted strategies are required to overcome barriers to entry for certain groups of prospective educators and teachers (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, and regional and remote communities) Children’s education and care service providers can find navigating various government workforce related initiatives, incentives and opportunities challenging. This can impact the effectiveness of initiatives where they are most needed 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Based on a review of existing and previous targeted programs, engage in strategic partnerships to support target students to enrol in and complete children’s education and care qualifications</p> <p>The two initial national priorities for targeted workforce programs are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the regional and remote workforce.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to how different key component parts of the sector (long day care; outside school hours care; preschools/kindergartens; family day care) can best support the priorities.</p> <p>Consideration also to be given to appropriate incentives for target students to remain within the sector.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA2-2 Review and streamline existing application and approval processes for overseas trained educators and teachers	Short (within three years)	59% of respondents strongly support (22%) or support (37%), with 31% neither supporting nor opposing [n=2,689]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas trained educators and, in particular, overseas trained teachers often need to negotiate multiple complex assessment and approval processes before they are able to commence work As Australia recovers from the impact of COVID-19, it is important to ensure that there is an attractive and accessible pathway into the country for overseas trained educators and teachers, and international students 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Review existing migration processes and opportunities for overseas trained entrants to the children’s education and care sector</p> <p>The review will consider existing skills assessment processes to ensure quality, reduce duplication and streamline the process for recognition of overseas qualifications.</p> <p>It will also consider skilled migration visa options and opportunities, including skilled migration occupation lists and requirements for international students, for prospective educators and teachers in the children’s education and care sector.</p>		



Attraction and retention

Workforce diversity, including attracting the right people into the sector, and valuing and retaining high calibre staff.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA2-3 Develop an accessible suite of resources highlighting the careers and career pathways available within the children’s education and care sector	Short (within three years)	84% of respondents strongly support (37%) or support (47%) [n=2,689]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is currently a lack of contemporary information about clear, attainable career opportunities for both current and prospective staff There is also often the need to canvass various websites and information sources, rather than having a ‘one stop shop’ for careers and career pathways advice 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Develop dedicated resources regarding employment and career opportunities in the children’s education and care sector and its key component parts, and promote using existing Australian Government websites</p> <p>Resources will be developed for prospective job seekers, employers and employment services providers.</p> <p>They will also be complemented by the YourCareer and MySkills websites, JobTrainer fund and National Careers Institute.</p>		

Focus area 3 – Leadership and capability



Leadership and capability

Workforce culture, including professional development, leadership and mentoring, and management capability.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA3-1 Improve access to core professional development for educators and teachers	Short (within three years)	92% of respondents strongly support (58%) or support (34%) [n=2,488]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality induction processes and ongoing professional development opportunities are highly valued by educators and teachers Particularly in light of enduring recruitment and retention challenges, having an online suite of accessible training available to all educators and teachers would provide ongoing benefits, particularly for new entrants to the sector 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Develop an evolving suite of eLearning modules, including an ‘Induction to the NQF’ training package, with new entrants to the sector identified as a primary audience</p> <p>The modules will be refined and added to over time, with future priorities for topics to be gleaned from educators, teachers and other sector stakeholders.</p>		



Leadership and capability

Workforce culture, including professional development, leadership and mentoring, and management capability.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA3-2 Improve access to an increasing range of micro-credentials for educators and teachers in areas of identified need	Medium (within six years)	90% of respondents strongly support (56%) or support (34%) [n=2,488] Ranked as the fifth most important of all 21 actions [n=2,192]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Micro-credentials (mini-qualifications that demonstrate skills, knowledge or experience in a given subject area or capability) offer a range of opportunities beyond traditional higher education, and vocational education and training Micro-credentials allow targeted upskilling in specific priority areas 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Develop and implement a priority list of micro-credentials for educators and teachers in recognised areas of demand and need</p> <p>Likely priority topics include leadership and management capability, educational leadership, cultural competency and safety, conflict resolution and challenging behaviours, information and communications technology, dealing with childhood trauma, and educating and caring for children with additional needs.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA3-3 Investigate options for a national professional practice network for educators and teachers	Short (within three years)	90% of respondents strongly support (52%) or support (38%) [n=2,488]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators, teachers and service leaders, particularly those in regional and remote areas, can feel isolated and would benefit from access to a professional practice network to enhance their practice 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Consider the appropriateness of a national professional practice network, following a review of existing networks that are available at jurisdictional and local levels</p> <p>The review will consider how effective and successful existing networks are in order to inform the options for, and potential value of, introducing a national network.</p>		

