

Evaluation of the Transition to School Statement

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) was created in 2012 to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of education in New South Wales. CESE is focused on supporting decision-making in education delivery and development with strong evidence.

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CESE provides sound evidence for educators to make decisions about best practice in particular contexts; and importantly to enable teachers to meet the needs of students at every stage of their learning.

Acknowledgements

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Letter to the Minister



Education
Centre for Education
Statistics & Evaluation

Advisory Council

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Dear Minister

This report represents work undertaken by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation to evaluate the NSW Transition to School Statement. The Statement was initiated in response to the Review of NSW Government Funding for Early Childhood Education (the Brennan Report). The Statement was successfully piloted in 2013-2014 prior to state wide roll out in September 2014.

The Centre consulted with a wide range of key stakeholders including early childhood service directors, school principals, teachers, parents and carers and a panel of academic researchers and early childhood and school educators with expertise in transition to school initiatives. Strong response rates were achieved amongst all surveyed stakeholders, thus enabling confidence in the representativeness of the findings.

The evaluation found that early childhood services, families and schools almost universally felt that children were well supported in their transition to school. These strong positive responses created ceiling effects, whereby respondents in geographical areas where the statement was used more or less frequently were equally likely to provide positive responses about children's transitions. This made it impossible to detect any additional impact of the Statement in its first year of implementation. However, the Statement is clearly valued as a useful tool among the many key stakeholders who were using it and was generally perceived to serve the needs of individual children and their families. These findings suggest that there is merit in making the Statement more widely available. A potential barrier identified to more widespread implementation is lack of awareness about the Statement. There is clear evidence that the encouragement design employed for this study resulted in significantly greater awareness and uptake of the Statement in the targeted sites relative to the comparison sites. Most surveyed teachers felt better able to respond to the learning needs of their students with a Statement compared to those students without a Statement. A substantial majority of surveyed parents agreed that having a Statement provided better support to help their child's transition to school compared to their other children who did not have a Statement.

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation Advisory Council thanks the key stakeholders for their generous contribution and insights for this evaluation. Particular thanks are extended to the members of the Evaluation Reference Group who provided guidance to ensure high standards of independence, rigour and integrity and facilitated access to data. This Group included cross-sectoral representatives from the following agencies or peak organisations: early childhood education services; academic researchers with evaluation expertise in early childhood and school settings, including a member of the CESE Advisory Council; the Catholic Education Commission of NSW, the Association of Independent Schools of NSW and senior officers in the Department's Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate and School Operations and Performance Division.

This report provides a strong basis on which further work may be undertaken to enhance the implementation of the Statement to support children's transition to school.

I commend the staff of the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation for undertaking this evaluation.

John Ainley

Chair, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, Advisory Council

August 2015

Contents

Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	6
2. Extent of awareness and uptake of the Statement	13
3. Use of the Statement in schools	17
4. Implementation – enablers and barriers	18
5. Differences in expected outcomes between targeted and comparison sites	22
6. Suggestions for improving the Statement	28
7. Future support strategies to enhance uptake of the Statement	29
8. Discussion and recommendations	34
9. References	36
Appendices	37

Executive summary

Introduction

The NSW Transition to School Statement was introduced in September 2014. The Statement records a child's strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning. Its aims are to improve communication between early childhood (EC) services, families and schools about children's transition and provide greater assistance for school teachers to prepare for children entering Kindergarten and thus, to plan appropriate learning and teaching programs.

The aims of the evaluation were to: identify the extent of uptake of the Statement and to assess which aspects of the Statement are working effectively and which aspects could be improved to inform future implementation efforts (i.e. a process evaluation). The evaluation also sought to determine whether the Statement achieves its stated objectives (i.e. an outcome evaluation).

CESE employed a quasi-experimental encouragement design to evaluate the program. This involved selecting two 'targeted' sites (Sydney-Blacktown and Riverina) and two 'comparison' sites (Sydney-Inner South West and Central West). The targeted sites received encouragement to utilise the Statement through additional communication and tailored professional learning workshops for EC services and schools, and parent forums. Data was gathered through qualitative and quantitative methods.

Data is based on surveys of:

- 195 (or 94% of) EC and school participants in the workshops and 10 (or 100% of) parents in the parent forums in the targeted sites, carried out in September 2014
- 531 (or 87% of) EC directors in the targeted and comparison sites, carried out in December 2014
- 205 (or 61% of) school principals in the targeted and comparison sites, carried out in March-April 2015
- 532 (or 60% of) Kindergarten teachers in the targeted and comparison sites (representing 60% of all teachers in those sites), carried out in March-April 2015.
- 1,029 parents and carers of Kindergarten students in the targeted sites, carried out in March-April 2015. These respondents represent 49% of all parents and carers selected from administrative records and 93% of families who could be contacted. Parents and carers were not surveyed in comparison sites to minimise fieldwork costs.

The very strong response rates provide reason to be confident in the representativeness of the survey findings. Data was also obtained through case studies of seven EC services and a forum with an expert panel to review de-identified Statements.

In this report, 'EC services' includes: community preschools; preschools that are part of a school; mobile preschool services and long day care services. The term 'EC directors' refers to the EC service directors and/or educators who responded to the survey. The term 'principals' includes their nominees for the survey. The term 'school educators' refers to school principals and teachers of Kindergarten students. The terms, 'parents' and 'families' includes carers. The term, 'child' refers to the child for whom the respondent was the biological parent, step parent or other carer.

Extent of awareness and uptake of the Statement

The encouragement design resulted in significantly greater awareness and uptake of the Statement in the targeted sites. When surveyed two months after the Statement initiative commenced, 88 per cent of EC services in the targeted sites said they were aware of the Statement compared to 76 per cent of services in the comparison sites. EC services in the targeted sites were significantly more likely to report using the Statement than services in the comparison sites (60% vs 26%). Nearly 20 per cent of EC services in the targeted sites completed Statements for all children in their year before school compared to only six per cent of services in the comparison sites.

Around 50 per cent of principals and school teachers surveyed in the targeted sites had received Statements for one or more of their Kindergarten students compared to fewer than 20 per cent of school educators in the comparison sites. Around 90 per cent of the school educators who received Statements reported that their school made use of them to support the learning and additional needs of children and to get to know the child and family. Around half these school educators used the Statement for classroom grouping and organization, and one in three for curriculum design and delivery.

Around one quarter of parents surveyed in the targeted sites had a Statement prepared for their child. Based on the self-reporting of EC services, it was estimated that around 10 per cent of parents in the comparison sites received a Statement for their child.

The most challenging issues for EC services implementing the Statement were the workload and time constraints in preparing the Statement. EC directors typically reported taking between 41-60 minutes to prepare their sections for each Statement and a further 10 minutes to complete the child's section. Paper versions were the most commonly used format but involved significant photocopying costs. Some EC services reported technical difficulties with the online format.

Among the EC services that had chosen not to use the Statement, the most frequently cited reasons included: the late introduction of the Statement in the year (62%); too much time involved to complete the process (39%); the service was already using a similar transition statement (32%) or the staff need professional development to prepare the Statements (21%).

Differences on expected outcomes between targeted and comparison sites

The successful implementation of the 'encouragement' design enabled a test of whether communication and transition support was perceived to be better in targeted than comparison sites. There were few differences between targeted and comparison sites on the outcome measures, which suggests that the Statement had little aggregate impact on transitions in its first year of implementation. However, users of the statement tended to report that it was a valuable tool to assist in the transition to school.

Improved communication between early childhood services, families and schools

Targeted vs comparison sites

Nearly all EC services agreed that they share information with families about children's strengths, interests, preferred ways of learning and ways to support children's transition to school. The majority of principals and school teachers reported receiving information from families about their child's strengths and interests. There were no significant differences between targeted and comparison sites on these measures.

Kindergarten teachers in the targeted sites were significantly more likely to indicate that they received information from EC services about students' strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning than did teachers in the comparison sites. There were no significant differences between principals' responses to these questions in the targeted and comparison sites.

Users vs non-users

The parents and school educators who had received Statements said they felt better informed about the children's strengths, interests, preferred ways of learning and ways to help their transition to school than respondents who did not receive them.

Better support for children's transition to school

Targeted vs comparison sites

Nearly all EC directors, principals and teachers in targeted and comparison sites agreed that children were well supported and generally well prepared for their transition to school. This did not vary significantly across targeted and comparison sites.

Users vs non-users

Despite very high levels of agreement among users and non-users of the Statement, teachers who received Statements were slightly more likely to agree that their students were generally well prepared for school than teachers who did not receive any Statements. Families with Statements were also slightly more likely than those without Statements to agree that their child was well supported in their transition to school. However, most families surveyed felt that their children made a smooth transition into Kindergarten.

Among the families who already had a child at school, 86 per cent of parents agreed that having a Statement provided better support to help their child's transition to school compared to their other children who did not have a Statement. Furthermore, 95 per cent of parents agreed that the Statement provided a better way for their family to pass on their knowledge of their child to the school compared to their other children who did not have a Statement.

Greater assistance for teachers to prepare for children entering Kindergarten

Just over 90 per cent of school teachers agreed that they felt better informed about the strengths and interests of their students with a Statement compared to students without a Statement. Approximately 75 per cent of teachers agreed that they felt better informed about the preferred ways of learning for students with a Statement than students without a Statement. Around 80 per cent of school teachers reported feeling better able to respond to the learning needs of their students with a Statement compared to those without a Statement.

Perceived value of the Statement among those who had used or received them

More than 90 per cent of EC directors, school educators and parents affirmed the Statement as a valuable tool for sharing information between families, EC services and schools. Ninety per cent of respondents were willing to recommend the Statement to other EC educators, families and schools.

Three quarters of the EC educators were planning to use the Statement in 2015 for children going to school in 2016, with the bulk of the remaining services still considering using the Statement. A substantial majority of school principals (87%) and teachers (90%) said they would use the Statements if received for Kindergarten students starting in 2016. Nearly all parents (95%) said they would like to have a Statement if they had another child starting school in the future.

Suggestions for improving the content and format of the Statement

Given the high level of interest in implementing the Statement in 2015, the most commonly mentioned recommendations were to make the Statement shorter and more concise, and to make specific refinements to the language and structure of the questions in all sections. The clear consensus from the survey data, case studies and review of de-identified Statements was to streamline questions and reduce the overall length and thus, reduce the time involved for EC services and families preparing Statements and for school educators using the information.

Future support strategies to enhance uptake of the Statement

Awareness and perceived value of the targeted and state wide support strategies

EC directors were generally much more aware of the targeted and state wide support strategies offered than school educators. In the targeted sites where professional learning workshops were offered to introduce the Statement, two in five EC services and schools sent participants. Over 90 per cent of respondents who accessed this support valued the workshops and Initiative Support Payment (teacher relief) in helping them to use the Statement. Although the parent forums were not well attended, almost all surveyed parents who attended, valued the forum. The online support materials (information sheets, community languages translations and completed example) were very well received by over 90 per cent of all respondents who used them. EC directors and school educators who were surveyed after the workshops and/or during Term 1 requested additional training to understand how to use the Statement to support children's transitions.

Some respondents highlighted the need for ongoing support strategies for both the EC and schools sectors to increase understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework and school curriculum and to enhance skills in preparing and interpreting strength-based writing. Respondents also highlighted the need for more information sessions about the Statement and ideas on how parents can support their child's transition. Some respondents indicated that schools should be encouraged to provide feedback to EC services and families about the individual Statements received to enhance children's transition experience.

Discussion and Recommendations

The evaluation found that EC services, families and schools almost universally felt that children were well supported in their transition to school. These strong positive responses created ceiling effects, whereby respondents in geographical areas where the statement was used more or less frequently were equally likely to provide positive responses about children's transitions. This made it impossible to detect any additional impact of the Statement in its first year of implementation. However, the Statement is clearly valued as a useful tool among the many key stakeholders who were using it and was generally perceived to serve the needs of individual children and their families. These findings suggest that there is merit in making the Statement more widely available. A potential barrier identified to more widespread implementation is lack of awareness about the Statement. One quarter of EC directors, two in three school teachers and nearly half the school principals surveyed in the comparison sites had little or no knowledge of the initiative. The proportion of parents who are unaware of the Statement is also likely to be high given that 61 per cent of parents in the targeted sites reported knowing little or nothing about it. If the comparison sites are indicative of the state wide trend, efforts to improve awareness may be required across the State to increase utilisation of the Statement.

To enhance uptake and implementation of the Statement, it is recommended that:

- 1) The structure and content of the Statement should be refined, taking into consideration the feedback received in the evaluation.
- 2) The accessibility of the online Statement should be enhanced to give early childhood services more flexibility to utilise electronic options, conditional on those options being consistent with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.
- 3) Communications should commence earlier in the year, with consideration given to Terms 1 or 2 when early childhood services, families and schools are planning for transition.
- 4) A targeted communication strategy should be implemented state wide to raise awareness of the Statement and promote its potential benefits to early childhood services, families and schools.
- 5) The communication strategy should include support for professional learning including:
 - a) resource materials targeted at key users of the Statement - early childhood and school educators, parents and carers
 - b) specific training or online webinars targeted for educators in the early childhood education and school sectors with helpful ideas on how to use the Statement.
- 6) The strategy should also include delivery and/or support for professional learning including:
 - a) cross-sectoral training opportunities for early childhood and school educators to develop a shared understanding of the purpose of the Statement and its alignment with the Early Years Learning Framework and to enhance skills in preparing and interpreting strength-based writing to support children's transition to school
 - b) more localised training and networking to build relationships and collaboration between early childhood services and schools.
- 7) The communication strategy should encourage schools to provide feedback to early childhood services and families by acknowledging receipt of the Statements and sharing how the Statement has been used to support the children's transition.

