

FACT SHEET



Resolving the educator shortage crisis

THE ISSUE

The Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) sector has reached a national workforce crisis. There are simply **not enough entrants** into the sector to meet the demand and to meet our regulatory requirements for the child-educator ratios. Right now, we urgently need at least 10,000 well-trained, competent early childhood educators and Early Childhood Teachers to fill vacancies.

This workforce shortage is impacting equitable family access to their ECEC service. This in turn, has **significant implications** for the current staff shortages we are experiencing - as many workers are forced to isolate from exposure to the highly infectious Omicron variant - and also for the mid-long term economic recovery of the country.

The situation has been further amplified by the impacts of COVID-19, the growing demand for places for children, the growing issue of **new centre builds** and population sizes in **rural and remote areas**.

Sourcing Early Childhood Teachers (ECT) is an increasingly urgent challenge **Australia-wide**.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) predicts that Australia will need around **14,200 new Early Childhood Educators and Teachers by 2023**¹. Meanwhile the recent National Skills Commission's Skills Priority List² indicates a national shortage of both child care workers and Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers, with strong and moderate future demands respectively.

A recent report³ produced by CELA (Community Early Learning Australia), ELAA (Early Learning Association Australia) and CCC (Community Child Care Association) suggests over 4,500 vacancies (minimum) were advertised in the first six months of 2021 and nearly half of all vacancies remained unfilled in early 2021.

Across the board, there is a shortage of Cert III, Diploma and degree-qualified ECEC candidates⁴.

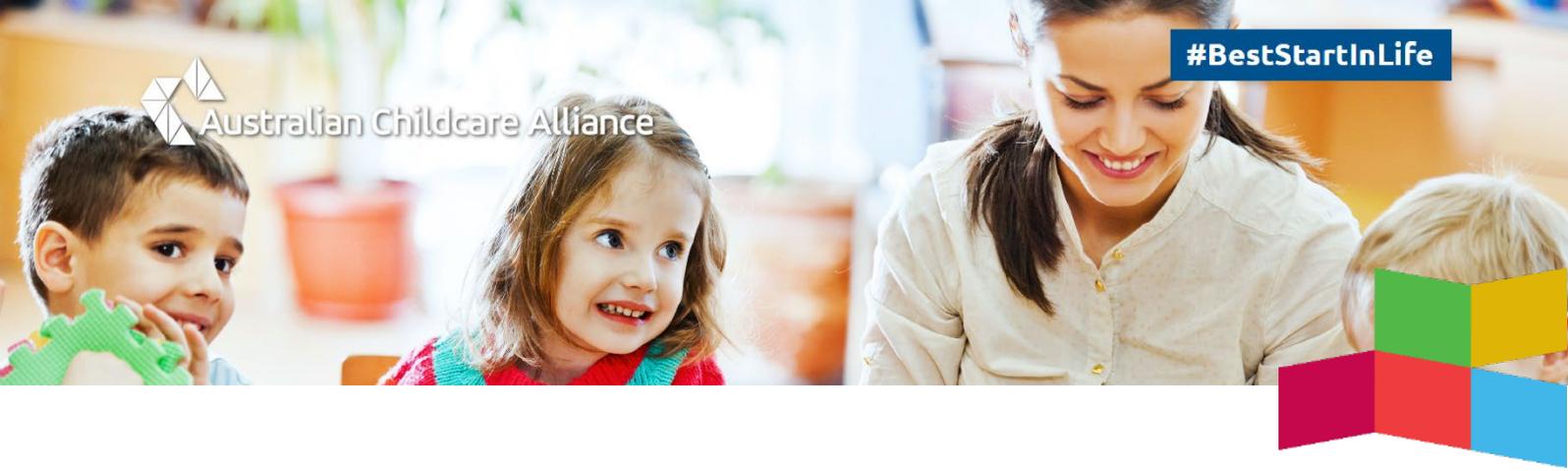
This problem will **continue to grow** unless effectively addressed. Without early childhood educators, **Australians families risk missing out on early learning (child care) places for their children** as strict educator-child ratios must be adhered to, regardless of a workforce shortage.

¹ Labour Market Information Portal - <https://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/EmploymentProjections>

² 2021 Skills Priority List, National Skills Commission - <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/2021-skills-priority-list>

³ Investing in our future: Growing the education and care workforce – Nov 2021 - <https://bit.ly/CELAWorkforceReportNov2021>

⁴ Jobs In Demand – Dashboard as at 3 July - <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/resource-centre/latest-data>



SOLUTIONS

We call on all political parties to commit to this “Early Childhood Educator Solutions Policy”

Employer-focused

We call on all parties to:

- Continue to incentivise Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services to hire more trainees.

Employee-focused

We call on all parties to:

- Provide the funding and resources to run an immediate **national education campaign** to promote the career path of working in the sector beyond the entry role and encourage unemployed Australians to consider working in the early learning sector through an entry-level Traineeship or to enrol in an Early Childhood Teaching Degree. Such a campaign would require a national call to action which puts jobseekers directly in touch with the application process. It should also outline the workplace benefits incentives recommended above, including the discounted access to early learning(childcare) for their own children
- Maximise workplace benefits for educators in the early learning sector.
This includes:
 - allowing for a fringe benefits tax exemption for service providers in the context of providing fringe benefits to employees such as salary sacrifice in relation to cars, electronic devices, etc. This initiative could help attract jobseekers to the sector by lowering their income tax threshold and therefore boosting their income.
- Provide a funding program that allows all educators to take time away from their duties to undertake the Be You training modules to assist them to identify children at risk of mental illness and support the wellbeing of the children (and their families) in their care (including funding to backfill the staff while training).

Qualifications, training & study measures

We call on all parties to:

- Immediately provide the funding and resources to create a nationally available fast-track degree program to rapidly upskill early childhood educators to the degree qualification level of early childhood teacher in a period of **18 months**, instead of the usual three years.
- Ensure funding for vocational ECEC courses appropriately meets the requirements of the mandated course load, which is substantially higher than most other certificate and diploma courses.
- Incentivise applicants for the Bachelor of Education (Birth to Five Years) by further reducing the cost to students.
- Incentivise educators to be trained and retained in regional and remote Australia through a conditional waiver of HECS-HELP fees. This can be tested through a two-year pilot project across key areas of need.

With over **360,000 families** in our care, ACA believes all of Australia’s children have the right to the **best start in life**.