

Information kit for careers advisers

'Education has the power to transform lives. This begins with making sure that every young child has the opportunity to benefit from structured play-based learning before they start school, because this helps build the social, emotional and cognitive skills they need to succeed in the years to come.'

— Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration, 2019.



About early childhood education and care

The human brain develops more rapidly in the first few years of life than at any other time. Children's experiences in the years before school are critically important for everything that follows. For this reason, early childhood education and care (ECEC) matters enormously for children and families.

More than 45% of Australian children aged 0-5 years attend ECEC services, including preschool/kindergarten and long-day care services. To provide these services, the Australian ECEC sector employs more than 190,000 educators.

What's new?

Australia's ECEC sector has changed in significant ways since the introduction of the [National Quality Framework](#) in 2012. All early childhood educators now require formal qualifications in order to work with children, and there is a comprehensive National Quality Standard that governs educators' work.

Job prospects

The job prospects for qualified early childhood educators are excellent. There is currently a shortage of early childhood educators across Australia, with moderate-to-strong demand [forecast](#) (depending on qualifications) for the next five years. The Australian Government [estimates](#) that Australia will need an additional 23,900 early childhood educators (including degree-qualified teachers) by 2025.

In June 2021, there were 4,628 [vacancies](#) advertised online for early childhood educators and managers across Australia. Among the members of the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA), there were 3,796 positions vacant.



Attributes and skills

Guiding children's learning, development and wellbeing in the years before school is sophisticated work. Early childhood educators require a good understanding of pedagogy and childhood development, as well as practical skills in working with diverse groups of children.

Effective early childhood educators are:

- ★ curious
- ★ knowledgeable
- ★ empathetic
- ★ energetic
- ★ inclusive
- ★ inventive.

Communication and teamwork skills are also essential. Early childhood educators need to cooperate and collaborate with children, parents and their own colleagues.

Early childhood educators are also able to incorporate particular skills and interests into their work, such as science, music and drama.

What do early childhood educators do?

The work of early childhood educators is multi-faceted. In their work with children, educators plan, observe, encourage, explain, nurture and inspire. Many early childhood educators also work closely with families and allied health professionals, to provide additional support to those who need it.

"Early childhood educators are skilled in concepts and practices of play-based learning, and understand that play provides a supportive environment where children can ask questions, solve problems and engage in critical thinking"

— Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.

Where do early childhood educators work?

Early childhood educators may choose to work in a variety of settings: long-day care centres, preschools/kindergartens, outside school hours care services, family day care or schools (the latter depending on their qualifications).

Roles for early childhood educators

Early childhood educators can create career pathways that include leadership roles and specialisation. Within larger employers, there are frequent opportunities for further development and promotion, providing younger educators with the chance to advance in their careers.

There are different roles and responsibilities in early learning and care services:

Educators:

- ★ create inspiring, interesting, and age-appropriate learning environments
- ★ inspire children's curiosity to create and explore their environment
- ★ establish strong relationships with children
- ★ support children's social and emotional development
- ★ create opportunities for every child to reach their potential
- ★ form meaningful partnerships with families to reach the best outcomes for each child.

In addition, lead educators:

- ★ lead the development and implementation of an effective educational program in the service
- ★ provide advice and support to other educators, to build an effective early learning team.

In addition, early childhood teachers:

- ★ deliver preschool/kindergarten programs to children in the two years before they start school
- ★ assess each child's learning and development
- ★ scaffold children's learning to develop new concepts, skills and positive attitudes to learning
- ★ support children to become self-reliant and collaborative, with the confidence to transition to school.

Managers:

- ★ monitor and assess the performance of their early learning and care service, ensuring that it meets the National Quality Standard
- ★ build a strong team of educators and support staff
- ★ work with parents to understand the best ways to support their children
- ★ collaborate with other professionals to deliver specialised support for children and families.

There are also opportunities for educators to move into senior leadership and management roles. For example, large ECEC providers operate up to 600 services, with roles for area managers, pedagogical leaders and quality improvement leaders, to name a few.

In addition, most degree-qualified early childhood teachers are able to teach children from birth into the early years of school, providing flexibility and choice over the course of a career.

Pay and conditions

Pay and conditions for early childhood educators vary across roles, locations and employers. Positions may be permanent (full-time or part-time) or casual. Some educator roles have pay and conditions set by the relevant industrial award, while others are set above the award (via an enterprise agreement or otherwise).

The Australian Government's Job Outlook website provides estimates of median weekly wages for degree-qualified early childhood teachers (\$1,488), early learning and care centre managers (\$1,272) and other educators (\$953).

In many cases, degree-qualified early childhood teachers enjoy the same (or similar) pay and conditions working in early learning services as they do in schools. This provision is sometimes based on industrial awards (see VECTEA); in other cases, individual employers ensure pay parity.

Conditions of employment for educators may include: time for planning; paid professional development; and support for upskilling. Employers will often provide financial support and paid leave for educators undertaking additional study (eg at Bachelor level). In addition to pay and professional support, educators may also be eligible for benefits such as discounted private health insurance and gym membership.

Other ways to value the profession

New Australian research shows that early childhood educators working in high-quality services [report](#) high levels of job satisfaction. They identify teamwork, good communication and passion as among the key elements of their success. Families also recognise the value of educators' work, with a 2020 [survey](#) finding that 97% of Australian families consider early learning and care 'important' or 'very important'.

Qualifications and pathways

Early childhood educators must hold an approved qualification, or be actively working towards one. Qualifications are assessed and approved by the [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority](#).

There are different pathways into an early childhood education career. It's also common for educators to upskill to higher qualifications over the course of their careers. Many employers will provide financial and/or other support to help their staff to upskill.



Qualification options

	Higher education	Vocational education and training	School-based*/work-based traineeship
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care			
Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care			
Bachelor of Early Childhood Education			
Graduate Diploma of Early Childhood Education			
Master of Teaching (Early Childhood)			

*Traineeships are available in some schools, along with units of competency from the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Work experience

Would you like to arrange work experience for your students in an early learning and care service? Our members operate more than 2,300 services across Australia, in every state and territory.

Click [here](#) to complete our work experience request form.

Information for students

Our [Big Roles in Little Lives](#) website contains lots of accessible information about ECEC careers for secondary school students.

About us

Established in 2014, the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) works to promote the value of quality early learning and care for young children and their families.

Our 19 members include some of the largest early learning and care providers in the country, from all parts of the sector, including both long-day care and preschool/kindergarten. ELACCA members operate more than 2,300 early learning and care services across Australia, educating and nurturing more than 220,000 children. Together, our members provide nearly 30% of the nation's early learning and care places.

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Did you know?

While 'child care worker' is still a common term, it is no longer used in the early learning and care sector. The preferred term is 'early childhood educator', which reflects the central role of these professionals in supporting children's learning, from birth onwards.

Early childhood educators have provided essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Early learning and care services have continued to operate throughout restrictions and lockdowns, providing secure employment for the early childhood workforce.

Early learning and care services work with a national curriculum document. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia was developed by a group of eminent early childhood experts, and introduced in 2009.