1: Introduction

Overview of the Transition to School Statement

The importance of early childhood education and care as a foundation for lifelong learning underpins state and national policies to provide all children with access to high quality early childhood (EC) programs (*National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, 2015, NSW 2021, 2011, p.31*). Research shows that participating in quality EC education programs can significantly improve children's educational and life outcomes (OECD, 2012, Galinsky, 2006, Temple & Reynolds, 2005). Research also shows that a smooth transition to school enhances children's learning and development outcomes (Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

One of the significant challenges for the NSW early childhood and school sectors is helping children to be better prepared for schooling and facilitating their continuity of learning in new settings. While EC services base their curriculum on the Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009), schools are utilising NSW syllabuses with some flexibility for local implementation. Although many families choose to send their children to EC services, less than five per cent of services are part of a school. The vast majority of children transition to a new school setting. While many EC services and schools already offer transition to school programs, the type and depth of information exchanged between EC services, families and schools can vary.

In 2011, the NSW Government commissioned Professor Deborah Brennan to lead a review into early childhood education funding and to identify strategies to improve the quality and delivery of early childhood education and care into the future. Citing the example of the Victorian transition statement, Brennan recommended that the Department pilot a strengths-based transition to school statement (Brennan, 2012, pp. 53-54). This Statement was to be based on the principles embodied in the EYLF to support children's transition to school, improve communication between families, EC services and schools, and strengthen links between schools and EC services.

The NSW Government accepted the advice of the Brennan review and committed to the development of a NSW Transition to School Statement. An initial trial was conducted on a relatively small scale with 12 EC services and 22 schools in 2013-14. The trial found that the Statement was generally well received. Families, EC educators and school staff were positive about the value of the Statement. It found that the most challenging issues in implementation included how best and when to transmit the information to schools and how to engage parents, particularly those who had not yet chosen a school for their children. Following further stakeholder consultations, the Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate (ECECD) refined the Statement for state wide rollout.

The introduction of the Statement is linked to Quality Area 6 (QA6) of the National Quality Standard (NQS) (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2013). QA6 promotes the development of collaborative partnerships between EC services, families and other organisations to enhance children's learning and wellbeing. These partnerships require active communication with the potential benefits of enhancing children's continuity of learning and transitions by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.

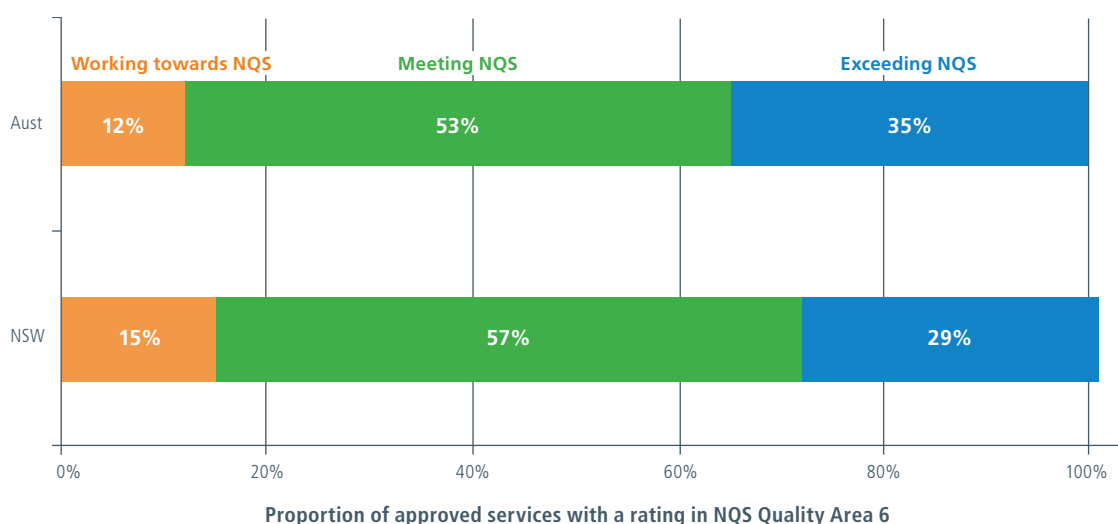
At 30 September 2014, 2,668 approved services in NSW (54%) had been assessed with a finalised quality rating. As shown in Figure 1.1, of those NSW services assessed, 86 per cent had attained a quality rating of meeting or exceeding the NQS on QA6, which is comparable to the national average of 88 per cent. However, it is clear that some services in NSW could benefit from policy initiatives that aim to encourage stronger relationships with families and community.

Figure 1.1:

Proportion of approved services with a rating in NQS Quality Area 6, Partnerships with families and communities in NSW and Australia, as at September 2014.

Note: This analysis is based on EC services in NSW (n=2,668) and Australia (n=6,722)

Source: Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority 2014, National Quality Framework (NQF) Snapshot Q3 2014



Aims and expected outcomes of the NSW Transition to School Statement

A program logic model was developed to describe how the Government's investment in the Statement was intended to bring about change and clarify what outcomes are anticipated from the initiative over the short, medium and long-term. As can be seen in Figure 1.2, the agreed aims of the NSW Transition to School Statement are to:

- improve communication between EC services, families and schools about children's strengths, interests and their preferred ways of learning
- provide better information and support for families with their children's transition to school and
- provide greater assistance for school teachers to plan appropriate learning and teaching programs for children entering Kindergarten.

The Minister for Education launched the Statement in September, 2014. Preparation and use of Statement in NSW is voluntary. It is completed by the child's EC educator in cooperation with the parent or carer to outline the child's strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning. With the consent of the child's parent or carer, the Statement is then transferred to the child's school before they begin Kindergarten.

Three information sheets were provided on the department's ECECD Transition to School webpage, one each for educators, parents/carers, and for teachers and schools. The Statement and information sheet for families were translated into eleven community languages with instructions for parents to complete the Statement in English. The community translations and a fourth information sheet on the development, trial and evaluation of the Statement were released in October. Online access to a video promoting the Statement was released state wide in November, 2014.

NSW Education & Communities
Office of Education

NSW Transition to School Statement

This Transition to School Statement will give your child's school teacher important information that will help your child to have a successful start to school.

What is the NSW Transition to School Statement?
This document provides a child's interests, strengths and preferred ways of learning to their year prior to school. It is a guide to assist early childhood educators, parents and primary school teachers to better understand a child and how best to support their transition from early childhood education to school.

How to complete this statement
Step 1: Early childhood educator completes sections A & B
Step 2: Early childhood educator completes section C with child
Step 3: Parent/carer completes sections B, C and signs section D
Step 4: Parent/carer signs transfer statement to early childhood educator and the statement is then forwarded to the primary school

SECTION A: Early childhood educator to complete this section

Child's first name: _____ Surname: _____

Name of early childhood educator completing this form: _____

Professional title: _____

Telephone: _____ Suburb/town: _____

Email: _____

10001 EDUCATION (02) 9399 4444 (02) 9399 7333 (02) 9399 7333 (02) 9399 7333

NSW Transition to School Statement

Figure 1.2:

Program logic model for the NSW Transition to School Statement Initiative.

Program logic model for Transition to School Statement Initiative

INPUT	OUTPUTS Activities & Participants	OUTCOMES		
		Short term	Medium term	Long term
Project Funding under Bilateral Agreement on Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (NP UAECE) DEC resources & project personnel Resources for transition to school initiatives in early childhood (EC) services and schools Parental support for children in the year before fulltime schooling	ECECD coordinates a roll-out of the NSW Transition to School Statement: • State-wide rollout in 2014/15. Statement will be available for all EC services. If the parents give consent, the EC service will pass the statement to the school that the parents nominate for their child's Kindergarten enrolment • Targeted communication and implementation support such as workshops and parent forums will be offered in Sydney-Blacktown and the Riverina areas during 2014/15. • EC services and parents collaborate to prepare statements that describe children's strengths, approach to learning interests and additional needs. • School teachers receive statements that can assist with individual student and school-level planning.	Children / Parents		
		• Participants gain more knowledge of children's transitions. • Parents perceive the statement as valuable and useful for supporting their children's transition. • Parents perceive improved communication with EC educators and schools. • Parents perceive their children make a better transition between early childhood services and schools.	• Children's previous learning experiences are used for planning school programs with improved continuity of learning outcomes. • Parents perceive improved communication and positive support for their children's transition between ECEC services and schools.	• Children have improved learning outcomes at school. • Parents are more satisfied with their children's learning outcomes at school.
		EC Service Providers		
		• Workshop participants gain more knowledge of children's transitions • EC educators perceive the statement as valuable and useful for supporting children's transition. • EC educators who prepare statements perceive improved communication with parents and schools. • EC educators are providing better transition support for children. • EC services that send statements establish stronger connections with schools.	• More EC educators are collaborating with parents preparing statements. • Sustained improvements in communications and connections with schools.	• Better quality transition practices are in place. • Better connections are established with schools.
		Schools / Kindergarten teachers		
• Workshop participants gain more knowledge of children's transitions. • Teachers who receive statements have more knowledge about children for individual and school-level planning. • Teachers perceive the statement as valuable and useful for supporting children's transition. • Teachers who receive statements perceive improved communication with parents and EC services. • Schools that receive statements establish stronger connections with EC services.	• Teachers receive and use more consistent information to support children's continuity of learning. • Schools provide better transition support for children. • Sustained improvements in communications and connections with parents and EC services.	• Schools receive more consistent and structured information to plan for the specific learning needs of children. • Better connections are established with EC services.		
ASSUMPTIONS		EXTERNAL FACTORS		
EC services and parents choose to prepare statements for children		Children may participate in more than one EC service. Parents/carers may access multiple generic and specialist support programs for their family. EC services and school may offer multiple transition initiatives.		

Evaluation design

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) was asked to evaluate the Transition to School Statement. The aims of the evaluation were to:

- identify the extent of uptake of the Statement and to assess which aspects of the Statement are working effectively and which aspects could be improved to inform future implementation efforts (i.e. a process evaluation)
- determine whether the Statement achieves its stated objectives (i.e. an outcome evaluation).

Determining whether the Statement achieves its objectives is complicated by the fact that it was available across the State. In these circumstances it is difficult to determine the counterfactual situation, or what children's transitions would have been like in the absence of the Statement.

An 'encouragement design' (Duflo, Glennerster & Kremer, 2007, p.27) was employed to make as robust an assessment as possible about the impact of the Statement. This involved the selection of two targeted sites and two comparison sites (with one rural and one metropolitan area in each group). EC services and schools in the comparison sites employed their usual transition programs as well as the Transition to School Statement if they were aware of it and wanted to use it. In the targeted sites, additional communications, parent forums and professional learning workshops for EC services and schools were delivered with the aim of increasing uptake of the Statement. Each EC service was given a starter pack including paper copies of the Statement, information sheets, a flyer and a poster. The quantities were based on the number of enrolments in each service. Relief time was also paid to assist EC educators and school teachers to attend the workshops. These targeted activities were intended to raise awareness of the importance of supporting children and their transition to school and to explain the purpose and use of the Statement. The workshops and parent forums were designed to help facilitate improved connections between EC services, schools and families and increase take-up and utilisation of the Statement in those sites.

If the encouragement effectively increases utilisation of the Statement, it enables an assessment of whether there are any aggregate-level differences in the outcomes across targeted and comparison sites. This design is represented in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3:
Evaluation design

Targeted Sites Sydney-Blacktown and Riverina	Comparison Sites Sydney-Inner South West and Central West
Existing transition programs Statement and online resources available + Targeted communications Participation in professional learning workshop Earlier online access to a video promoting the Statement (available in October) Active promotion of tool throughout the region	Existing transition programs Statement and online resources available

The selection of the four evaluation sites was based on the profiles of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) regions at the Statistical Area 4 (SA4) level. Selection factors included:

- population statistics: total population, number and proportion of 0-4 years old children and number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- socio-economic characteristics as measured by median and range of ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) scores
- number and range of EC service providers (long day care services, mixed type services, preschools that are not part of a school such as community-managed preschools and mobile preschool services, preschools that are part of a school and family day care services) and
- number and range of schools with Kindergarten enrolments (government, Catholic systemic and independent).

CESE identified a number of state wide pairs of similar sites. The ECEC Directorate advised CESE of the four evaluation sites selected from this list. The targeted sites were Sydney-Blacktown (including Mt Druitt, Quakers Hill, Plumpton) and Riverina (including Hillston, Griffith, Wagga Wagga, Tumut). The comparison sites were Sydney-Inner South West (including Bankstown, Bass Hill, Bexley, Canterbury, Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale) and Central West (including Bathurst, Lachlan Valley, Lithgow, Mudgee, Orange, West Wyalong). Appendix A contains maps of the distribution of services and schools and a comparison of the demographic profiles of the four ABS statistical areas.

