

2013 Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Review

*Department of
Education*

February 2014

Workforce Review Report

Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia (PwC) at the request of the Department of Education (the Department) in our capacity as advisors in accordance with the Work Order Agreement (PNR: 28526) between PwC and the Department.

PwC have based this report on information received or obtained by PwC, on the basis that such information is accurate and, where it is represented by stakeholders as such, complete. PwC has not checked or audited the accuracy of any of this information.

The information contained in this report has not been subject to an audit. The information must not be relied on by third parties, copied, reproduced, distributed, or used, in whole or in part, for any purpose other than detailed in our Work Order Agreement without the written permission of the Department and PwC.¹

¹ *Liability is limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation*

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACECQA	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
ACCS	Australian Community Children’s Services
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
the Department	Department of Education (Commonwealth)
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECT	Early Childhood Teacher
FDC	Family Day Care
IPSP	Inclusion and Professional Support Program
LDC	Long Day Care
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
OSHC	Outside of School Hours Care
PS	Preschool ²
PSC	Professional Support Coordinator
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training

² While the definition of ‘preschool’ may differ between jurisdictions (see *The Allen Consulting Group 2011, Eighteen Month Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education report to the Early Childhood Development Working Group of the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee, Canberra, May*), the Education and Care Services National Law defines a ‘preschool program’ as an early childhood program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year that is 2 years before grade 1 of school. Programs delivered to children two years prior to grade 1 are called kindergarten in some jurisdictions (Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania).

Executive summary

There is a growing recognition of the importance of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in Australia and the role it plays in supporting children's development as well as facilitating greater workforce participation and economic engagement.

Reflecting this, the Australian Government and state and territory governments are implementing the National Quality Framework (NQF) for the ECEC sector. The NQF aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement by introducing a new nationally consistent regulatory framework for ECEC in Australia, replacing the existing separate regulatory arrangements in each jurisdiction.

One of the significant reforms of the NQF is the introduction of nationally consistent qualification requirements for ECEC educators in preschool (PS),³ long day care (LDC) and family day care (FDC) settings. While the NQF qualification requirements do not currently apply to outside of school hours care (OSHC), some jurisdictions have existing qualification requirements for OSHC which will remain after the NQF qualification requirements came into effect on 1 January 2014. Further, there are two broad models of preschool delivery across Australia - through the childcare sector or through the school sector. This uneven intersection with the school sector has a bearing on workforce comparisons across states and territories.

The 2013 ECEC Workforce Review

PwC was engaged to undertake the 2013 ECEC workforce review ('the review') which is a requirement of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care ('the national partnership'). The national partnership is the framework under which the NQF has been established.

The purpose of this review is to:

- review the progress of the ECEC sector towards meeting the qualification requirements of the NQF that came into effect from 1 January 2014, particularly in relation to Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) and rural and remote workforces
- identify areas which require further attention so additional support can be provided.

PwC conducted focus groups to identify and understand the challenges that were consistently put forward by the ECEC. These challenges were, where possible, validated by the available data including the data collected in the National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census undertaken in 2010 and 2013.⁴ Areas where further attention and support may address these challenges were also suggested.

PwC also analysed the 2013 National ECEC Workforce Census to comment more specifically on the preparedness of each jurisdiction to meet the NQF qualification requirements, as well as the extent of the progress from 2010 to 2013 towards meeting the NQF qualification requirements. This report consolidates the findings of this review.

³ While the definition of 'preschool' may differ between jurisdictions (see *The Allen Consulting Group 2011, Eighteen Month Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education report to the Early Childhood Development Working Group of the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee, Canberra, May*), the Education and Care Services National Law defines a 'preschool program' as an early childhood program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year that is 2 years before grade 1 of school. Programs delivered to children two years prior to grade 1 are called kindergarten in some jurisdictions (Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania).

⁴ For further information on the National ECEC Workforce Census please visit <http://www.education.gov.au/national-workforce-census-frequently-asked-questions-faqs>

Key findings of the review

Despite some concerns about the preparedness of the ECEC sector in meeting the NQF qualification requirements, the general view of the sector is that they do not want to see the NQF qualification requirements watered down, for example by removing the ECT qualification requirements for LDC. Additionally, most educators indicated they did not want the timeframes extended. Many indicated this is because the sector has been advocating for these reforms for a number of years.

In considering the preparedness of each jurisdiction for the NQF qualification requirements, it is important to recognise that each jurisdiction comes from a different starting point. Prior to agreeing to the NQF, each jurisdiction had existing qualification requirements for educators in FDC and LDC services and schooling sectors. These existing qualification requirements impact on the proportion of staff in each jurisdiction with qualifications, the types of qualifications they hold and therefore their starting point in terms of meeting the NQF qualification requirements.

Although there are some specific challenges within jurisdictions, within geographical areas and in relation to certain qualification requirements, the ECEC sector across Australia appears to be broadly on track to meet the NQF qualification requirements by 1 January 2014. It appears that there has been an increase in the qualification levels in the ECEC sector in recent years. For example, in 2009 it was estimated that approximately 40 per cent of the ECEC workforce did not hold a qualification, which decreased to 25 per cent in 2010 and 17 per cent in 2013.

The 2013 ECEC Census data continues to suggest that the sector is broadly on track to meeting the requirement that 50 per cent of staff in centre-based services hold or be working towards a Diploma-level qualification or above. The data also shows that the sector is broadly on track to meeting the NQF requirements related to the attainment of staff with a relevant Certificate III and above as close to or over 90 per cent of staff held a Certificate III qualification or above across all jurisdictions.

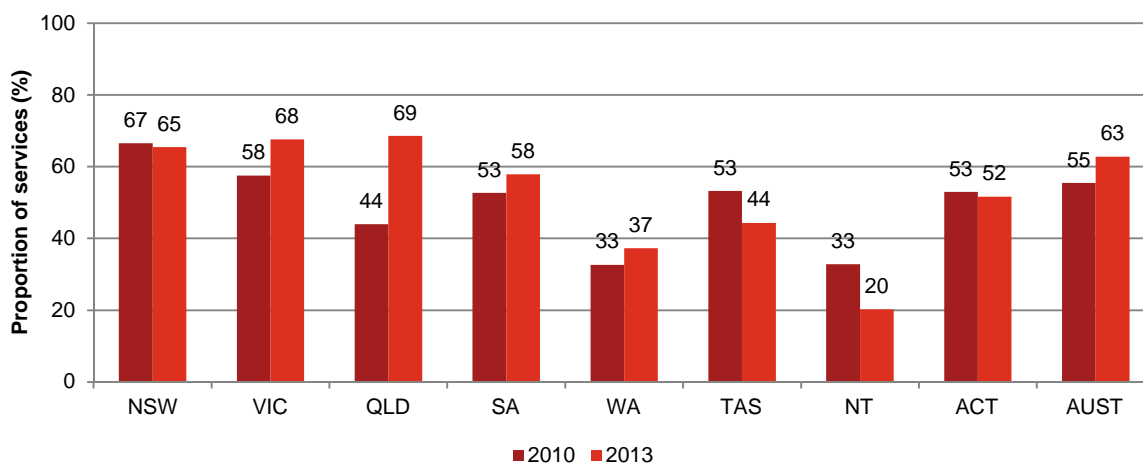
However, there appears to be greater challenges in meeting the requirements for ECTs in LDC settings. As highlighted from the review of the 2013 Census, there were a large proportion of LDC services - ranging between 31 to 80 per cent across the jurisdictions - that did not have access to an ECT.⁵ Although progress has been made across the sector - with ECT access increasing from 55 per cent to 63 per cent for LDC services and significant increases within Queensland and Victoria between 2010 and 2013 - the overall levels of ECT access remain low (see Figure 1). It should be noted that these figures do not include services with access to staff who are working towards an ECT qualification.

There was also a significant degree of variability in the proportion of LDCs and preschools in different jurisdictions that had access to an ECT. For example, 69 per cent of LDCs in Queensland (QLD) had access to an ECT, whereas, only 20 per cent of LDCs in the Northern Territory (NT) had access to an ECT. Furthermore, 95 per cent of preschools in the ACT had access to an ECT, whereas only 74 per cent of preschools in NT had access to an ECT. This may reflect the different qualification requirements each jurisdiction had in place prior to the NQF and that the different models of preschool delivery have a bearing on national comparisons. Specifically, in jurisdictions where preschool is mainly delivered through LDCs and only one ECT is employed by a given service, that ECT is likely to be responsible for the delivery of preschool. In contrast, in jurisdictions where preschool is mainly delivered through the school sector, the corresponding ECT is working in the school sector. This difference must be borne in mind when comparing data from one state/territory with another.

⁵ For the purposes of this report, 'Access to an ECT' is used to describe the number of services that have at least one ECT employed at their service. For technical definition using 2013 ECEC Census data please see Appendix B.

It should be noted that these results do not mean that all those services with access to an ECT are prepared or even on track to meeting the NQF qualification requirements. Rather, they provide an indication of the level of preparedness in meeting the NQF requirements. Under the NQF qualification requirements, all preschools and LDCs will require access to an ECT from 1 January 2014.

Figure 1: Proportion of LDC services with access to an ECT by jurisdiction



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and 2013. Totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding of weighted data. Table includes only paid, contact staff that were present during the reference period

Figure 2: Proportion of preschool services with access to an ECT by jurisdiction



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and 2013. Totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding of weighted data. Table includes only paid, contact staff that were present during the reference period.

Note: policy regimes in states and territories generally require preschool programs to be delivered by an ECT.

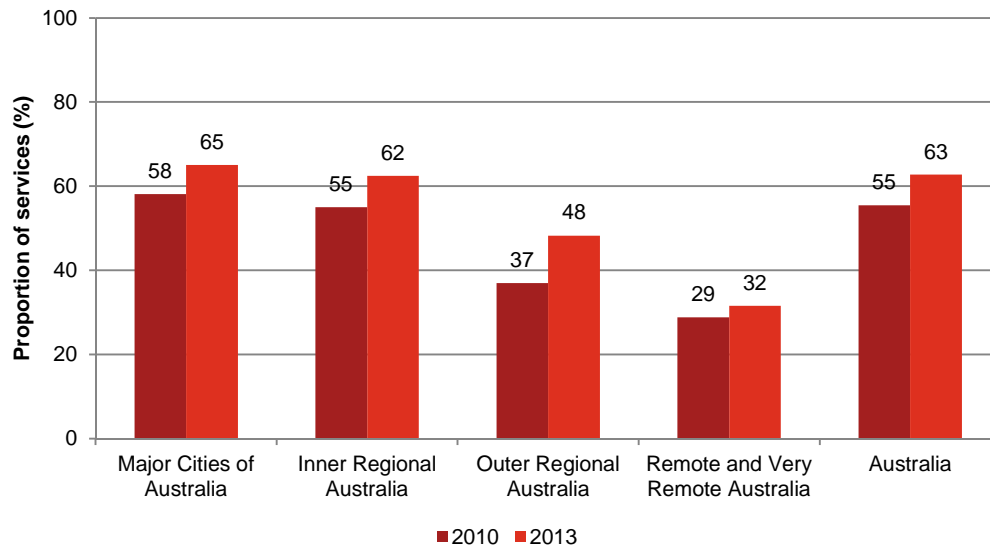
ECT access for remote and very remote services was identified as a key focus of this review. To that end, access to ECTs also appears to have increased in all levels of remoteness between 2010 and 2013 for LDC and preschool services. However, the increase in remote and very remote locations was small relative to major cities and overall access levels remain significantly lower. As highlighted by Figure 3 and Figure 4:

- access levels for LDC services in remote and very remote locations increased by only 3 per cent between 2010 and 2013. Only 32 per cent of LDC services in remote and very remote locations which is approximately half of access levels in major cities and regional locations.

- although access levels for preschool services in remote and very remote settings increased from 71 to 77 per cent, it remains below the national average for preschools.

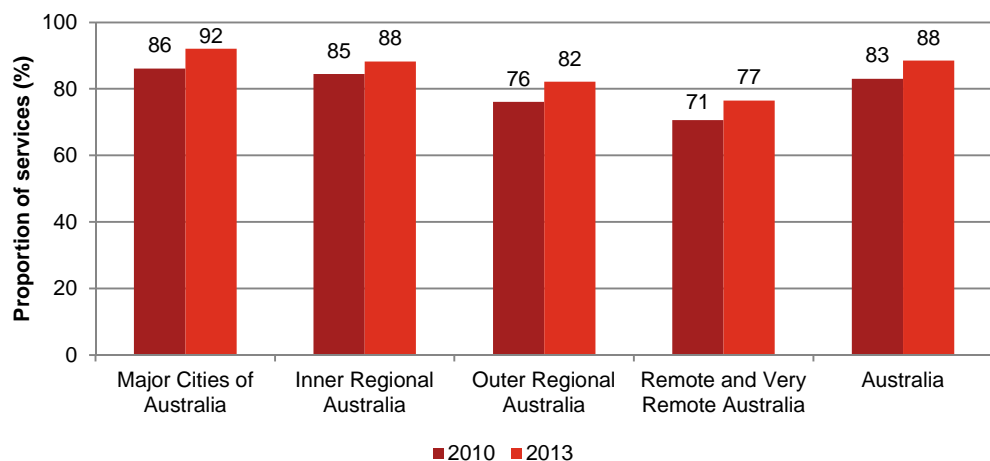
These results highlight the potential lack of preparedness of services in these locations and the workforce challenges that remain within remote and very remote locations.

Figure 3: Access to ECTs: LDCs by remoteness



Source: Unpublished weighted data, DEEWR National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010, Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Information presented for Remote and Very Remote services represents only a small number of workers and should be interpreted with caution

Figure 4: Access to ECTs: Preschools by remoteness



Source: Unpublished weighted data, DEEWR National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010, Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Information presented for Remote and Very Remote services represents only a small number of workers and should be interpreted with caution

Again, it should be noted that the Figures 1 to 4 do not include the number of staff who are currently working towards an ECT qualification. The Workforce Census does not collect detailed information on the level or field of study, therefore the figures above may underestimate the access to ECTs in the medium term as those staff pursuing study to become an ECT gain their qualifications.

Nevertheless, the progress that has generally been made across the sector towards meeting the ECT requirements and the NQF qualification requirements more broadly should be highlighted. The progress appears to reflect the outcomes of the various Australian Government and state and territory government programs that have been implemented to support the sector. For example, the comparison of the 2013 Census data with the 2010 data shows that the level of access to ECTs has increased in all jurisdictions for preschool services and increased in half of the jurisdictions for LDC services. The proportion of staff with or working towards Certificate III qualification or above also increased overall.

In terms of the challenges that remain for ECEC services in meeting the NQF qualification requirements, PwC identified seven key themes which are listed below in no particular order.

The key themes include challenges faced by educators in gaining qualifications, services in attracting and retaining qualified staff and training providers in providing quality training. The next section provides a summary of findings to further improve the ability of the sector to meet the NQF qualification requirements. PwC notes that there is already national work in train to respond to some of these findings.

1. Pay and conditions

An overwhelming and consistent message from the focus groups conducted during the Review was that the pay and conditions offered in the ECEC sector impact upon the ability of the sector to attract and retain staff. Data shows that ECEC educators earn below the workforce average and that ECTs often do not have equal pay and conditions as compared to primary school teachers. The continued shortages in the ECEC sector suggest that the pay and conditions are significant barriers to recruitment and retention of educators in the sector, in particular ECTs. Despite this finding, it appears that ECEC educators are generally more satisfied with their jobs than the average of the labour force.

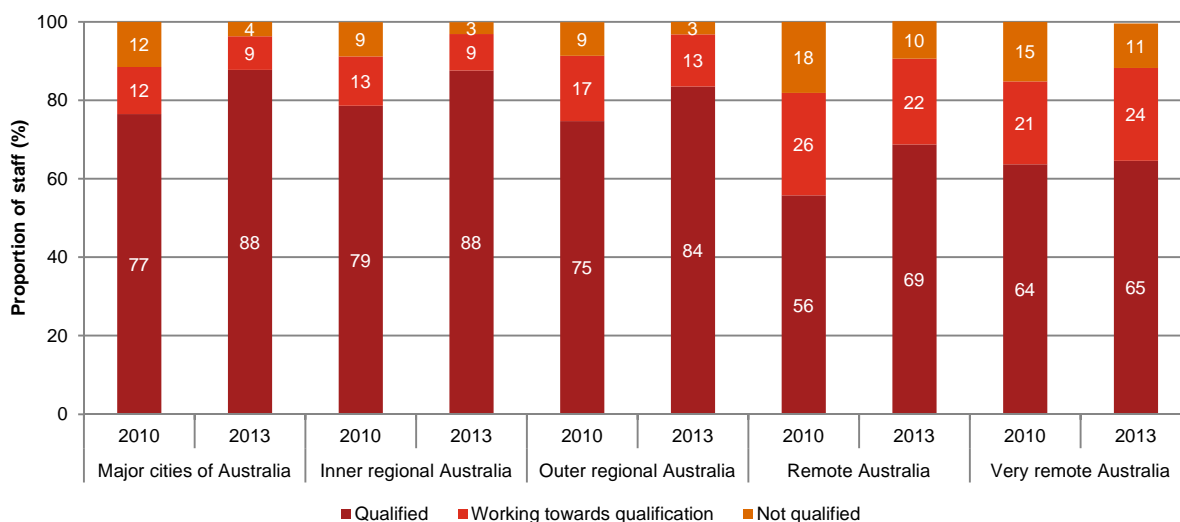
2. Rural and remote ECEC services

The Review identified that ECEC services in rural and remote areas face similar challenges in meeting the NQF qualification requirements to metropolitan ECEC services. However, the challenges are more acute in rural and remote areas. Services in these areas particularly struggle to provide ongoing professional development and to replace these qualified staff when they are on leave (called 'backfilling'). Educators in rural and remote areas also face a range of challenges in gaining qualifications such as: travelling long distances; accessing recognition of prior learning (RPL); and needing to study for qualifications through online delivery mechanisms. Educators in mining areas and very remote locations may also struggle to find affordable accommodation.

The analysis of the 2013 Census data and the 2010 data shows that progress has been made with increasing qualification levels in rural and remote areas (see Figure 5):

- in remote locations, the proportion of LDC staff with (or working towards) a Certificate III qualification or above increased from 82 to 90 per cent
- in very remote locations, the proportion of LDC staff with (or working towards) a Certificate III qualification or above increased from 85 to 89 per cent.

Figure 5: Proportion of LDC staff with or working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above, by remoteness



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013

However, the proportion of staff with a relevant qualification remains lower in remote and very remote locations compared to major cities and regional locations. As discussed, the data also shows that access to ECTs is significantly lower for services located in remote and very remote locations (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

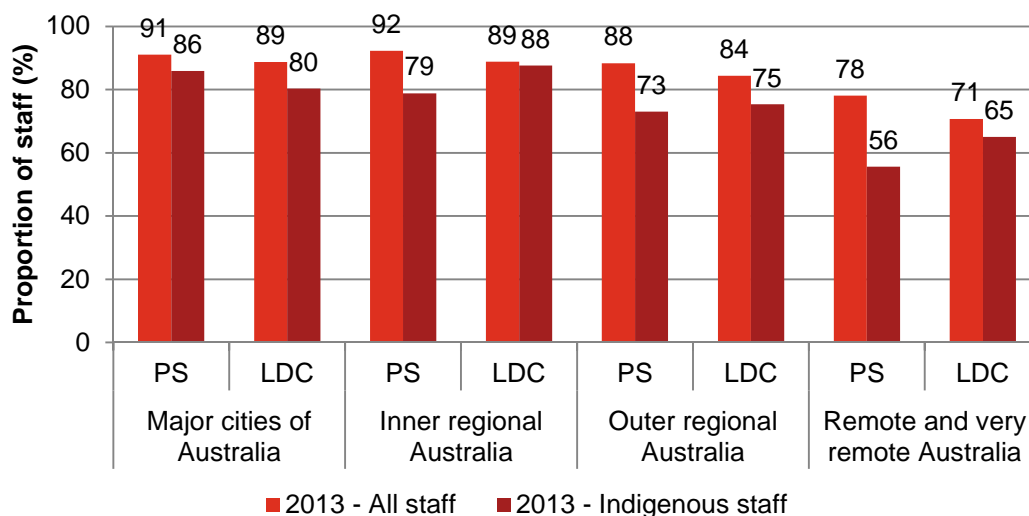
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators

The Review identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, particularly those in remote communities, face a range of barriers in gaining qualifications. These barriers include a lack of familiarity with using technology (which is particularly a challenge for educators studying online) and difficulty with literacy due to English being a second language. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators in remote communities also face difficulty completing practicum that are required to be undertaken at a service other than where they are employed, noting that there will often be only one ECEC service in a community. They must therefore travel often long distances to another town or community to complete their practicum. Furthermore, educators indicated that the training provided by universities and RTOs is not always culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

These concerns are broadly supported by the 2013 ECEC Census data which shows that the proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant qualifications remains lower than the sector overall in remote and very remote areas (Figure 6). The data also shows:

- that the proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant qualifications is lower across all other remoteness levels
- the difference in the proportion of all staff with qualifications and Indigenous staff is more pronounced in preschool services

Figure 6: Proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant early childhood education qualifications by remoteness in 2013⁶



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

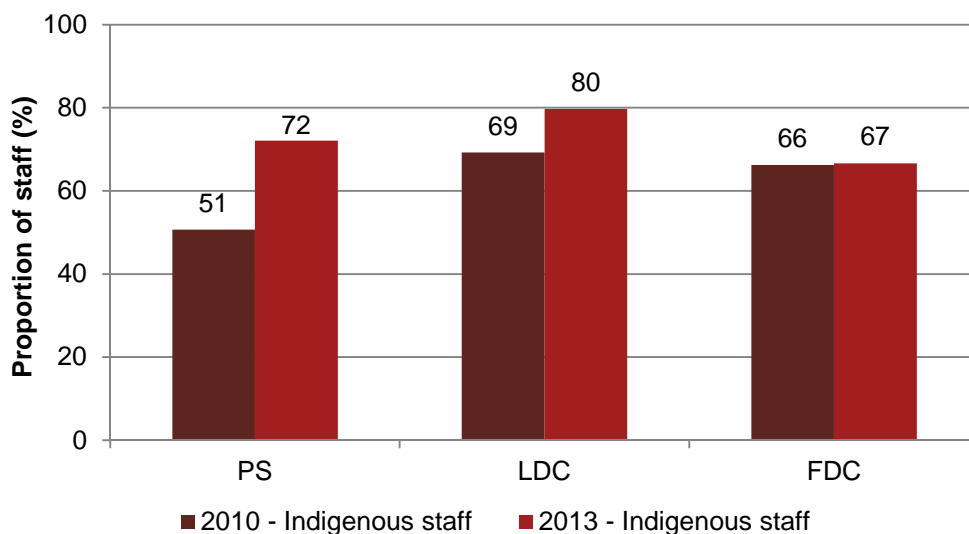
A comparison of 2010 and 2013 census data also shows that progress has been made with increasing the qualification levels of Indigenous staff:

- the proportion of Indigenous contact staff with a relevant ECEC qualification has increased significantly between 2010 and 2013 for preschool and LDC services (Figure 7):
 - from 51 to 72 per cent for preschools
 - from 69 to 80 per cent for LDC services
- the proportion of Indigenous staff with a relevant qualification within FDC services did not change significantly.

Figure 8 shows that the proportion of Indigenous staff with qualifications has increased across all remoteness levels from 2010 to 2013.

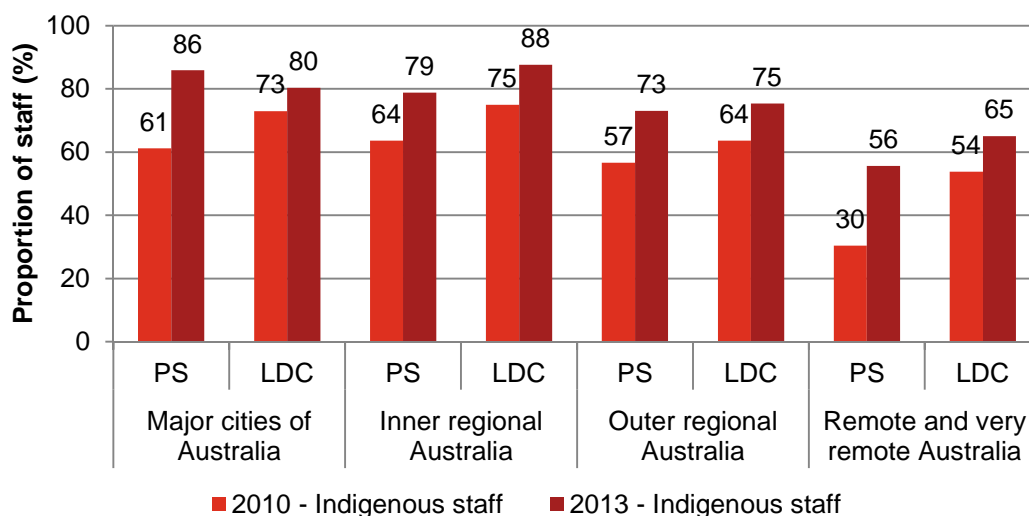
⁶ These figures do not include staff that are working towards a qualification.

Figure 7: Change in the proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant early childhood education qualifications between 2010 and 2013



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013

Figure 8: Proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant early childhood education qualifications by remoteness in 2010 and 2013⁷



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

4. Paid leave for study and professional development

Data analysis conducted during the Review suggested that one of the most significant barriers to educators gaining qualifications or upgrading their qualifications is the funded time available for training. Anecdotal evidence suggests that paid leave for study and professional development can be critical in assisting educators complete their qualifications.

⁷ These figures do not include staff that have identified they are 'working towards' a relevant early childhood education qualification.

Though some large services provide paid study leave to their educators, smaller services often do not because they believe that they are not in a financial position to do so.

These concerns appear to remain within the sector based on the analysis of the 2013 data, although a comparison of the results from the 2013 Census with the 2010 results highlights some small changes in staff attitudes towards further education. While the changes are not large, they do highlight trends in the potential barriers to further study which has implications for the ongoing up-skilling of the ECEC workforce. Since 2010:⁸

- lack of time as a barrier became less of an issue - 1 per cent less agreed that it was an issue while 1 per cent more disagreed that it was an issue.
- cost as a barrier to further study also became less of an issue – of the staff who are not currently studying, 3 per cent less agreed that it was an issue while 2 per cent more disagreed that it was an issue.
- lack of financial incentive (small resulting wage increase) became a more prominent barrier to further study - 2 per cent more agreed that it was an issue while 2 per cent less disagreed that it was an issue.

The potential difficulty in undertaking the Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment Process remained a relatively insignificant barrier to further study with approximately 10 per cent agreeing that it was a barrier.

Aside from staff attitudes towards further study, the 2013 Census also shows that:

- the overall proportion of staff undertaking professional development training in the previous 12 months has increased from 81 per cent in 2010 to 84 per cent in 2013
- the proportion of staff undertaking training has increased in all jurisdictions except South Australia and Tasmania.

⁸ 2010 ECEC Workforce Census, Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013, PwC analysis

Figure 9: Proportion of contact staff undertaking professional development in the previous 12 months



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013

5. Confidence to access training

PwC identified a range of challenges that educators face which impact upon their confidence in accessing training. These include educators' confidence with technology, literacy skills and the time since they last undertook formal training. Ongoing professional development, professional networks and mentoring are integral to improving educator's confidence and ensuring they complete their qualifications.