Focus area 4 – Wellbeing



Wellbeing

Helping service providers to have strong mental health and wellbeing supports for their workforce.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA4-1 Investigate options for improved wellbeing supports	Short (within three years)	94% of respondents strongly support (62%) or support (32%) [n=2,374] Ranked as the fourth most important of all 21 actions [n=2,192]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers and management have clear responsibilities in terms of workplace health and safety, as well as expectations in terms of promoting a positive workplace environment that safeguards staff wellbeing The ability for educators and teachers to access an employee assistance program is very likely to depend on the size of their employer, with large providers having the economies of scale to provide comprehensive access, while single service providers are unlikely to be able to provide access 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Consider the viability of a range of potential wellbeing supports, notably a base level employee assistance program for educators and teachers that currently do not have access to one</p> <p>Other opportunities include providing resources aimed at service providers that highlight practices that can lead to a strong mental health and wellbeing culture, and encouraging providers to provide protected time for educators and teachers to access supports wherever possible.</p> <p>The viability of providing subsidised training, for example mental health first aid training, for all children’s education and care services will also be considered.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA4-2 Promote wellbeing resources for educators and teachers	Short (within three years)	90% of respondents strongly support (48%) or support (42%) [n=2,374]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and educators undertake professional, demanding and complex work every day Many educators and teachers feel stressed by the daily demands of their roles and responsibilities, are concerned about burnout, and encounter significant challenges in finding the time to access wellbeing supports Educators’ and teachers’ wellbeing is an increasingly urgent priority, exacerbated by the impact of being essential frontline workers during recent natural disasters and national emergencies 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Continue to deliver the Be You initiative, with service providers committing to provide protected time for educators and teachers to access the initiative wherever possible</p> <p>The Be You resources will continue to be reviewed and updated based on feedback, including ensuring their applicability to all children’s education and care service types.</p>		



Wellbeing

Helping service providers to have strong mental health and wellbeing supports for their workforce.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA4-3 Initiate and promote research monitoring the wellbeing of educators and teachers	Medium (within six years)	90% of respondents strongly support (54%) or support (36%) [n=2,374]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particularly given the recent impact of bushfires, flooding and COVID-19, there is a pressing need for contemporary longitudinal research on the wellbeing of educators and teachers 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Commission research monitoring the wellbeing of educators and teachers over time, with the research to be promoted and supported by a cross section of sector stakeholders</p> <p>The research will investigate factors that influence educator and teacher wellbeing over time, as well as consider an appropriate framework for wellbeing, including cultural safety.</p>		



Qualifications and career pathways

Supporting quality, improving consistency and reducing complexity, as well as enabling flexible career progression.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA5-1 Review staffing and qualification requirements under the NQF, with a focus on early childhood teachers and outside school hours care educators	Medium (within six years)	85% of respondents strongly support (48%) or support (37%) [n=2,295]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite increased national consistency over time since the introduction of the National Quality Framework in 2012, there remain aspects of the staffing and qualifications requirements that differ significantly by jurisdiction The most stark differences relate to outside school hours care educator qualification requirements and early childhood teacher requirements The 2024 NQF Review offers an opportunity for a thorough review of the staffing and qualification requirements under the NQF, with a focus on improving consistency, supporting quality and reducing complexity 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Review transitional workforce regulations, recently extended until the end of 2023 in six jurisdictions, and include a specific focus on a review of the staffing and qualification requirements in the National Regulations as part of the 2024 NQF Review</p> <p>The 2024 NQF Review will consider options for appropriate and consistent national qualification requirements for outside school hours care educators, as well as consistent operational requirements for early childhood teachers across all jurisdictions.</p> <p>The focus of the thorough review will be on improving consistency, supporting quality and reducing complexity, with the overarching emphasis being maintaining the importance of a highly qualified, experienced and sustainable sector workforce.</p>		