The primary outcomes were addressed by comparing aggregate-level differences in EC and school educators' and parents' perceptions about the transition to school in targeted and comparison sites. However, one advantage of a voluntary statement is that some Kindergarten students within a given school will have a Statement and some will not. This natural experimental design was also utilised to identify whether school teachers felt more prepared for the arrival of children with a statement than they did for children without a Statement.

Key evaluation questions

Process evaluation

The purposes of the process evaluation were to ascertain whether the Statement has been implemented as intended and to identify the extent of uptake with or without the targeted communications and support. The process evaluation also sought to identify which aspects of the initiative are most critical to its success and any areas for improvement.

The questions that were addressed in the process evaluation included:

Extent of awareness and uptake of the Statement

- Are ECEC services aware of the Statement?
- What proportions of EC services completed Statements and what proportion of these were transferred to schools?

Use of the Statement

- How were the Statements used by schools?

Implementation - enablers and barriers

- What form of the Statement was used, how and when were they transferred to schools? Could the methods of transfer be improved?
- How long does it take EC educators and parents to prepare Statements and how long do schools spend considering them?
- Which issues and concerns did EC educators, schools and parents have about implementing the Statement?
- To what extent are the materials perceived to be inclusive of all children – e.g. catering for the needs of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children in low SES, rural and remote communities?
- Is the Statement reaching the right children and if not, what are the perceived gaps in reach?
- What reasons did stakeholders give for not using Statements?
- How could the Statement, the resource materials and/or the process be improved?
- Are additional resources and support materials needed and if so, what would be most useful?
- What support strategies are needed to ensure increased uptake and sustainability of the Statement?

Outcome evaluation

The focus of the evaluation was on the short-term outcomes because it was commissioned to inform the implementation of the Statement from 2015 onward. The questions that were addressed in the outcome evaluation included:

Improved communication between EC services, families and schools

- Do EC educators and school educators in targeted sites perceive communication to be better and feel more informed about students' strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning than EC educators and school educators in comparison sites?
- Do EC educators, parents and school educators who develop/receive statements perceive communication to be better and feel more informed about students' strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning than those who do not develop/receive the statements?

Better information and support for families with their children's transition to school

- Do EC educators in the targeted sites feel better able to contribute their knowledge of children to the school than EC educators in the comparison sites?
- Do EC educators and parents/carers who develop Statements feel better able to contribute their knowledge of children to the school than EC educators and families who do not develop statements?
- Do parents/carers who develop Statements perceive that their children made a better transition to school compared to parents/carers who do not develop Statements?

Greater assistance for school teachers to prepare for children entering Kindergarten

- Do Kindergarten teachers in targeted sites feel they have more knowledge and are better able to respond to the learning needs of their Kindergarten students than teachers in comparison sites?
- Do Kindergarten teachers who receive some Statements feel they have more knowledge and are better able to respond to the learning needs of their Kindergarten students than teachers that do not receive any Statements?
- Do Kindergarten teachers feel better able to respond to the learning needs of students who arrive in their school with a Statement than for students who arrive in their school without a Statement?

Overall outcomes

- Do EC services, parents and schools perceive the NSW Transition to School Statement as a valuable and useful tool for supporting children's transition to school?
- Does support for the Statement vary depending on the nature of the targeted support accessed by participants?
- What are any unplanned outcomes (positive or negative effects) of the rollout?

Governance

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) was formed to guide the evaluation and ensure high standards of independence, rigour and integrity. The ERG included cross-sectoral representatives from the following agencies or peak organisations: EC education services; academic researchers with evaluation expertise in EC and school settings, including a member of the CESE Advisory Council; government, Catholic systemic and independent school sectors and membership from ECECD.

Data

To achieve the evaluation aims, data was gathered from key stakeholders through qualitative and quantitative methods. Data is based on surveys of:

- 195 (or 94% of) participants in the EC and school educator workshops in Blacktown, Wagga and Griffith and 10 (or 100% of) parents from the Griffith parent forum held in September 2014
- 531 EC directors in the targeted and comparison sites (representing 87% of all EC educators in those areas), carried out in December 2014
- 205 school principals in targeted and comparison sites (representing 61% of all principals in those areas), carried out in March-April 2015
- 532 Kindergarten teachers in targeted and comparison sites (representing 60% of all teachers in those areas), carried out in March-April 2015
- a sample survey of 1,029 parents and carers of Kindergarten students in the targeted sites (representing 49% of all parents and carers selected from administrative records and 93% of parents and carers who could be contacted), carried out in March-April 2015. Parents and carers were not surveyed in comparison sites to minimise fieldwork costs.

Table 1.1 gives a breakdown of the population and samples achieved. Figure 1.4 shows the response rates for each survey. The very strong response rates achieved provide reason to be confident in the representativeness of the survey findings.

In this report, 'EC services' includes: community preschools; preschools that are part of a school; mobile preschool services and long day care services. The term 'EC directors' refers to EC service directors and/or educators who responded to the survey. The term 'principals' includes their nominees who responded to the survey. The term 'school educators' refers to school principals (or nominees) and teachers of Kindergarten students. The terms, 'parents' and 'families' include carers. The term, 'child' refers to the child for whom the respondent was the biological parent, step parent or other carer.

Table 1.1:

Summary of survey participants, respondents and response rates

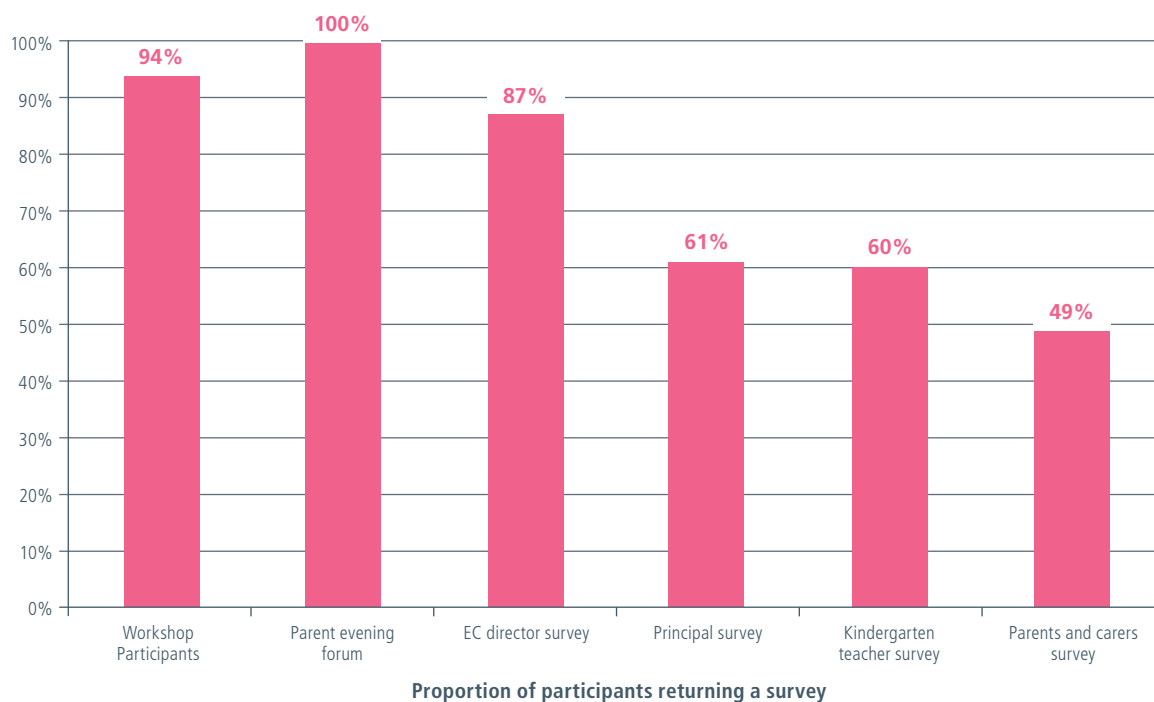
Table 1.1: Summary of survey participants, respondents and response rates

Method	Participants approached / selected			Responses achieved			Response rate
	Targeted	Comparison	Total sample	Targeted	Comparison	Total	
Workshop participants ¹	208		208	195		195	93.8%
Parent evening forums ²	10		10	10		10	100%
EC directors ³	243	365	608	216	315	531	87.3%
	40.0%	60.0%	100%	40.7%	59.3%	100%	
School principals ³	150	184	334	94	111	205	61.3%
	44.9%	55.1%	100%	45.6%	54.4%	100%	
Kindergarten teachers ³	413	478	891	236	296	532	59.7%
	46.4%	53.6%	100%	44.4%	55.6%	100%	
Parents ^{1,4}	2,093		2,093	1,029		1,029	49.2%

Note:

1. There were no differences in the response rates obtained in the Sydney-Blacktown and Riverina areas.
2. Parents were only surveyed at one of the three workshops offered.
3. There were no differences in the response rates obtained in the four evaluation areas.
4. A sample of 2,093 families was obtained from school enrolment data. Just under half these families could not be contacted, were ineligible or refused. The co-operation or nominal response rate for the parent/carer survey was 93.3% calculated by dividing the total number of completed interviews (n=1,029) by the total number of interviews plus the number of refusals (n=1,103).

Figure 1.4:
Survey response rates



Note: This analysis is based on 208 workshop participants; 10 parents who attended the Griffith evening forum; 608 EC directors; 334 principals; 891 teachers and 2,093 parents.

Data was also obtained through: seven in-depth case studies of EC services in the targeted sites that had representation at the workshops and families with children who were in their year before school; a forum of EC and school educators and academic researchers with specialist expertise in transition initiatives to review de-identified Statements and a review of administrative documents and associated data. A detailed description of each data source and the samples can be found in Appendix B.

2. Extent of awareness and uptake of the Statement

This section describes the extent of awareness and uptake of the Statement by EC services, families and schools.

2.1 Awareness of the Statement in targeted and comparison sites

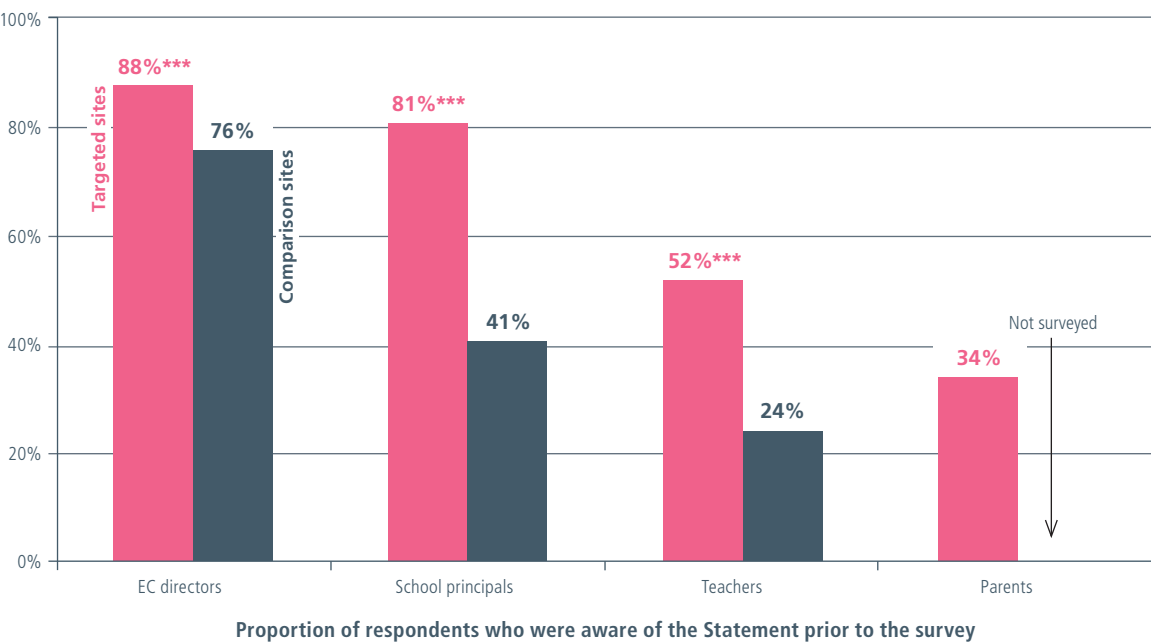
There is clear evidence that the encouragement design resulted in significantly greater awareness of the Statement in the targeted sites.

The majority of surveyed EC directors and school educators reported that they were aware of the Statement in September 2014 (i.e. prior to participating in the survey). Figure 2.1 shows that EC directors in the targeted areas were significantly more likely to report awareness of the Statement than services in the comparison sites (88% vs 76%).

Four in five principals (81%) and half of the teachers (52%) in the targeted sites said they were aware of the initiative. In contrast, only two in five principals (41%) and one in four teachers (24%) in the comparison sites reported being aware of the Statement, prior to the survey invitation.

Approximately one in three parents (34%) in the targeted sites said they were aware of the Statement (parents were not surveyed in comparison sites).