This theme could not be verified any further with the 2013 Census data.

6. NQF qualification requirements in practice

PwC identified that the ECEC sector appears to be very aware of the NQF, including the qualification requirements. However, as there are a significant number of changes being introduced there is a degree of nervousness and uncertainty regarding some of the changes. For example, service directors did not appear to fully appreciate the operational flexibility they have in meeting the NQF qualification requirements. Additionally, some appeared to be unsure of how waivers would be granted to services who, despite the operational flexibility available, could not meet the NQF qualification requirements.

Analysis of ACECQA data indicates that a low proportion of services have been granted a waiver in all states except Tasmania and NT (see Table 16). Data analysed to date suggests that all states have progressed towards meeting the NQF qualifications, however, Tasmania and NT may see an increase in applications for waivers, in particular for requirements related to ECTs given the decline in access to ECTs in both jurisdictions.

**Table 1: Proportion of approved services with a staff waiver
(as of November 2013)**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Total
Number of services with staff waiver	147	60	54	107	37	12	21	20	458
Total number of services	4,785	3,814	2,666	974	1,129	225	208	315	14,116
% of services with staff waiver	3.1%	1.6%	2.0%	11.0%	3.3%	5.3%	10.1%	6.3%	3.2%

Source: ACECQA NQF Snapshot Q3 2013, Table 24 p.27 and PwC analysis

Note: the relatively low numbers in Queensland may be impacted by the transition timelines to national ratios being longer than in other jurisdictions. Similarly, the relatively high numbers in Tasmania may be impacted by transitional arrangements which did not enable 'working towards' to be counted in ratio.

7. ECT requirements for LDC services

Following the review of the Census data, PwC identified that many LDC services appear to be struggling to meet the requirements around employing staff with an ECT qualification. The review of the 2013 Census data highlighted the progress that had been made by LDC services since 2010 but it also showed that access levels remained well below 100 per cent. In other words, there are still a large proportion of LDC services (37 per cent) across the sector which do not have access to an ECT.

Summary of findings

Challenges in gaining qualifications: New entrants to the ECEC sector

Retention in ECEC courses

Finding 1 Studies have found that in some Certificate III and Diploma courses less than one third of those students who undertake an ECEC related qualification complete their studies. The Australian Government recently provided funding to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to investigate the reasons for students not completing their qualifications and recommend strategies to improve retention in Certificate III and Diploma courses. Further, data suggests that university attrition rates are higher for ECT courses than for other university courses. Potential areas for consideration include:

- considering the findings of the NCVER, particularly those recommendations concerning out-of-classroom support (such as peer study networks) and effective screening of entrants into training courses
- commissioning a similar review for university ECT courses.

These could be undertaken by jurisdictions and the Department of Education (the Department).

Consistency of the quality of training

Finding 2 The quality of training provided by registered training organisations (RTOs) is not consistent and services are not aware of the complaint mechanisms to use when they have concerns regarding the quality of training providers. Potential areas for consideration include:

- improving the referral to complaint mechanisms available when services or educators have concerns regarding the quality of RTOs
- encouraging employers, service providers and students to make complaints through the appropriate mechanisms regarding low quality training.

These could be undertaken by bodies such as the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), jurisdictional regulatory authorities and Vocational Educational and Training (VET) regulatory authorities. On 24 January, Minister Ley announced that ASQA will undertake a review of the quality of training for the ECEC sector with work expected to start in February 2014.⁹

⁹ Media Release, the Hon Sussan Ley MP ' Priority given to ensuring early childhood training 'up to scratch' Friday 24 January 2014, accessed 21 February.

Promoting a better understanding of the sector

- Finding 3 Some new graduates with VET or university qualifications are not suited to work in the ECEC sector and therefore leave the sector after a short time. A potential area for consideration is the introduction of a ‘grace period’ whereby educators have three months after commencing work in the ECEC sector to enrol in an approved Certificate III qualification while still being counted in staff/child ratios. This may require amendments to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012*.
-
- Finding 4 The Department held a number of Industry Roundtables, which aim to build relationships between local ECEC services, ECEC educators and other related stakeholders within a regional area including training providers and universities. A potential area for consideration to continue to build the relationship is to provide mechanisms for a dialogue between the ECEC sector and training providers to ensure that training is meeting the needs of the sector. This could be undertaken by the jurisdictions through Industry Roundtables.
-
- Finding 5 Many RTOs and TAFEs across Australia are already implementing strategies to better screen candidates, therefore consideration could be given to identifying examples of programs that have successfully improved students’ understanding of the ECEC sector (such as traineeships, extended practicum models, taster sessions, weekly play groups and work experience whilst studying) and facilitating opportunities for training providers to share the examples of effective models for improving retention. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions.
-

Focus on Birth to five years

- Finding 6 Some ECT qualifications can be as broad as Birth to 12 years. As part of these ECT qualifications, students must undertake practicum in both primary schools and ECEC settings. There are concerns that with insufficient focus on the Birth to five years age group, students will not be sufficiently equipped to enter the ECEC sector. A potential area for consideration is to increase the number of practicum in ECEC settings to ensure high quality practice. This could be undertaken by bodies such as ACECQA, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Australian Teacher Registration Authority (ATRA) as they set the requirements for practicum for ECT qualifications.
-

Primary school teacher recruitment

- Finding 7 ECTs in ECEC settings are listed by the Department as being in skills shortage; however, there is an adequate supply or oversupply of teachers in primary school settings in many areas. A number of universities have bridging programs for primary school teachers to gain qualifications to work in ECEC settings and have promoted the ECEC sector as a career for primary school teachers not currently working. A potential area for consideration is to investigate options to increase recruitment of qualified teachers who are working in primary schools or are on wait lists to work in primary schools. This could include promoting pathways into the ECEC sector, extending bridging programs for qualified teachers to become ECTs or ‘team teaching’ arrangements. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions.
-

Challenges in gaining qualifications: Up-skilling the existing workforce

Staff time and backfill support to undertake training

Finding 8 It is a significant time commitment to complete studies, particularly for ECEC educators who are already working full time and often have financial and caring commitments. At the focus groups, educators who have access to paid study leave indicated it was critical to them in completing their qualifications. Services also struggle to find casual staff to replace educators who are at training. These issues appear to apply particularly to smaller providers, as larger providers tend to have the resources to deal with some of these backfill challenges. A potential area for consideration is to examine the gap between the support already available to access training, the responsibility of employers to provide training and the challenges that services are experiencing in providing paid study leave and/or backfill support, in particular for smaller providers and rural and remote areas. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and ACECQA.

Cost of undertaking study

Finding 9 The 2013 ECEC Census found that 43 per cent of ECEC educators who are not currently studying but would like to indicated that this was due to the cost. This includes the cost of forgoing paid work to take leave for study. There are a range of programs to financially support educators undertaking study including fee waivers for Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas (which will expire on 31 December 2014), HECS-HELP benefit for ECT and scholarships for ECT qualifications. There appears to be less financial support for educators undertaking Certificate IIIs. A potential area for consideration is to extend programs to provide targeted incentives to educators (who meet eligibility criteria) undertaking Certificate IIIs such as scholarships, financial incentives for the completion of the qualification or the fee waivers similar to those that are provided to educators undertaking Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas.

Financial incentive to undertake further study

Finding 10 Many ECEC educators believe the resulting wage increase from undertaking further study is too small to warrant the time and cost required. The perceived lack of a career path for educators in the ECEC sector may be contributing to the view that the financial payoff for attaining qualifications is insufficient. A potential area for consideration is to facilitate an effective mechanism for the sharing of ideas and current strategies for the promotion of existing career paths for educators with the ability for leading educators to take on leadership and mentoring roles. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and ACECQA.

Accessibility of RPL

Finding 11 Educators with experience in the ECEC sector can have their prior experience recognised towards qualifications through a RPL initiative funded by the Australian Government and through similar programs in each state and territory. It appears that educators are accessing RPL; however, there are challenges with access to RPL assessors particularly in rural and remote locations. A potential area for consideration is to review the availability of training providers who are able to deliver training and assessment services for the early childhood workforce, in particular in regional and remote locations. This could be undertaken by the jurisdictions.

Educators close to retirement age

Finding 12 Educators close to retirement age can be reluctant to complete qualifications. A potential area for consideration is communicating to the sector the transitional arrangements which are in place until December 2015 whereby educators with more than 15 years of experience (up to immediately before the scheme commencement day) can be considered as holding Certificate III. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and/or ACECQA.

Confidence to access training

Finding 13 Educators face a range of barriers that impact on their confidence to access training. Professional networks, mentoring and ongoing professional development can be essential to improving educators' confidence and ensuring they complete qualifications. A potential area for consideration could be to establish further formal professional support networks for peer support and professional development. This could be undertaken by groups such as employers, sector organisations, local governments, the Department, Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) and jurisdictions.

Finding 14 Educators in regional and rural areas particularly appear to face professional isolation which can impact on retention in the sector and their confidence in accessing further training. A potential area for consideration could be to extend pre-existing programs in regional and rural areas that have been successful in attracting and retaining staff and in particular, programs that provide professional support and mentoring. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Finding 15 The challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators in gaining qualifications are more acute due to issues around the cultural appropriateness of training courses and English often being a second language. This can be further compounded due to the challenges faced by educators in rural and remote areas. A potential area for consideration is the accessibility of training and cultural appropriateness of training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and training providers (including RTOs and universities) with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Lessons learnt and successful programs should be shared amongst jurisdictions given the national importance of improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the ECEC workforce.

Workforce challenges for ECEC services (including attracting and retaining staff)

Pay and conditions

Finding 16 A strong message from the focus groups indicated that pay and conditions in the ECEC sector impacts upon the ability of the sector to attract and retain staff. A change in the awards for the ECEC sector would require the appropriate industrial processes to be followed through the Fair Work Commission. A submission has been made to the Fair Work Commission.

ECT requirement for LDC services

Finding 17 LDC services are facing significant challenges around the employment of staff with or working towards an ECT qualification. LDC services noted during consultations that there is strong competition for scarce ECTs within the broader ECEC sector and that LDC services were less likely to be chosen by prospective employees. This was due to the service type's perceived inferiority in relation to pay and conditions and ongoing professional development.

These challenges are supported by the analysis of the 2013 Census data which shows that a significant proportion of LDC services (37 per cent) did not have access to a qualified ECT.

Ongoing professional development

Finding 18 Services face a range of challenges in providing ongoing professional development. The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) reduces many of the direct costs of professional development, however services face costs such as replacement staff and meeting travel expenses. *See Finding 7 and Finding 13 for potential areas of consideration.*

Accessibility of programs

Finding 19 There are a significant number of Australian Government and state and territory government programs that have been introduced to support the ECEC sector in meeting the NQF qualification requirements. However, it is often difficult to find information on these programs. The Department is currently developing a website that will house information on existing Australian Government programs to support the ECEC workforce. Potential areas for consideration include:

- a single mechanism to house all relevant information (especially in relation to Australian Government programs) that is checked for accuracy and updated regularly. This could be undertaken by the Australian Government on the centralised information website.
 - the Australian Government's centralised information website also providing links to the websites of the relevant department in each state and territory
 - including a link to the Australian Government's centralised information website on the ACECQA website.
-

Challenges for interpretation and application of NQF qualification requirements

NQF requirements in practice

Finding 20

There have been a significant number of changes introduced under the NQF qualification requirements and there is a degree of nervousness and uncertainty in the sector regarding some of these. Service directors may not fully appreciate the flexibility they have in meeting the NQF qualification requirements and some are apprehensive as to how the waivers will operate. Over the next 6 – 18 months ACECQA and regulatory authorities should seek to communicate to the sector the operational flexibility within the national law and regulations as there appears to be some uncertainty and confusion within the sector. Potential areas for consideration include:

- undertaking a targeted national communication campaign regarding the implementation of the NQF
- providing concise guidance on issues such as the flexibility services have in meeting the NQF qualification requirements (for example, the meaning of ‘working towards’ a qualification), the requirements for obtaining a waiver, the impact of holding a waiver on a service’s rating and a focus on the desired outcomes for children through the greater professionalisation of staff

This could be undertaken by ACECQA and Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs), in conjunction with the relevant state and territory regulatory authorities.

Contents

Disclaimer	i
Acronyms	ii
Executive summary	iii
Summary of findings	xiv
1 Background	3
2 Objective of NQF qualification requirements	6
3 Preparedness for the NQF qualification requirements	14
4 New entrants to the ECEC sector	32
5 Up-skilling the existing workforce	42
6 Attracting and retaining staff	60
7 Providing ongoing professional development	66
8 Accessibility of programs	69
9 Interpretation and application of the NQF qualification requirements	72
Appendix A Focus groups	78
Appendix B ECT definition	82
Appendix C Transitional arrangements	82

Section A

Preparedness for the NQF qualification requirements

1 Background

1.1 The ECEC sector

In June 2012 there were 15,020 ECEC services in Australia providing care to 986,280 children.¹⁰ The majority of children are in LDC (587,100 children), followed by OSHC (304,120 children) and FDC (118,700 children).¹¹

LDC services offer care and education for children from Birth to school age. They usually operate for approximately 11 hours per day (usually from 7am to 6pm) for 48 weeks per year. The LDC sector has experienced significant growth in recent years, with the number of LDC services increasing by 39 per cent from 2004 to 2010.¹² Increasingly, LDCs offer structured educational programs such as in-house preschool programs or kindergarten programs.¹³

Approximately 65 per cent of LDCs offer preschool or kindergarten programs. Additionally, there are almost 5,000 stand-alone preschools or kindergartens. Approximately 200,000 children access preschool programs, which are offered to children in the year prior to full-time schooling. LDC, preschool services and kindergarten services are often referred to collectively as 'centre-based services'.

FDC is provided by educators usually within a residence or their own home and usually managed through coordinated networks that link together multiple FDC educators. The number of children attending FDC has been stable for a number of years, though there was an increase from 2012 to 2013.

OSHC is provided to children of school age both before and after school hours and during holiday periods. The number of places in OSHC has increased by 25 per cent from 2004 to 2009 and is expected to rise a further 40 per cent in the next two decades.¹⁴ It should be noted that the NQF qualification requirements do not apply to OSHC.

The ECEC sector in Australia is a mixed market with services provided by government, community (non-for-profit) organisations and private (for-profit) organisations. All levels of government intervene in the ECEC sector from policy making and regulation to funding and service provision. Private providers dominate the LDC market, and although there are some differences between jurisdictions, they account for approximately 70 per cent of LDC services.¹⁵ Many preschool or kindergarten programs are funded and delivered by state and local governments. Community providers dominate FDC and OSHC, though there has been a significant increase in private providers in the OSHC sector (now approximately 40 per cent of OSHC providers).¹⁶

At the focus groups conducted as part of this review, educators overwhelmingly indicated that despite their concerns with pay and conditions in the ECEC sector, they are passionate about the work they do.

Educators saw themselves as having an important role in both caring for and educating children. Educators said that the significant contribution they make to children's development keeps them working in the sector. Many indicated that they have been in the sector for a significant period or that they intend on staying in the sector in the long term.

¹⁰ Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care, 2012. *Childcare Quarterly Management Information Report*.

¹¹ Ibid.

As children may use more than one service type, and due to rounding, the sum of the components will not equal the total.

¹² Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 17

¹³ Note: Some jurisdictions such as NSW use the term 'preschool' and other jurisdictions such as Victoria and SA use the term 'kindergarten'.

¹⁴ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 17.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

1.2 Scope of the 2013 ECEC workforce review

The 2013 ECEC workforce review ('the review') is a requirement of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care ('the national partnership').¹⁷ The national partnership has helped establish a consistent NQF for ECEC services, replacing existing separate licensing and quality assurance processes of each jurisdiction (see Section 2.1).

The purpose of this review is to:

- review the progress of the ECEC sector towards meeting the qualification requirements of the NQF from 1 January 2014, particularly in relation to ECTs and rural and remote workforces
- identify areas which require further attention so additional support can be provided.

This document forms the final output for the 2013 ECEC Workforce Review. This report:

- presents and tests the feedback provided at focus groups that were conducted as part of the review
- provides analysis of the data collected in the 2013 ECEC Census to validate the findings from the focus groups
- comments on the preparedness of the ECEC sector for the NQF qualification requirements
- comments on the extent of the progress from 2010 to 2013 towards meeting the NQF qualification requirements (by comparing the 2010 ECEC Census data to the 2013 ECEC Census)
- provides suggested actions to address areas where further support could be provided.

PwC conducted a total of 16 focus groups across Australia with a range of stakeholders. This included:

- eleven face-to-face focus groups held in locations across Australia (see below for locations) which were open to all ECEC service providers, ECEC educators, training providers (including academics and registered training organisations (RTOs)), sector representatives and representatives of state and territory governments
- two teleconference focus groups open to all ECEC service providers, ECEC educators, training providers (including academics and RTOs), sector representatives and representatives of state and territory governments
- one teleconference focus group specifically for ECEC providers and educators from remote and rural areas
- one focus group with representatives of large service providers (held in Sydney)
- one focus group with representatives from national peak organisations (held in Canberra).

Locations for the 11 face-to-face focus groups were selected in consultation with representatives of the relevant department in each jurisdiction. In selecting locations, PwC sought to ensure that at least one focus group was held in each jurisdiction and that a spread of metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations were selected. The face-to-face focus group locations are listed below:

¹⁷ Council of Australian Governments, 2009. *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education*.

Background

- Sydney
- Griffith
- Melbourne
- Mildura
- Cairns
- Canberra
- Adelaide
- Perth
- Port Hedland
- Launceston
- Darwin

Appendix A provides a summary of the focus groups including the attendees and the questions discussed at the focus groups.

2 Objective of NQF qualification requirements

The NQF is a significant reform for the ECEC sector which has been introduced following clear evidence that the early years are essential to children's outcomes later in life. This section provides an overview of the NQF and the qualification requirements that have been introduced under the NQF.

2.1 The National Quality Framework

The NQF was agreed to in December 2009 and provides a nationally consistent framework for regulating the ECEC sector. The NQF includes:¹⁸

- a national legislative framework that consists of the *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*
- a National Quality Standard (NQS) which sets out a national benchmark for the quality of children's ECEC services¹⁹
- an assessment and rating system to accompany the NQS which consists of a national approach to the assessment and rating of the quality of ECEC services²⁰
- a regulatory authority in each state and territory that will have primary responsibility for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services in their jurisdiction in accordance with the national legislative framework and in relation to the NQS²¹
- the establishment of ACECQA who provide national leadership in promoting quality and improvement in ECEC services in Australia.²²

The reforms are being introduced in a phased approach. For example, the assessment and rating of services commenced in 2012 whereas the requirement for all educators to have or be working towards a minimum Certificate III level qualification was not introduced until 1 January 2014.

The legislative framework in the *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* sets out a range of nationally consistent requirements for ECEC services, including:

- processes for obtaining provider approvals, service approvals and supervisor certificates
- minimum operating requirements for ECEC services relating to matters such as staffing, physical environment and educational programs, including
 - staff to child ratios for centre-based services (i.e. LDC and preschools) and FDC
 - qualification requirements for educators in centre-based services and FDC

¹⁸ ACECQA, 2013. *National Quality Framework*. Available at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/>.

¹⁹ ACECQA, 2013. *National Quality Standard*. Accessed 24 April 2013. Available at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/national-quality-standard/>.

²⁰ ACECQA, 2013. *Information on Assessment and Ratings*. Accessed 24 April 2013. Available at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/assessment-and-ratings/>.

²¹ ACECQA, 2013. *National Quality Framework*. Available at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/>.

²² ACECQA, 2013. *About ACECQA*. Accessed 24 April 2013. Available at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/about/>.

- the NQS against which all approved services are assessed and rated.

This review deals specifically with the preparedness of the ECEC workforce for the NQF qualification requirements introduced on 1 January 2014.

2.2 The NQF qualification requirements

As already described, under the NQF a range of qualification requirements will apply to ECEC educators. The NQF qualification requirements apply to centre-based services (excluding OSHC) and FDC as of 1 January 2014, as shown in Table 2.

Each jurisdiction had different legislative requirements prior to the NQF. Each jurisdiction has introduced transitional arrangements to meet the NQF qualification requirements and these transitional arrangements are detailed in Section 2.4.²³ Further, in some jurisdictions, existing improved educator to child ratios will remain in place indefinitely or until a decision is made in the future to amend such arrangements. These are referred to as saving provisions in the notes to Table 2.

In considering the preparedness of each jurisdiction for the NQF qualification requirements, it is important to recognise that each jurisdiction is coming from different pre-existing requirements. Prior to 1 January 2014, no jurisdiction apart from NSW currently requires LDCs to employ an ECT. Additionally, many jurisdictions (WA, Tasmania, NSW and ACT) have no existing requirements for staff in LDC to hold Certificate IIIs. SA and Tasmania are the only jurisdictions with qualification requirements for FDC educators and Queensland, SA, Tasmania and ACT are the only jurisdictions with qualification requirements for FDC coordinators.

Though the NQF has been agreed to cover care of school aged children as well as children under school age, it does not include a national standard for providers of care to school aged children.²⁴ Therefore, services for children of school age, particularly OSHC, do not have qualification requirements under the NQF. The existing regulatory requirements of each jurisdiction for OSHC are detailed in Appendix C.

Table 2: NQF qualification requirements

Service type	Staff-to-child ratio	Timeframe	Qualified staff requirements	Timeframe
Centre based services ^a	0-23 months, 1:4	From 1 January 2012 ^b	For services providing care to children of preschool age and below: ^e <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% staff counted towards the staff-to-child ratios must hold or be working towards an approved Diploma level qualification or above • All other staff counted towards the staff-to-child ratios must hold or be working towards an approved Certificate III level qualification • All services must employ a 	From 1 January 2014
	24 – 36 months, 1:5	From 1 January 2016 ^d		
	> 36 months, 1:11 ^c	From 1 January 2016 ^e		

²³ Note: Many of these transitional arrangements end on 1 January 2014, however, there are a number of transitional arrangements that will continue beyond 1 January 2014 (see Appendix C).

²⁴ ACECQA, 2011. *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, p. 87

Service type	Staff-to-child ratio	Timeframe	Qualified staff requirements	Timeframe
			<p>qualified ECT or a person working towards an approved ECT qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – services with less than 25 children preschool age and below must have access to an ECT for 20% of hours – services with 25 – 59 children preschool age and below must have an ECT in attendance for 6 hours per day or 60% of the time – services with 60 to 80 children preschool age and under must have an ECT for 6 hours on that day or 60% of the operating hours. – services with over 80 children preschool age or under must have an ECT for 6 hours on that day or 60% of the operating hours. 	
FDC	1:7 No more than 4 children < under preschool age	From 1 January 2014 ^f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators must hold or be working towards an approved Certificate III level qualification • Coordinators must hold an approved Diploma level qualification 	From 1 January 2014

Source: Adapted from Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, Appendix F, Table F.1 and ACECQA, 2013. *Qualifications and Educator to Child Ratios*. Available at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/qualifications-and-educator-to-child-ratios/>.

Note a: Centre based services is defined as an education and care service other than a family day care service in the *Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011*.

Note b: In respect of Queensland, Regulation 300 provides for a ratio of 1:5 (15 - 24 months). Regulation 300 applies to a declared approved service that:

a) was granted a licence under the former education and care services law of Queensland before 1 January 2011;

b) immediately before the scheme commencement day educated and cared for children aged 15 months or more up to and including 24 months; and

c) on application of the approved provider, the Regulatory Authority decides it is necessary for the service to continue to apply the current ratios until 31 December 2017.

Note c: Saving provisions apply in SA.

Note d: 24-36 months, 1:5 ratio was already operational in ACT, NT, Tas and WA from 1 January 2012 and saving provisions apply in Vic. For Tasmania, Regulation 346 provides that the ratio for certain approved declared services is 1:7 children aged 24 months or more but less than 72 months if not more than 3 of the children are aged 24 months or more but less than 36 months.

Note e: >36 months, 1:11 was already operational in NT from 1 Jan 2012. 1 Jan 2016 it will apply in ACT, QLD and Vic. Savings provisions apply in NSW, SA, TAS and WA.

Note f: 1:7 ratio in FDC was already operational in ACT, QLD, SA and Vic from 1 Jan 2012. 1 Jan 2014 it will also apply in NSW, NT, Tas and WA. Transitional provisions apply in SA and QLD. Additionally, the 1:7 ratio does not include the educators own children who are over preschool age (Regulation 305). From 1 January 2016, the educator's own children are to be taken into account if those children are under 13 years of age and there is no other adult present and caring for the children (regulation 124(2)(b)).

Note g: The *Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011* specifies that the qualified staff requirements only apply to services offering care to children of preschool age and below. Services offering care to children over preschool age are covered by jurisdiction specific requirements detailed in Chapter 7 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011*.

Regulation 10 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* states that an educator is actively working towards a qualification if the educator:

- is enrolled in the course for the qualification, and
- provides documentary evidence from the provider of that course that
 - the educator has commenced the course, and
 - is making satisfactory progress towards completion of the course, and
 - is meeting the requirements for maintaining the enrolments.

An educator is taken to be working towards an ECT qualification if they:²⁵

- are actively working towards an early childhood teaching qualification, and
- provide documentary evidence that:
 - the person has completed at least 50% of the course, or
 - holds an approved Diploma level education and care qualification.

It should be noted that ECTs can be ‘working towards’ until 1 January 2016, after which, all ECTs must hold an approved qualification. Additionally, under the transitional arrangements an educator is taken to be an ECT if they were accredited as an ECT under any jurisdiction’s previous requirements.

2.3 Support for the NQF qualification requirements

Despite high levels of satisfaction with the work they do, educators at the focus groups indicated that the important role of the ECEC sector has not always been recognised by the community. They indicated that educators had been viewed by some as ‘baby sitters’ and that previous approaches to education policy reflected a view that education starts at school age. As one educator commented offhandedly at a focus group “people think that children’s brains are inserted at age 5”.

However, this is changing. Increasingly the Australian community is recognising the important role that ECEC plays in children’s development. For example, the number of parents who access ECEC services because they believe they are beneficial for their child’s development has increased from 16 per cent in 1993 to 39 per cent in 2008.²⁶

This shift in attitude reflects a range of research that has demonstrated that the skills and abilities acquired in early childhood are fundamental to a person’s success and well-being later in life. A positive early childhood provides personal and economic benefits to the individual and society. Early learning drives later learning and achievement, which in turn contributes to the ‘human capital’ that underpins the economic well-being of the broader community.²⁷

International research has demonstrated that ECEC educators’ qualifications are the most important determinant of quality ECEC.²⁸ For example, the UK Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project showed that by age seven children who had attended a high quality preschool scored higher on measures of social, behavioural and cognitive development.²⁹ Furthermore, it was demonstrated that those preschools that were led by highly qualified educators had the greatest impact on outcomes for children. Furthermore, yet to be

²⁵ Education and Care Services National Regulations, Section 242

²⁶ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 32

²⁷ Heckman, J. 2000, ‘The real question is how to use the available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the Very Young.’ Ounce of Prevention Fund and the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy Studies: Chicago.

²⁸ OECD, 2006. *Starting Strong*.