Qualifications and career pathways

Supporting quality, improving consistency and reducing complexity, as well as enabling flexible career progression.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA5-2 Review requirements for early childhood teaching programs under the National Quality Framework	Medium (within six years)	86% of respondents strongly support (46%) or support (40%) [n=2,295]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ACECQA's requirements for early childhood teaching programs are regularly reviewed and updated. However, there is an opportunity to undertake a specific review focussing on the contemporary and emerging skills and knowledge needed for early childhood teaching, as well as innovative design and delivery approaches ■ The review will also consider the outcomes of the recently announced national review of initial teacher education programs 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Undertake a review of early childhood teaching program requirements</p> <p>The focus of the review will be on ensuring early childhood teaching program requirements address the contemporary and emerging skills and knowledge needed for early childhood teaching, as well as innovative design and delivery approaches.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA5-3 Continue the ongoing focus on the quality of vocational education and training	Short (within three years)	88% of respondents strongly support (47%) or support (41%) [n=2,295]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The 2019 Joyce Review (Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System) made 71 recommendations around six key priorities, including strengthening quality assurance, speeding up qualification development, and better careers information ■ The Australian Government is committed to strengthening vocational education and training through its \$585.3 million Skills Package Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow ■ In August 2020, all governments endorsed a roadmap of reform across three main streams - strengthening industry engagement; improving qualifications; and high quality delivery 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Ensure that intergovernmental, education and training provider, and sector stakeholder representatives provide ongoing advice and feedback regarding vocational education and training reform, including the implementation of the revised children's education and care national training package</p> <p>Stakeholders will be given ongoing opportunities to provide advice and feedback regarding the quality of vocational education and training.</p>		

Focus area 6 – Data and evidence



Data and evidence

Enhanced national data collection, analysis, and strategic discussion.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA6-1 Undertake a national workforce census at least every three years	Short (within three years)	67% of respondents strongly support (28%) or support (39%), with 28% neither supporting nor opposing [n=2,221]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality data and evidence about workforce supply and demand enables informed policy making and strategic planning Consistent feedback from sector stakeholders over a number of years indicates that the national workforce census is valued and supported, but in need of being reviewed and updated regularly, undertaken more frequently, and shared and used much more widely 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Review the implementation and outcomes of the 2021 workforce census and involve sector stakeholders throughout the future development and delivery cycles</p> <p>Each future census cycle will start with a review and update of the census questionnaire, including its scope and specific focus areas, as well as considering opportunities for linking different datasets.</p> <p>Future census information will be gathered in such a way to ensure that the anonymised results can be shared and used widely, and easily interpreted and analysed. There will also be the opportunity to regularly refine census questions, drop outdated content and include new content as appropriate.</p> <p>To fully realise the benefits of a comprehensive and contemporary national workforce census, any jurisdiction and sector stakeholder specific workforce censuses should complement, enhance and/or follow up on issues and trends identified through the national census wherever possible, resulting in efficiency gains and burden reductions.</p>		

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA6-2 Develop options for a live national workforce database	Long (within 10 years)	66% of respondents strongly support (27%) or support (39%), with 31% neither supporting nor opposing [n=2,221]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data and evidence concerning the children's education and care sector workforce is often not contemporary or comprehensive A more ambitious alternative to a regular national workforce census would be to develop a live national workforce database containing real time data However, the ongoing cost and burden would need to be considered against the added value created by such a database The scope of the data to be included in the database would also need to be carefully considered 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Consult on options for a live national workforce database, including its potential scope and implementation</p> <p>To ensure that a live national workforce database was comprehensive, accurate and contemporary, it is likely that there would need to be new requirements placed upon children's education and care service providers through the Education and Care Services National Regulations in relation to data entry and accuracy. This issue could be included as part of the 2024 NQF Review process.</p> <p>The scope of the proposed database would also need to be carefully considered, including whether it would capture information about all educators and teachers, and how it would interact with other sources of data (for example the Australian Teacher Workforce Dataset).</p>		