Figure 2.1:
Awareness of the introduction of the Statement in targeted and comparison sites



Note: *** $p < .001$
This analysis is based on 525 EC directors: targeted sites ($n=215$) and comparison sites ($n=310$); 189 principals in targeted sites ($n=89$) and comparison sites ($n=100$); 469 teachers in targeted sites ($n=204$) and comparison sites ($n=265$); and 942 parents in targeted sites.

2.2 Uptake and transfer in targeted and comparison sites

Two in five surveyed EC directors reported using the Statement for at least some children in 2014. Figure 2.2 shows that significantly more EC services in the targeted sites used the Statement than did services in the comparison sites (60% vs 26%).

One in two school principals (55%) and school teachers (50%) surveyed in the targeted sites said they received Statements for at least one of their students starting Kindergarten in 2015. In contrast, slightly fewer than one in five principals (18%) and one in six teachers (16%) in the comparison sites said they received Statements for one or more of their Kindergarten students.

Approximately one quarter of parents (28%) in the targeted sites had a Statement prepared for their child. Although parents in the comparison sites were not surveyed, based on the self-reporting of EC services in those areas, it was estimated that approximately 12 per cent received a Statement for their child.

Figure 2.2:
Extent of uptake
in targeted and
comparison sites



Note: *** $p < .001$

This analysis is based on 523 EC directors in targeted sites ($n=216$) and comparison sites ($n=307$); 190 principals in targeted sites ($n=88$) and comparison sites ($n=102$) and 457 teachers in targeted sites ($n=200$) and comparison sites ($n=257$).

The percentage of Statements prepared by each EC service was estimated by dividing the reported number of the Statements completed by the number of children expected to leave the service to start school in the following year.

Figure 2.3 shows that 18 per cent of EC services in targeted sites completed Statements for all children in their year before school (the number of children in these services ranged from 1 to 71) compared to only six per cent of EC services in the comparison sites (the number of children in these services ranged from 6 to 47). At the other end of the spectrum, 74 per cent of EC services in comparison sites and 40 per cent of EC services in the targeted sites did not complete Statements for any children.

Of the 192 surveyed EC directors who specified the number of children who had a complete Statement, with the educators, child's and parent/carer's sections filled out, an average of 16.2 Statements were prepared, ranging from 1 to 115 Statements (standard deviation was 15.3). The most common number of completed Statements was 10. A median number of 12 Statements were completed. A very small proportion (3%) specified between 50-70 completed Statements.

For school teachers, the percentage of Statements received for their class was estimated by dividing the reported number of the Statements received by the number of Kindergarten students (excluding repeating students) in their class in 2015. This analysis should be viewed with caution because it most probably includes students who did not attend any EC services.

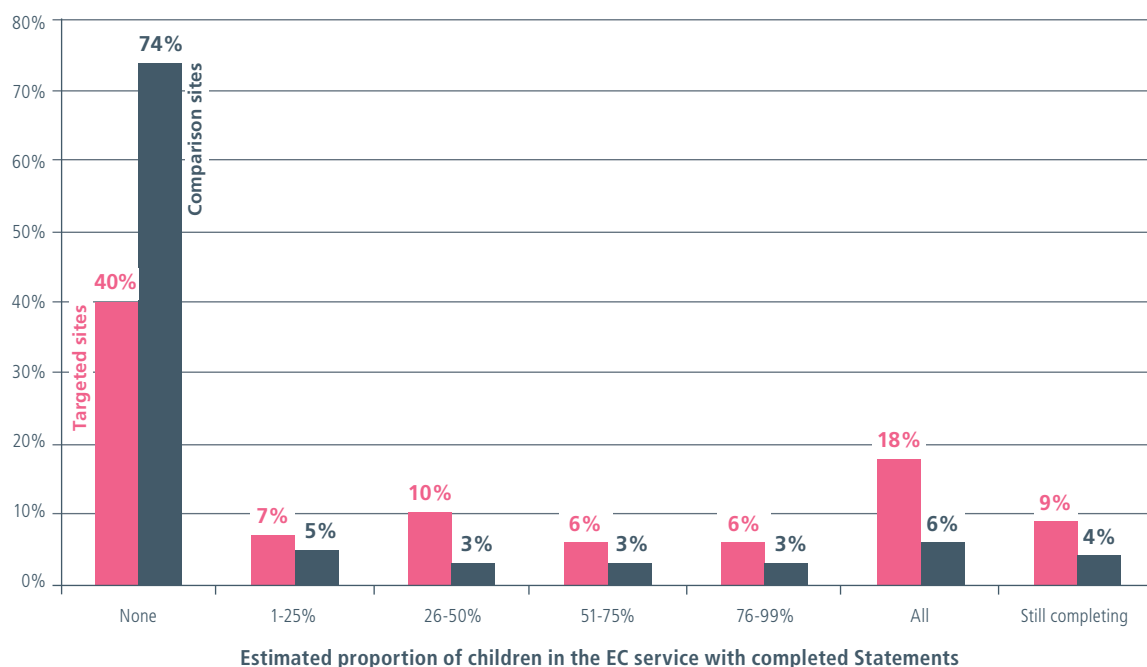
Figure 2.4 shows that teachers in the comparison sites were significantly more likely to report receiving no Statements than teachers in the targeted sites (85% vs 53%).

It is estimated that four per cent of school teachers in the targeted sites received Statements for every child in their class. The sizes of these classes ranged from 2 to 27 students. In contrast, no teachers in the comparison sites reported receiving Statements for every child in the class. The highest estimated proportion of Statements received in the comparison schools was three quarters of the students in the class.

Less than five per cent of school teachers reported receiving more than one Statement for a child. These teachers reported that they still read and considered all the statements received for these children.

Figure 2.3:

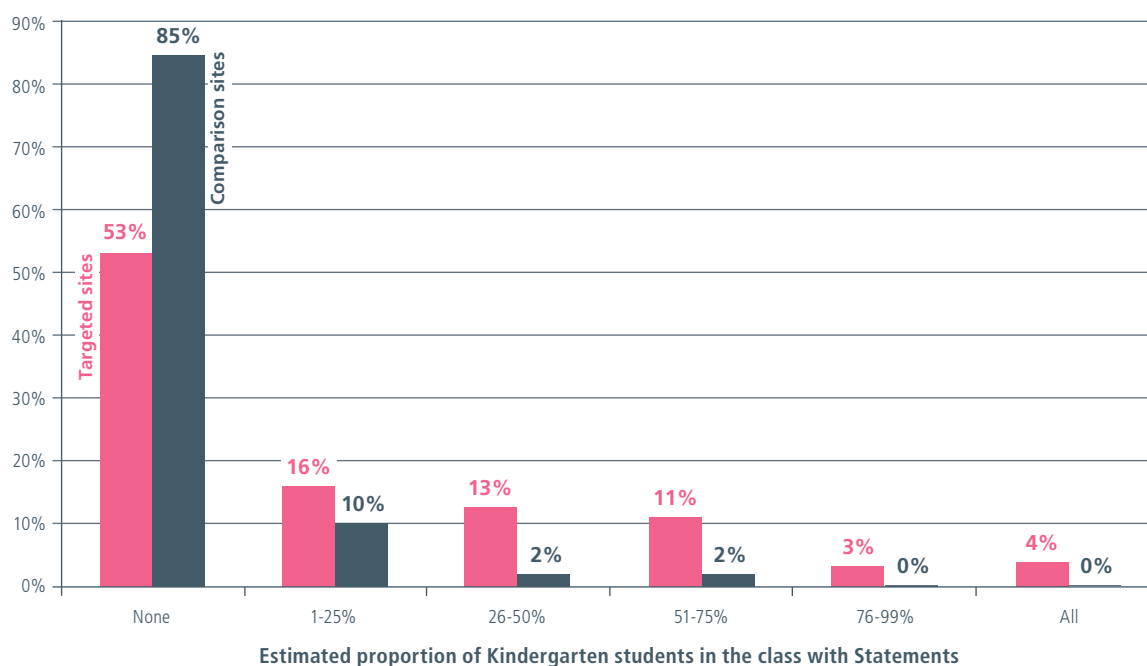
Estimated proportion of EC directors completing Statements for children in their service in targeted and comparison sites



Note: This analysis is based on 523 EC directors in targeted sites (n=216) and comparison sites (n=307). Percentages do not sum to 100% because some EC directors did not answer the questions used for this calculation. For this analysis, completed Statements were defined as those with all educator, child and parent/carer sections filled out.

Figure 2.4:

Estimated proportion of teachers receiving Statements for students in their class in targeted and comparison sites



Note: This analysis is based on 457 school teachers in targeted sites (n=200) and comparison sites (n=257).

2.3 Familiarity with the Statement in targeted and comparison sites

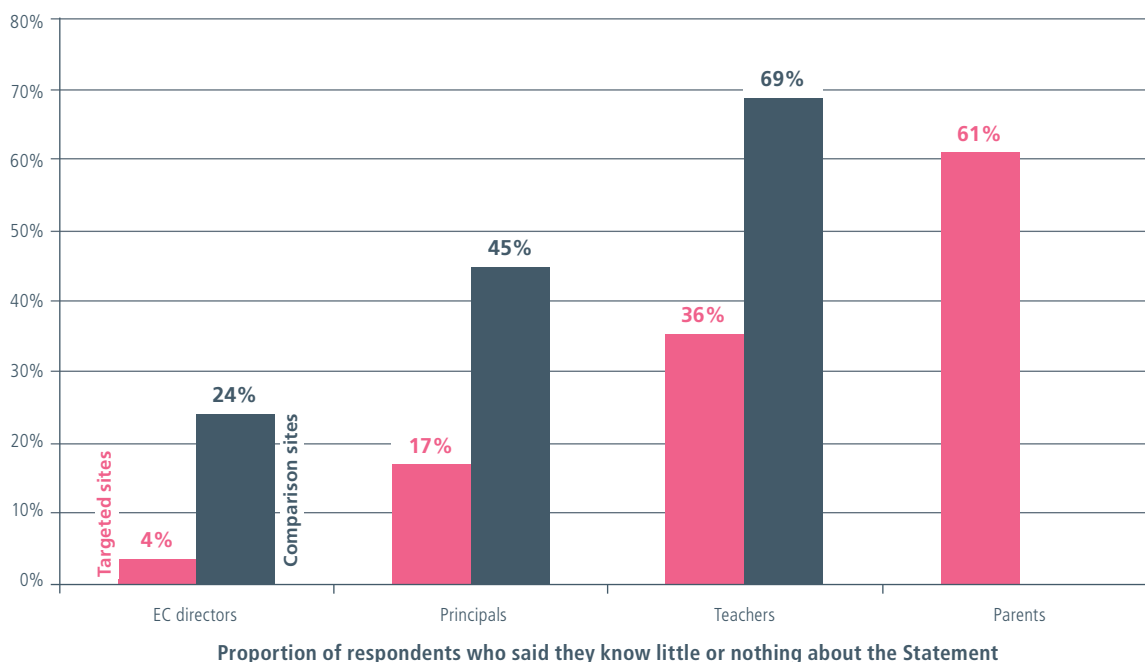
Given some EC services and schools were already using transition statements, a picture of the Statement was provided in the online surveys or described in detail for the telephone surveys to ensure respondents were responding to the 'correct' departmental Statement.

Consistent with the finding of lower usage in the comparison sites, Figure 2.5 shows significantly more EC directors, principals and school teachers surveyed in the comparison sites reported that they had 'not used' or 'not seen the Statement' and 'know little or nothing about it' compared to their counterparts in the targeted sites.

It is noteworthy that 61 per cent of parents in the targeted sites said that they 'have not seen the Statement' and 'know little or nothing about it'. Details of the responses for each group of respondents can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 2.5:

Proportion of respondents who were not familiar with the Statement in targeted and comparison sites



Note: *** $p < .001$

This analysis is based on 523 EC directors in targeted sites ($n=216$) and comparison sites ($n=307$); 190 principals in targeted sites ($n=88$) and comparison sites ($n=102$); 457 teachers in targeted sites ($n=200$) and comparison sites ($n=257$) and 913 parents in targeted sites (parents in the comparison sites were not surveyed).

3. Use of the statement in schools

Of the 66 schools who received Statements, two in five principals (40%) reported that their school discussed the introduction of the Statement with EC services. The most frequently cited topic for discussion was what information would be useful to the school. The principals also discussed introducing the Statement to the school with EC services and logistics such as how to pass the Statements onto the school.