²⁹ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., and Elliot, K. 2003, *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from the pre-school period*. Institute of Education, University of London.

published research by the Melbourne Institute indicates that children who have attended an ECEC program led by a Diploma or ECT qualified educator are likely to have better outcomes on the National Assessment Program –Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).³⁰

Reflecting this research, the NQF seeks to improve the qualifications of ECEC educators. Services, educators and sector groups at the focus groups were overwhelmingly supportive of the objectives of the NQF to improve quality and to professionalise their sector. This was confirmed by a recent survey conducted by Australian Community Children’s Services which found that the ECEC sector is embracing the reforms of the NQF.³¹

Many educators at the focus groups commented that the sector has been supportive of introducing such reforms for many years now, primarily with the aim of improving outcomes for children. Educators commented that introducing national qualification requirements would go a long way towards professionalising the sector and improving its recognition in the community.

Educators also overwhelmingly indicated that they enjoy their work and the contribution they can make to children’s development. This is confirmed by the 2013 ECEC Census which found that the majority of educators:

- are satisfied with their job (87 per cent) (see Table 3)
- would recommend a career in the sector to others (66 per cent)
- wish to further their career in the sector (61 per cent).

Job satisfaction rates did not change significantly from the 2010 ECEC Census.

Table 3: 2013 ECEC Census: Job satisfaction

		PS	LDC	FDC	OSHC	Total
I am satisfied with my job	% agree	90	85	88	90	87
	% disagree	3	4	3	2	3

Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

Furthermore, it appears that ECEC educators are generally more satisfied with their jobs than the average of the labour force. Table 4 contains data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey on average job satisfaction of ECEC educators and compares this to the average for all employed people. The HILDA Survey is a household-based survey which surveys over 9,000 households and 24,000 individuals.

While ECEC staff were marginally less satisfied with their pay and conditions, they were more satisfied with the work itself and their level of job security.

Table 4: HILDA Survey data: Average job satisfaction amongst ECEC staff

	Pay	Job security	Work itself	Hours	Flexibility	Overall
Average for ECEC staff	6.8	8.2	8.1	7.5	7.6	8.0
Average for employed people	6.9	7.9	7.5	7.2	7.5	7.6

Source: Based on Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce Study*, p 77 and University of Melbourne Faculty of Business and Economics, 2011. *Families, Incomes and Jobs*.

³⁰ Correspondence provided to PwC from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

³¹ Australian Community Children’s Services, 2012. *ACCS Trends in Community Children’s Services Survey: 2012 1st Wave National Report*.

2.4 Transitional arrangements in each jurisdiction

As already detailed, each jurisdiction has implemented a range of transitional arrangements to meet the NQF qualification requirements. This section provides a high level summary of the transitional arrangements each jurisdiction has introduced for centre-based services and FDC. As already detailed, the qualification requirements each jurisdiction had in place prior to the NQF and the transitional arrangements that have been implemented impact on the starting point of each jurisdiction. This may in turn impact on their preparedness for the NQF qualification requirements.

Appendix C provides a more detailed summary of the transitional arrangements for centre-based services and FDC. It also provides a summary of the existing regulatory requirements for OSHC.

2.4.1 Centre-based services

Table 5 provides a high level summary of the transitional qualification requirements by jurisdiction. It shows those jurisdictions that already have qualification requirements in place for each qualification level. As shown in the table:

- most jurisdictions already require a proportion of staff to hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification
- Victoria and Queensland both require educators counted towards educator to child ratios to hold at least an approved Certificate III level qualification
- NSW is the only jurisdiction with existing ECT requirements for LDC.

In considering the preparedness of each jurisdiction for the NQF qualification requirements, it is important to recognise that each jurisdiction is coming from different pre-existing requirements. No jurisdiction apart from NSW currently requires LDCs to employ an ECT, however, a number of jurisdictions require ECTs to deliver state government funded preschool or kindergarten programs. Additionally, many jurisdictions including WA, Tasmania, NSW and the ACT have no existing requirements for staff to hold an approved Certificate III qualification.

Table 5: Centre-based services Transitional qualification requirements by jurisdiction

	Certificate III	Diploma	ECT^a
NQF	All educators must hold or be actively working towards at least an approved Certificate III qualification.	50% staff must hold or be working towards an approved Diploma level qualification or above.	All services must employ an ECT (see Table 2 for the proportion of time the ECT must be employed).
NSW		✓	✓
VIC	✓	✓	
QLD	✓	✓	
SA		✓	
WA		✓	
Tas		✓	
NT		✓	
ACT		✓	

Note A: A number of jurisdictions through preschool funding guidelines require LDC services to employ an ECT to deliver a funded preschool or kindergarten program for children in the year before school.

Table 20 in Appendix C details the transitional educator-to-child ratios for LDCs in each jurisdiction. It should be noted that the number of qualified staff that are required at a centre-based service is dependent on the educator to child ratios. For example, in Victoria 50 per cent of educators working with children aged three and above are required to hold a Diploma and this qualification requirement is in line with the NQF. However, the educator to child ratio is currently 1:15 in Victoria and will be 1:11 under the NQF. Therefore, services in Victoria will require more Diploma qualified staff to meet the NQF qualification requirements and the educator to child ratios.

2.4.2 Family Day Care

Table 6 provides a high level summary of the transitional qualification requirements by jurisdiction for FDC. As shown in the table:

- SA is the only jurisdiction with existing qualification requirements for FDC educators
- Tasmania requires FDC educators with an extended registration (meaning they can have an additional younger child) to hold an approved qualification
- QLD, SA, Tasmania³² and ACT are the only jurisdictions that require FDC coordinators to hold a Diploma level qualification

³² It should be noted that Tasmania has a different definition for FDC coordinator than the definition under the NQF.

Objective of NQF qualification requirements

- NSW does not have qualification requirements for FDC educators, however, require FDC coordinators to hold a Certificate III level qualification and have 12 months experience.

It should be noted that the educator to child ratios for FDC are already broadly in line with the NQF requirements (see Appendix C for the educator to child ratios for FDC).

Table 6: FDC Transitional qualification requirements by jurisdiction

	FDC educators	FDC coordinators
NQF	Educators must hold or be working towards an approved Certificate III level qualification.	Coordinators must hold an approved Diploma level qualification.
NSW		✓
VIC		
QLD		✓
SA	✓	✓
WA		
Tas	✓ ³³	✓
NT		
ACT		✓

³³ Note: Only FDC educators with an extended registration require a qualification in Tasmania.

3 Preparedness for the NQF qualification requirements

Though there are specific challenges within jurisdictions and geographical areas, the 2013 ECEC Census results suggest the sector across Australia appears to be broadly on track to meeting the NQF qualification requirements by 1 January 2014, with the exception of the requirements relating to the employment of early childhood teachers (ECT). While the views from the focus groups indicated that New South Wales and Victoria were best placed to meet the NQF requirements, the results from the Census appears to suggest that all jurisdictions were on track to meeting most of the requirements.³⁴

The 2013 ECEC Census data suggests the sector was broadly on track to meeting the requirement that 50 per cent of staff in centre-based services hold or be working towards a Diploma level qualification or above. The data also shows that the sector is broadly on track to meeting the NQF requirements related to the attainment of staff with a relevant Certificate III and above as close to or over 90 per cent of staff held a Certificate III qualification or above across all jurisdictions.

However, there appears to be greater challenges around preparedness in meeting the requirements for ECTs in LDC settings. There were a large proportion of LDC services - ranging between 31 to 80 per cent - that did not have access to an ECT as required by the NQF. There was a significant degree of variability in the proportion of LDCs and preschools in different jurisdictions that had access to an ECT.

Nevertheless, there appears to have been progress across the sector towards meeting the ECT requirements and the NQF qualification requirements more broadly. This reflects the outcomes of the various Australian Government and state and territory government programs that have been implemented to support the sector. The comparison of the 2013 Census data with the 2010 data shows that the level of access to ECTs has increased in nearly all jurisdictions for centre-based services while the proportion of staff who hold or are working towards a Certificate III qualification or above has also increased overall.

3.1 Ability to meet the NQF qualification requirements

The feedback from the focus groups was that a large number of services felt it will be challenging to meet and, more importantly, continue to meet, the qualification requirements of the NQF. This message was largely consistent across jurisdictions, though in some jurisdictions (notably, NSW and Victoria) many services felt they should be able to meet the NQF qualification requirements on 1 January 2014.

Many participants indicated that they do not believe they would be in a better position to meet the requirements if the timeframes were extended because without addressing the barriers detailed in this report there will be insufficient numbers of qualified staff in the ECEC sector.

The services that felt confident that they will meet the NQF qualification requirements on 1 January 2014 have been planning for a number of years, for example, by seeking to employ

³⁴ Data from ECEC Census staff surveys were not fully available at the time of this analysis. For a more comprehensive analysis of preparedness, PwC recommends further analysis be conducted around services' access to qualified staff once this data becomes available.

only Certificate III qualified staff and above. Many large service providers also indicated that, though they face challenges, they have developed workforce strategies and will in many areas be able to meet the NQF qualification requirements.

Participants highlighted that the challenges they face are compounded by the significant change that the ECEC sector is currently experiencing. Some indicated that Universal Access provisions and other elements of the NQF such as the ratings meant that services are preparing for multiple changes to the sector.

3.1.1 Analysis of the 2013 ECEC Census

Overall, the views of stakeholders in relation to their service's and the sector's preparedness for meeting the NQF qualification requirements (refer to Table 2) are broadly supported by the 2013 ECEC Census data. We note that it is difficult to gauge the preparedness of the sector using the 2013 ECEC Census data as a result of the overlap within the qualification requirements³⁵ and the limitations of the data. However, an analysis of the data still provides valuable insight into the preparedness of the sector.

In assessing the preparedness of the sector using the 2013 ECEC Census data, we have examined each of the three qualification requirements for centre-based services and the requirements for FDC services separately. We have analysed three potential measures of preparedness including:

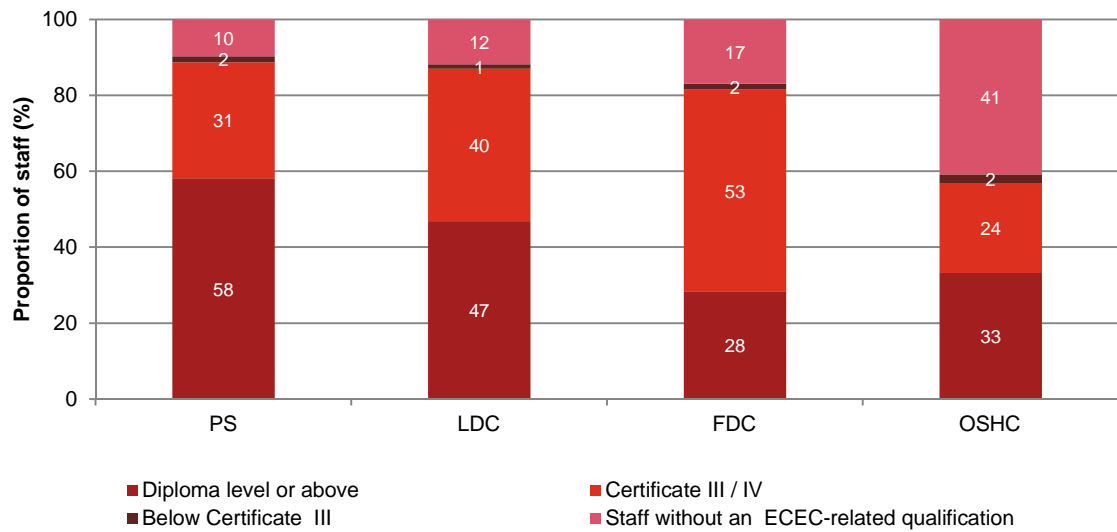
- the proportion of ECEC educators with a specific level of qualification
- the proportion of staff who are currently working towards an ECEC related qualification
- the proportion of ECEC services who currently have access to at least one staff member with a certain level of qualification, where 'access' is defined as a service which currently employs a qualified staff member for any number of hours.

NQF requirement: 50 per cent of staff in centre-based services must hold or be working towards a Diploma-level qualification or above

The 2013 ECEC Census showed that centre-based services (i.e. preschool and LDC service types) were potentially on track to meeting the NQF qualification requirement that at least 50 per cent of staff either hold or be working towards an approved Diploma level qualification or above. According to the 2013 ECEC Census, 58 per cent of contact staff in preschools and 47 per cent in LDCs held a Diploma qualification or above (see Figure 10). While this does not mean that 50 per cent of staff in every preschool or LDC service holds or is working towards a Diploma qualification or above, it nevertheless represents a positive sign that qualification levels within centre-based services may be approaching the levels required under the NQF qualification requirements.

³⁵ For example, because of the requirement that 50 per cent of staff must hold a diploma or above and then all other staff must have at least a Certificate III, it is difficult to quantify how many Certificate III level qualifications a service will need without knowing how many Diplomas they have first. Further the number of ECTs at a service will count towards the 50 per cent of staff holding diploma and above and therefore the number of diploma level qualifications required is uncertain.

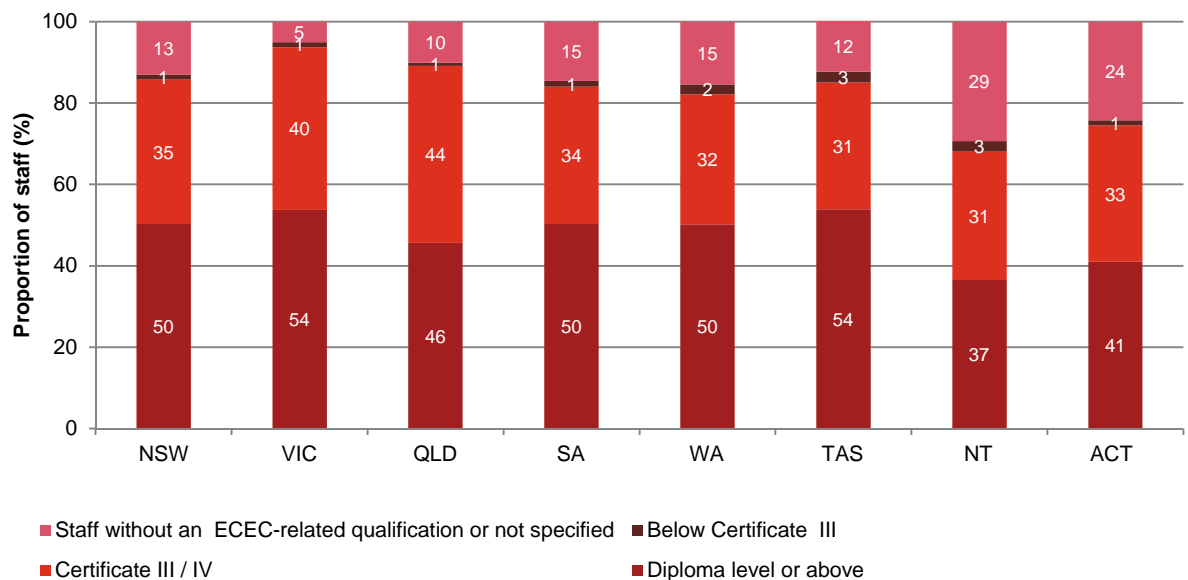
Figure 10: Educator qualifications by service type



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

At the focus groups, services from NSW and Victoria indicated that they were likely to meet the NQF qualification requirements by 1 January 2014. While the Census results support the view that centre-based services in New South Wales and Victoria were on track to meeting this particular requirement, it also indicates that South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia were equally well positioned (see Figure 11). For these jurisdictions, approximately half of contact staff held qualifications at a Diploma level or higher.

Figure 11: Educator qualifications in centre-based services (LDC and preschool), by jurisdiction



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

NQF requirement: All other staff in centre-based services must hold or be working towards a Certificate III

The 2013 ECEC Census shows that centre-based services appeared broadly on track to meeting the requirement that all other staff hold or be working towards a Certificate III qualification. According to the 2013 ECEC Census, there remains a proportion of educators working in preschool and LDC services, who do not hold an ECEC-related qualification (see Figure 10). This proportion ranges from 6 per cent in Victoria to 29 per cent in the Northern Territory (Figure 11).

Some contact staff who currently do not hold a relevant qualification of Certificate III or higher are currently working towards this qualification. For LDC services, the 2013 Census results suggest that there is a proportion of LDC staff in each jurisdiction that are working towards a qualification (Figure 12). While this is encouraging, there remains a proportion of staff who neither hold a relevant qualification of Certificate III or higher or are working towards this qualification. This is most notable in Western Australia (8 per cent), the Northern Territory (8 per cent) and the ACT (11 per cent).

Figure 12: Proportion of LDC staff with or working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above, by jurisdiction

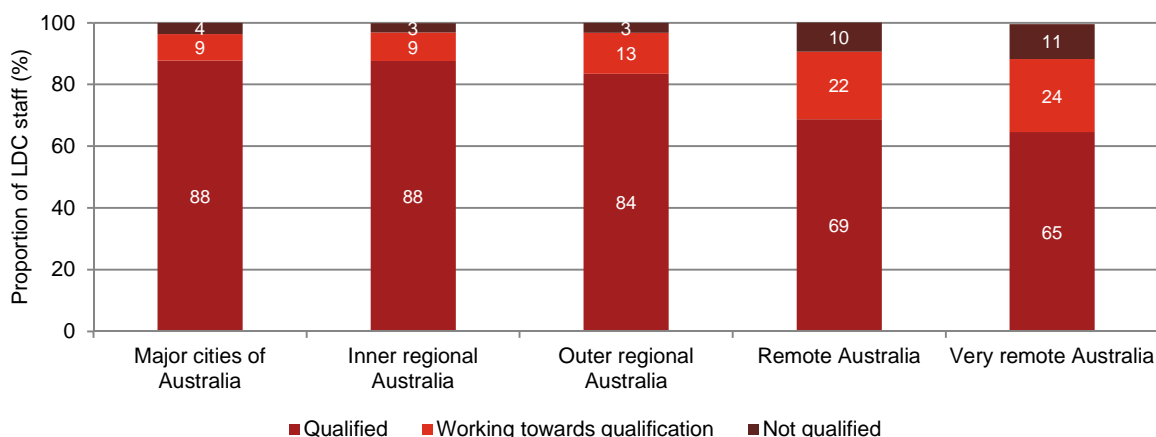


Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

Note: there are different transitional arrangements in places as described in Appendix C.

The proportion of LDC staff who hold or are working towards a Certificate III qualification or above also appears to vary depending on geographical remoteness. As highlighted in Figure 13, nearly all LDC staff in non-remote areas hold or are working towards a Certificate III qualification or above. However, only 90 per cent of LDC staff in remote and very remote areas are meeting this criteria.

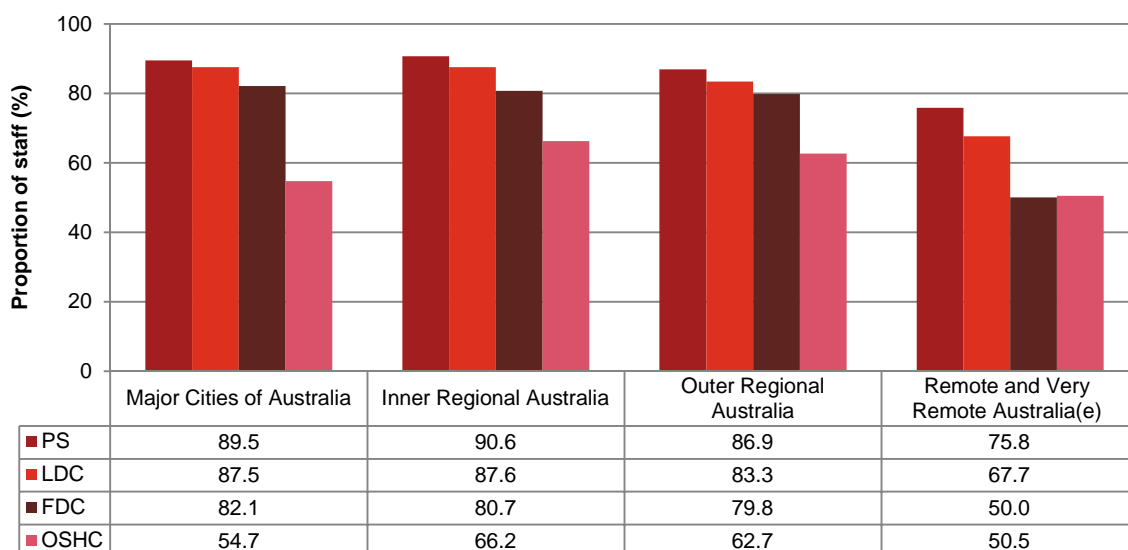
Figure 13: Proportion of LDC staff with or working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above, by remoteness



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

For preschool services, the proportion of staff with a Certificate III qualification or above was lower in remote and very remote areas (Figure 14). At the time of this analysis, data on the number of preschool staff working towards a relevant qualification level was not available. PwC is therefore unable to comment on the preparedness of preschool services in relation to their remoteness.

Figure 14: Proportion of staff with an ECEC related Certificate III qualification or above, by remoteness



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

NQF requirement: All centre based services must employ an ECT for a specified proportion of operating hours based on the size of the service

The data indicates that the sector is not on track to meeting ECT criteria noting that LDCs and preschools are the only service types that require access to an ECT under the NQF qualification requirements.

‘Teacher’, as defined by the NQF, includes ECEC educators who have a university qualification in a teaching field. However, under Regulation 137(2)(a)(i) of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* ACECQA publishes a list of ‘former approved ECT qualifications’ that allow people to work as ECTs under the NQF.³⁶ This includes a broader range of qualifications than just teaching bachelor degrees.

Using access to ECTs as a measure for preparedness in meeting the NQF qualification requirements, there appears to be a lack of preparedness within LDC services for meeting the NQF qualifications. As highlighted by Figure 15, approximately 70 per cent of LDC services in Victoria and Queensland had access to an ECT, which falls below the 100 per cent requirement. This proportion drops to 65 per cent for LDC services in New South Wales, 58 per cent for South Australia and 52 per cent for the ACT. The data also shows that less than half of LDC services in Western Australia, Tasmanian and the Northern Territory had access to a teaching qualified staff member.

The Census result for the Northern Territory is particularly low where only 20 per cent of LDC services have access to a teacher.

Figure 15: Proportion of LDC services with access to an early childhood teacher, by jurisdiction



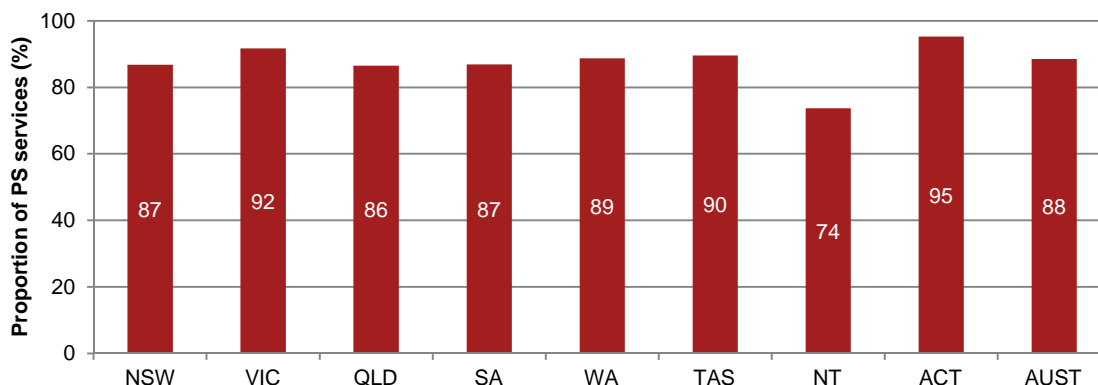
Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding of weighted data. Table includes only paid, contact staff that were present during the reference period

Although the proportion of preschool services with access to at least one ECT was higher in comparison to LDC services across all jurisdictions, there also appeared to be a lack of preparedness in meeting this criteria for this group of services. As highlighted in Figure 16, there remains a proportion of preschool services who do not currently have access to an ECT.

Over 90 per cent of preschool services in Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT had access to an ECT. Nearly 90 per cent of services in the remaining jurisdictions apart from the Northern Territory had access to an ECT while the data also shows that ECT access for services in the Northern Territory was relatively lower where only 74 per cent of services had access.

³⁶ ACECQA, 2013. *Former approved early childhood teaching qualifications*. Available at: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/Former-approved-early-childhood-teaching-qualifications>

Figure 16: Proportion of preschools with access to an early childhood teacher, by jurisdiction



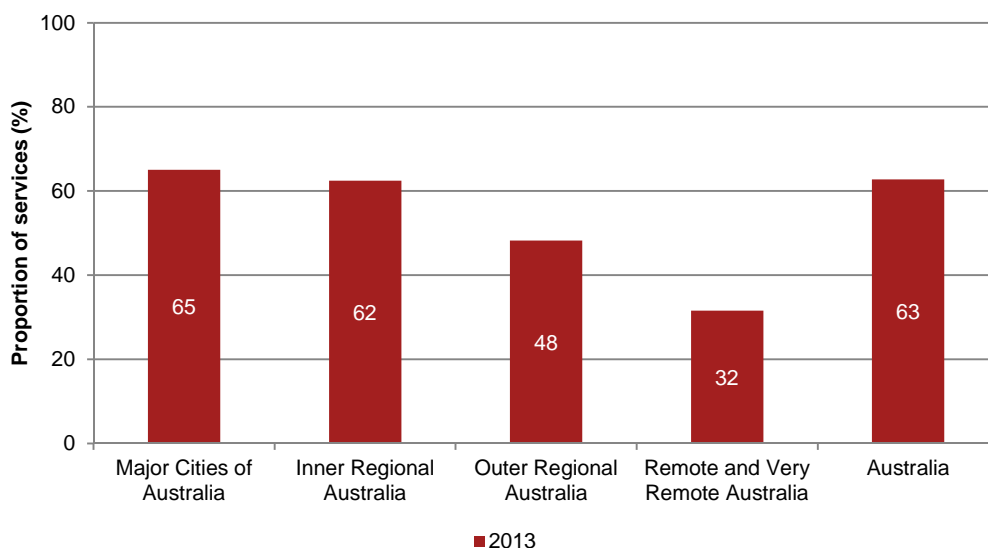
Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding of weighted data. Table includes only paid, contact staff that were present during the reference period

Throughout the focus groups, regional and remote areas were the most concerned about their ability to maintain the NQF qualification requirements due to high staff turnover and the difficulty in attracting new staff members. This finding is weakly supported by the Census results which show that remote and very remote areas have a lower proportion of staff with a bachelor degree or higher in early childhood related teaching (Figure 17 and Figure 18).

While 63 per cent of LDC services and 88 per cent of preschool services have access to an ECT, the data also highlights the drop in access levels for services located in remote and very remote areas. According to the data, only 32 per cent of LDC services in remote and very remote areas had access to an LDC. This highlights a potential lack of preparedness for LDC services in remote and very remote locations.