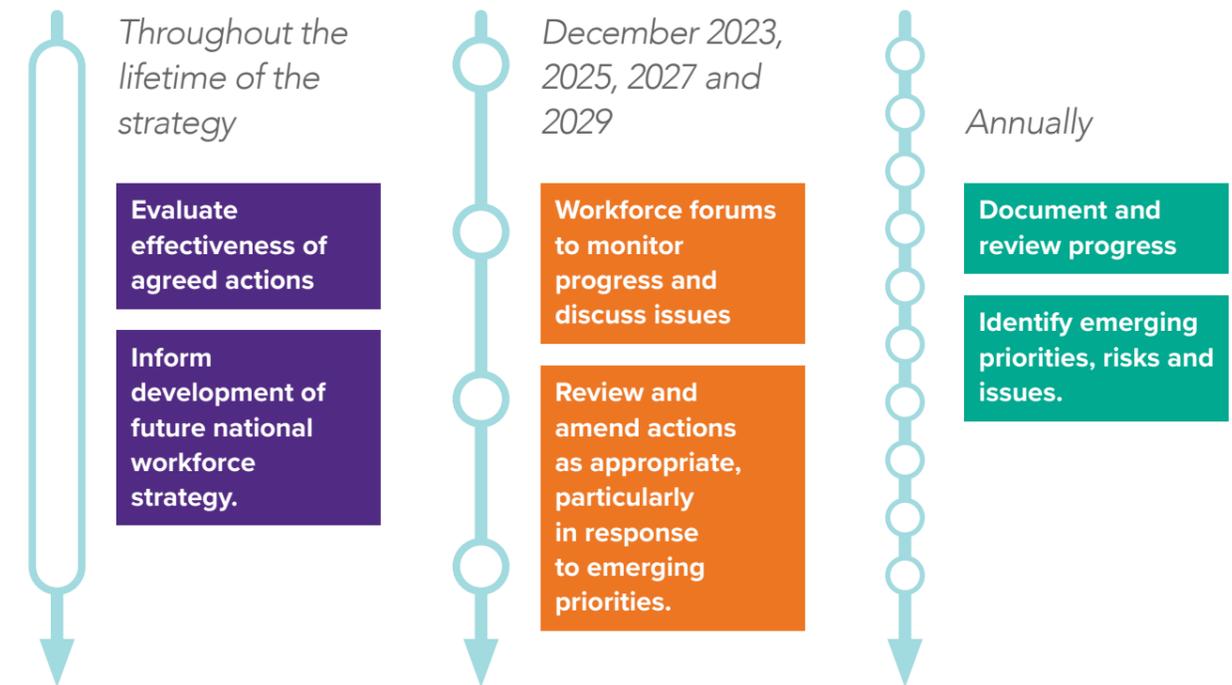


Data and evidence

Enhanced national data collection, analysis, and strategic discussion.

Action	Timescale	Summary of consultation survey results
FA6-3 Commit to an evaluation plan for the national workforce strategy	Short (within three years)	75% of respondents strongly support (34%) or support (41%), with 22% neither supporting nor opposing [n=2,221]
Rationale		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A shortcoming of some previous workforce related strategies, actions and initiatives has been the lack of a formal review and evaluation mechanism, which has meant there has often been limited information available about relative efficacy and impact on workforce supply ■ A long-term strategy should have an in-built mechanism for monitoring, reviewing, updating and evaluating ■ Just as with the development of the strategy, all sector stakeholders have an important ongoing role to play in the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy 		
What needs to be done?		
<p>Develop and maintain an evaluation plan, including undertaking biennial stakeholder forums (December 2023, 2025, 2027 and 2029) to discuss workforce related issues and priorities, and monitor the ten-year national workforce strategy</p> <p>The evaluation plan will consider each of the 21 actions in detail, including stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and any appropriate goals, objectives and outcome measures.</p>		

9. Monitoring and evaluation



The implementation of the strategy will be overseen through an evaluation plan aligned to the six focus areas and 21 agreed actions.

The progress of the strategy will be monitored through an annual review of the evaluation plan, including analysis of workforce data and evidence, and regular cross-sector consultative activities that provide an opportunity to discuss workforce related issues and priorities.

The evaluation plan will be provided to Education Ministers on a regular basis to inform ongoing implementation activities and future priorities. Updates regarding the progress of the workforce strategy and evaluation plan will also be regularly published.

In keeping with the overarching vision of this strategy, progress made against the 21 agreed actions, including their relative effectiveness, will be monitored and evaluated in the context of having a sustainable, high-quality workforce of teachers and educators that is highly respected and valued by the broader community.

To complement this strategy, ACECQA has published an [online workforce snapshot](#) that brings together a range of different data sets to provide a sector workforce profile, as well as indicators relating to workforce demand and supply. The snapshot will be updated and refreshed regularly based on data availability.

Thank you to ACECQA, Family Day Care Australia and the Northern Territory Department of Education for providing the photographs contained within this document.

Shaping Our Future

A ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high-quality children's education and care workforce
2022–2031



National Children's Education
and Care Workforce Strategy