

Early Learning Workforce Strategy

RATIONALE

- Sourcing Early Childhood Teachers (ECT) is a significant problem Australia-wide, with undersupply, exacerbated by the requirement for an additional ECT for centres with over 60 children from 2020 and also varying levels of quality.
- This will be compounded by the NQF requirement for a second Early Childhood Teacher in kindergarten/preschool programs in 2020, along with a growing need for quality candidates to address a likely increase in 3 year old participation.
- There is a clear need to ensure a steady flow of qualified, job-ready candidates into the sector.
- It is vitally important that the quality of candidates and their job readiness at all qualification levels is consistent and at a high level.

CURRENT SITUATION

- The early learning sector is already struggling to meet the demand for well trained, competent Early Childhood Teachers and early childhood educators, with not enough entrants into the sector to meet the demand.
- There is currently no Federal Government early learning workforce strategy to support the growing demand of vocationally trained educators and tertiary trained teachers.

- There is currently **no Federal Government funding** in place to support the professional development of Australia's early childhood educators and teachers.
- The former Long Day Care Professional Development Program (LDCPDP), which concluded on 30 June 2017, allowed early learning service providers to meet their specific professional development needs to support the National Quality Framework, adhere to the National Quality Standard and deliver the Early Years Learning Framework or other approved learning framework.
- The Federal Department of Employment Report (April 2017)¹⁵ and the NSW Department of Education's Early Childhood Education Workforce Review (October 2017)¹⁶ have both confirmed labour shortages for both Certificate III, Diploma and Degree qualified educators and teachers.
- There is a need for a **nationally consistent approach** to how each state jurisdiction recognises **qualified early childhood teachers**. Each state has its own independent Teacher Registration Board, which do not necessarily align with ACECQA qualification approvals. This means that when a qualified teacher relocates inter-state, their degree qualification may not be recognised by the new state's Teacher Registration Board. Whilst service providers can apply for waivers, these are provided on a case by case basis and require substantial paperwork from both the candidate and the service provider. These waivers also render affected service providers to be non-compliant to the NQF, thereby potentially downgrading their services' ratings.

¹⁵ Federal Department of Employment Report (April 2017), https://docs.jobs.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/241111earlychildhtchrnsw_2.pdf

¹⁶ NSW Department of Education's Early Childhood Education Workforce Review (October 2017), <https://education.nsw.gov.au/media/eccec/pdf-documents/2017/Workforce-Literature-Review.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on all parties to support:

- Government funding allocated to a national early learning workforce strategy that aims to ensure an adequate supply of quality early childhood educators and teachers for the sector. This must include:
 - Government policy that will deliver a consistent level of high quality vocational training courses with the required outcomes, to ensure that Australian young children receive the best quality early childhood education and care, particularly in the lead up to the 2020 change in NQF requirements regarding early childhood teachers and the potential for the universal kindergarten/preschool programs to be extended to 3 year olds.
 - Government funding for the professional development of early childhood P11 – eds and teachers i.e. a program similar in concept to the LDCPDP with the same distribution model that allows early learning service providers to determine the most appropriate training needs for the staff in their own services.
- That each state Teacher Registration Board should adopt the ACECQA qualification approvals for inter-state and overseas qualifications regarding **qualified early childhood teachers**, to create a **nationally consistent approach**.