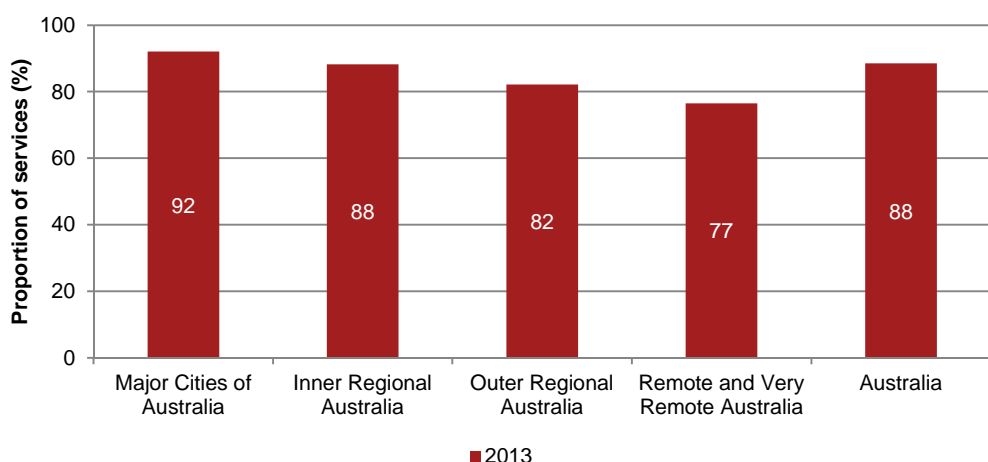
The data also highlights the lower ECT access levels for preschool services located in remote and very remote locations (77 per cent) in comparison to services located in major cities and regional areas.

Figure 17: Proportion of LDC services with access to an early childhood teacher, by remoteness



Source: Unpublished weighted data, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Information presented for Remote and Very Remote services represents only a small number of workers and should be interpreted with caution

Figure 18: Proportion of preschools with access to an early childhood teacher, by remoteness



Source: Unpublished weighted data, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Information presented for Remote and Very Remote services represents only a small number of workers and should be interpreted with caution

NQF requirement: All family day care educators must hold or be working towards a Certificate III qualification

The 2013 ECEC Census data indicates that FDC services are broadly on track to meeting the criterion that all educators hold or be working towards a Certificate III qualification or above. However, the data does show that there is a proportion of FDC staff in every jurisdiction, who neither hold or are working towards the qualification.

As outlined in Figure 19, 11 per cent of FDC staff in Queensland, 9 per cent in Western Australia and 9 per cent in Victoria do not meet this criterion. These proportions are smaller in New South Wales, South Australia and the smaller jurisdictions.

Figure 19: Proportion of FDC staff with or working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above by jurisdiction



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

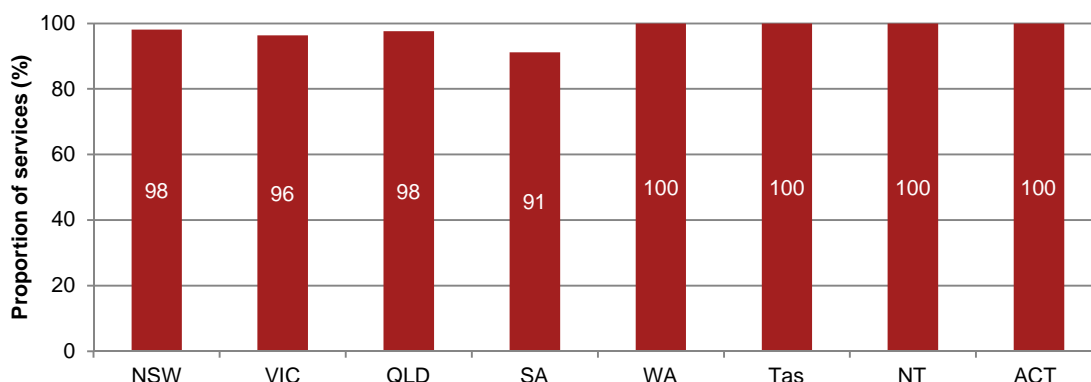
NQF requirement: All FDC coordinators must have a Diploma qualification

The 2013 ECEC Census indicates that FDC services are on track to meeting this requirement as in many jurisdictions most FDC services have access to a coordinator who holds an approved Diploma qualification or above. As highlighted by Figure 20, almost all FDC services in every jurisdiction have access to a Diploma qualified (or above) coordinator.

Although the proportion in South Australia appears lower (91 per cent), it should be noted that there are a small number of FDC services operating in this state. Therefore, an increase in the proportion of FDCs with access to a Diploma qualified coordinator could be improved by a relatively small number of FDC coordinators attaining a Diploma qualification. Additionally, a large number of FDC services in South Australia are run through a state government coordinated network of FDC services which accounts for the small number of FDC services. Therefore, there are a relatively high number of FDC educators per service.

Again, the high proportion of FDCs with access to a Diploma qualified staff member only provides an indication that these services are on track to meeting the NQF qualification requirements.

Figure 20: Proportion of FDCs with access to a Diploma-qualified or above coordinator (%)



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

Note

- (a) Totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding of weighted data
- (b) Table includes only staff that were present during the reference period
- (c) Table includes only family day care services where information on coordinator qualification was provided
- (d) Information presented is affected by the small number of services in this area and should be used with caution

3.2 Progress since 2010

While an analysis of the 2013 Census data highlights whether the sector is currently on track to meeting the NQF requirements, a comparison of the data with the 2010 Census data is useful in highlighting the progress that has been achieved during this period.

3.2.1 Access to early childhood teachers (ECTs)

The proportion of centre-based services with access to an ECT increased between 2010 and 2013 in nearly all jurisdictions. The exceptions were LDC services in New South Wales, ACT, Tasmania and the Northern Territory where the proportion of services with access to an ECT declined over the period. The analysis of progress showed that:

- overall access to ECTs across all LDC services increased from 55 per cent of services in 2010 to 63 per cent in 2013 (see Figure 21)
- the level of change between jurisdictions was mixed:
 - there was a significant increase in the proportion of LDCs with access to an ECT in Queensland (44 to 69 per cent) and Victoria (58 to 68 per cent)
 - there was a large decrease in access levels for Tasmania (53 to 44 per cent) and the Northern Territory (33 to 20 per cent)
- access to ECTs across all preschool services increased from 83 per cent of services in 2010 to 88 per cent in 2013 (see Figure 22).

Figure 21: Access to ECTs: LDCs



Source: Unpublished weighted data, DEEWR National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013

Figure 22: Access to ECTs: Preschools

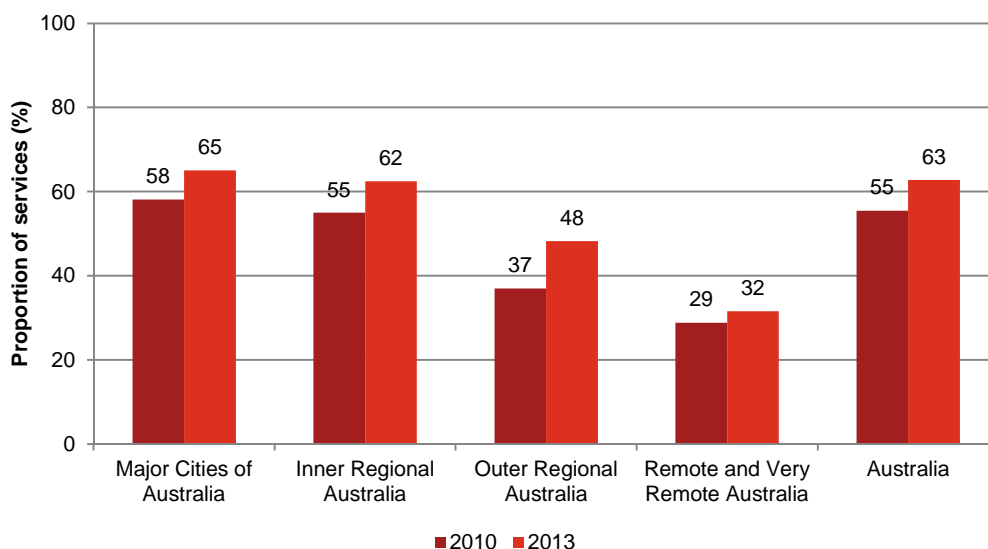


Source: Unpublished weighted data, DEEWR National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013

Access to ECTs also appears to have increased in all levels of remoteness between 2010 and 2013 for LDC and preschool services. However, the increase in remote and very remote locations was small relative to major cities and overall access levels remain significantly lower. As highlighted by Figure 23 and Figure 24.

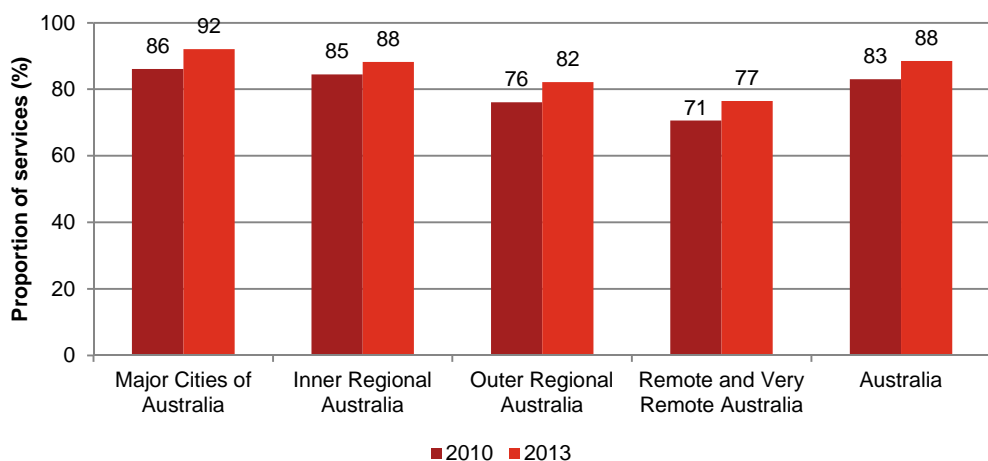
- access levels for LDC services in remote and very remote locations increased by only 3 per cent between 2010 and 2013. Only 32 per cent of LDC services in remote and very remote locations which is approximately half of access levels in major cities and regional locations.
- although access levels for preschool services in remote and very remote settings increased from 71 to 77 per cent, it remains below the national average for preschools.

Figure 23: Access to ECTs: LDCs by remoteness



Source: Unpublished weighted data, DEEWR National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010, Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Information presented for Remote and Very Remote services represents only a small number of workers and should be interpreted with caution

Figure 24: Access to ECTs: Preschools by remoteness



Source: Unpublished weighted data, DEEWR National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010, Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013. Information presented for Remote and Very Remote services represents only a small number of workers and should be interpreted with caution

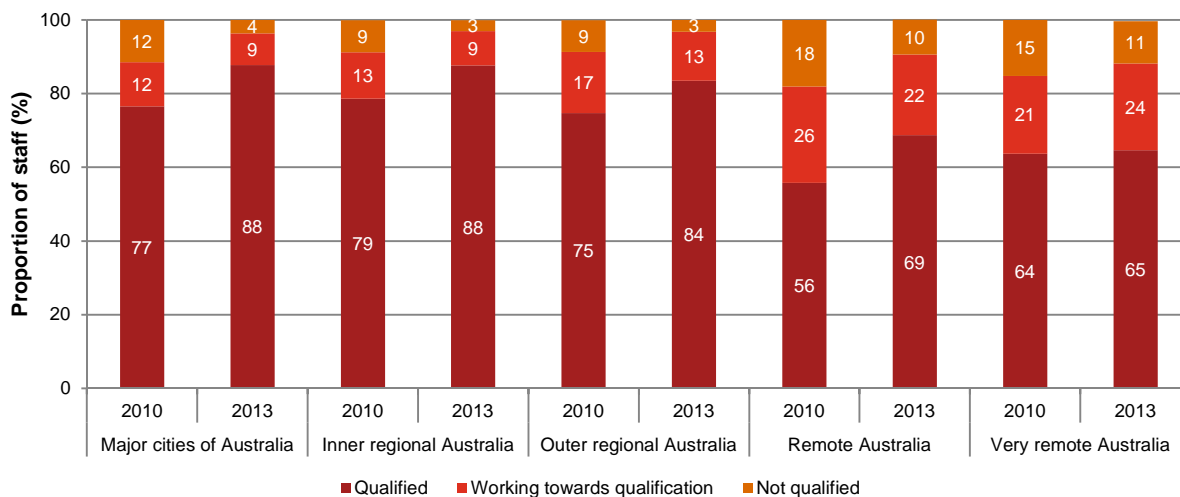
3.2.2 Certificate III qualifications or above for centre-based services staff

While ECEC services in rural and remote areas face similar challenges in meeting the NQF qualification requirements to metropolitan ECEC services, progress in remote services appeared to be greater than progress for services located in very remote areas. Figure 25 shows that:

- in remote locations, the proportion of LDC staff without a Certificate III qualification or higher and was not working towards one decreased from 18 to 10 per cent
- in very remote locations, the proportion of LDC staff without a Certificate III qualification or higher and was not working towards one decreased by a smaller amount (from 15 to 11 per cent)

- the increase in the proportion of staff with a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above increased by only 1 per cent.

Figure 25: Proportion of LDC staff with or working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above, by remoteness



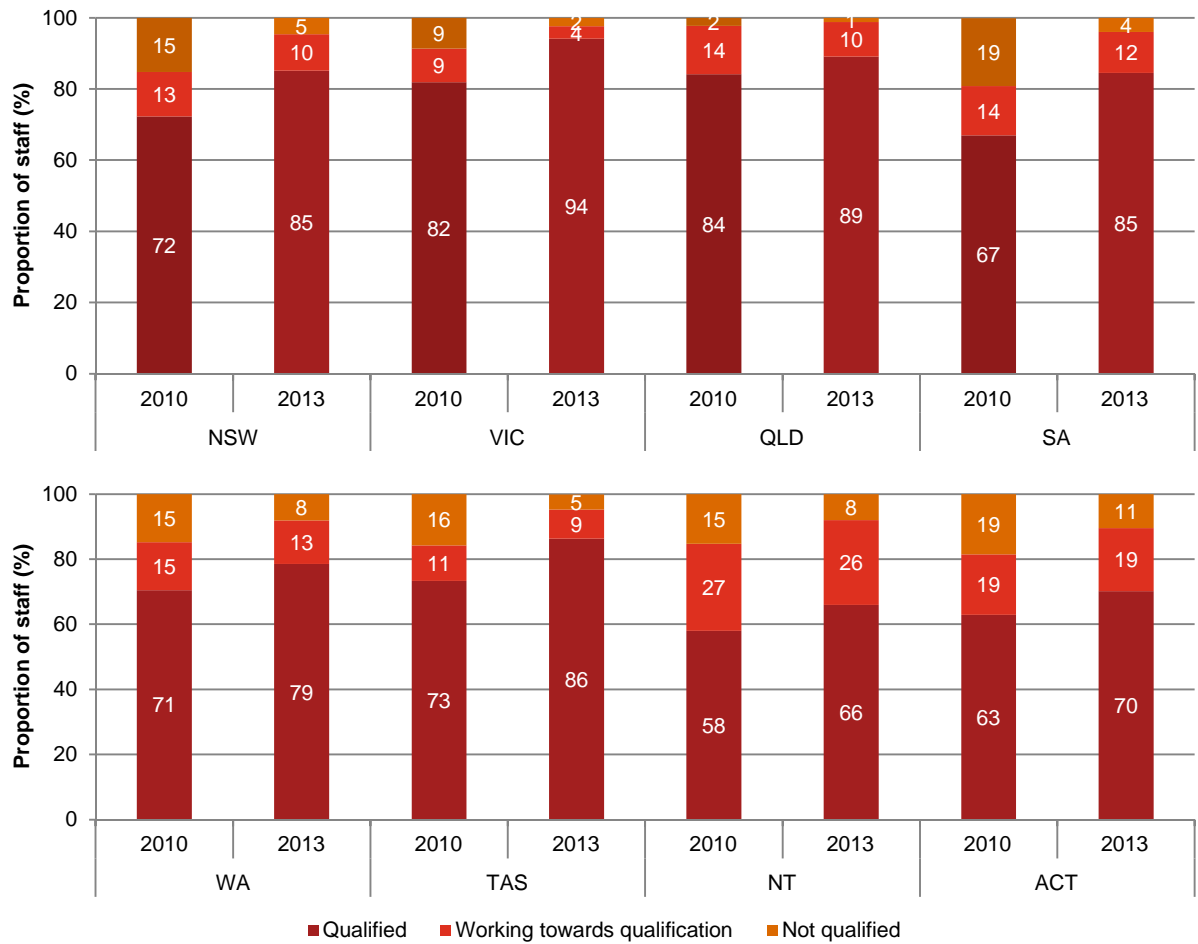
Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013.

Progress for LDC services also appears to have been made in all jurisdictions (Figure 26), in particular:

- New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria where the proportion of staff with qualifications increased by 13 per cent, 13 per cent and 12 per cent respectively
- the Northern Territory and the ACT where there continues to be a significant proportion of staff who are working towards a qualification.

Progress for centre-based services collectively (Figure 27) is also evident as the proportion of staff with qualifications increased in all jurisdictions.

Figure 26: Proportion of LDC staff with or working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above, by jurisdiction



Source: 2010 ECEC Workforce Census, unpublished weighted data, 2013 ECEC Workforce Census – unpublished, weighted preliminary data.

Figure 27: Educator qualifications in centre-based services (LDC and preschool), by jurisdiction



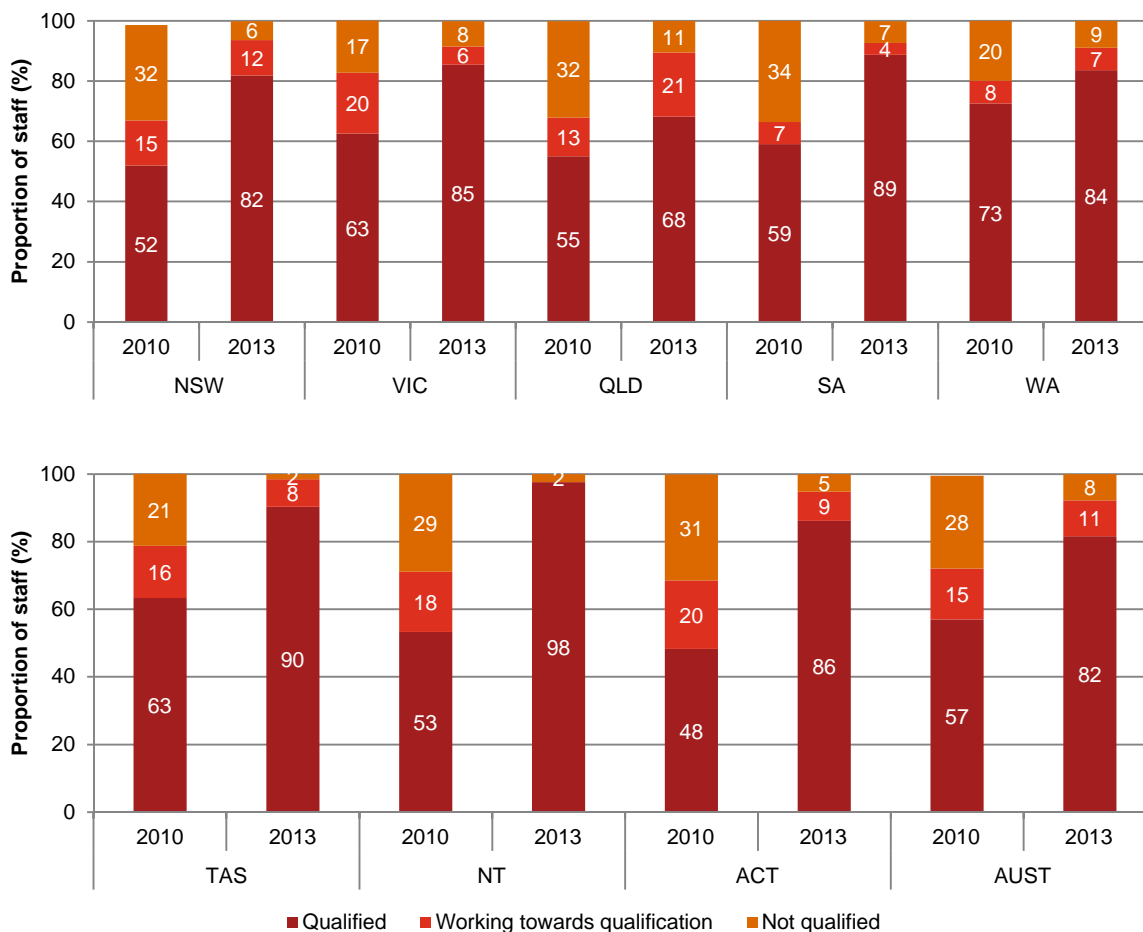
Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

3.2.3 Certificate III qualifications or above for FDC staff

There appears to have been significant progress made in relation to qualifications for FDC staff. As highlighted by Figure 28, the proportion of FDC staff who are currently unqualified and are not working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above has decreased overall:

- the proportion of FDC staff who do not hold a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above decreased in all jurisdictions
- only 2 per cent of FDC staff in NT do not currently hold a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above and are not working towards a qualification (it should be noted that there are only a small number of FDC staff in the NT).

Figure 28: Proportion of FDC staff with or working towards a relevant qualification of Certificate III or above, by remoteness



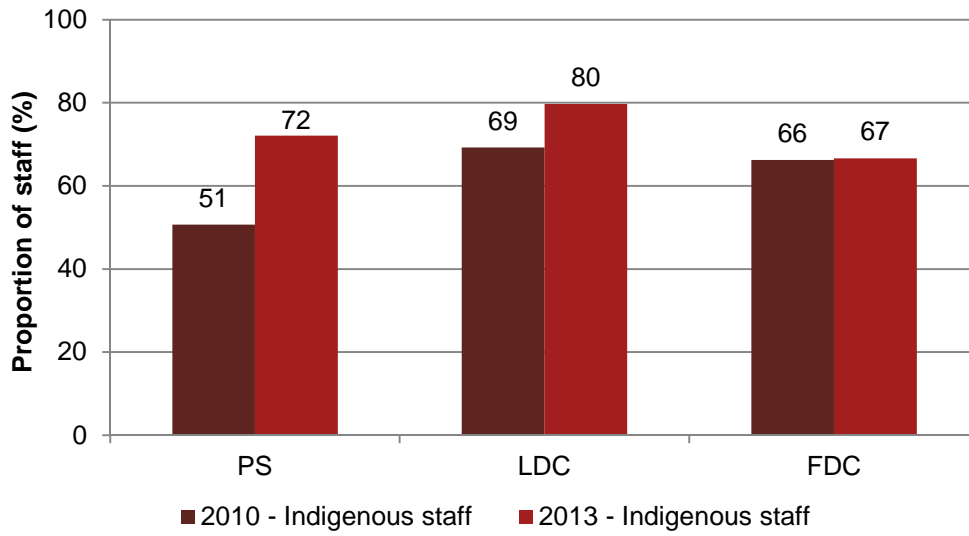
Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013. Totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding of weighted data

3.2.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators

Progress appears to have been made with an increasing proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators with qualifications. A comparison of 2010 and 2013 census data shows that:

- the proportion of Indigenous contact staff with a relevant ECEC qualification has increased significantly between 2010 and 2013 for preschool and LDC services (Figure 29):
 - from 51 to 72 per cent for preschools
 - from 69 to 80 per cent for LDC services
- there was a small increase in the proportion of Indigenous staff with a relevant qualification within FDC services.

Figure 29: Change in the proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant early childhood education qualifications between 2010 and 2013



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013. Totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding of weighted data

Section B

Challenges in gaining qualifications

4 *New entrants to the ECEC sector*

Since 2007, there has been a significant increase in new entrants to the ECEC workforce. Over the five years to November 2012, employment of ECEC service managers increased by 29 per cent and employment of ECEC educators increased by 16.8 per cent.³⁷ This is set to continue with projected growth in employment in the ECEC sector from 2011/12 to 2016/17 of over 18 per cent.³⁸

This significant increase in the number of people employed in the sector has been accompanied by a significant increase in the number of people studying ECEC related qualifications. NCVER data for 2011 indicates that there were approximately 65,200 students in vocational education and training (VET) related to ECEC (Certificate IIIs and Diplomas), nearly double the number of students in 2007.³⁹ There were a further 1,700 students who completed a university ECT qualification (for example, a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education) in the same year.⁴⁰

This section details the challenges faced by new entrants to the ECEC sector, as well as the current actions that seek to address these challenges and potential actions that PwC suggest could provide further support.

4.1 *Retention in ECEC courses*

Challenge

Studies have found that in some Certificate III and Diploma courses less than one third of the students who undertake an ECEC related qualification complete their studies.⁴¹

A study by the NCVER found that on average 33 per cent of students commencing a Certificate III in Children's Services complete that qualification and 27 per cent of students commencing a Diploma complete that qualification.⁴² Another study prepared for the Victorian Government found that only 22.7 per cent of students in both Certificate III and Diplomas of Children Services at TAFE would complete their studies.⁴³ This was notably lower than completion rates at private RTOs, where 60.4 per cent of students would graduate with their Certificate III or Diploma.⁴⁴

Though these completion rates appear very low, data suggests there are challenges of low completion rates across all VET courses. On average only 23.2 per cent of students complete their VET studies.⁴⁵ This is lower than most of the completion rates observed for ECEC VET qualifications.

Table 7 shows the attrition rates for ECT bachelor degrees. 21 per cent of students who commenced an ECT university qualification in 2010 did not complete the qualification and

³⁷ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. 2012. *Labour Market Research- Child Care Occupations*.

³⁸ Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council, 2013. *The Care Industry: Time for Action*, p. 14.

³⁹ NCVER data referenced in Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. 2012. *Labour Market Research- Child Care Occupations*.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Centre for Research on Education Systems, 2011. *A Report on the Effectiveness of Courses Leading to an Early Childhood Qualification in Preparing and Developing the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, p 89. National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2013. *Engagement of students in Children's Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR, p.10.

⁴² National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2013. *Engagement of students in Children's Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR, p.10.

⁴³ Centre for Research on Education Systems, 2011. *A Report on the Effectiveness of Courses Leading to an Early Childhood Qualification in Preparing and Developing the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, p 89.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

this is marginally above the attrition rates for all university degrees. However, it should be noted that the attrition rates from ECT university qualifications has decreased from 22.4 per cent in 2005.

Table 7: Attrition rates by university qualification

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Early childhood (%)	22.4	20.4	21.0	21.5	21.3	21.0
Education (%)	20.7	18.5	19.3	19.2	19.5	20.5
All students (%)	18.9	18.5	19.0	17.9	18.1	19.1

Source: Unpublished Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education higher education statistics, 2005-2011 provided to PwC from the Department.

Current action

The Australian Government provided funding to the NCVER to investigate the reasons for students not completing ECEC VET qualifications and recommend strategies to improve retention.⁴⁶

The NCVER report suggested a range of actions including better support for students completing qualifications. The report also highlighted a number of strategies that training providers have already implemented to support their students. For example, one TAFE in Sydney holds weekly ‘learning circles’ where students gather to discuss assignments, the challenges of work placements and to provide learning and personal support to each other. The learning circles are also used for workshops on study skills and resume writing. The NCVER report also highlights the importance of effective screening of students; this is discussed further in Section 4.3.

Additionally, a University of Melbourne study has found that traineeships are more effective at retaining educators and have higher completion rates and a number of jurisdictions have introduced traineeship programs. For example, NSW have introduced the Children’s Services Traineeship which provides support to employers and students to undertake Certificate III or Diploma qualifications through traineeships. A traineeship involves on-the-job training and it reduces the amount of out-of-work classroom training.

