

# Investing in Australia's ECEC workforce: Addressing critical shortage of qualified job candidates

Sourcing high quality, qualified educators (Certificate III and Diploma) and Early Childhood Teachers (degree-qualified) is an **ongoing problem among early learning service providers Australia-wide.**

The situation has been further amplified:

- by the growing issue of new centre builds, particularly in geographic areas that are already experiencing low occupancy and struggling to find appropriately qualified, job-ready staff
- by the 2020 NQF requirement for an additional Early Childhood Teachers (ECT) for centres with over 60 children plus an increase in three year old participation.
- by the current **COVID-19 climate** - many experienced educators in the older age cohorts left the sector as their age put them in the high-risk category.
- in **rural and remote areas**, where population size is an additional barrier to finding suitable candidates.



The early learning sector is **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.

**Across the board, there is a shortage of Cert III, Diploma and degree-qualified ECEC candidates<sup>1</sup>.**

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) predicts that Australia will need around **39,000 additional Early Childhood Teachers by 2023**. Recent modelling indicates that **one third** of all preschools may lack a qualified teacher in the next four years if nothing changes<sup>2</sup>.

This problem will **continue to grow** unless addressed.

<sup>1</sup> Jobs In Demand – Dashboard as at 3 July - <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/resource-centre/latest-data>

<sup>2</sup> Progressing a national approach to the children's education and care workforce – ACECQA Workforce report November 2019 - [https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/ChildrensEducationandCareNationalWorkforceStrategy\\_0.pdf](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/ChildrensEducationandCareNationalWorkforceStrategy_0.pdf)

## THE SOLUTION

We call on the Australian Government to:

- Immediately create or silo **5,000 funded trainee/apprentice wage subsidy places** in the early learning sector, targeting school leavers, unemployed and people wanting to reskill into a new career. They will be trained for a role that cannot be offshored, thus offering long-term career prospects in a stable sector of the economy.
- 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.
- Provide HECS/HELP relief for diploma trained ECEs who choose to upskill to an Early Childhood Teaching Degree.
- Immediately provide the funding and resources to create a 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.
- Provide the funding and resources to run an immediate national education campaign to encourage unemployed Australians to consider working in the early learning sector through an entry-level Traineeship. Such a campaign would require a national **call to action** which put them in touch with a centralised application process.
- Create incentives for Australians on JobSeeker to take on ECEC courses and to become job-ready candidates.
  - This should include a national advertising campaign to boost interest in the early learning sector and help align jobseekers with immediate employment opportunities.
  - We also recommend that each jurisdiction provides an exemption period of three months prior to the need for enrolment in a relevant ECEC qualification.
- Provide a funding program to develop the systems approach needed to implement evidence-based training and resources for educators and the curriculum and pedagogical practices that will reduce the prevalence of **family violence** and reduce the development of engrained child behaviours and beliefs that lead to family violence in later life, especially when intergeneration effects are at play.
- 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).