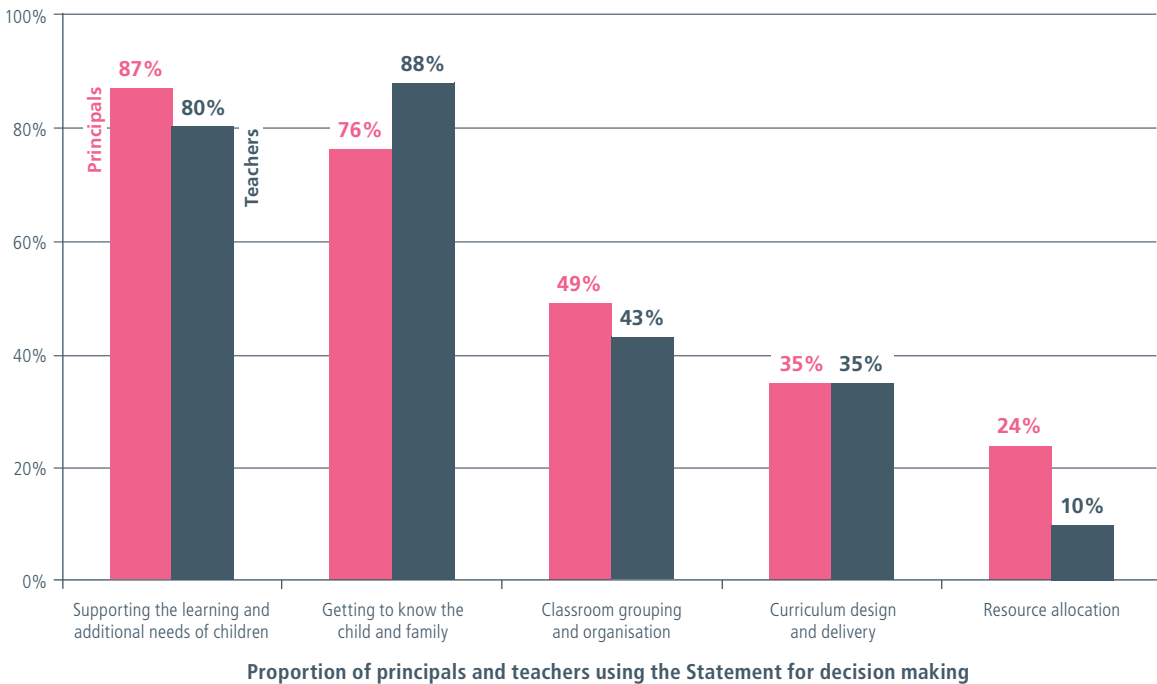
In schools where Statements had been received, nearly all principals (92%) and teachers (90%) reported that their school made use of them. As shown in Figure 3.1, the two most frequently reported ways that schools used children’s Statements were to support the learning and additional needs of children and to get to know the child and family. Approximately half of the principals and school teachers used the Statement for classroom grouping and organization. One in three school educators reported using the Statements for curriculum design and delivery.

Three in five principals (60%) reported that they or another staff member had discussed children’s Statements with their parents. One in three teachers (36%) reported that they had discussed children’s Statements with their parents. These discussions typically focused on specific follow up for individual students clarifying information provided or responding to parental concerns. One in three surveyed parents (36%) also indicated that their child’s kindergarten teacher had discussed their Statement with them.

One in four principals (26%) and teachers (23%) reported giving some feedback to the EC services that provided the children’s Statements, typically general discussions about the Statement and/or the process. Half the principals and school teachers reported specific follow up to discuss individual students.

Among the six principals and 13 teachers who gave their reasons for not using the Statements received, all principals and nearly two in three teachers indicated that ‘the Statements were given to the school too late’. Some principals indicated that their staff needed more professional development to understand the Statement, as did several teachers. A few respondents reported that it was too time-consuming to read all the Statements. These respondents did not express any lack of interest in receiving the Statements. A small number of teachers thought that the Statement did not provide information that is useful to Kindergarten teachers but no principals cited this reason. Several schools were already using a similar transition statement.

Figure 3.1
Ways schools reported using Statements



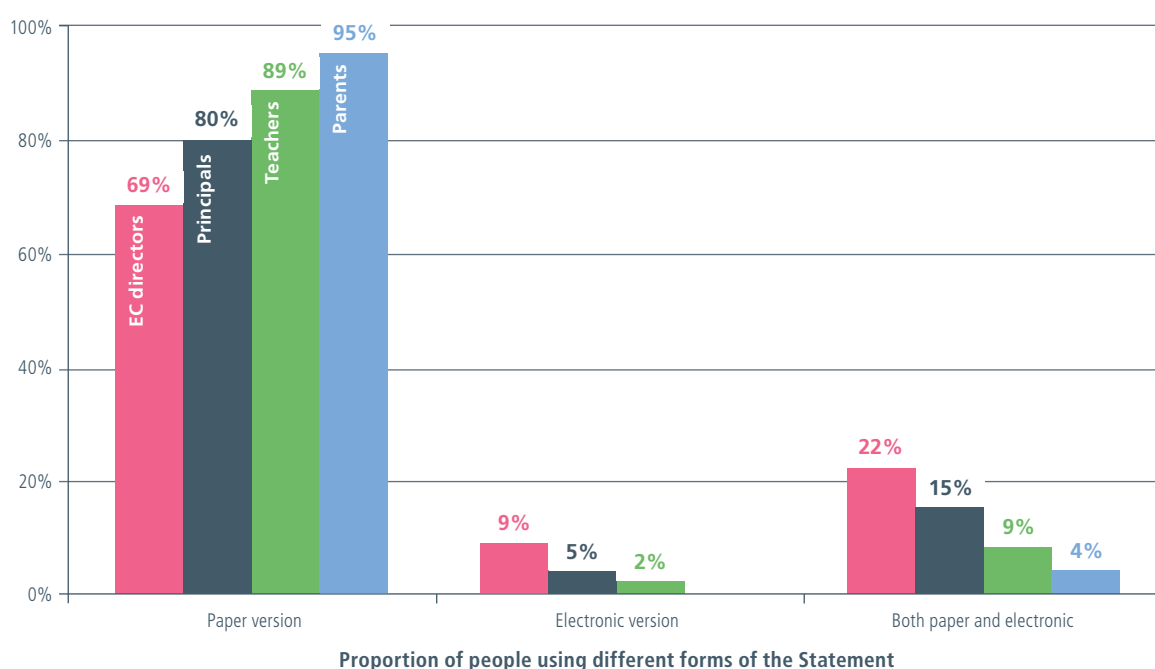
Note: This analysis is based on 55 principals and 117 teachers.
Percentages do not sum to 100% because respondents could choose more than one option.

4. Implementation – enablers and barriers

4.1 Method of transferring to schools

Figure 4.1 shows that 69 per cent of EC directors reported using paper versions of the Statement and a further 22 per cent reported using both paper and electronic versions. Nearly all parents (95%) reported receiving paper versions. In schools, 80 per cent of principals and school teachers reported receiving paper versions.

Figure 4.1:
Proportion of people using different forms of the Statement



Note: This analysis is based on 211 EC directors; 66 principals; 159 teachers and 253 parents.

When the EC director survey was conducted in December 2014, half of the services (51%) had passed the Statements to the schools nominated by parents who had given their consent. Of the services that had not yet transferred the Statements, the two most commonly cited reasons were (a) that they were waiting for the parents to complete their sections, nominate the school and give consent or (b) the service was still completing the process. About 20 per cent of these EC directors said the parents preferred to pass their child's Statement on themselves or they thought it was the parents' responsibility to pass on the completed Statements.

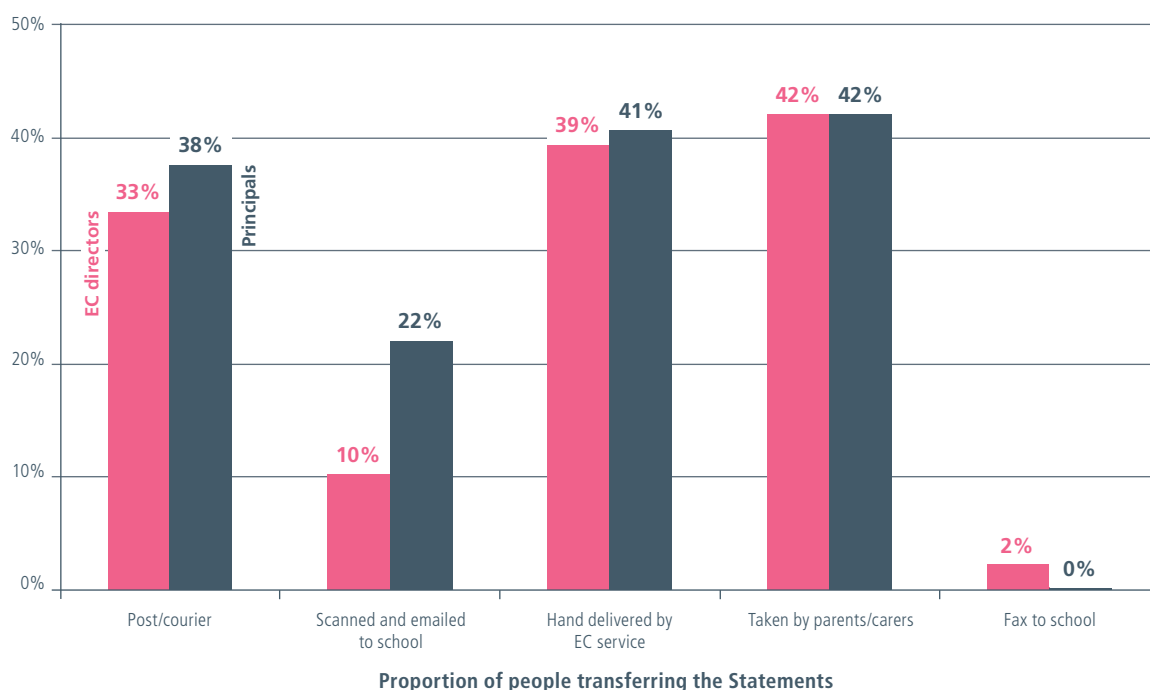
When surveyed in March 2015, 63 per cent of surveyed parents reported that they had returned their child's Statement to the EC service to pass onto their nominated school. One in three (33%) had passed it directly to their child's primary school. Where parents passed the Statement to the school, most reported doing so by hand (98%). Only a small proportion of parents (4%) said they did not return their child's Statement to the EC service or the school.

Nearly all surveyed parents (97%) said they gave permission to the EC service to pass their child's Statement on to the primary school. These parents did not express any concerns about the educator's comments or any concerns that the Statement would adversely affect their child's enrolment in Kindergarten.

As shown in Figure 4.2, hand delivery of the Statements to a school by either families or EC services were the most frequently reported transfer methods (used by approximately 40 per cent of EC services). The next most common mode of delivery was by post or courier (used by 33 per cent of services).

Figure 4.2:

Method of transferring
Statements used by EC
services and schools



Note: This analysis is based on EC directors (n=192); Principals (n=64).

Percentages do not sum to 100% because respondents could choose more than one option.

The differences in the proportion of scanned and emailed statements may be due to the fact that EC services were surveyed in December 2014 whereas principals were surveyed in March 2015.

Approximately five per cent of respondents commented on better ways of transferring the Statement. The most frequently mentioned suggestion was to introduce an electronic transfer system to allow ease of access for EC directors to prepare, store and update Statements and for school educators to access Statements.

Possible options included direct data entry into an online data base accessible through a portal or scanned copies transferred via email. A few teachers suggested the Statement could be discussed between the EC service and school leaders who are responsible for transition support. A few respondents suggested a three-way discussion between the EC service, school and family would be beneficial while also noting that it would be time-consuming.

4.2 Length of time to complete and consider Statements

Figure 4.3 shows that EC directors reported a wide variation in the length of time taken to complete their Sections A and B of the Statement. The most commonly selected category was between 41-60 minutes, on average, for each child. Around one in three directors (36%) reported taking less than 30 minutes per child. A sizable proportion (22%) reported taking more than one hour per child.

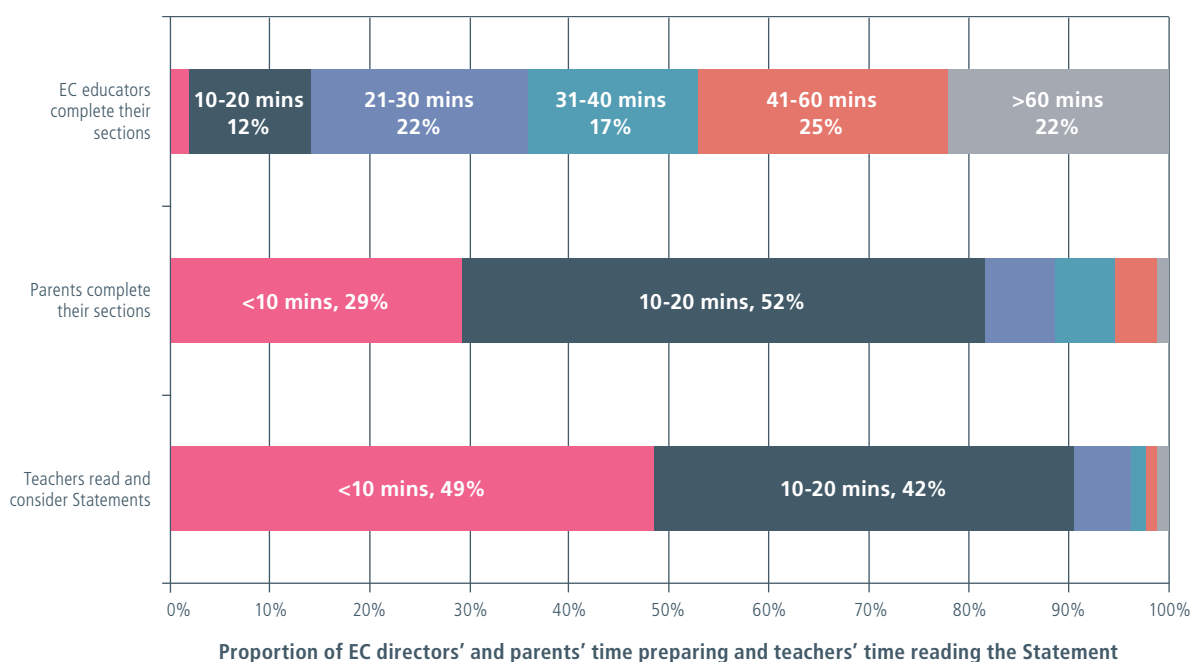
Three in five EC directors (60%) reported taking more than 10 minutes, on average, to complete the questions in the child's Section C of the Statement (not shown in Figure 4.3). One in three directors (36%) reported taking 5-10 minutes per child. A small proportion of EC directors (4%) reported taking less than 5 minutes per child.