Review finding

Finding 1: Studies have found that in some Certificate III and Diploma courses less than one third of those students who undertake an ECEC related qualification complete their studies. The Australian Government recently provided funding to the NCVER to investigate the reasons for students not completing qualifications and recommend strategies to improve retention in Certificate III and Diploma courses. Further, data suggests that university attrition rates are higher for ECT courses than for other university courses. Potential areas for consideration include:

- Considering the findings of the NCVER, particularly those recommendations concerning out-of-classroom support (such as peer study networks) and effective screening of entrants into training courses.
- Commissioning a similar review for university ECT courses.

These could be undertaken by jurisdictions and the Department.

⁴⁶ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2012. *Engagement of students in Children’s Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR.

4.2 Consistency of the quality of training

Challenge

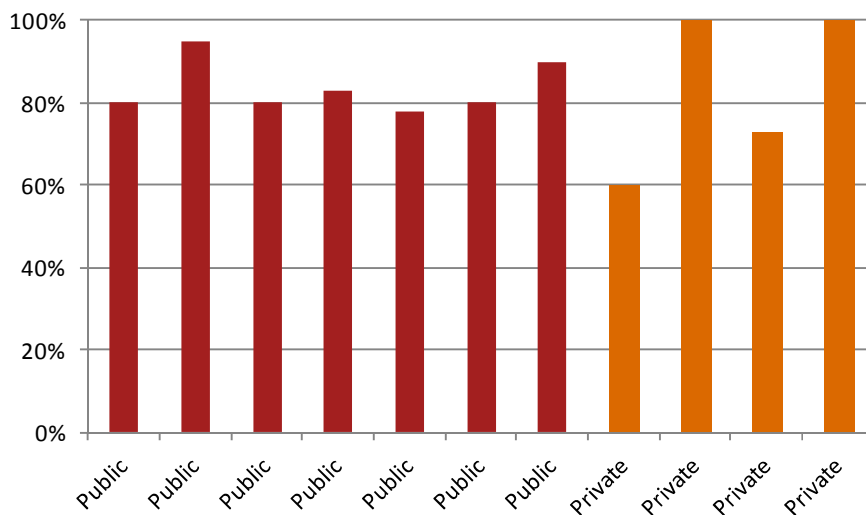
Many focus group participants raised concerns regarding the consistency of the quality of VET training being provided by RTOs. The vast majority of sector groups, large service providers, educators and directors indicated that they particularly have concerns regarding ‘fast track’ VET qualifications being offered by some RTOs that can be completed over a number of weeks. Many of these fast track VET qualifications do not require completion of practicum and focus group participants did not believe they appropriately prepare people to work in the sector.

In 2012, the Australian Community Children’s Services surveyed 640 ECEC services and found that nearly 50 per cent of those that had recently recruited found the field of new entrants was of a satisfactory standard. However, 41 per cent of respondents reported that the field of new entrants was of a low or very low standard.⁴⁷

This may be driven by a high level of variation in the quality of VET courses offered by both public and private providers. Educators at the focus groups indicated some RTOs produce consistently high quality graduates, whereas there are certain RTOs that they would be very unlikely to employ graduates from due to concerns around the quality of training those RTOs provide.

A survey of ECEC graduates of Certificate III and Diploma qualifications found that there was a degree of variation across both private and public providers in the overall level of satisfaction graduates had with their course (see Figure 30).⁴⁸ While satisfaction with a course may be influenced by a number of factors unrelated to quality, it is intuitive that students who feel they are being provided with high quality training would be more likely to be satisfied.

Figure 30: ECEC Certificate III and Diploma graduates: Proportion satisfied with the course



Source: Centre for Research on Education Systems, 2011. *A Report on the Effectiveness of Courses Leading to an Early Childhood Qualification in Preparing and Developing the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, p 89.

Note: the names of the training providers have been withheld for privacy purposes.

⁴⁷ Australian Community Children’s Services, 2013. *ACCS Trends in Community Children’s Services Survey: 2012 1st Wave National Report*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Centre for Research on Education Systems, 2011. *A Report on the Effectiveness of Courses Leading to an Early Childhood Qualification in Preparing and Developing the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, p 89.

Current action

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council, after consultation with stakeholders, has released the New Standards for Training Packages. These standards involve a range of changes to the Certificate III, Certificate IV and Diploma ECEC qualifications including but not limited to:

- new assessment requirements for each competency which specify performance evidence, knowledge evidence and specific conditions for assessment of the unit
- revision of all units to describe discreet job functions
- revision of all qualifications to describe vocational outcomes
- further strengthening of language and terminology in line with the NQF
- addition of child development units in Certificate III qualifications
- alignment of core units to the NQF.⁴⁹

Additionally, the Department held a series of ECEC Industry Roundtables across Australia in 2012 and 2013.⁵⁰ These Industry Roundtables identified that the consistency of quality in training was an issue and identified a range of actions to address this. Actions proposed include promoting effective communication between ECEC services and RTOs, promoting mentoring for students and enhanced selection processes for RTOs to more effectively screen entrants.

Preliminary finding

It is recognised that there has already been a review of the training packages and that a series of actions has been taken to improve the consistency of quality of VET courses.

At the focus groups there appeared to be a lack of awareness regarding the complaint mechanisms which people could use when they had concerns regarding the quality of VET training providers and whether it was most appropriate to complain to the state regulator, the national regulator (the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)) or directly to the RTO.

Educators and service directors in the sector felt that they had a sound understanding of the quality of training provided at the RTOs and TAFEs in their area. This was largely the result of their experiences working with new graduates of qualifications from certain training providers. This information should be captured and relayed back to training providers and regulators to improve the consistency of the quality of ECEC qualifications. This could be achieved by better awareness in the sector of the complaint mechanisms available when educators have concerns regarding the quality of RTOs.

⁴⁹ Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council, 2013. *Children's and Youth Services Streamline and Review Project: Children's Services Overview*.

⁵⁰ DEEWR, 2012. *Early Childhood Education and Care Industry Roundtable Initiative: National Analysis Summary Key Issues and Solutions*.

Finding 2: The quality of training provided by RTOs is not consistent and services are not aware of the complaint mechanisms to use when they have concerns regarding the quality of training providers. Potential areas for consideration include:

- Improving the communication of the complaint mechanisms available when services or educators have concerns regarding the quality of RTOs.
- Encouraging employers, service providers and students to make complaints through the appropriate mechanisms regarding low quality training.

These could be undertaken by bodies such as ACECQA, ASQA, jurisdictional regulatory authorities and VET regulatory authorities. On 24 January, Minister Ley announced that ASQA will undertake a review of the quality of training for the ECEC sector with work expected to start in February 2014.⁵¹

4.3 Promoting a better understanding of the sector

Challenge

There were common experiences discussed at focus groups of employing new graduates of VET qualifications and university qualifications who the service directors believed were not suited to work in the ECEC sector and therefore left the sector after a short time. This concern was expressed for Certificate III qualified educators, Diploma qualified educators and ECTs. Service directors and educators frequently and consistently indicated that some new entrants are not fully aware of the nature of the work that is expected of them. Educators commented that as well as providing for children's development through pedagogical programs, they may have to contribute to toilet training and cleaning.

These concerns around the level of understanding by new graduates of the work they would be expected to do appears to be particularly expressed by directors and educators in the LDC setting. Educators in FDC settings indicated that VET ECEC qualifications may not provide educators with the skills necessary to working in the FDC sector.⁵²

A study in Victoria recently found that over half of Certificate III and Diploma graduates did not feel that their training prepared them very well to apply theories to their work in the ECEC sector.⁵³ Additionally, approximately 40 per cent of Certificate III and Diploma graduates did not feel that their training prepared them for working with children at different stages and in different contexts.⁵⁴ This figure was higher for ECT graduates (54 per cent).⁵⁵ This feeling of being underprepared may, to a certain extent, reflect a lack of understanding of the ECEC sector.

That said, a survey of ECEC qualification students found that 44.7 per cent of respondents indicated it was their personal interest in the ECEC sector that led them to pursue their studies and 92 per cent of students felt that they had selected the right course of study for them.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Media Release, the Hon Sussan Ley MP ' Priority given to ensuring early childhood training 'up to scratch' Friday 24 January 2014, accessed 21 February.

⁵² Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 130.

⁵³ Centre for Research on Education Systems, 2011. *A Report on the Effectiveness of Courses Leading to an Early Childhood Qualification in Preparing and Developing the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, p 141

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2012. *Engagement of students in Children's Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR.

Current action

The NCVER identified that a key challenge in the retention of students in VET courses was a lack of understanding of the sector.⁵⁷ A number of strategies were suggested including mechanisms to ensure appropriate students are selected for courses including provision of pre-course information on the sector and early exposure to work experience.

Case study 1

There are a number of examples of RTOs and TAFEs across Australia that are currently implementing strategies to improve their students' understanding of the ECEC sector. These strategies broadly seek to improve screening of candidates and give students experience working in the sector early in their training. Below are three examples:⁵⁸

- an RTO in WA offers what they call 'taster sessions' where students have an orientation session that involves observing an ECEC service so they can see what is involved
- a TAFE in Queensland has the program coordinator interview every student to discuss their motivations for enrolling in ECEC training
- a TAFE in NSW holds play sessions for infants and children four times per week at which the ECEC students are supervised by teaching staff. This assists in preparing students for work placements and allows them to apply their theory in a 'real environment'.

Case study 2

A number of early childhood education schools and institutes in universities across Australia extensively engage with the sector. For example, the University of Melbourne's Early Childhood Masters program has intense practicum work with a practice leader in each Local Government Area to advance early learning. Additionally, the Institute of Early Childhood at Macquarie University also runs a Child and Family Study Centre which provides LDC to children aged from six weeks to school age. The Centre provides opportunities for academic research and observational studies for units offered in child development, curriculum studies and early childhood education.

Additionally, as previously mentioned the Department held a series of Industry Roundtables across Australia to build relationships between local ECEC services, ECEC educators and other related stakeholders (including training providers and universities) within a regional area. A number of activities have emerged from the Industry Roundtables including dialogues between the ECEC sector and training providers regarding the needs of the sector.

Review finding

Under the NQF qualification requirements all educators at LDC, FDC and preschools will be required to be working towards or hold a minimum of an approved Certificate III qualification. Service directors at the focus groups indicated that this means that all of their educators will have to be enrolled and working towards a Certificate III, even if they have only just entered the industry.

Service directors indicated it would be useful for there to be a 'grace period' whereby educators have three months after commencing work in the ECEC sector to enrol in a Certificate III qualification. They said this would allow new educators and their service

⁵⁷ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2012. *Engagement of students in Children's Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

directors to decide if the person was appropriate for the ECEC sector before they commence their studies.

A similar concept to this exists in Queensland as a transitional provision. It is PwC’s understanding that ACECQA is currently working with jurisdictions to explore policy options to achieve this flexibility for the sector via a potential legislative amendment.

Finding 3: Some new graduates with VET or university qualifications are not suited to work in the ECEC sector and therefore leave the sector after a short time. A potential area for consideration is the introduction of a ‘grace period’ whereby educators have three months after commencing work in the ECEC sector to enrol in an approved Certificate III qualification while still be counted in staff/child ratios. This may require amendments to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012*.

Finding 4: The Department held a number of Industry Roundtables, which aim to build relationships between local ECEC services, ECEC educators and other related stakeholders within a regional area including training providers and universities. A potential area for consideration to continue to build the relationship is to provide mechanisms for a dialogue between the ECEC sector and training providers to ensure that training is meeting the needs of the sector. This could be undertaken by the jurisdictions through Industry Roundtables.

Finding 5: Many RTOs and TAFEs across Australia are already implementing strategies to better screen candidates, therefore consideration could be given to identifying examples of programs that have successfully improved students understanding of the ECEC sector (such as traineeships, extended practicum models, taster sessions, weekly play groups and work experience whilst studying) and facilitating opportunities for training providers to share the examples of effective models for improving retention. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions.

4.4 *Insufficient focus on Birth to five years*

Challenge

Concerns were consistently expressed at the focus groups that some ECT qualifications can be as broad as Birth to 12 years. ECEC educators indicated that this may provide graduates with insufficient training and practicum experience specific to the Birth to five years age group.

Table 8 shows ECT university degrees by the age groups they cover. The majority are Birth to eight year qualifications or Birth to 12 year qualifications. A small number of universities do offer specific Birth to five year degrees in addition to the broader Birth to 12 year degrees.

Table 8: Early childhood teaching university degrees

Age groups	Providers	
Birth to five years	Charles Sturt University	University of Sydney
	University of New England	University of Western Sydney
Birth to eight years	Charles Darwin University	The University of Notre Dame
	Deakin University	University of Canberra
	Edith Cowan University	University of Melbourne
	Flinders University	University of Newcastle

Age groups	Providers
	James Cook University La Trobe University Queensland University of Technology RMIT University
	University of South Australia University of Southern Queensland University of Sunshine Coast University of Tasmania University of Western Australia
Birth to 12 years	Central Queensland University Macquarie University University of Western Sydney Australian Catholic University University of New England
	Charles Sturt University Monash University Victoria University University of Ballarat Murdoch University

Source: Prepared by PwC on the basis of publically available information.

Students undertaking the degrees for Birth to eight or 12 years are required to complete practicum in primary schools as well as in ECEC services. Concerns were expressed at the focus groups that this gave graduates insufficient experience working in ECEC settings.

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, ACECQA set the requirements for approved ECT qualifications and publish a list of approved qualifications. There are published criteria for all ECT qualifications. These criteria include 80 days practicum for undergraduate qualifications, including 10 days focused on Birth to 2 years, and 60 days for post-graduate qualifications, with 10 days focused on Birth to 2 years.

Educators expressed that it would be preferable if the number of hours of practicum set by ACECQA in ECEC settings were increased.

Current action

As already detailed, a number of Industry Roundtables have been held across Australia and some of these roundtables have included universities. The Industry Roundtables have facilitated discussions between the ECEC sector and universities regarding the needs of ECT graduates.

Review finding

As already detailed, ACECQA sets requirements for ECT qualifications that are approved under the NQF qualification requirements. It is recognised, however, that ACECQA is not the only regulator of ECT qualifications. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership sets the National Professional Standards for Teachers, while the Australasian Teacher Regulation Authorities set the accreditation requirements for teaching programs. ACECQA's requirements are linked to the standards of these other bodies.

PwC suggests that the number of hours of practicum in ECEC settings should be increased. We recognise that there would need to be consultation with universities and other teaching registration bodies and there may need to be a phased approach to increasing the hours of practicum.

Finding 6: Some ECT qualifications can be as broad as Birth to 12 years. As part of these ECT qualifications, students must undertake practicum in both primary schools and ECEC settings. There are concerns that with insufficient focus on the Birth to five years age group, students will not be sufficiently equipped to enter the ECEC sector. A potential area for consideration is to increase the number of practicum in ECEC settings to ensure high quality practice. This could be undertaken by bodies such as ACECQA, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and ATRA (Australian Teacher Registration Authority) as they set the requirements for practicum for ECT qualifications.

4.5 Primary school teacher recruitment

Challenge

ECTs in ECEC settings are listed by the Department as being in skills shortage⁵⁹ and ECEC service directors at focus groups overwhelmingly indicated that they struggle to recruit ECTs.

There is evidence that there is “either an adequate supply or an oversupply of primary school teachers for government schools, except in a small number of geographical locations”.⁶⁰ This is evidenced by the significant number of primary school teachers who are on standby for positions in metropolitan areas.

In their submission to the Productivity Commission’s *Education and Training Workforce Study* the NSW Government indicated that there is an oversupply of primary school teachers in NSW and an undersupply of ECTs.⁶¹ The NSW Government suggested that improving the mobility of teachers from primary schools to the ECEC sector could address both of these issues.

As already detailed, many ECTs are qualified to teach in both primary school and ECEC settings. However, the ECEC sector has difficulty retaining ECTs as ECTs are often attracted to working in primary schools after a short amount of time in the ECEC sector due to the better pay and conditions that are offered in primary schools. This issue is discussed further in Section 6.1.

Current action

There are currently a significant number of ‘bridging programs’ offered for teachers qualified to work in primary schools to gain qualifications to work in ECEC settings. For example, in Queensland as part of the *Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan 2012/13* a customised Early Childhood Bridging Program was developed to assist primary school teachers to upgrade their qualifications in order to work in ECEC settings. Additionally, many universities offer graduate certificates so that qualified teachers can teach in ECEC settings.

Jurisdictions, such as NSW, have also distributed communication materials to primary school teachers on wait lists for positions in primary schools. These communication materials promote the ECEC sector as a career path and advise teachers of bridging programs.

Additionally, some ECEC services have explored ‘team teaching’ arrangements with nearby primary schools. Under these arrangements, the ECEC service accesses ECTs at the primary school to meet the requirements under the NQF for the amount of time they must have an ECT.

⁵⁹ DEEWR, 2013. *Labour Market Research- Teachers 2011/12*. Accessed 13 May 2013. Available at: http://foi.deewr.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/teachersclusterreport2011_12.pdf

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ NSW Government, *Submission to the Productivity Commission’s Education and Training Workforce Study*. Accessed 15 May 2013. Available at: http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/111652/sub014.pdf

Review finding

Finding 7: ECTs in ECEC settings are listed by the Department as being in skills shortage; however, there is an adequate supply or oversupply of teachers in primary school settings in many areas. A number of universities have bridging programs for primary school teachers to gain qualifications to work in ECEC settings and have promoted the ECEC sector as a career for primary school teachers not currently working. A potential area for consideration is to investigate options to increase recruitment of qualified teachers who are working in primary schools or are on wait lists to work in primary schools. This could include promoting pathways into the ECEC sector, extending bridging programs for qualified teachers to become ECTs or 'team teaching' arrangements. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions.

5 *Up-skilling the existing workforce*

As well as encouraging new entrants to the sector, there has been a strong focus on up-skilling the existing workforce. This includes unqualified staff gaining qualifications and qualified staff ‘upgrading’ their qualifications (for example, a Certificate III qualified educator attaining a Diploma).

It appears that there has been an increase in the qualification levels in the ECEC sector in recent years. For example, in 2009 it was estimated that approximately 40 per cent of the ECEC workforce did not hold a qualification, which decreased to 25 per cent in 2010 and 17 per cent in 2013.⁶²

Many participants at the focus groups expressed a preference for meeting the NQF qualification requirements by up-skilling their existing workforce. However, there was agreement that there are a range of barriers to up-skilling, as detailed below.

5.1 *Staff time and backfill support to undertake training*

Challenge

There is a significant time commitment to complete studies, particularly for ECEC educators who are already working full time. The overwhelming majority of participants at focus groups indicated that ECEC educators who are working full time often have family responsibilities and find it difficult to commit the amount of time required to complete studies. These educators cannot go to part time work in order to have more time to study due to their financial responsibilities to their families.

This is consistent with the 2013 ECEC Census (see Table 9) which found that of those educators not currently studying 49 per cent agreed that they would like to further their studies, however, do not have enough time. Insufficient time appears to particularly be an issue for educators in FDC, with 58 per cent of those not currently studying indicating that they do not have enough available time.

Table 9: Existing educators not pursuing studies: time

		PS	LDC	FDC	OSHC	Total
I would like to further my studies, but I don't have enough spare time	% agree	51	51	58	37	49
	% disagree	22	24	20	33	25

Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

This is also consistent with the National Children’s Services Workforce Study conducted in 2006 which found that 62 per cent of staff said that they would like to study but do not have enough time.⁶³

⁶² Deloitte Access Economics, 2013. *Analysis of the 2010 National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census*. p(i), Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

⁶³ Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council, 2006. *National Children’s Services Workforce Study*. Prepared for the Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services.

Service directors also overwhelmingly indicated that it is difficult for them to find replacement staff while their staff members are at training. This view was particularly expressed by services in rural and remote locations.

Service directors indicated that they have casual staff that they are able to call upon. However, these casual staff members generally do not hold qualifications and therefore, they will not be able to use them for backfill after 1 January 2014. This means that the challenges of finding staff to backfill will be exacerbated when the NQF qualification requirements come into effect.

Current action

At the focus groups many participants indicated that some larger services offer paid study leave for educators pursuing qualifications. Educators who had accessed study leave indicated that this was integral to them being able to complete their studies. These larger services also have access to a significant pool of casual or temporary staff that they can use when educators are at training.

The Australian Government offers professional development and support to approved ECEC services through the IPSP. The support provided is discussed further in Section 7.1.

The Australian Government has also invested \$9.2 million for RPL in 2011 to 2015 for existing ECEC educators in regional and remote areas.⁶⁴ RPL allows existing educators to have their prior experience and knowledge recognised and credited towards the completion of qualifications, reducing the time to complete a qualification. This investment includes a RPL Assessment Grant for ECEC educators, up to \$3,500 per ECEC educator. RPL is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.4.

State and territory governments have also introduced a number of policies and programs that assist in easing the time burden of undertaking study, including for example:

- Children's Services Traineeship: NSW Government is providing support to employers and students to undertake Certificate III or Diploma qualifications through traineeships. A traineeship involves on-the-job training and it reduces the amount of out-of-work classroom training.
- Scholarship programs: Many jurisdictions have introduced scholarship programs for existing ECEC educators to gain qualifications. Some of these programs provide living allowances or stipends to recipients. This may cover some of the lost income that educators may experience in having to take time off paid work to undertake their studies. Scholarship programs include those listed below:
 - Australian Government Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarships (not accepting new applicants)
 - The Early Childhood Intervention Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme (Vic)
 - The Early Childhood Scholarships for Aboriginal People (Vic)
 - The Early Childhood Qualifications Fund (Vic)
 - The Early Childhood Teacher Scholarships (Qld)
 - The Early Childhood Teacher Scholarships for Advanced Diploma Holders (Qld)
 - Early Childhood Scholarships for Indigenous People (WA)
 - Teacher Upgrade Scholarships (SA)
 - Post Graduate Training Program Scholarships (SA)

⁶⁴ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2013. *Recognition of Prior Learning for Early Childhood Educations*. Accessed 6 May 2013. Available at: <http://education.gov.au/recognition-prior-learning-early-childhood-educators-o>

- Funding Support Program (Tasmania)
- Early Childhood Scholarships (ACT)
- NT More Early Childhood Teachers Scholarships (NT).

Review finding

It is recognised that there is already a range of support available for educators and services to pursue training. However, even when these programs can be accessed, services appear to struggle to backfill their staff. Additionally, having sufficient time outside of work to undertake training continues to be a significant barrier to educators attaining qualifications.

Generally it should be the responsibility of employers to provide support to their employees to assist them in professional development, which could include attaining qualifications, which improve the quality of their work. However, the provision of further targeted support could be examined, based on a range of eligibility criteria, to assist services to offer paid study leave to educators and to backfill positions when educators are at training. This support could particularly be targeted towards rural and remote areas and smaller providers as these services appear to face these challenges acutely.

Finding 8: It is a significant time commitment to complete studies, particularly for ECEC educators who are already working full time and often have financial and caring commitments. At the focus groups, educators who have access to paid study leave indicated it was integral to them completing their qualifications. Services also struggle to find casual staff to replace educators who are at training. These issues appear to pertain particularly to smaller providers, as larger providers tend to have the resources to deal with some of these backfill challenges. A potential area for consideration is to examine the gap between the support already available to access training, the responsibility of employers to provide training and the challenges that services are experiencing in providing paid study leave and/or backfill support, in particular for smaller providers and rural and remote areas. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and ACECQA.

5.2 Cost of undertaking training

Challenge

Educators at the focus groups indicated that the cost of pursuing study can act as a barrier and that these costs include both the direct cost of training (for example, course fees) and indirect costs (for example, forgone paid work). The direct costs of training may be a barrier for FDC educators who, unlike educators in LDC or preschool, do not have an employer who could incur part of the cost of their training.⁶⁵ Programs such as the fee waivers for TAFE fees for Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas and HECS – HELP relief for ECTs will ease the cost burden. However, in addition to course fees, for many existing staff in the ECEC sector studying would involve forgoing paid work. Many participants at the focus groups indicated that this is unaffordable for staff who have financial commitments to provide for their families and already are not highly paid.

This is confirmed by the 2013 ECEC Census which found that 43 per cent of ECEC educators who are not currently studying but would like to indicated that the decision to not undertake study was influenced by the cost.

⁶⁵ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 129.

Table 10: Existing educators not pursuing study: cost

		PS	LDC	FDC	OSHC	Total
I would like to further my studies, but the cost is too high	% agree	40	46	48	36	43
	% disagree	28	26	25	34	28

Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

A study of students who completed VET ECEC qualifications (some of whom were already working in the sector) found that 35 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that completing training was financially challenging.⁶⁶

Current actions

As already detailed, since 2009 students enrolling in a Diploma or Advanced Diploma in Children's Services at a TAFE or other government provider of training have not had to pay course fees.⁶⁷ This is the result of an Australian Government program that has funded the course fees of over 8,000 students enrolled in Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas.

The Australian Government also offers HECS – HELP benefits for ECTs. The program allows ECTs working in high-needs areas (rural, remote, remote Aboriginal communities or areas of high socio-economic disadvantage) to have their HECS – HELP debt reduced.⁶⁸ For a person required to make a compulsory HECS – HELP repayment in 2011/12, the benefit would reduce the amount they repay by up to \$1,744.81 per year.

ECTs can also access another program providing HECS benefits for all education graduates. In 2009 the Australian Government announced that education graduates who took up employment as teachers would be eligible to apply for a HECS – HELP benefit to reduce their repayments.⁶⁹ The maximum benefit for 2011/12 was \$1,635.73 per graduate. ECTs who graduated after second semester 2009 may be eligible for both the Benefit for Early Childhood Education Teachers and the Benefit for Education Graduates.

Review finding

Whilst there may be significant support to ease the cost burden of completing a Diploma, Advanced Diploma or ECT qualification, there appears to be less financial support available for educators completing Certificate III qualifications.

Recognising the low completion rates for Certificate III qualifications (as discussed in Section 4.1), targeted financial support for educators (who meet eligibility criteria) could encourage unqualified educators to attain Certificate III qualifications

Finding 9: The 2013 ECEC Census found that 43 per cent of ECEC educators who are not currently studying but would like to indicated that this was due to the cost. This includes the cost of forgoing paid work to take leave for study. There are a range of programs to financially support educators undertaking study including fee waivers for Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas (which will expire on 31 December 2014), HECS-HELP benefit for ECT and scholarships for ECT qualifications. There appears to be less financial support for educators undertaking Certificate IIIs. A potential area for consideration is to extend programs to provide targeted incentives to educators (who meet eligibility criteria) undertaking Certificate IIIs such as scholarships, financial incentives for the completion of the qualification or the fee waivers similar to those that are provided to educators undertaking Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas.

⁶⁶ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2012. *Engagement of students in Children's Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR.

⁶⁷ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2012. *Removal of TAFE fees for diploma and advanced diploma child care courses*.

⁶⁸ <http://deewr.gov.au/hecs-help-benefit-early-childhood-education-teachers>

⁶⁹ <http://foi.deewr.gov.au/node/3092>

5.3 Lack of financial incentive

Challenge

Participants at focus groups indicated that many existing ECEC educators do not see gaining qualifications as worth the time and cost because they will receive little or no increase in pay. According to many participants this is particularly the case for staff pursuing Certificate III qualifications as they will still be performing the same job within the service and will likely have the same salary.

