Shaping our Future

Focus Area 1-5: Agree and consistently use contemporary terminology to describe the children's education and care sector and its workforce.

NSW Department of Education

The importance of contemporary terminology

"Everyone has a part to play in building recognition for the importance of ECEC. By choosing words carefully, you can show that you value the ECEC sector and respect educators' professionalism. You can also be a role model for others to do the same.

Words may not seem important, but many words used to talk about ECEC have a long history of being used to diminish the importance of what educators do. When people talk about 'child care' or 'looking after little kids', the reinforce outdated views that undervalue ECEC practice. We all need to work together to change these views.

The use of consistent, affirmative, inclusive and sector-accepted language about ECEC supports the professionalism of the sector."

Early Childhood Australia, *'How to Talk About ECEC'*

Aim and scope of Focus Area 1-5

The action aims to identify **contemporary terminology** which **uplifts the value** of the work performed by the **ECEC sector and** that is embraced by the workforce and broader public.
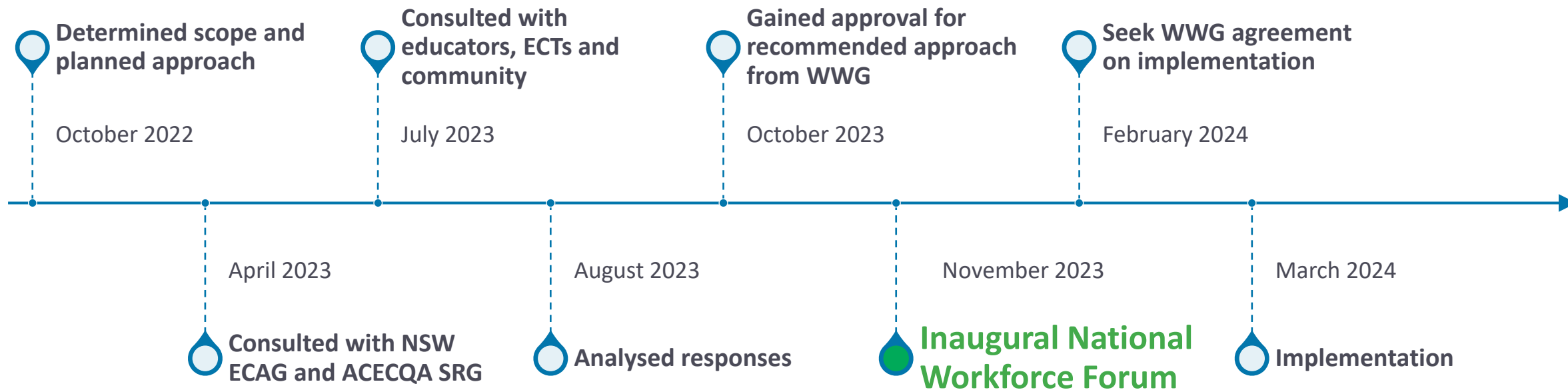
In Scope

- Review of common terminology used to describe the sector.
- Identification of contemporary language to embrace and outdated terminology to avoid.

Out of scope

- Specific language to describe children, their culture or circumstances (for instance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from multicultural communities or children with a disability).
- Terminology included in the NQF, such as 'educational leader', 'approved provider', or defining the term 'quality'.

Project timeline

Determined scope and planned approach

October 2022

Consulted with educators, ECTs and community

July 2023

Gained approval for recommended approach from WWG

October 2023

Seek WWG agreement on implementation

February 2024

April 2023

Consulted with NSW ECAG and ACECQA SRG

August 2023

Analysed responses

November 2023

Inaugural National Workforce Forum

March 2024

Implementation

Consultations have included:

- **NSW Early Childhood Policy Group (ECAG)** and **ACECQA Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG)** to understand the impacts of outdated language and preferred terminology.

- **Target groups** through Victorian-led market research to inform Focus Area 1-4 (national communications program) to understand different audiences' understanding and reaction to terminology used to describe the sector.

- **Australian governments** to undertake an environmental scan of terminology employed in government websites, policies etc.

- **Early Childhood Australia (ECA)** to understand consultations underpinning the development of the 'How to Talk About ECEC' guide.

What we have heard so far

Category	Term	Feedback
✕ **Terms to avoid**	• Childcare • Worker / Carer	• Diminishes the role to a 'care' function only • Does not reflect the educational aspect of the role • Low skilled associations
✓ **Terms to use**	• Early Childhood Education (ECE) • Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	• ECE has strong associations with professionalism due to 'education' component • ECEC broadly accepted as terminology to describe the sector as a whole
⇄ **Contrasting views**	• Early learning • Care	• Early learning reflects the educational component, but sounds commercial/transactional and does not reflect the relational aspect • Care is an essential function of the role but on its own may have low-skill associations

Early Childhood Australia 'How to Talk About ECEC' terminology guide

The ECA 'How to talk about ECEC' guide is underpinned by significant sector consultation.

The guide has been well received and is widely accepted as the key terminology resource for the sector.

The findings from our consultations reflect the recommended terminology in the guide.

Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Shifting the terminology

REPLACE	EMBRACE
Kids	Children
Child care worker	Educator or early childhood teacher
Centre	Service or setting
Day care	Early childhood service
Industry	Sector/profession

Proposed next steps

- **ECA's 'How to Talk about ECEC'** adopted as the guiding terminology resource for Australian Governments.

- Development of **accompanying communication resources** to share the ECA terminology guide with media outlets, ministerial offices, families, and ECEC services.

- Establish a process for **ongoing review** to ensure that terminology remains consistent and contemporary, and to **measure impact**.

Thank you