The majority of surveyed parents (52%) reported taking 10-20 minutes to complete their Sections D and E of the Statement. Just over one quarter of parents (29%) reported taking less than 10 minutes.

Around 90 per cent of surveyed teachers reported that they spent 'less than 10 minutes' or between '10-20 minutes' considering each Statement.

Figure 4.3:

Average length of
time preparing and
considering Statements



Note: This analysis is based on 204 EC directors; 146 teachers and 215 parents (principals were not surveyed on this question).

4.3 Reasons given for not using the Statement

Among the 231 EC services that had chosen not to use the Statement, the most frequently cited reasons were that:

- The Statement was introduced too late in the year (62%).
- The process takes too much time to complete (39%).
- The service was already using a similar transition statement (32%).
- The staff needed professional development to prepare the Statements (21%).
- They were concerned the schools that the children usually transition to may not be interested in receiving the Statement (14%).
- Concerns that the EC service provider was understaffed (12%).
- There were too many children in the EC service to complete the Statements (10%).
- There was reluctance to proceed because the director had spoken to some schools that the children usually transition to but they did not seem interested in receiving the Statement (10%).

Only a small proportion of EC directors (7%) thought the Statement would not add to the children's transition process.

Of the 41 parents who had seen a Statement but did not have one prepared for their child, the most frequently cited reasons included:

- Their child's EC service did not provide a Statement (24%).
- A belief that their child's EC service and primary school had sufficient transition programs in place, without needing the Statement (9%).
- The process took too much time to complete (9%).
- A belief that the Statement would not add to their child's transition process (5%).
- The child's EC service was already using a similar transition statement (4%).
- The Statement was introduced too late in the year (4%).
- The child did not attend an EC service (4%).

4.4 Issues and concerns in implementation

Nearly half of the EC directors using the Statement expressed issues or concerns about using the Statement. The most frequently mentioned issue for three-quarters of these EC directors was the workload for educators, time constraints and concerns that the Statement was overly timeconsuming to use.

Around 10 per cent of EC directors reported some frustration using the electronic version of the Statement including compatibility issues with the PDF version provided online and difficulties creating a file that could be saved, edited and stored. A few respondents preferred an online version with helpful suggestions or a bank of comments.

Some EC directors found it was challenging for their educators to write strengths-based Statements. A small proportion of EC directors expressed reservations about whether schools would make use of the information given the considerable investment of time needed to complete individual Statements.

Around five per cent of EC directors reported difficulties getting parents to fill in their sections due to time constraints, family commitments and working parents. A number of parents were reluctant to write a response or were unsure what to write given that it was their first experience of having a child start school.

Around five percent of respondents requested more notice earlier in the year about the Statement so the input could be planned over a period of time.

During the case study interviews, an EC director indicated that their service decided to complete a Statement for every child in their year before school. This director coordinated the preparation of 62 Statements by four educators. The main concerns were the time and additional costs involved for photocopying the Statement several times before passing onto the parents for completion and again before despatch to schools.

A small proportion of the surveyed principals and school teachers and the panel of experts at the forum commented on the variable quality and depth of information provided in the Statements received. The review of de-identified Statements revealed the educators' varying levels of familiarity with and understanding of the EYLF reflected in their comments. In a few cases, parents had articulated concerns relating to their child that were not mentioned by the EC educators (although it was acknowledged that the child may only show those behaviours in the home but not the EC setting). Some respondents suggested more webinars or online support about strengths-based writing would be helpful for both EC and school educators who could not participate in the training sessions offered.

A small proportion of school educators thought the Statements should contain more individualised, specific comments. These educators reported that some comments appeared to be based on a 'pro forma' – they preferred to be told how the child behaves or responds in certain situations and to receive evidence based statements about a child's progress instead of reading what they described as 'glowing' or only positive information that they perceived was of limited use in alerting the school to any challenges a student may face. Some EC directors indicated that they and their educators felt they could not be entirely honest if they had major concerns about a child knowing that a parent would read it and may not submit it to the school. There were varying opinions amongst respondents on the issue of whether parents or EC services should pass on a child's Statement to the school.

Some respondents were disappointed that they did not know about the new Statement earlier and requested more information to understand its purpose. Some school principals and teachers were particularly concerned for children who do not attend EC services and would not receive a Statement.

5. Differences in expected outcomes

The successful implementation of the ‘encouragement’ design enables a test of whether communication and transition support was perceived to be better in the targeted than comparison sites. This section focuses on whether the expected short-term outcomes of the Statement were achieved. It also compares the outcomes reported by EC services, families and schools that used the Statement with their counterparts who did not use Statements. The detailed analysis for each outcome measure can be found in Appendix D.

5.1 Improved communication between EC services, families and schools

Targeted vs comparison sites – communication with families

All surveyed EC services agreed or strongly agreed that they share information with families about their child’s strengths and interests to support their transition to school. Overall, nearly all EC services also agreed or strongly agreed that they share information with families about children’s preferred ways of learning and ways to support children’s transition to school. EC services in targeted and comparison sites were equally likely to agree that they share information with families.

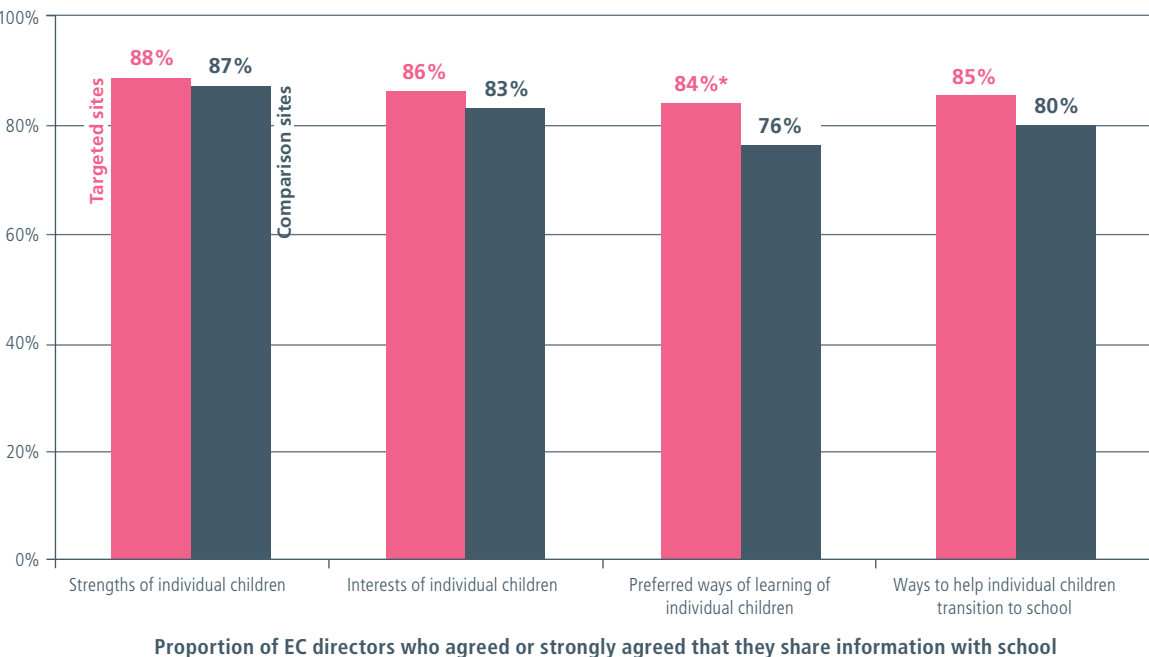
The majority of principals and school teachers reported receiving information from families about their children’s strengths and interests. Around one in three principals and teachers said they received information from families about their children’s preferred ways of learning. School principals and teachers in targeted and comparison sites were equally likely to agree that they received this information with families.

Targeted vs comparison sites – communication between EC services and schools

Figure 5.1 shows that EC directors in the targeted sites tended to be slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree that they share information with schools about individual children’s strengths, interests, preferred ways of learning and ways to help children’s transitions than directors in the comparison sites. This difference was only statistically significant in relation to sharing information about children’s preferred ways of learning. Figure 5.2 shows that Kindergarten teachers in the targeted sites were significantly more likely to indicate that they received information from EC services about students’ strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning than did teachers in the comparison sites. There were no significant differences between principals’ responses to these questions in the targeted and comparison sites.

Figure 5.1:

Proportion of EC directors in targeted and comparison sites who agreed that they share information with schools to support children’s transition

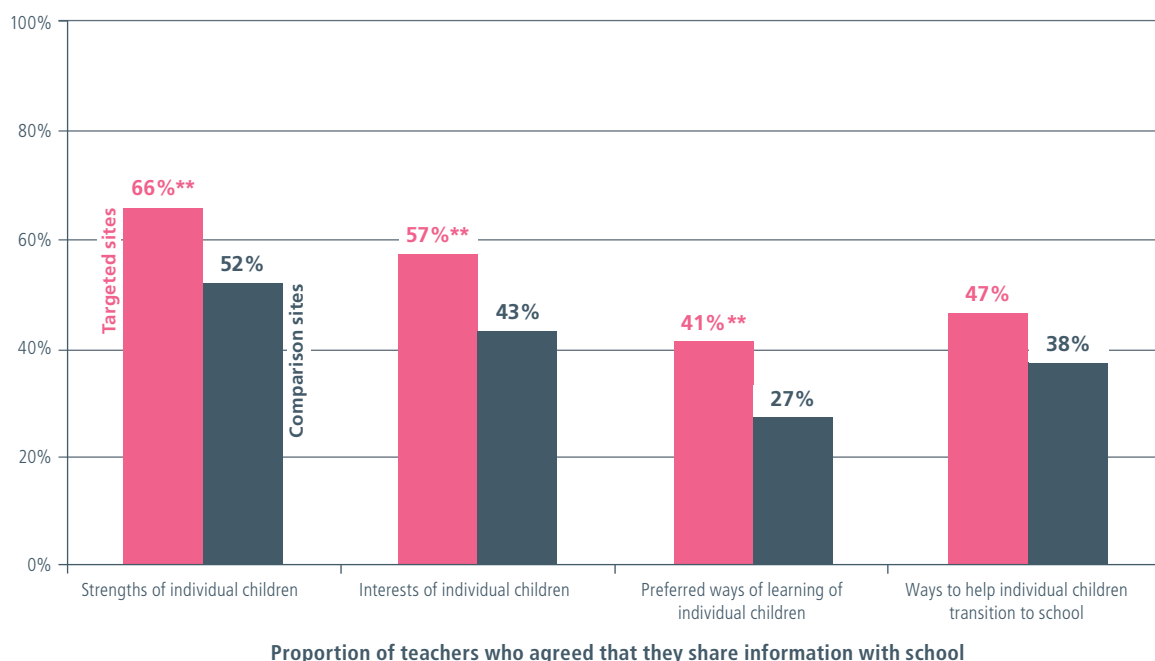


Note: * p<0.05

This analysis is based on 531 EC directors. The number of respondents for each outcome measure can be found in Appendix D Table D1.

Figure 5.2:

Proportion of teachers in targeted and comparison sites who agreed that they received information from EC services to support children's transition



Note: ** $p < 0.01$

This analysis is based on 452 school teachers. The number of respondents for each outcome measure can be found in Appendix D Table D3.

Users vs non-users

Parents and school educators who had received Statements felt better informed about their child's strengths, interests, preferred ways of learning and ways to help their transition to school than those who had not received Statements.

Almost all parents (93%) who already had a child at school agreed that having a Statement improved the communication between their child's EC service and school compared to their other children who had started school without a Statement.

5.2 Better information and support for children's transition to school

Targeted vs comparison sites

Nearly all EC directors, school principals, and school teachers in targeted and comparison sites agreed or strongly agreed that children were well supported and generally well prepared for their transition to school. This did not vary significantly across targeted and comparison sites.