In 2004, the National Children's Services Workforce Study found that most ECEC workers (66 per cent) strongly agree that 'it is not worth the time and money to study further- the resulting wage increase is too small'.⁷⁰ This was confirmed by the 2013 ECEC Census which found that approximately 47 per cent of educators that were not undertaking study indicated that this decision was because the resulting wage increase was too low (see Table 11).

Table 11: Existing educators not pursuing study: financial incentive

		PS	LDC	FDC	OSHC	Total
It's not worth the time and money to study further – any resulting wage increase is too small	% agree	50	51	48	36	47
	% disagree	22	24	26	32	25

Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

In an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement of a large LDC provider, unqualified educators who obtained a Certificate III received at least a \$60 per fortnight pay increase in 2012 (depending on years of experience). An educator with a Certificate III who gained a Diploma received at least a \$95 per fortnight pay increase in 2012 (depending on years of experience). While this amount is not insignificant, it may not be sufficient for some educators to feel that gaining a qualification or upgrading their qualification will be sufficiently financially beneficial.

In 2011, the Productivity Commission conducted an analysis of unpublished Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on the earnings of ECEC educators and their hours worked per week.⁷¹ ECEC educators earned approximately \$20 per hour and worked approximately 24 hours per week. ECEC directors earned approximately \$29 per hour and worked approximately 33 hours per week.

There does appear to be a notable increase in hours and pay per hour when a person goes from an educator position to a director position. However, it should be noted that not all staff who gain a Diploma will be promoted to a director position. Additionally, the director position may be the highest paid position in a service. Participants at the focus groups indicated that educators may be reluctant to gain qualifications when the highest they could earn per hour is approximately \$29 per hour.

Additionally, educators indicated overwhelmingly that there has not traditionally been a clear career path and strong leadership within the ECEC sector. This is confirmed by research that has shown that the discussion of leadership in the ECEC sector is a relatively new debate.⁷² This is partly attributable to the structure of the sector as there are limited senior or leadership positions. Some research has indicated that the 'leadership' positions in an ECEC centre are often management based and focused on day-to-day work, whereas, leadership should be considered 'future oriented, linked with the articulation and realisation

⁷⁰ 2004 the National Children's Services Workforce Study, p 325

⁷¹ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p. 64.

⁷² Waniganayake, M, Morda, R and Kapsalakis, A, 2000. 'Leadership in Child Care Centres: Is it just another job?'. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*. Volume 25, No 1, p 13.

of visions'.⁷³ Additionally, leadership roles require educators to be taken away from the 'floor' of the service which requires backfilling of staff.

Some directors indicated that this is changing with larger services employing educational leaders and senior teachers. Additionally, the roles of 'Certified Supervisor' and 'Educational Leader' are specified in the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* and have leadership requirements. This may provide an opportunity for educators to have defined leadership roles within their services. These changes may mitigate the perception that there is a limited career path within the ECEC sector.

It is notable that in ACECQA May 2013 snapshot of the ratings of services, a significant number of ECEC services were rated as 'working towards the NQS' in quality area 7 - leadership and service management.⁷⁴ This may support the comments at the focus groups that there has not been strong leadership in the sector.

Current actions

A number of jurisdictions have implemented programs to promote the career paths available to educators in the ECEC sector. For example, Queensland has undertaken a campaign promoting the ECEC sector and Victoria is currently working on an Early Years Workforce Campaign to promote the diversity of career opportunities in the sector.

Review finding

The 2013 ECEC Census data suggests that many educators do not consider there is a sufficient financial payoff for completing a qualification. In many industries there is not an immediate financial payoff for completing a qualification; however, people pursue training due to the financial benefit they will incur over their lifetime.⁷⁵ It may be that ECEC educators see insufficient immediate financial payoff as well as insufficient financial payoff over their career.

Many ECEC educators with qualifications go on to build career paths, using their skills and knowledge, both within the ECEC sector and outside the ECEC sector. It is important that the many diverse career paths that educators can pursue are promoted in the sector. For example, some ECEC educators go on to positions within local, state and Australian governments or move into early intervention work. The numerous, professional career paths that educators can pursue should be advertised in the sector.

Additionally, a clear career path in the sector should be developed that includes appropriate financial recognition for the additional responsibilities that educators take on.

⁷³ Rodd quoted in Waniganayake, M, Morda, R and Kapsalakis, A, 2000. 'Leadership in Child Care Centres: Is it just another job?'. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*. Volume 25, No 1, p 13.

⁷⁴ ACECQA, 2013. *ACECQA Snapshot*. Accessed 10 May 2013. Available: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/Uploads/files/130501ACECQA%20Snapshot%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010. *Research Paper: Measuring Economic Returns to Post-School Education in Australia*.

Finding 10: Many ECEC educators believe the resulting wage increase of undertaking further study is too small to warrant the time and cost required. The perceived lack of a career path for educators in the ECEC sector may be contributing to this view that the financial payoff for attaining qualifications is insufficient. A potential area for consideration is to facilitate an effective mechanism for the sharing of ideas and current strategies for the promotion of existing career paths for educators with the ability for leading educators to take on leadership and mentoring roles. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and ACECQA.

5.4 Accessibility of RPL

Challenge

Some participants at focus groups expressed concern around the consistency of the quality of RPL. Some participants indicated that where quality RPL is offered, it takes significant time and poses a significant administrative burden (to the point that some educators believed it is simpler to complete all units of a qualification).

However, this is somewhat contradicted by data, including data from the 2013 ECEC Census, which showed that a high proportion of educators have accessed RPL and that a low proportion indicated it is difficult to access. It may be that there are issues regarding the accessibility of RPL in certain locations.

The 2013 ECEC Census found that only 10 per cent of educators that were not undertaking training agreed that it was the difficulty in undertaking RPL that stopped them from pursuing further study (see Table 12). Additionally, in the National Children's Services Workforce Project only 22 per cent of respondents indicated it was the difficulty with accessing RPL that stopped them from undertaking further study.⁷⁶

Table 12: Existing educators not pursuing study: RPL

		PS	LDC	FDC	OSHC	Total
It is the difficulty in undertaking the Recognition Assessment Processes (RAP) that stops me from further study	% agree	9	10	12	9	10
	% disagree	48	51	48	52	50

Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

The 2013 ECEC Census also found that a relatively high proportion of staff had received RPL (see Table 13).

Table 13: 2010 ECEC Census: RPL

	PS	LDC	FDC	OSHC	Total
Any RPL %	37	38	46	35	38
No RPL %	53	55	45	51	53
RPL not applicable %	11	7	8	14	9

Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

A survey of VET students found that for 20 per cent of students studying an ECEC qualification, their training provider did not offer RPL and therefore they had to complete

⁷⁶ Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, 2006. *National Children's Services Workforce Study*. Prepared for the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services, p. 6.

the entire course.⁷⁷ It was also found that approximately 66 per cent of the students that had prior experience in the ECEC sector had their training shortened as a result of RPL.⁷⁸

At the focus groups educators in remote areas indicated that there were very few, if any, qualified RPL assessors in their areas. This results in significant wait periods for an assessor to be available to conduct the RPL assessment. This wait time can be significant enough that it is quicker for educators to complete all units of the qualification. Though the above data shows that educators are accessing RPL and do not face significant difficulty in accessing RPL, it may be the case that it is particularly challenging to access RPL in remote areas.

Furthermore, educators at the focus groups indicated that there may be broader issues of the accessibility of training in remote and regional areas. In some locations educators may only be able to undertake training using online delivery mechanisms. This requires familiarity with technology, as well as reducing the amount of face-to-face training that is delivered.

Current actions

As already detailed, the Australian Government has provided \$9.2 million over four years (2011 to 2015) to RPL for existing educators in regional and remote Australia. The Australian Government also recently increased the grant that can be accessed for RPL from \$1,125 to \$3,500 for Certificate III, Diploma and Advance Diploma in Children's Services.⁷⁹ The Australian Government has trained and registered 349 RPL assessors to support this program across Australia.

Review finding

The relatively high proportion of staff that are able to access RPL suggests that there may not be a barrier in accessing training providers who are able to deliver training and assessment services. However, there may be particular issues in certain geographical locations regarding the availability of RPL assessors.

Finding 11: Educators with experience in the ECEC sector can have their prior experience recognised towards qualifications through a RPL initiative funded by the Australian Government and through similar programs in each state and territory. It appears that educators are accessing RPL; however, there are challenges with access to RPL assessors particularly in rural and remote locations. A potential area for consideration is to review the availability of training providers who are able to deliver training and assessment services for the early childhood workforce, in particular in regional and remote locations. This could be undertaken by the jurisdictions.

5.5 Educators close to retirement age

Challenge

Focus group participants indicated that some ECEC educators are reluctant to study because they are close to retirement age. Directors at the focus groups said that many of the staff members who are close to retirement age and do not hold qualifications would leave the sector when the qualification requirements come into effect on 1 January 2014.

According to the 2013 ECEC Census a significant number of educators did not intend to retire in 2011. The data shows that of those educators who indicated they would leave the sector in the next 12 months, only 6 per cent indicated this was due to an intention to

⁷⁷ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2012. *Engagement of students in Children's Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2013. *Recognition of Prior Learning for Early Childhood Educators*. Accessed 6 May 2013. Available at: <http://deewr.gov.au/recognition-prior-learning-early-childhood-educators>.

retire.⁸⁰ This is consistent with the data collected in the National Children's Services Workforce Project that was undertaken in 2004 which found that 4 per cent of staff that left the sector in 2004 retired.⁸¹

Though there may not be a significant proportion of staff that retire each year, educators indicated that closeness to retirement age (i.e. within the next five years) acts as a barrier to pursuing further training. Focus group participants indicated that this was largely because educators close to retirement age do not see it as worth the time and cost of training when they intend on leaving the workforce in the near future.

Additionally, educators indicated that older workers in the ECEC sector may not have significant experience working with technology and are not confident accessing some of the online delivery mechanisms of training.

Current action

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* Certificate III qualification transitional arrangements are in place until 31 December 2015 for educators at centre based services (excluding OSHC) whereby an educator can be included to meet a relevant educator to child ratio if:⁸²

- the educator has been continuously employed as an educator in an ECEC service or a children's service for period of at least 15 years up to immediately before the scheme commencement date, and
- the educator is employed by the same approved provider as the educator was employed by immediately before the scheme commencement date.

Workers with significant experience in the sector who may be close to retirement age can also access RPL (as discussed in Section 5.4). Additionally, the Australian Government has established the Investing in Experience program that allows mature age workers to have their current capabilities recognised with formal qualifications. It also assists in filling any skills gaps so they can obtain a Certificate III, Diploma or Advanced Diploma qualification.⁸³

Review finding

At the focus groups, participants were not generally aware of the transitional arrangements that allow educators at centre based services with at least 15 years of experience to be counted towards educator to child ratios for Certificate IIIs. There also did not appear to be awareness of the additional support that experienced educators can access in gaining qualifications.

Finding 12: Educators close to retirement age can be reluctant to complete qualifications. A potential area for consideration is communicating to the sector the transitional arrangements which are in place until December 2015 whereby educators with more than 15 years of experience (up to immediately before the scheme commencement day) can be considered as holding a Certificate III. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and/or ACECQA.

⁸⁰ Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

⁸¹ Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, 2006. *National Children's Services Workforce Study*. Prepared for the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services.

⁸² Education and Care Services National Regulations, Section 246 (2).

⁸³ <http://skillsconnect.gov.au/faqs-case-studies-and-news/quick-reference-guides/quick-reference-guide-investing-in-experience-skills-recognition-training/>.

5.6 Confidence to access training

Challenge

Participants at the focus groups raised a range of other challenges that existing educators face in accessing training. These challenges appear to impact educators' confidence in their ability to complete their studies, as detailed below.

- *Literacy:* Many existing ECEC educators are reluctant to study or require significant support to complete qualifications because of poor literacy skills. This is particularly the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and people for whom English is a second language.

This may also be particularly a challenge for the FDC sector. Approximately 25 per cent of FDC educators are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.⁸⁴ There are large sections of the FDC sector that predominately provide care to particular cultural groups and for most of these educators English is a second language. This can cause educators to have a lack of confidence in their English literacy skills and therefore be reluctant to study.

- *Time since last undertaking formal study:* Older ECEC educators who have significant experience in the sector may be reluctant to study because they have not undertaken formal study for many years and feel nervous about studying alongside students who are significantly younger than them.
- *Ability to access technology:* Many educators in the ECEC sector do not use technology as part of their work and therefore may not be familiar with using computers. This can particularly be a barrier for educators in remote and rural areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and educators for whom English is a second language.

Educators in rural and remote areas may only be able to complete qualifications via online delivery mechanisms. This requires familiarity with technology that educators may not have. Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators in remote communities face the same challenges of only being able to complete qualifications online and may not have used computers extensively.

In Victoria it was found that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were underrepresented in flexibly delivered courses.⁸⁵ This may suggest reluctance by educators for whom English is a second language to study in this manner. This may particularly be an issue for the FDC sector where there is a high proportion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Further, to some extent these challenges are also present with face-to-face training as most RTOs, universities and TAFEs use emails and websites to distribute information to students and require students to do online research.

- *Completing practicum:* Services in remote Aboriginal communities indicated that the requirement to complete practicum in services other than those educators work in poses logistical challenges. There is usually only one ECEC provider in a remote community and therefore educators must go to another town to complete their practicum, incurring travel costs and having to forgo paid work. This can be intimidating and challenging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators who may be reluctant to leave their community for extended periods of time. This can, to

⁸⁴ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 118.

⁸⁵ Centre for Research on Education Systems, 2011. *A Report on the Effectiveness of Courses Leading to an Early Childhood Qualification in Preparing and Developing the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, p 124.

some extent, be addressed by RPL. However, as already discussed educators face challenges in accessing RPL, particularly in remote areas.

Current action

There is significant evidence that professional networks for mentoring, peer support and professional development can be essential to improving educators' confidence in accessing training. Educators at the focus groups also indicated that professional networks and mentoring can be essential in supporting students studying via online delivery of training.

Professional networks

The Productivity Commission highlighted that “network based support can be important in improving service quality, supporting on-the-job development and preventing burnout”.⁸⁶ Professional networks can also be particularly important for:

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators:* The Productivity Commission concluded that networks are important for all educators, but particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.⁸⁷
- *Educators at smaller services:* Directors and educators at focus groups indicated that educators, particularly ECTs, experience professional isolation. For example, an ECT may be the only teacher working in a service and may not have the opportunity to have regular professional conversations with their colleagues due to time tables for breaks. This was identified by a study conducted by Victoria University and Deakin University as being a significant challenge, particularly for ECTs in regional areas.⁸⁸
- *Educators in remote and regional areas:* Educators from remote and regional areas indicated that they do not have the number of ECEC services in their area to build a network for professional conversations. One educator highlighted an alliance that has been formed in NSW to address this (see Case Study 3).

Research also highlights that networks can make professional development more effective, for example, one study found that networks and opportunities to work with other educators are more effective than unrelated in-service sessions.⁸⁹

Case study 3

One focus group participant discussed a formal alliance of ECEC services who work across a large area of the North-West of NSW. The alliance started as an informal network that had director-level meetings on a regular basis. The group of services then decided to form a formal alliance and together they employ an Early Childhood consultant who performs a range of tasks. These include tasks such as compiling a list of qualified casual staff that services can use to backfill, investigating training and professional development opportunities and preparing example education policies.

⁸⁶ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p. 256.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Nolan, A, Morrissey, A and Dumenden, I. 2013. 'Expectations of Mentoring in a Time of Change: Views of New and Professional Isolated Early Childhood Teachers in Victoria'. *Early Years: An Integrated Research Journal*. Vol 33, No 2, p 161- 171.

⁸⁹ Fleet, A & Patterson, C. 2001. *Professional Growth Reconceptualised: Early Childhood Staff Searching for Meaning*. Published in *Early Childhood Research and Practice*.

Case study 4

Another focus group participant highlighted an informal network that had been formed by Somali FDC educators. These FDC educators were all unqualified and recognised that they needed to complete Certificate IIIs. They formed an informal network to support each other in completing their studies and all successfully graduated.

Mentoring

Educators at focus groups indicated that mentoring can be very important in supporting educators completing their qualifications. Participants highlighted that many of the challenges that educators face in gaining qualifications, such as a lack of confidence, can be addressed through consistent mentoring by qualified staff.

Studies have found that mentoring appears to be successful, particularly for ECTs in the first two years of their careers.⁹⁰ Other studies have also found that mentoring has benefits for both the mentees and the mentor, such as improving collegiality and cooperation amongst colleagues and challenging and extending established pedagogical practices.⁹¹ In a Victoria University and Deakin University study, educators who had participated in a mentoring program reported that the mentoring relationship assisted in reducing their feeling of professional isolation and made them feel that they had more collegial support.⁹²

Current government initiatives

There are a range of initiatives that governments and the ECEC sector are running to support educators to complete qualifications, including:

- *The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) (Australian Government):* The IPSP provides professional development and inclusion support to Australian Government-approved ECEC services including services approved for the Child Care Benefit.⁹³
- *Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU) (Australian Government):* The IPSU is funded by the Department and provides professional development and support to Indigenous ECEC services.⁹⁴
- *RPL (Australian Government):* Educators with significant experience in the sector who may not have studied for a significant period can access RPL for some of this experience. This may improve their level of confidence in undertaking study.⁹⁵
- *Certificate III for educators from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (SA):* The SA Government facilitated the development of a Certificate III in Children's Services which includes a Certificate in English Language Proficiency.⁹⁶ The Certificate III has had completion rates of approximately 90 per cent.
- *Scholarships for upgrading qualifications (SA):* Funding made available through the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology is supporting 244 existing workers in the non-government sector to gain relevant qualifications. Further scholarship grants of up to \$10,000 each are also available to

⁹⁰ Macquarie University and Charles Sturt University, 2008. *Practice Potentials: Impact of Participation in Professional Development and Support on Qualify Outcomes for Children in Childcare Centres*, p 19

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Nolan, A, Morrissey, A and Dumenden, I. 2013. 'Expectations of Mentoring in a Time of Change: Views of New and Professional Isolated Early Childhood Teachers in Victoria'. *Early Years: An Integrated Research Journal*. Vol 33, No 2, p 161- 171.

⁹³ <http://deewr.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program>

⁹⁴ DEEWR, 2013. *Inclusion Support Portal*. Available at: <http://deewr.gov.au/inclusion-support-portal>

⁹⁵ DEEWR, 2013. *Recognition of Prior Learning for early childhood educators*. Available at: <http://deewr.gov.au/recognition-prior-learning-early-childhood-educators>

⁹⁶ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 129

200 diploma qualified early childhood educators in the private and community child care sector to upgrade to the four year early childhood teaching degree.⁹⁷

- *Numeracy and literacy support for students (NSW)*: The NSW Government provides subsidies and courses for ECEC students who require assistance with basic skills such as language, literacy and numeracy. This is intended to support ECEC students to complete their qualifications and improve completion rates.⁹⁸
- *Statewide Professional Mentoring Program for Early Childhood Teachers (Victoria)*: The program is available to ECTs in state government funded kindergarten programs operating in stand-alone services who are new to the profession or have limited access to collegial support. It provides the new ECTs with a mentor who is an experienced ECT.⁹⁹
- *ECEC Professional Network Pilots (Victoria)*: The program funds pilots in selected local government areas to promote the development of local networks for ECEC professionals.¹⁰⁰
- *Professional development for the ECEC sector (Queensland)*: The Queensland Government provided approximately \$400,000 to support ECEC services in providing professional development to employees.¹⁰¹

Review finding

Participants at the focus groups emphasised the importance of professional development and networks of professional support for educators completing their qualifications. They overwhelmingly indicated that professional development and support is essential to building educators' confidence in completing studies. There are many existing professional development programs that have been successful which could be expanded to other areas and shared across jurisdictions.

Educators from regional and remote areas particularly emphasised the importance of professional support and mentoring for their staff. They indicated that the high levels of professional isolation their educators experience can impact on the attainment of qualifications and the retention of educators in the sector.

Finding 13: Educators face a range of barriers that impact on their confidence to access training. Professional networks, mentoring and ongoing professional development can be essential to improving educators' confidence and ensuring they complete qualifications. A potential area for consideration could be to establish further formal professional support networks for peer support and professional development. This could be undertaken by groups such as employers, sector organisations, local governments, the Department, PSCs and jurisdictions.

Finding 14: Educators in regional and rural areas particularly appear to face professional isolation which can impact on retention in the sector and their confidence in accessing further training. A potential area for consideration could be to extend pre-existing programs in regional and rural areas that have been successful in attracting and retaining staff and in particular, programs that provide professional support and mentoring. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions.

⁹⁷ South Australian Government, 2012. *2012 Workforce Development Initiatives to Support the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Available at: <http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/SouthAustralia2012Workfor.pdf>

⁹⁸ NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2012. *New Skills: Quality Care*.

⁹⁹ Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013. *Early Childhood Teacher Mentoring*. Available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/mentoring.aspx>

¹⁰⁰ Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009. *Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce*. Available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/careers/ecworkforce.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2010. *Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan 2011-2014*.

5.7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Challenge

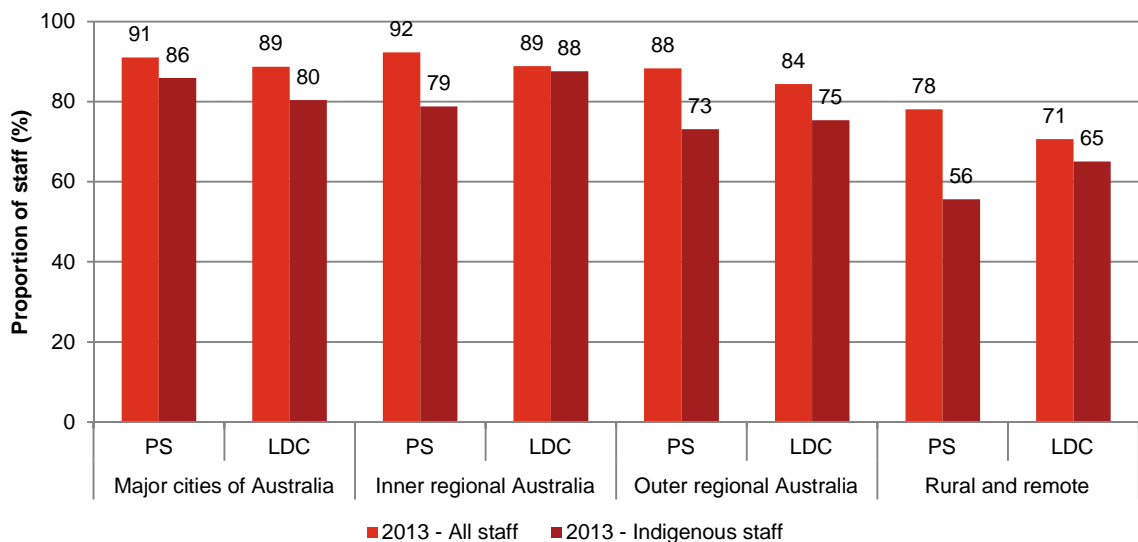
Service directors and educators from remote Aboriginal communities indicated that the educators they employ from the local community play an important role. They said that these educators perform important work liaising and engaging with the local community, as well as ensuring the service is culturally appropriate.

However, they also said that many of these Aboriginal educators do not hold qualifications. Service directors expressed that Aboriginal educators in remote communities face a significant number of challenges in gaining qualifications, including those previously detailed (literacy skills, experience using technology, accessibility of practicum).

They also said that the training provided by many RTOs and universities is not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal educators, which forms an additional challenge.

These concerns are supported by the 2013 Census data which shows that the proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant qualifications remains lower than the sector overall in remote and very remote areas (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant early childhood education qualifications by remoteness in 2013¹⁰²



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013

Current action

There are a number of programs offered by the Australian Government, as well as state and territory governments, to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators in entering the ECEC industry or up-skilling. These include:

- Indigenous Professional Support Units (Australian Government)
- State Training Service Aboriginal Training Coordinator Program (NSW)

¹⁰² These figures do not include staff that are working towards a qualification.

- Early Childhood Scholarships for Aboriginal People (Victoria)
- Indigenous Remote Area Strategy (Queensland)
- Early Childhood Scholarships for Indigenous People (WA)
- Remote Indigenous Professional Learning (WA)
- Daly Kids Daily Lives Project (NT).

As noted in Section 3, progress has been made in increasing qualifications for Indigenous staff which may be attributable to these programs. A comparison of 2010 and 2013 census data shows that:

- the proportion of Indigenous contact staff with a relevant ECEC qualification has increased significantly between 2010 and 2013 for preschool and LDC services (Figure 32):
 - from 51 to 72 per cent for preschools
 - from 69 to 80 per cent for LDC services
- the proportion of Indigenous staff with a relevant qualification within FDC services did not change significantly.

Figure 32: Change in the proportion of Indigenous staff with relevant early childhood education qualifications between 2010 and 2013



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013

Case study 5

There are a number of examples of flexible and culturally appropriate delivery of training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.¹⁰³ Two examples are detailed below:

- The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education was established in the NT to provide training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Institute uses what is often called 'both ways education' which combines both traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and ways of learning with Western educational traditions. Many courses are offered through a combination of on-campus study (in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Tennant) and study at home. This allows students to study without having to leave their community for significant periods.
- The Cape/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Child Care Network program was established in 1991 to deliver ECEC in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within the North Queensland and Far North Queensland Regions. The aim of the program is to promote and support the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within their extended family and cultural community and to ensure that ECEC services in remote Indigenous communities are developed in accordance with community needs and aspirations.

Review finding

Finding 15: The challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators in gaining qualifications are more acute due to issues around the cultural appropriateness of training courses and English often being a second language. This can be further compounded due to the challenges faced by educators in rural and remote areas. A potential area for consideration is the accessibility of training and cultural appropriateness of training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. This could be undertaken by jurisdictions and training providers (including RTOs and universities) with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Lessons learnt and successful programs should be shared amongst jurisdictions given the national importance of improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the ECEC workforce.

5.8 Change since 2010

A comparison of the results from the 2013 Census with the 2010 results highlights some small changes in staff attitudes towards further education. While the changes are not large, they do highlight trends in the potential barriers to further study which has implications for the ongoing up-skilling of the ECEC workforce. Since 2010:¹⁰⁴

- Lack of time as a barrier became less of an issue - 1 per cent less agreed that it was an issue while 1 per cent more disagreed that it was an issue.
- Cost as a barrier to further study also became less of an issue – of the staff who are not currently studying, 3 per cent less agreed that it was an issue while 2 per cent more disagreed that it was an issue.

¹⁰³ Hutchins, T, Frances, K and S Sagers 2009. 'Improving the representation of Indigenous Workers in Mainstream Childcare Workplaces'. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, v 34, n 1, p 7.

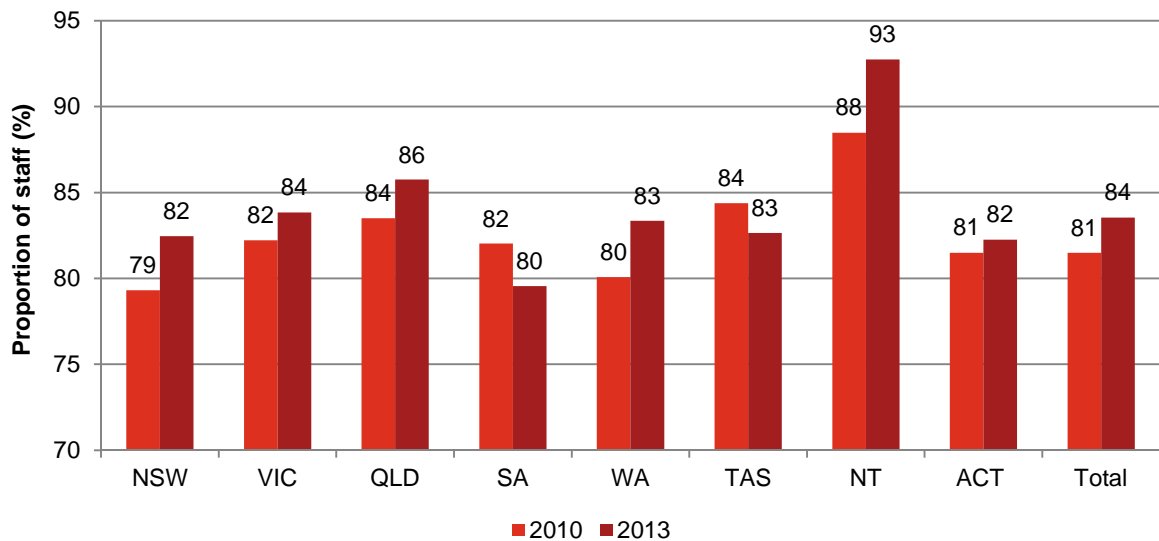
¹⁰⁴ 2010 ECEC Workforce Census, Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013, PwC analysis

- Lack of financial incentive (small resulting wage increase) became a more prominent barrier to further study - 2 per cent more agreed that it was an issue while 2 per cent less disagreed that it was an issue.
- The potential difficulty in undertaking the Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment Process remained a relatively insignificant barrier to further study with approximately 10 per cent agreeing that it was a barrier.

Aside from attitudes towards further study, Figure 33 shows that:

- the overall proportion of staff undertaking professional development training in the previous 12 months has increased from 81 per cent in 2010 to 84 per cent in 2013
- the proportion of staff undertaking training has increased in all jurisdictions except South Australia and Tasmania.

Figure 33: Proportion of contact staff undertaking professional development in the previous 12 months: 2013



Source: Unpublished, preliminary weighted data, Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 and Census 2013

Section C

Workforce challenges for ECEC services

6 Attracting and retaining staff

Focus group participants indicated that even if the challenges to up-skilling the existing workforce and training new entrants are overcome, services will continue to face challenges in attracting and retaining staff. Participants overwhelmingly said that attracting and retaining educators is difficult due to the pay and conditions in the sector. This was the most consistent message of the focus groups held as part of this review.

This section details the challenge that pay and conditions pose for attracting and retaining staff in the ECEC sector and highlights some specific issues including the pay and conditions for ECTs working in LDC compared to school teachers, the long and/or irregular hours of LDC and the lack of non-contact hours.

6.1 Pay and conditions

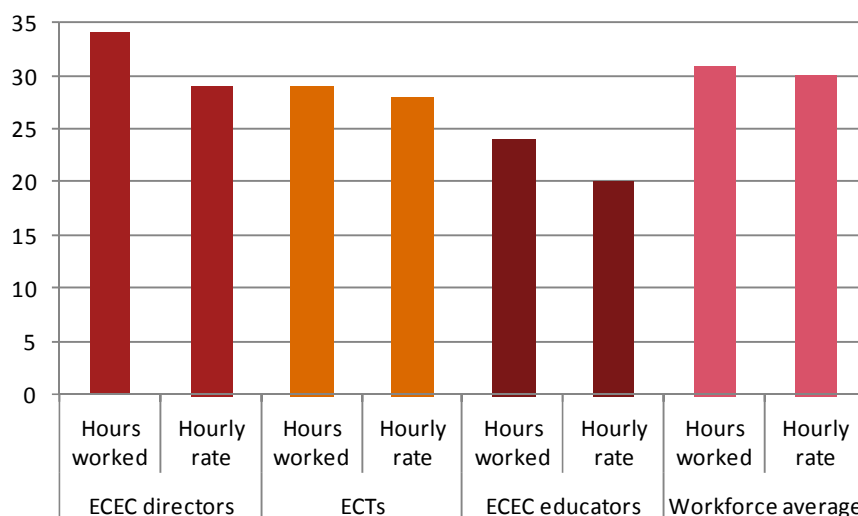
Challenge

An overwhelming and consistent message from the focus groups was that the pay and conditions in the ECEC sector impacts the ability to attract and retain staff.

Analysis conducted by the Productivity Commission shows that on average ECEC educators earn significantly below the average hourly rate of the rest of the workforce. Additionally, as shown in Figure 34, ECEC educators work on average less hours per week, compounding the impact of the lower hourly rate. This appears to be contrary to the feedback at the focus groups that educators work long hours. However, the workforce average for ECEC educators hours worked would include casual and part-time staff.

As shown in Figure 34, some service directors may earn above the average gross weekly earnings of the rest of the workforce. However, service directors work more hours per week on average and also have significant management responsibility. Additionally, despite holding a university degree, ECTs earn below the workforce average hourly rate. It should be noted that in some jurisdictions some ECTs will be employed at preschools attached to primary schools and therefore, earn comparable amounts to primary school teachers.

Figure 34: Comparison of average hourly pay (\$)



Source: Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 64.

Like ECEC educators, FDC coordinators earn below the workforce average hourly rate. As Table 14 shows, FDC coordinators earn between \$22.24 to \$24.15 per hour (depending on the award they are paid under), whereas the workforce average hourly rate is \$30 per hour (as shown in Figure 34).

Table 14: Modern award minimum wages for FDC coordinators

	Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010	Children's Services Award 2010
Assistant coordinators	\$21.50 / hour	-
Coordinator	\$24.15 / hour	\$22.24 / hour
Director	\$27.21 / hour	\$25.65 / hour

Source: Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, Table 6.2

Additionally, the 2013 ECEC Census also found that pay and conditions was one of the most significant issues for ECEC educators who intended on leaving the sector. Twenty-nine per cent of educators that indicated that they may leave the ECEC sector in the next 12 months said it was due to dissatisfaction with pay and conditions.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, only 49 per cent of educators in the 2013 ECEC Census indicated that they were satisfied with their pay and conditions.

The pay and conditions in the ECEC sector appear to contribute to continued shortages of ECEC educators and employers continuing to experience difficulty recruiting appropriate staff.¹⁰⁶ In 2006 there were approximately 2,200 vacancies for ECTs and educators in Australia and by 2012 this had increased to approximately 3,600 vacancies. Furthermore, in a survey of 640 ECEC services conducted in 2012 by the ACCS it was found that one third of respondents had at least one educator vacancy at the time of the survey.¹⁰⁷

Participants at the focus groups indicated that in order to attract and retain appropriately qualified staff they would need to offer higher wages. Many participants expressed concern about how they could afford higher staff costs without increasing their fees.

6.1.1 ECT pay and conditions in LDC relative to primary school settings

Challenge

Across all the focus groups, participants consistently raised the disparity in pay and conditions for ECTs compared with primary school teachers. Participants also raised the issue that teachers at primary schools have access to more annual leave and professional support.

Table 15 summarises the modern award for teachers in school and LDC settings. The award sets the minimum pay and conditions for teachers. Many teachers have their wages and conditions set above the award level through collective agreements. It is noted that in some jurisdictions ECTs in senior positions may be paid at the same levels as primary school teachers.

¹⁰⁵ ECEC 2010 Workforce Census.

¹⁰⁶ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2012. *Labour Market Research- Child Care Occupations*.

¹⁰⁷ Australian Community Children's Services, 2013. *ACCS Trends in Community Children's Services Survey: 2012 1st Wave National Report*, p. 9.

As can be seen in the table, under the award ECTs in LDC work 12 per cent more days each year however are only paid an additional 4 per cent in salary. The Productivity Commission concluded that “in many cases, the pay and conditions for teachers in LDC have been below those offered to preschool and primary school teachers”.¹⁰⁸

Table 15: Modern award wages and conditions for four year qualified teachers in 2011

	Teachers working in a school or related services^a	ECTs working in an LDC centre
Salary range per year	\$42,971 - \$56,715	\$44,690 - \$59,326
Allowances	1.6 – 8% of the standard salary for teachers in leadership positions.	11.5-17.3% of the standard salary for teachers that are appointed as centre directors.
Working days and hours	205 working days per year, with variable hours per day.	230 working days per year, up to 10 hours per day. Rostering system allows for rostered days off if longer hours are worked.
Annual leave	10-12 weeks per year, depending on jurisdiction.	4 weeks per year.

Source: Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, Table 5.6 based on Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2010.

Note a: Includes primary school teachers and preschool teachers working in a school setting.

Furthermore, the pay and conditions for ECTs working in the state school system tend to be better than those in LDC.¹⁰⁹ As the Productivity Commission highlighted, ECTs in preschools attached to schools earn more than ECTs in LDC.¹¹⁰ Conditions in the state school system include more annual leave, more preparation time and shorter working days. For example, ECTs in schools in WA receive 5 hours and 20 minutes non-contact time per week whereas ECTs in LDC receive 2 hours per week.¹¹¹

Further, focus group participants emphasised that new ECTs in school settings had access to significant professional development opportunities that were not able to be offered in LDC settings. They also indicated that there was a clear career path in school settings with accompanied increases in pay over time.

The gap in pay and conditions for ECTs working in LDC compared to those working in schools appears to contribute to difficulty attracting and retaining ECTs in LDC. One survey of students enrolled at university in ECT courses found that less than 5 per cent of students would prefer to work in LDC.¹¹² Approximately 50 per cent of students indicated they would prefer not to work in LDC and that pay and conditions were the primary factor in this reluctance to work in LDC. Additionally, a survey of ECT graduates in Victoria found that 71 per cent were not satisfied with their working conditions in the ECEC sector.¹¹³

Educators at the focus groups indicated that when they are able to attract ECTs, they often leave for a position in a school after a short period. Educators indicated that some ECTs were ‘biding their time’ in ECEC services until they could get a position in a school setting. This

¹⁰⁸ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p. 96.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid p. 98

¹¹⁰ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, Table 5.8

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Centre for Research on Education Systems, 2011. *A Report on the Effectiveness of Courses Leading to an Early Childhood Qualification in Preparing and Developing the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*. Prepared for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

¹¹³ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2012. *Engagement of students in Children’s Services Qualifications- Final Report*. Prepared for DEEWR.

was echoed by the Tasmanian Government which said that “Due to there being a limited number of kindergarten positions [in the Tasmanian school system] available each year some recently qualified ECD teachers may be ‘forced’ into the child care sector to gain some practical experience in the industry as they wait for a position in a school to open up”.¹¹⁴

6.1.2 Potential claims for equal remuneration in the workforce

The ECEC sector traditionally has a very high concentration of women in the workforce. At the time of the 2010 ECEC Census, 94.4 per cent of educators across the ECEC sector were female. Though it was not a view that was consistently expressed, some educators did indicate that they believed that the relatively low wages in the ECEC sector can be attributed to the high concentration of women in the workforce.

These educators often cited the claim made by the female dominated Social and Community Sector Workers to Fair Work Australia in 2011. The Australian Government proposed, in a joint submission with the Australian Services Union, a pay increase to help secure gender equality for social and community sector workers.¹¹⁵

The proposal was made under section 302 of the *Fair Work Act 2009* which gives the Fair Work Commission the power to ensure there is equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value. As a result of the decision there were increases in the award wages of social and community services sector workers of between 19 per cent and 41 per cent.

6.1.3 Housing in remote areas

Services and educators in remote areas and mining towns indicated that one of the most significant barriers they face in attracting staff is securing accommodation for these staff. The cost of accommodation can be very high and often only shared accommodation can be secured. This compares to ECTs working in the schools sector in the same towns and communities who have access to housing and/or living subsidies.

Remote providers indicated that housing is particularly an issue for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. Service directors indicated that due to the high cost of housing, many of the local educators at their services live in overcrowded housing. This makes it difficult for them to study at home and also means they face a range of challenges in getting to work each day. A small number of service directors also expressed that they believed it was inequitable that educators from out-of-town have access to housing, whereas many of their local educators live in overcrowded housing.

6.1.4 Long and/or irregular hours

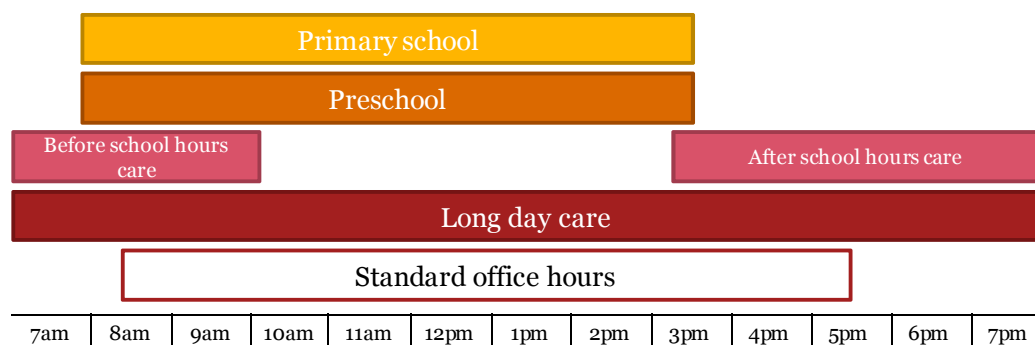
Participants consistently raised the issue that the hours in the ECEC sector are not conducive to the family responsibilities that many educators have. Figure 35 summarises the approximate hours by service type. FDC has not been included in this diagram due to the significant variation in the hours educators offer care.

As shown in Figure 35, LDC services can operate for significantly longer periods than standard office hours. Though educators in LDC work shifts (and therefore, are not working for the entire hours of operation) these shifts will often start before standard office hours or end after standard office hours.

¹¹⁴ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p. 101

¹¹⁵ FaHCSIA, 2012. *Social and Community Sector Workers Equal Remuneration Case*. Accessed 14 May 2013. Available at: <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about-fahcsia/news/2012/social-and-community-sector-workers-equal-remuneration-case>.

Figure 35: Hours of operation by service type



Source: Prepared based on Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, Figure 4.3.

6.1.5 Lack of non-contact hours

Participants at the focus groups raised that staff in ECEC settings, particularly ECTs, do not have access to sufficient non-contact hours. Participants indicated that this led to staff having to perform administrative tasks, program planning, observation reporting and pursue professional development outside of their paid work hours.

In the National Children’s Services Workforce Study it was found that 84 per cent of surveyed staff said that ‘allowance of preparation time away from children’ would improve retention of staff and 68 per cent agreed that rostered days off would also improve retention.¹¹⁶ Additionally, it was also found that one third of staff worked unpaid overtime (averaging nearly five hours per week).

It is worth noting that the NQF does not establish any requirement for contact or non-contact hours for educators. This is at the discretion of the approved provider or performed in accordance with the relevant industrial arrangement.

6.2 Current action

The Australian Government is establishing a Pay Equity Unit within the Fair Work Commission which will assist with data and research collection and specialist pay equity information. Their work will particularly be associated with:¹¹⁷

- an equal remuneration application made under section 302 of the Fair Work Act 2009
- the four-yearly modern award review and annual minimum wage decisions
- research and reporting on equal remuneration matters.

State programs such as Western Australia’s ‘400 Program’ to increase and improve housing for government officers in regional and remote communities and its \$355.5m program to increase affordable housing in many regional Western Australian locations, contribute to improving housing options in regional and remote areas.

6.3 Review finding

Pay and conditions in the ECEC sector was the dominant issue at most focus groups. Educators overwhelmingly indicated that without an improvement to pay and conditions the ECEC sector would struggle to meet and maintain the NQF qualification requirements.

¹¹⁶ Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council, 2006. *National Children’s Services Workforce Study*. Prepared for the Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2013. *The National Quality Agenda- Early Years Quality Fund*. Accessed 9 May 2013. Available at: http://foi.deewr.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/early_years_quality_fund_fact_sheet_1.pdf.

Data shows that ECEC educators earn below the workforce average and that ECTs do not have equal pay and conditions to primary school teachers. The continued shortages of ECTs in the ECEC sector (especially LDC services) suggest that the pay and conditions in the sector may indeed be significant barriers to recruitment and retention of educators.

Finding 16: A strong message from the focus groups indicated that pay and conditions in the ECEC sector impacts the ability of the sector to attract and retain staff. A change in the awards for the ECEC sector would require the appropriate industrial processes to be followed through the Fair Work Commission. A submission has been made to the Fair Work Commission.

Finding 17: LDC services are facing significant challenges around the employment of staff with or working towards an ECT qualification. LDC services noted during consultations that there is strong competition for scarce ECTs within the broader ECEC sector and that LDC services were less likely to be chosen by prospective employees. This was due to the service type's perceived inferiority in relation to pay and conditions and ongoing professional development.

These challenges are supported by the analysis of the 2013 Census data which shows that a significant proportion of LDC services (37 per cent) did not have access to a qualified ECT.

7 Providing ongoing professional development

7.1 Professional development

Challenge

Educators at the focus groups overwhelmingly indicated that there has not been a strong focus on professional development in the ECEC sector in the past. This was echoed by the Productivity Commission which said they found little evidence of a systematic approach to professional development in the ECEC sector.¹¹⁸

Effective professional development can improve the quality of an ECEC service. Professional development augments formal training and is important in imparting specialised skills (such as working with children with additional needs), distributing knowledge and supporting career development.¹¹⁹ Educators indicated that professional development can be particularly effective in reducing the professional isolation that many ECEC educators face.

ECEC educators and services face a range of challenges in providing ongoing professional development, including:

- *Cultural barriers:* There has not been a strong history of professional development in the ECEC sector. This is largely the result of the ECEC sector not being seen as a profession. This has shifted significantly in recent years with the growing recognition of the importance of ECEC in children's development and a significant increase in the number of qualified staff in the sector. However, educators at focus groups indicated that there has not been the culture of professional development in the ECEC sector that exists in school settings.
- *Financial barriers:* Professional development provided as part of the IPSP by Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) are subsidised by the Australian Government. The Productivity Commission found that ECEC services generally considered the direct costs of professional development to be reasonable.¹²⁰ However, accessing professional development can involve accommodation, travel costs and overtime costs. These costs are particularly felt by ECEC services in remote and rural areas where educators may have to travel significant distances to undertake face-to-face professional development.
- *Staffing barriers:* When educators are accessing professional development, services will usually have to find replacement staff, known as 'backfilling'. Service directors at the focus groups indicated that this was one of the most significant barriers to providing ongoing professional development to their educators.

Service directors indicated that they do not have a significant pool of casual staff they can employ when their permanent staff are at training. Therefore, they often have to rely on agencies that provide casual staff which can be very costly. The challenge of backfilling staff is particularly acute in remote and rural areas where replacement staff may have to be brought in from regional centres or other towns.

¹¹⁸ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 259

¹¹⁹ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 209

¹²⁰ Ibid, p 255

7.2 Professional development in primary school settings

Challenge

As already detailed in Section 6.1, ECTs in primary schools have access to professional development. These professional development programs are highly structured and ongoing, particularly for newly graduated teachers. Educators at the focus groups indicated that professional development in the ECEC sector is not as systematic. Educators indicated that this structured professional development in school settings significantly contributes to the difficulty the ECEC sector has in retaining ECTs.

Educators at focus groups indicated that professional development can be essential in reducing the professional isolation that many ECTs experience in the ECEC sector. They said that because of the limited number of non-contact hours that ECEC educators have and that their lunchbreaks often are not at the same time, ECEC educators often do not have time for professional conversations. Educators indicated that teachers in schools have significantly more opportunities for professional conversations due to their additional non-contact hours.

This can be particularly acute for ECTs who may be the only ECT in the service they work in. This can contribute significantly to ECEC educators, particularly ECTs, feeling professional isolation.

7.3 Current action

It is recognised that ECEC services across Australia are providing their educators with ongoing professional development in recognition of the impact that this has on the quality of the service they provide. Some of these professional development programs, including professional networking and mentoring, are detailed in Section 5.6.

Additionally, eligible services¹²¹ can access the Australian Government's IPSP which consists of:

- the Professional Support Program
- the Inclusion Support Program.

The Professional Support Program provides funding for a PSC and Indigenous Professional Support Unit in each jurisdiction. The PSCs are responsible for planning the delivery of all professional support to approved ECEC services. The IPSU is funded by the Department and provides professional development and support to Indigenous ECEC services. Both the PSCs and IPSU subcontract organisations to provide professional development.

The Inclusion Support Program seeks to improve access to ECEC for:

- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children with ongoing high support needs including children with disability
- Indigenous children.

In some circumstances, services can access subsidies for the cost of replacing staff through the IPSP, for example, when educators are undertaking professional development relating to children with additional needs.

¹²¹ The IPSP is available to CCB-funding approved education and care services or Budget Based Funded services, which are out of scope of the NQF.

7.4 *Review finding*

As discussed in Section 5.1, services often find it difficult to provide paid leave for educators to undertake training or professional development and find it difficult to find replacement staff. Therefore, Finding 7 recommends examination of the gap between the support already available to access training and the challenges that services are experiencing in providing paid study leave and/or backfill support, in particular for smaller providers and rural and remote areas.

As discussed in Section 5.6, formal professional support networks can be important in facilitating professional development, reducing professional isolation and providing mentoring and Finding 13 suggests more of this.

Finding 18: Services face a range of challenges in providing ongoing professional development. The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) reduces many of the direct costs of professional development, however services face costs such as replacement staff and meeting travel expenses. See Finding 7 and Finding 13 for potential areas of consideration.

8 *Accessibility of programs*

Participants at the focus groups said there are a significant number of Australian Government and state / territory government programs available to support them in meeting the NQF qualification requirements. This chapter discusses the accessibility of programs offered by government to support the ECEC sector in meeting the NQF qualification requirements.

Overall, service directors indicated that they face a number of challenges in accessing programs which adds to the administrative tasks they have to perform. This was confirmed in a recent survey by the ACCS in which 60 per cent indicated that the NQF requirements had significantly increased their workload. However, it should be noted that most services also expected this increase to flatten out and expressed support for the NQF requirements.¹²²

The ECEC sector already spends significant time doing administrative and compliance tasks.¹²³ Educators spend between 40 to 50 per cent of their time on administrative duties and service directors spend approximately 58 per cent of their time on administrative tasks.¹²⁴ Educators at the focus groups indicated that because they are already time poor and have to spend significant time on administrative tasks they need easily accessible information on programs.

8.1 *Ability to access programs*

Challenge

Some service directors, particularly those at smaller services, indicated that when they do find information on programs available, they can find it difficult to identify if they meet the eligibility criteria. Some service directors indicated that they had to spend significant amounts of time researching programs, only to find out later that they were not eligible.

8.2 *Availability of information*

Challenge

Educators indicated that having multiple levels of government funding programs to support the workforce in meeting the NQF means it can be difficult finding information on programs. They indicated that they had to 'really search' to find information, which added to the already significant administrative tasks they have to perform.

Some service directors also indicated that they will often find out about programs after they have already closed. They indicated that websites will often include programs that are no longer open.

8.3 *Current action*

It is understood that the Department are currently developing a website that will house information on existing Australian Government programs to support the ECEC workforce. The website is intended to provide a one-stop-shop for educators and service directors.

¹²² Australian Community Children's Services, 2012. *ACCS Trends in Community Children's Services Survey: 2012 1st Wave National Report*, p 24.

¹²³ Productivity Commission, 2011. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p. 69.

¹²⁴ Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, 2006. *National Children's Services Workforce Study*. Prepared for the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services.

8.4 Review finding

It is suggested that across all levels of government information on existing programs should:

- *Be streamlined:* Participants indicated there are a significant number of programs they can access, however, there is not consistent knowledge of the programs that exist and providers have different abilities to access this information. Smaller providers may have greater difficulty in accessing information than larger providers. Participants indicated that there must be straight forward information on any new programs, preferably provided on one authoritative source / website that is kept up-to-date.
- *Be easily accessible:* Participants indicated that ECEC educators are time poor. Policies and programs need to be in a manner that recognises this and not add to the administrative burden on ECEC services.

To this end, it would be particularly useful if the website the Department is developing could be expanded to include information of state and territory programs. If this is not possible, the website the Department is developing could:

- be clear that there are also state and territory programs as well as Australian Government programs that the sector can access
- include links to the websites of the relevant Department in each state and territory, preferably to the page that houses information on the programs available in that jurisdiction.

Service directors indicated that they often use the ACECQA website, therefore, it is suggested that the ACECQA website include a link to the Australian Government's centralised information website.

Finding 19: There is a significant number of Australian Government and state and territory government programs that have been introduced to support the ECEC sector in meeting the NQF qualification requirements. However, it is often difficult to find information on these programs. The Department are currently developing a website that will house information on existing Australian Government programs to support the ECEC workforce. Potential areas for consideration include:

- a single mechanism to house all relevant information (especially in relation to Australian Government programs) that is checked for accuracy and updated regularly. This could be undertaken by the Australian Government on the centralised information website.
- the Australian Government's centralised information website should include links to the websites of the relevant department in each state and territory
- providing a link to the Australian Government's centralised information website on the ACECQA website.

Section D

Challenges for interpretation and application of the NQF qualification requirements

9 Interpretation and application of the NQF qualification requirements

Across the focus groups it was clear that there is a high degree of awareness of the NQF requirements, including the qualification requirements, and that the ECEC sector has been preparing for these changes for a number of years. However, as the NQF qualification requirements represent a significant change, there is a degree of nervousness and uncertainty regarding some of the changes.

This section details those areas where there appear to be challenges for the interpretation and application of the NQF qualification requirements, as well as providing preliminary findings. It also provides an overview of the work of governments, regulatory authorities, sector groups and large services in communicating the NQF qualification requirements to the sector.

It should be noted that there is no data on the level of understanding of the NQF qualification requirements in the ECEC sector. This chapter is based entirely on discussions at the focus groups conducted as part of this review. It is likely that there may have been a degree of self-selection amongst focus group participants and that the attendees at the focus groups are those educators who are highly engaged with the NQF reform process.

9.1 Understanding the operational flexibilities within the NQF qualification requirements

Services and educators that participated in the focus groups were aware of the NQF qualification requirements and felt they understood the qualifications their staff will have to hold as of 1 January 2014.

There was confusion at some focus groups around the detail of the NQF qualification requirements, particularly related to the operational flexibility in determining how services can meet the NQF qualification requirements and the definition of ‘working towards’ a qualification.

Many educators at focus groups expressed concern that the NQF qualification requirements will result in newly graduated ECTs displacing the existing highly experienced Advanced Diploma qualified staff who are the educational leaders at their services. This view appears to reflect a broader confusion regarding the flexibility that services have to meet the NQF qualification requirements, as well as confusion regarding how qualified staff can best be utilised (see Section 9.2). Some educators believe the NQF qualification requirements required certain staff members to hold specific roles based on their qualification, i.e. that the ECT must be the educational leader.

It is our understanding that the NQF qualification requirements do not specify the roles that staff of different qualification levels must hold. Services will be required to have a certain number of qualified staff (based on the number of approved places at the service), however, services have complete flexibility to make staffing decisions regarding staff roles.

Furthermore, some educators at focus groups interpreted the requirements as meaning that an ECT must always be present at their service. This made educators very concerned regarding how they would secure an ECT when their ECT was on leave or training. Some educators did not appear to be aware that under Regulation 135 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulation*, a primary school teacher or Diploma qualified staff member can be counted as an ECT when the ECT is absent due to short term illness or annual leave.