Users vs non-users

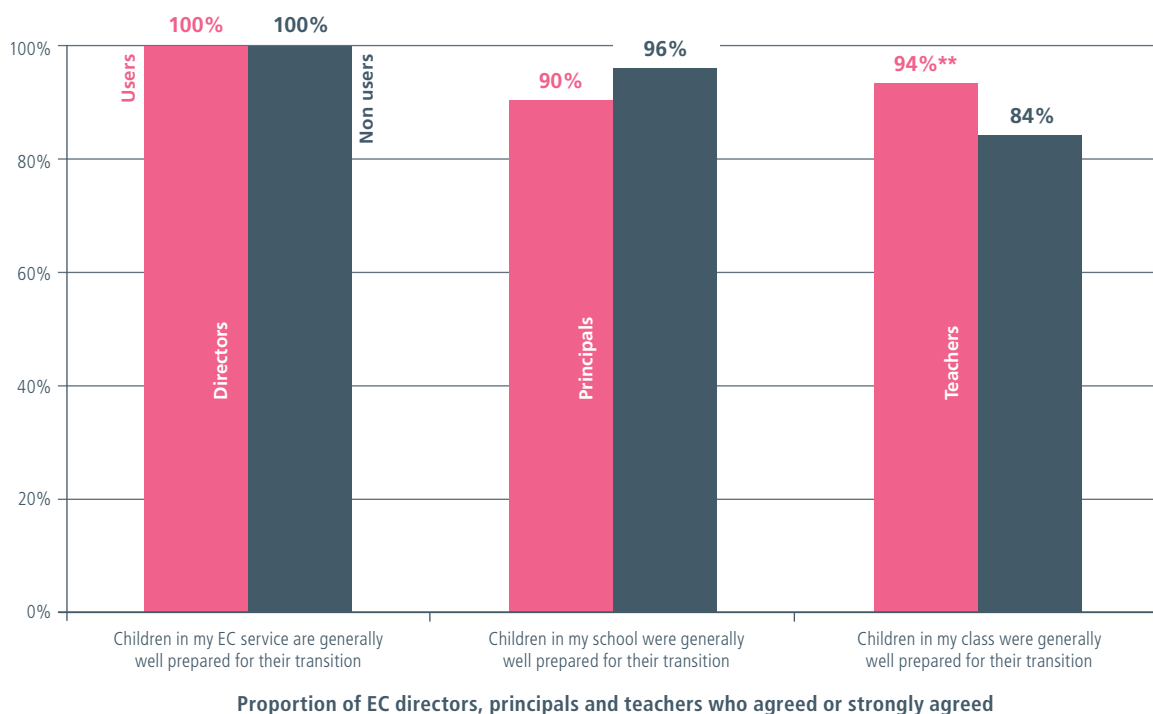
Despite very high levels of agreement among users and non-users of the Statement, school teachers who received Statements were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree that their students were well prepared for school than teachers who did not receive any Statements (94% vs 84%) as shown in Figure 5.3.

Families with Statements were also slightly more likely than those without Statements to agree that their child was well supported in their transition to school (99% vs 94%), as shown in Figure 5.4. However, families who had Statements were no more likely to perceive that their children "settled into Kindergarten" smoothly than families without Statements. Again, most families felt that their children made a smooth transition into Kindergarten.

Among the 129 families who already had a child at school, 86 per cent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that having a Statement provided better support to help their child's transition to school compared to their other children who did not have a Statement. These parents felt better informed about the strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning for their child with a Statement. Furthermore, 95 per cent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the Statement provided a better way for their family to pass on their knowledge of their child to the school compared to their other children who did not have a Statement.

Figure 5.3:

Proportion of EC directors, principals and school teachers with and without a Statement who agreed that children were generally well prepared for their transition to school

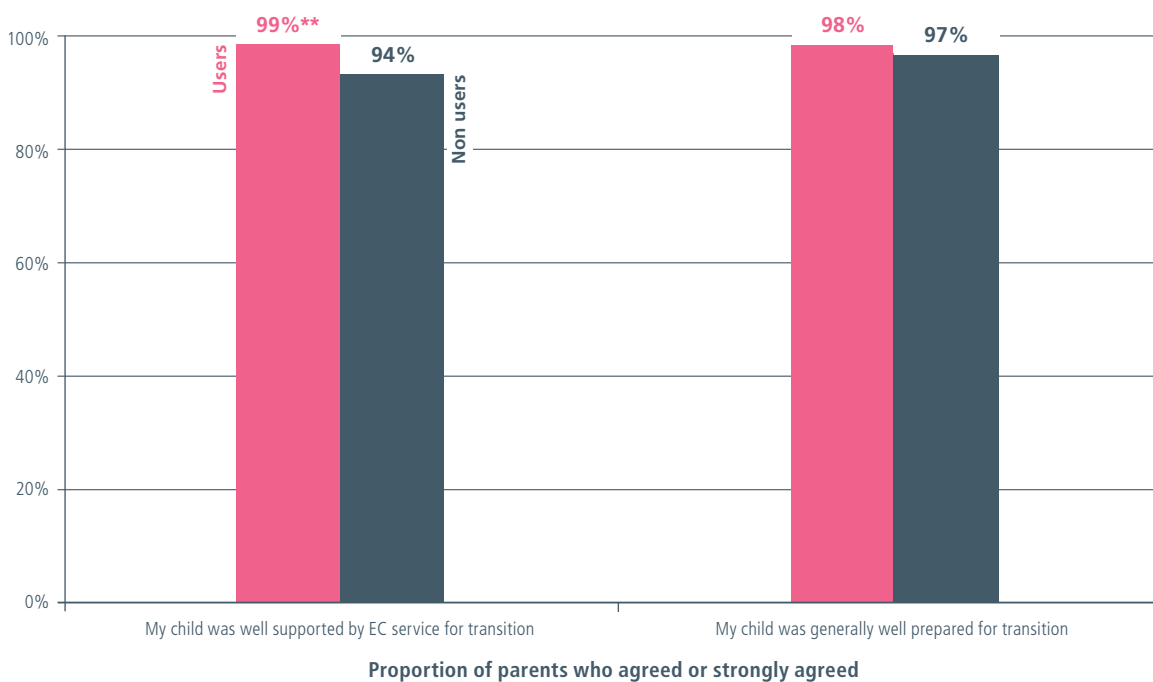


Note: ** $p < 0.01$

This analysis is based on 522 EC directors, 201 principals and 441 teachers. The number of respondents for each outcome measure can be found in Appendix D Table D5.

Figure 5.4:

Proportion of parents with and without a Statement who agreed that their child was well supported and generally well prepared for their transition to school



Note: ** $p < 0.01$

This analysis is based on 816 parents for the well supported outcome and 906 for the well prepared outcome. The number of respondents for each outcome measure can be found in Appendix D Table D4.

5.3 Greater assistance for teachers to prepare for children entering Kindergarten

Just over 90 per cent of school teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better informed about the strengths and interests of their students with a Statement compared to those students without a Statement. Approximately 75 per cent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better informed about the preferred ways of learning of their students with a Statement than the students without a Statement.

A substantial majority of school teachers (81%) reported feeling better able to respond to the learning needs of their students with a Statement compared to those students without a Statement.

5.4 Perceived value of the Statement among those who had used or received them

Figure 5.5 shows that more than 90 per cent of EC directors and school educators affirmed the Statement as a valuable tool for sharing information between families, EC services and schools. Nearly all parents (97%) who received a Statement also endorsed it.

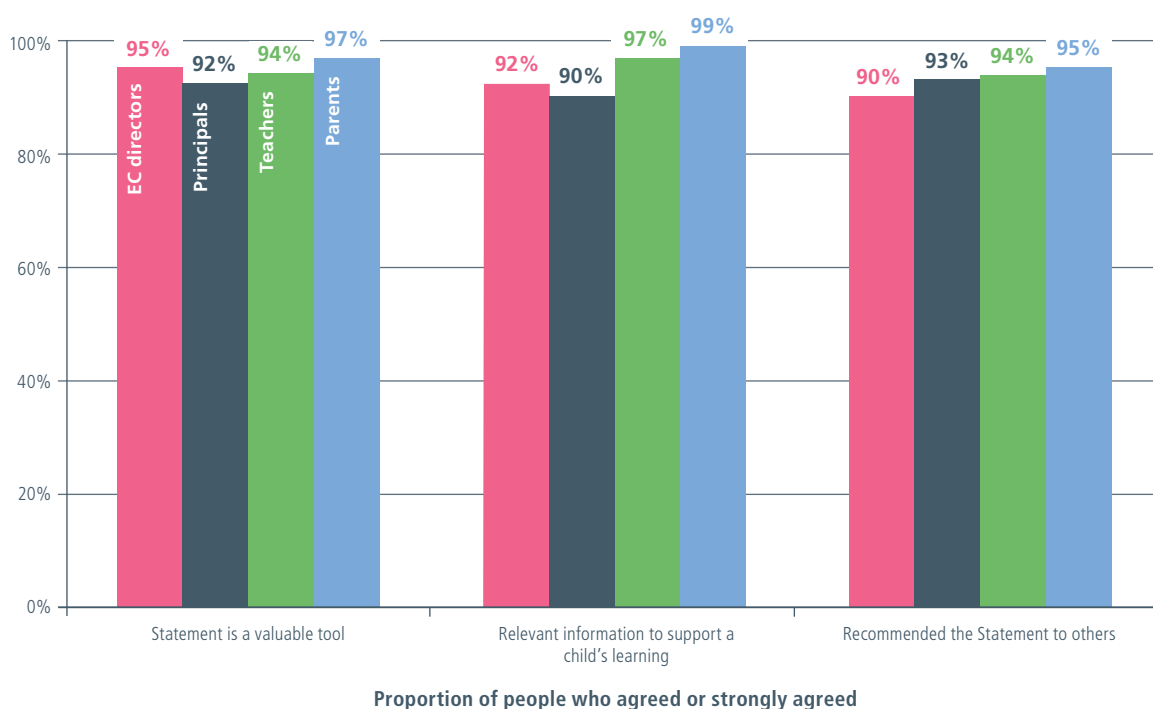
More than 90 per cent of respondents were willing to recommend the Statement to other EC services, families and schools. There was strong consensus across all groups that the standard/uniform Statement shares relevant information with families and schools to support a child's learning and additional needs. They also felt the Statement had provided a better way for EC services and families to pass on their knowledge of a child to the school.

Three quarters of the EC directors (75%) were planning to use the Statement in 2015 for children going to school in 2016. A further 20 per cent of EC directors were considering using the Statement but had not yet decided.

A substantial majority of principals (87%) and teachers (90%) said they would use the Statements if received for Kindergarten students starting in 2016. Nearly all parents (95%) said they would like to have a Statement if they had another child starting school in the future.

Figure 5.5:

Perceived value of the Statement among respondents who had used or considered using it



Note: This analysis is based on 404 EC directors; 96 principals; 162 teachers and 281 parents.

When surveyed in December 2014, 40 per cent of EC directors who had used or were considering using the Statement indicated that they 'take children who were starting school next year (2015) for a school visit' compared to 8 per cent of directors who had not used the Statement. Of the EC services that were making school visits, 56 per cent of directors reported that the visits were jointly planned by the EC service and the school(s) and a further 35 per cent said their EC service had initiated or planned the school visits. It appears that some of the EC services that decided to use the Statement already had established connections with some schools.

5.5 Other transition programs and activities offered by EC services and schools

Around 90 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Statement complements other transition activities currently offered by EC services and schools. When surveyed in December, EC directors identified the activities that their service provided to help children transition to school:

- Activities to prepare children for school life e.g. school lunch days, dress up role-plays, uniform days, play school routines (95%)
- Information sessions for parent and carers (69%)
- School teachers invited to the service (59%)
- Informal meetings arranged for families whose children will be going to the same school (51%)
- Children who are starting school next year are taken for a school visit (48%)
- School children invited to the service (42%) and
- 'Buddy' programs, where children in the service are paired with children in school (20%).

When surveyed in March, principals and school teachers identified the activities and experiences offered during Term 1 to help ease the transition for Kindergarten students and their families:

- Information sessions for parents and carers (principals, 86%; teachers 81%)
- Learning through play-based curriculum (principals, 65%; teachers 63%)
- 'Buddy' programs, where Kindergarten students are paired with other students (principals, 59%; teachers 55%)
- Formal assessment processes (principals, 50%; teachers 51%)

Four in five EC directors (81%) said that transition is 'continually reflected on to better respond to children, families and school needs'. In contrast, proportionally fewer principals (65%) and school teachers (51%) mentioned this approach.

Nearly all parents (97%) said that they had spoken with their child about school and how they were feeling about going to school. Most parents (86%) had attended parent information sessions at the school or EC service. While 94 per cent of parents said they had read the material provided by their child's school, 74 per cent had read the material provided by their child's EC service (only specified if their child attended an EC setting). Three quarters of the parents said that they had spoken to their child's current school teacher regarding transition (78%) and/or their child's EC educator (74%, if attended).

Parents nominated the programs/activities/experiences that they thought helped with their child's transition to school:

- Information sessions for parents/carers (81%)
- School visits (74%)
- Activities to prepare children for school life e.g. school lunch days, dress up role-plays, uniform days, play school routines (69%)
- Providing the school with written information about their child (65%)
- After starting school, 'buddy' programs where Kindergarten children are paired with other children (60%)

- Informal meetings arranged for families whose children are going to the same school (36%)
- School teachers visited children at the EC service (23%, only specified if their child attended an EC setting)
- 'Buddy' programs, where children in the EC service were paired with children in school (22%, only specified if their child attended an EC setting)
- School children visited children at the EC service (17%, only specified if their child attended an EC setting)

6. Suggestions for improving the Statement

6.1 Suggestions for improving the content and format of the Statement

Given the high level of interest in implementing the Statement in 2015, the most commonly mentioned recommendations were (a) to make the Statement shorter and more concise and (b) to make specific refinements to the language and structure of the questions in all sections.