There was also some confusion regarding what ‘working towards’ a qualification means. This is an important detail of the NQF qualification requirements as Certificate III and Diploma qualified staff in centre-based services and Certificate III staff in FDC can be ‘actively working towards’ their qualification.

Some participants indicated they understood that an educator must have completed 50 per cent of their qualification whilst others indicated that they thought educators just had to be enrolled in a qualification.

Some of the confusion regarding the meaning of ‘working towards’ appeared to be contributing to services’ nervousness that they would not be able to meet the NQF qualification requirements.

It should also be noted that for some jurisdictions, there may possibly be a lack of alignment between the ECT qualifications approved by ACECQA and the existing teacher registration requirements in each jurisdiction. This is potentially an issue for educators who might incorrectly think they meet registration requirements.

9.2 Utilising qualified staff

Many service directors at focus groups appeared to be heavily focused on recruiting and retaining qualified staff to meet the NQF qualification requirements and had given little thought to how they would best utilise their qualified staff.

Some services, particularly those that previously have not employed ECTs, appeared unclear as to what role the ECT would have in the service. As already detailed, some service directors questioned if the ECT would act as the service director or educational leader in the service. They appeared to be unsure as to how an ECT would fit within their current team and roles.

In order for the NQF qualification requirements to have the greatest possible impact on the quality of ECEC services in Australia, services must be able to effectively utilise their qualified staff.

9.3 Waivers

Prior to the commencement of the NQF, each jurisdiction’s regulatory authority had an existing system of granting waivers or exemptions for ECEC services compliance with qualification requirements. Data published in the 2011 Productivity Commission report suggests that 10 per cent of services held waiver exemptions for staff requirements in 2011.¹²⁵

Under the NQF, approved providers may be eligible to apply for a waiver if a service is unable to meet a prescribed Element or Elements of the National Quality Standard or the Education and Care Services National Regulations, including the qualification requirements.

Approved providers that can prove to their regulatory authority that they have attempted to, but are unable to meet regulatory requirements may be granted a waiver. Approved providers must also provide information on the measures being taken or to be taken to protect the wellbeing of children being educated and cared for by the service while the waiver is in force.

There are two types of waivers that can be obtained: temporary and service waivers. Temporary waivers are valid for no more than 12 months and can be revoked by the regulatory authority at any time or through application by the approved provider. Service waivers have no specified expiry date and may be revoked by the regulatory authority at any time or on receipt of an application from the approved provider.¹²⁶

The NQF qualification requirements came into effect on 1 January 2014 and the regulatory authorities in each jurisdiction are still able to grant temporary or service waivers for a

¹²⁵ Productivity Commission, 2012. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*, p 39

¹²⁶ ACECQA, 2011. *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, p 14

prescribed Element or Elements on the National Quality Standard or the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Waivers were discussed at each of the focus groups conducted as part of this review. Participants expressed confusion or concern regarding waivers, particularly regarding the continuation of existing waivers, the process of obtaining waivers and the implications of having a waiver for the service's rating.

Analysis of ACECQA data indicates, that a low proportion of services have been granted a waiver in all states except Tasmania and NT (see Table 16). Data analysed to date suggests that all states have progressed towards meeting the NQF qualifications. However, Tasmania and NT may see an increase in applications for waivers, in particular for requirements related to ECTs given the decline in access to ECTs in both jurisdictions.

Table 16: Proportion of approved services with a staff waiver (as of December 2013)

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Total
Number of services with staff waiver	147	60	54	37	107	12	21	20	458
Total number of services	4,785	3,814	2,666	1,129	974	225	208	315	14,116
% of services with staff waiver	3.1%	1.6%	2.0%	3.3%	11.0%	5.3%	10.1%	6.3%	3.2%

Source: ACECQA NQF Snapshot Q3 2013, Table 24 p.27 and PwC analysis

Note: the relatively low numbers in Queensland may be impacted by the transition timelines to national ratios being longer than in other jurisdictions. Similarly, the relatively high numbers in Tasmania may be impacted by transitional arrangements which did not enable 'working towards' to be counted in ratio.

9.3.1 *Uncertainty of impact of waivers on ratings*

Participants at the focus groups appeared to be unclear as to how existing waivers will be treated, and whether services with waivers would have to apply again for waivers or if:

- service waivers would continue to remain in place
- temporary waivers would continue for 12 months after they had been granted (for example, if a temporary waiver that was granted in May 2013 would continue until May 2014 despite the NQF requirements coming into effect on 1 January 2014).

Some participants at the focus groups also expressed concerns regarding the impact that obtaining a waiver will have on their rating. Under the NQF, all ECEC services across Australia are being rated by ACECQA across a number of 'quality areas' as well as being provided an overall rating. One of the quality areas is staffing arrangements; this includes meeting the educator-to-child ratios and the qualification requirements. There are five rating levels, as detailed below:

- excellent: indicates that a service demonstrated excellence and is recognised as a sector leader
- exceeds NQS: indicates that a service is exceeding the NQS
- meets NQS: indicates that a service is meeting the NQS
- working towards NQS: indicated that a service is working towards the NQS
- significant improvement required: indicates that a service is not meeting the NQS and that the regulator is working with the service to immediately improve its quality (otherwise the service's approval to operate will be withdrawn).

Some expressed their understanding that a service could still receive an overall rating of 'meeting' or 'exceeding' even if they held waivers, whereas, other educators indicated that

they thought they would receive a 'working towards' rating if they had a waiver. The current position agreed by jurisdictions is that waivers will not directly impact on a service's rating.

Some services were also concerned that parents and the community may misinterpret the ratings. They appeared to be particularly concerned that parents would assume a service was not of a high quality if they were 'just' meeting the NQS or the service was low quality if they received a working towards rating.

9.3.2 Uncertainty of process of obtaining waivers

Participants at the focus groups were also unclear as to what evidence they would have to provide in order to demonstrate eligibility for a waiver. For example, how long they would be required to have advertised for a position to prove that it could not be filled.

A small number of focus group participants did not appear to appreciate that they would have to demonstrate extensive and genuine attempts to employ appropriately qualified staff in order to obtain a waiver (as discussed in Section 9.3.4).

9.3.3 Consistency of implementation by jurisdiction

After the NQF qualification requirements come into effect the regulatory authorities in each jurisdiction will continue to process waiver applications. There appears to be some concerns regarding the consistency of how each jurisdiction will process and approve waivers.

9.3.4 Intentions to apply for waivers

Many of the participants who felt that their service would not be able to meet the qualification requirements of the NQF indicated that they do not currently hold waivers. Many of these services indicated that they intend to apply for waivers before 1 January 2014.

Participants in many jurisdictions indicated that they believe there will be a significant increase in the number of applications for waivers in the second half of 2013. This was particularly the case in Queensland and Tasmania. It is not known, however, if these services have contacted the regulatory authority in their jurisdiction or if they understand the conditions for which a waiver will be granted. It also appeared that a small number of service directors were not proactively seeking out qualified staff and were relying on being granted a waiver before 1 January 2014.

9.4 Current action

Since the announcement of the NQF, governments, regulatory authorities, ACECQA and sector groups have invested significantly in communicating the NQF changes to the sector. Additionally, focus group participants indicated that sector groups such as Early Childhood Australia have been very active in communicating the changes to the sector and large service providers have engaged with their staff to ensure they understand the changes.

Regarding the consistency of how waivers are applied by each jurisdiction's regulatory authority, it is understood that in 2014 ACECQA is undertaking an audit of how regulatory authorities are issuing waivers. It is understood that the objective of this audit is to ensure there is national consistency in the way in which waivers are issued.

9.5 Review finding

Despite the significant communication efforts, there still appears to be some confusion, uncertainty and nervousness in the ECEC sector as to how the NQF qualification requirements will work in practice. Over the next 6 – 18 months ACECQA and regulatory authorities should seek to communicate to the sector the operational flexibility within the national law and regulations as there appears to be some uncertainty and confusion within the sector. Therefore, it is suggested that a national communication campaign be undertaken in the second half of 2013. This campaign should include clarification around the areas discussed above. Further, the eligibility requirements for waivers should be clarified to encourage services to use this as a last resort.

It is important that the information produced as part of this communication campaign is clear and concise. Educators at the focus groups indicated that they do not have sufficient non-contact time to read through long and complex documents.

Finding 20: There have been a significant number of changes introduced under the NQF qualification requirements and there is a degree of nervousness and uncertainty in the sector regarding some of these. Service directors may not fully appreciate the flexibility they have in meeting the NQF qualification requirements and some are apprehensive as to how the waivers will operate. Over the next 6 – 18 months ACECQA and regulatory authorities should seek to communicate to the sector the operational flexibility within the national law and regulations as there appears to be some uncertainty and confusion within the sector. Potential areas for consideration include:

- undertaking a targeted national communication campaign regarding the implementation of the NQF
- including in the targeted national communication campaign clear, concise guidance on issues such as the flexibility services have in meeting the NQF qualification requirements (for example, the meaning of ‘working towards’ a qualification), the requirements for obtaining a waiver, the impact of holding a waiver on a service’s rating and a focus on the desired outcomes for children through the greater professionalisation of staff.

This could be undertaken by ACECQA in conjunction with the relevant state and territory regulatory authorities.

Section E

Appendices

Appendix A Focus groups

As part of the review, PwC held 16 focus groups which were attended by 177 participants. The focus groups covered a number of issues with a particular focus on the:

- impact of the NQF qualification requirements on ECEC educators and service providers
- strategies and barriers to meeting the NQF qualification requirements
- issues faced by rural and remote providers in attracting and retaining appropriately qualified staff.

Detailed discussion questions used to guide focus group discussions were developed following PwC's initial data analysis and can be found below in Table 19.

Focus group invitations were distributed to the invitees suggested by the relevant Department in each jurisdiction. Additional invitees were also suggested by the Department's Regional Education Skills and Job Coordinators.

Focus group locations

A total of 16 focus groups were held across Australia with a broad range of stakeholders involved.

There were 11 face-to-face focus groups that were open to all ECEC service providers, ECEC educators, training providers (including academics and RTOs), sector representatives and representatives of state and territory governments.

At least one face-to-face focus group was held in each jurisdiction in the locations below:

-
- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| • Sydney | • Adelaide |
| • Griffith | • Perth |
| • Melbourne | • Port Hedland |
| • Mildura | • Launceston |
| • Cairns | • Darwin |
| • Canberra | |
-

Three additional focus groups were held via teleconference, one of which was targeted specifically for services and educators from remote areas.

A further two face-to-face focus groups were held, one with representatives from large service providers (held in Sydney) and the other with the Department's Early Childhood Consultative Group (held in Canberra) which includes representatives from national peak organisations.

Focus group attendees

Most focus groups were well attended with a total of 177 people contributing to the discussions. Table 17 shows the attendance at all of the focus groups, excluding the 15 peak body representatives that attended the focus group with the Department's Early Childhood Consultative Group.

Most attendees were ECEC service directors and/or educators (we noted that in small services many have a dual role), followed by sector representatives who included peak bodies, unions and other significant stakeholders.

The educators and directors came from both ‘for-profit’ providers and ‘not-for profit’ providers. Of the 82 service directors and educators who attended focus groups approximately:

- 60 per cent were from LDC services
- 20 per cent were from preschools
- 5 per cent were from FDC services
- 10 per cent were from OSHC services.

The remaining educators and directors were from mobile or Budget Based Funded (BBF) services that are not directly covered by the qualification requirements of the NQF.

Table 17: Attendance at focus groups

	Service director and/or educator	Sector representative	Large service representative	Academic / RTO representative	Government Department representative	Other
Number	82	25	12	14	23	6
Proportion	51%	15%	7%	9%	14%	4%
Total*						162

*Excludes the 15 peak body representatives that attended the focus group with the DEEWR Early Childhood Consultative Group.

Focus group details

Table 18: Focus group locations, dates and attendees

Focus group location	Time and date	Number of participants
Large providers (Sydney)	10am- 12pm, Tuesday 26 March	7
Sydney	2pm – 4pm, Tuesday 26 March	20
Griffith	11am – 1pm, Wednesday 27 March	4
Melbourne	9am – 11am, Wednesday 27 March	8
Mildura	12pm – 2pm, Thursday 28 March	4
Launceston	11am – 1pm, Thursday 28 March	14
Cairns	6.30pm – 8.30pm, Tuesday 2 April	13
Perth	11am – 1pm, Wednesday 3 April	12
Port Hedland	11am – 1pm, Thursday 4 April	7
Darwin	10am – 12pm, Thursday 4 April	13
Adelaide	12pm – 2pm, Friday 5 April	10
Teleconference 1 (national)	3pm- 4pm, Tuesday 9 April	9
Teleconference 2 (national)	10am – 11am, Wednesday 10 April	7
Canberra	10am – 12pm, Tuesday 16 April	20
Regional and remote services teleconference	3pm- 5pm, Tuesday 16 April	14
The Department’s Early Childhood Consultative Group	1.30pm -3pm, Wednesday 17 April	15
	Total	177

Sector groups consulted

The below organisations are a sample of the sector groups and large service providers that were represented at the focus groups. It should be noted that the below list is not a full list of services or organisations that attended the focus groups and that there were a significant number of participants that attended from RTOs, universities and smaller services.

Sector groups and large service providers:

- Association of Independent Schools
- Australian Childcare Alliance
- Australian Education Union
- C&K
- Catholic Early Learning and Care
- Community Childcare Cooperative
- Early Childhood Australia
- Early Learning Association Australia
- Family Day Care Australia
- Good Start Early Learning
- Gowrie Australia
- Independent Education Union of Australia
- KU Children's Services
- National Association of Mobile Services
- National Out of School Hours Services Association
- United Voice
- Uniting Care Children's Services.

In addition to these sector groups and large providers, the following attended the focus groups:

- educators and service directors from approximately 65 smaller services
- academics from four universities
- trainers from five RTOs (including 2 TAFEs).

Focus group discussion questions

The below discussion questions were developed following the data analysis conducted by PwC. The questions asked at focus groups were tailored to the stakeholders present and the location.

Table 19: Focus group discussion questions

Data

Are there nuances relating to the preparedness of different jurisdictions for the qualification requirements of the NQF that are not reflected in the data?

Is the ratio of children to staff by qualification an accurate reflection of the preparedness of the workforce for the NQF qualification requirements?

What is driving the differences in waivers obtained by providers in jurisdictions?

ECEC workforce

What factors contribute to the perceived barriers to recruiting qualified staff in rural and remote areas?

What is driving the observed differences in the proportion of staff studying for further qualifications in the jurisdictions?

Is there a higher proportion of staff in the ACT, NT, Queensland and Victoria pursuing further study compared to other jurisdictions?

Do differences in the proportions of staff studying for further qualifications in different jurisdiction indicate there are barriers specific to these jurisdictions?

What qualifications are people who already hold four-year degrees studying and what are the reasons for them pursuing further qualifications?

Are the cost, time and benefits of pursuing further study creating barriers for ECEC staff obtaining further qualifications

What factors contribute to staff leaving the ECEC sector?

How significant are pay and conditions and stress levels in decisions to leave the sector?

Are there particular issues with staff retention in the LDC, OSHC and FDC sectors?

Is the growth in ECEC bachelor admissions keeping pace with demand?

What is driving growth in vacancies?

Policies and programs

Are providers aware of the availability of waivers and the required conditions to obtain a waiver?

Do scholarships that provide for some or all of the costs of study reduce these barriers?

What are the key approaches adopted by your relevant jurisdiction to assist the ECEC sector meet the NQF qualification requirements? What has worked well and what has not worked as well?

What are the existing links between the programs of different jurisdictions?

Is there merit in developing further links between the programs of different jurisdictions?

Where are the opportunities for further collaboration and sharing of successful programs?

How could links be developed between the programs of jurisdictions in the following areas:

- professional development in all jurisdictions
 - scholarships programs in all jurisdictions, particularly approaches to support ECEC educators and students on scholarships to complete their studies
 - strategies to engage the ECEC sector particularly in those jurisdictions where the ECEC sector is dominated by non-government providers
 - programs to staff remote and rural areas particularly in NT, WA and Queensland.
-

Appendix B ECT definition

ECTs, as defined in this report, include staff identified through the 2010 and 2013 Census that:

- hold a 3 or 4 year Bachelor degree or higher (ie. a postgraduate qualification), and
- hold that qualification in one of the following areas:
 - Teaching (early childhood related)
 - Teaching (primary)
 - Teaching (other)
- are primary contact or other contact staff
- are permanent (full or part time), fixed term contact or casual.

Appendix C Transitional arrangements

Long day care

Table 20 summarises the transitional arrangements of each jurisdiction for long day care and also includes the NQF requirements. The table includes both the qualification requirements of each jurisdiction, as well as the educator to child ratios.

As shown in the table:

- most jurisdictions already require a proportion of staff to hold a Diploma
- Victoria and Queensland both require all staff to hold at least an approved Certificate III level qualification
- New South Wales (NSW) is the only jurisdiction with existing ECT requirements for LDC. However, it should be noted that a number of jurisdictions through preschool funding guidelines require LDC services to employ an EC teacher to deliver a funded kindergarten program for children in the year before school.

In considering the preparedness of each jurisdiction for the NQF qualification requirements, it is important to recognise that each jurisdiction is coming from different pre-existing requirements. No jurisdiction apart from NSW currently requires LDCs to employ an ECT. Additionally, many jurisdictions (WA, Tasmania, NSW and ACT) have no existing requirements for staff to hold Certificate III.

Furthermore, the number of qualified staff that is required at a centre is dependent on the educator to child ratios. For example, in Victoria 50 per cent of educators working with children aged three and above are required to hold a Diploma and this qualification requirement is in line with the NQF. However, the ratio of educators to children is currently 1:15 in Victoria and will be 1:11 under the NQF. Therefore, services in Victoria will require more Diploma qualified staff to meet the NQF qualification requirements and the educator to child ratios.

Table 20: Transitional arrangements by jurisdiction for LDCs

	Educator to child ratios	Qualified educator to child ratios			
	Birth to 23 months ^a	23 to 36 months	36 months – preschool		
NQF	1:4 1 Jan 2012	1:5 1 Jan 2016 ^b	1:11 1 Jan 2016		<p>50% of educators required for the educator to child ratio must at least hold or be actively working towards an approved Diploma level qualification.^c</p> <p>All other staff must at least hold or be actively working towards an approved Certificate III level qualification.</p> <p>All services must employ an ECT.^d</p> <p>By 1 January 2014</p>
NSW	1:4 Ongoing	1:8 Until 1 Jan 2016	1:10 Ongoing ^e		<p>1 ECT: 30-39 children 2 ECTs: 40 – 59 children 3 ECTs: 60 – 79 children 4 ECTs: 80+ children</p> <p>At least one staff member working with 0-2 year old children must hold an approved qualification (such as a Diploma in Children’s Services).</p> <p>Until 1 January 2014</p>
VIC	1:4 Ongoing	1:4 Ongoing	1:15 Until 1 Jan 2016		<p>Regulations require each staff member in a licensed service to hold a Certificate III or above.^f</p> <p>0- 3 years: At least 1 of every 3 required staff must hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification.</p> <p>3 years – preschool age: At least 1 of every 2 required staff must hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification.</p> <p>Until 1 January 2014</p>

	Educator to child ratios	Qualified educator to child ratios			
QLD	1:4 Ongoing 1:5 for 15 to 24 months	1:6 Until 1 Jan 2016	1:12 Until 1 Jan 2016		All workers must hold or be working towards at least a Certificate III. 50% of staff required must hold or be working towards at least a Diploma qualification. Until 1 January 2014
SA	1:4 Ongoing	1:8 for first 8 children then 1:10 for any additional Until 1 Jan 2016	1:10 Ongoing		For staff to be counted towards the qualified educator to child ratios they must hold at least a Diploma level qualification. 0-2 year, 1:20 2 years- preschool age, 1:35 Until 1 January 2014
WA	1:4 Ongoing	1:5 Ongoing	1:10 Ongoing		Qualified staff must hold at least a two year Certificate in children services or a Diploma. 0-2 years, 1:12 Until 1 January 2014 2-3 years, 1:15 Until 1 January 2016 3 years - preschool, 1:30 Until 1 January 2016
Tas	1:4 Ongoing	1:5 Ongoing	1:10 Until 1 Jan 2016		At least 1 of every 2 staff required to meet the staff to child ratios must hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification. Until 1 January 2014
NT	1:4 Ongoing	1:5 Ongoing	1:11 Ongoing		At least 1 of every 2 staff required to meet the staff to child ratios must hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification. 0 – 2 years, 1: 8 Until 1 January 2014 2- 3 years, 1:10 Ongoing 3 years- preschool, 1: 22 Ongoing

ACT	Educator to child ratios	Qualified educator to child ratios		
	1:4	1:5	1:11	
	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	<p>One in two educators must hold or be working towards at least a Diploma level qualification.</p> <p>Each group of children must have a leader who holds or is working towards a tertiary qualification in early childhood.</p> <p>Directors must hold a tertiary qualification or Graduate Certificate in Childcare Management.</p>
Until 1 January 2014				

Source: Adapted from Productivity Commission, 2012. *Early Childhood Development Workforce*.

Note a: The staff to child ratio of the NQF was introduced on 1 January 2012, therefore, all jurisdictions are already meeting this requirements.

Note b: 1 January 2016 in NSW, QLD and SA.

Note c: Under Regulation 246 a person is taken to hold a diploma level qualification if a) at any time between 1 January 2010 and the scheme commencement day they were employed as an early childhood or children's services diploma-qualified staff member (or equivalent) in any participating jurisdiction, or b) immediately before the scheme commencement day held a qualification recognised under the former education and care services law of any participating jurisdiction as a diploma-level early childhood or children's services qualification (or equivalent).

Note d: All services must engage an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT), for:

- Services with less than 25 children preschool age and below must have ECT for 20% of hours
- Services with 25 – 59 children preschool age and below must have an ECT for 6 hours per day or 60% of the time
- Services with over 60 children preschool age and below must have a full time ECT and a second ECT at least 50% of the time.

Note e: As NSW has a higher standard for the educator to child ratio for children 36 months to preschool age this higher standard is being maintained under the NQF.

Note f: Some staff members are exempt if they complete a professional development course by 1 January 2012. Requirement was introduced in the *Victoria's Children Services Regulations 2009*.

Family day care

Table 21 details the NQF requirements for FDC and the transition arrangements in each jurisdiction. As shown in the table:

- SA is the only jurisdictions with existing qualification requirements for FDC educators and coordinators. All FDC educators must hold at least an approved Diploma qualification.
- Tasmania requires FDC educators with extended registration (meaning they can have an additional younger child) to hold an approved qualification
- QLD, Tasmania¹²⁷, SA and ACT are the only jurisdictions with specific qualification requirements for FDC coordinators
- Most jurisdictions' educator to child ratios for FDC for FDC are in line with the NQF.

¹²⁷ It should be noted that the term Co-ordinator has a different meaning under the Tasmanian system to that of the NQF.

Table 21: Transitional arrangements by jurisdiction for FDC

	Educator to child ratios	Qualification requirements
NQF	1:7 No more than 4 children <pre-school age From 1 Jan 2014	FDC educators must hold or be actively working towards at least a Certificate III qualification. FDC coordinators must have at least a Diploma level qualification. From 1 Jan 2014
NSW	1: 7 No more than 5 children <pre-school age Until 1 Jan 2014	No qualification requirements apply for FDC educators in NSW until introduction of the NQF qualification requirements. FDC coordinators must employ a qualified supervisory who holds at least an approved Certificate III and has 12 months experience. Until 1 Jan 2014
VIC	1:7 No more than 4 children <pre-school age Ongoing	No qualification requirements apply for FDC educators in Victoria until introduction of the NQF qualification requirements. Until 1 Jan 2014
QLD	1:7 No more than 4 children <pre-school age Ongoing	No qualification requirements apply for FDC educators in QLD until introduction of the NQF qualification requirements. Until 1 Jan 2014 FDC coordinators must hold at least an approved Diploma qualification. Ongoing
SA	1:7 No more than 4 children <pre-school age Ongoing	All FDC educators must hold at least a Certificate III level qualification. ^a All FDC coordinators must hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification. Ongoing
WA	0-6 years, 1:5 0-12 years, 1:7 Until 1 Jan 2014	No qualification requirements apply for FDC educators in WA until introduction of the NQF qualification requirements. Until 1 Jan 2014
TAS	1:7 No more than 4 children <pre-school age Until 1 Jan 2014	All educators caring for more than four children under the age of 5 years (i.e. those with extended registrations) must hold or be working towards at least an approved Certificate III. All FDC coordinators must hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification. ^b Until 1 Jan 2014
NT	1:7 Not more than 2 children < 3 years Until 1 Jan 2014	No qualification requirements apply for FDC educators in NT until introduction of the NQF qualification requirements. Until 1 Jan 2014

	Educator to child ratios	Qualification requirements
ACT	1:7 No more than 4 children <pre-school age Ongoing	No qualification requirements apply for FDC educators in ACT until introduction of the NQF qualification requirements. One in three FDC coordinators at a FDC service must hold an approved Diploma level qualification. Until 1 Jan 2014
<p>Source: Productivity Commission, 2012. <i>Early Childhood Development Workforce</i>, Table 6.3 and 6.4. Note a: If an educator was working prior to the introduction of these requirements they may retain a Certificate II in Children's Services as the highest required level of qualification. Note b: Coordinator has a different meaning under the Tasmanian system to that of the NQF.</p>		

Outside school hours care

As already detailed, the NQF has been agreed to cover care of school aged children. However, it does not include a national standard for qualifications or educator to child ratios for children over preschool age.¹²⁸

Table 22 details the existing requirements in place for OSHC services by jurisdiction.

Table 22: OSHC educator to child ratios by jurisdiction

	Educator to child ratios	Qualification requirements
NSW		Not required to meet any ratio requirements or qualification requirements, however, they are required to provide adequate supervision of children.
VIC	1:15	At least 50% of educators must hold or be studying for an approved Diploma level qualification. ^a As of 1 January 2014, all other educators must hold or be working towards a Certificate III. ^a
QLD	1:15	At least one educator must hold an approved Diploma level qualification. For every 30 children present one educator must hold an approved Certificate III level qualification.
SA	1:15	For every 30 children present one educator must hold at least an approved Diploma level qualification.
WA	1:10	For every 40 children present one educator must hold at least an approved Certificate IV or Diploma level qualification.
TAS	1: 15	No existing qualification requirements.
NT	1: 15	No existing qualification requirements.
ACT	1: 11	One educator who holds an approved Diploma level

¹²⁸ ACECQA, 2011. *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, p. 87.

Educator to child ratios	Qualification requirements
	qualification. For every 33 children or part thereof (above the first 33 children) the service must have one educator who holds at least an approved Certificate IV level qualification <i>or</i> is studying towards an approved Diploma or Degree and has two years experience working with school age children. ^b

Note a: Prior to 1 January 2014 there are no qualification requirements for non-Diploma staff in OSHC. Educators who completed an approved professional development course before 31 December 2011 are except from holding a Certificate III after 1 January 2014. See Section 356 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011*.

Note b: ACECQA, 2013. *Qualification Requirements for Working with Children Over Preschool Age in the ACT*. Accessed 7 May 2013. Available at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/Uploads/files/Quals/ACT%20over%20pre-school.pdf>

pwc.com.au