The clear consensus from the survey data, case studies and review was to streamline questions and reduce the overall length to reduce the time involved for EC services and families preparing Statements and for school educators using the information. The most commonly suggested modifications included:

Section A & B for educators:

- Add contextual information e.g. the date the Statement is completed.
- Add an indication of the child's participation and pattern of attendance e.g. number of hours the child attends, number of days absent, whether the child is full time or part time.
- Provide better framing of questions to reflect the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) outcomes and some guidance for educators e.g. dot point examples of skills or pointers under each outcome.
- Reduce the outcome questions to one page.
- Minimise repetition e.g. merge Questions 7 and 8 on interests and replace Question 6 on strengths with an instruction to include with Questions 1-5.
- Add a prompt requesting allied health information.
- Include more focus in questions on the supports needed by the child e.g. significant struggles, anxieties or areas of weakness, triggers, and strategies for assisting the child in managing change.
- Rectify the technical issues with the online pdf form and ensure it is saveable and can be completed over multiple sessions, or provide more options for electronic transfer e.g. Word version.

Section C for children:

- Provide more flexibility around the drawing requirement and encourage alternatives to demonstrate the child's creativity and interests. This could include scanned photos of something the child has constructed, or a drawing or painting previously completed.
- Separate the child's blank page for the drawing from the questions to be completed.
- Include a checklist or prompt for the educator to attach a drawing or photo.
- Rationalise and simplify the language with more meaningful questions e.g. Question 2, 'What do you think about school?' assumes children have prior experience or familiarity with a school.
- Retain questions as a guide rather than requiring a response under each question.

Section D & E for parents:

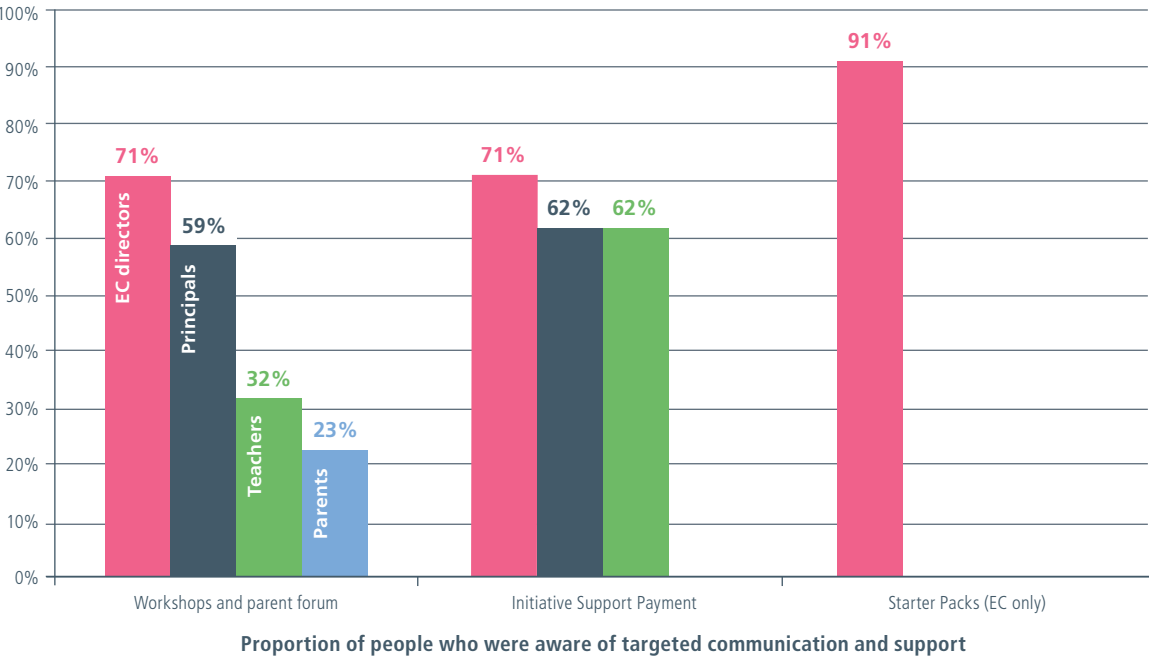
- Add the address of the school to facilitate transfer of the document to the correct school.
- Reduce the number of questions and simplify the language.
- Add a question to elicit cultural values that are important to the family.

7. Future support strategies to enhance uptake

7.1 Awareness and perceived value of the targeted support strategies

Figure 7.1 shows that EC directors were generally much more aware of the targeted support strategies offered than school educators and parents.

Figure 7.1:
Awareness of the targeted support among respondents



Note: This analysis is based on 200 EC directors; 71 principals; 108 teachers and 347 parents.

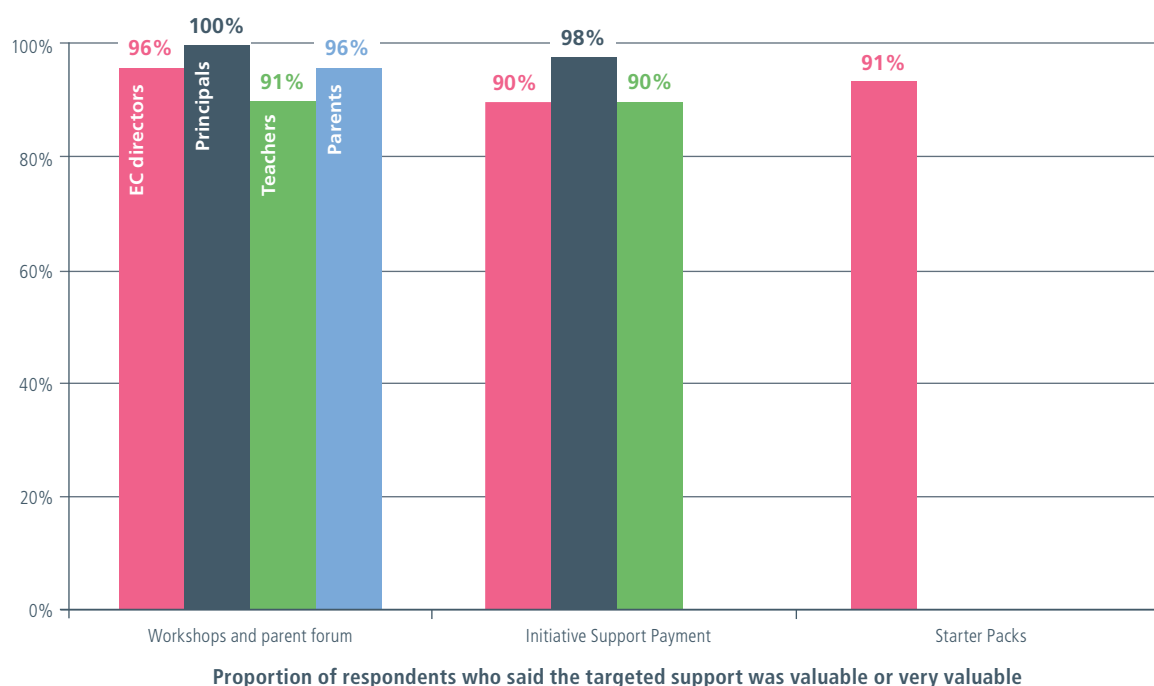
Professional learning workshops

In the targeted sites, two in five EC services and schools sent participants to the professional learning workshops offered to introduce the Statement. Across the five workshops offered, two in three participants (61%) were from EC services and two in five were from schools (39%).

Half the educators (54%), two-thirds of the principals (67%) and half the teachers surveyed (56%) reported attending the workshops. Figure 7.2 shows that over 90 per cent of respondents who accessed the support valued the workshops and Initiative Support Payment (teacher relief) in helping them to use the Statement.

Figure 7.2:

Perceived value of the targeted support among respondents who had accessed it



Note: The analysis for the workshops and parent forum is based on 75 EC directors; 10 principals; 20 teachers and 28 parents. The analysis for the initiative support payment is based on 133 EC directors, 40 principals and 70 teachers. The analysis for the starter pack is based on 169 EC directors.

Immediately after the workshop, all respondents rated the professional learning as 'useful and easy to understand'. All except a few EC and school educators felt more confident and skilled to use the Statement to support children starting school. All workshop respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Statement will give important information to EC educators, families, and school teachers, particularly, sharing relevant information to support a child's learning and additional needs.

The most frequently mentioned benefits of the workshop were:

- helpful ideas on how to use the Statement (97%)
- better understanding of the Statement and its connection to the EYLF and NQS (97%)
- valuable information and ideas about children's transitions to schooling (95%)
- access to presenters with EC education expertise (93%) and
- networking opportunity with other preschools/EC educators and schools (92%).

Respondents' most commonly mentioned improvements to the workshops included:

- area specific training workshops and networking with a greater focus on building relationships between services and schools in the same geographical area (31%)
- encouragement for more school representatives to attend with EC services (10%)
- more training on strengths based writing (7%) with more examples (7%) and
- more prior notice of workshops (7%).

Parent evening forums

Although the parent forums were not well attended, almost all surveyed parents (96%) rated the evening forum as valuable or very valuable.

Starter Pack

Nearly all EC directors (94%) indicated the Starter Pack (including copies of the Statement, information sheets, flyer and poster) was valuable or very valuable.

7.2 Awareness and perceived value of state wide support strategies

Figure 7.3 shows that awareness of the state wide online support and video resource was generally lower amongst the school educators than EC directors.

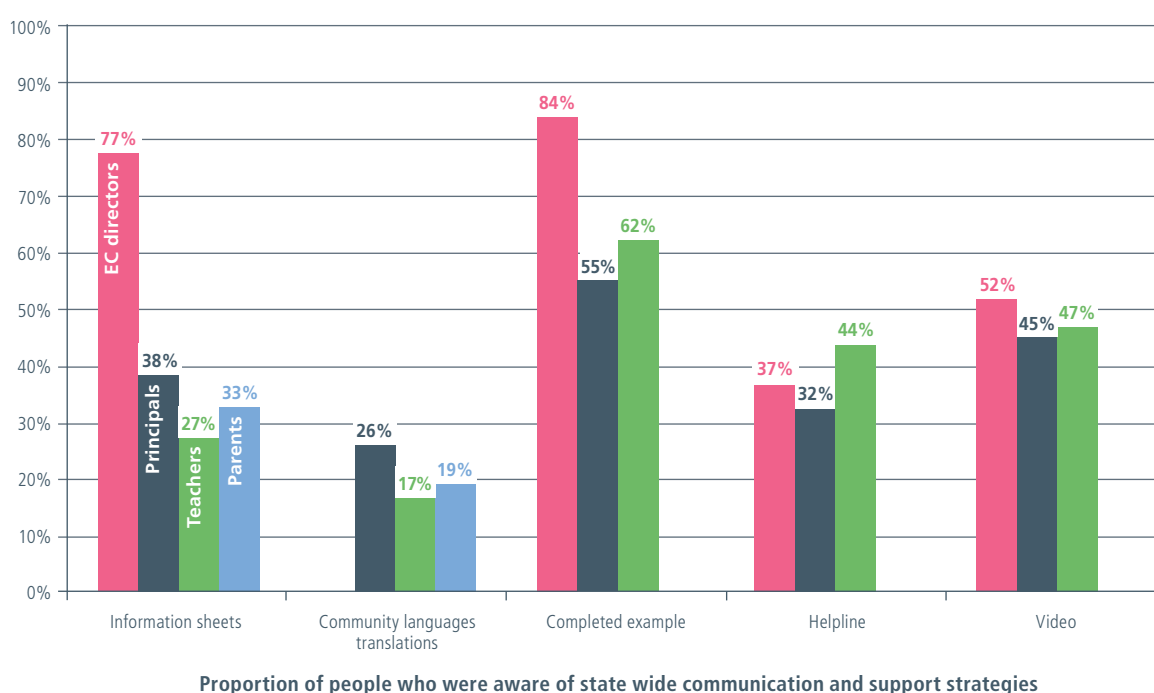
Figure 7.4 shows the online support materials (information sheets, community languages translations and completed example) were very well received by over 90 per cent of all respondents who used them.

Although only one in three EC directors and school principals were aware of the dedicated helpline support by ECECD project officers, 80 per cent of these respondents thought the helpline was valuable or very valuable. Online access to a video promoting the Statement was initially only made available in September in the targeted sites and then released state wide in November, 2014. About half the EC directors (52%) and school educators (46%) were aware of the video. Three quarters of the EC directors (79%) and principals (74%) and four in five teachers (81%) who had viewed it, rated it as valuable or very valuable.

In general, support for the Statement was so high among all four respondents groups, it was not possible to determine whether one type of targeted support was more successful than another.

Figure 7.3:

Awareness of the state wide support among respondents who had accessed it



Note: The analysis for the information sheets is based on 437 EC directors; 120 principals; 190 teachers and 339 parents.

The analysis for the community language translations is based on 43 principals; 51 teachers and 112 parents.

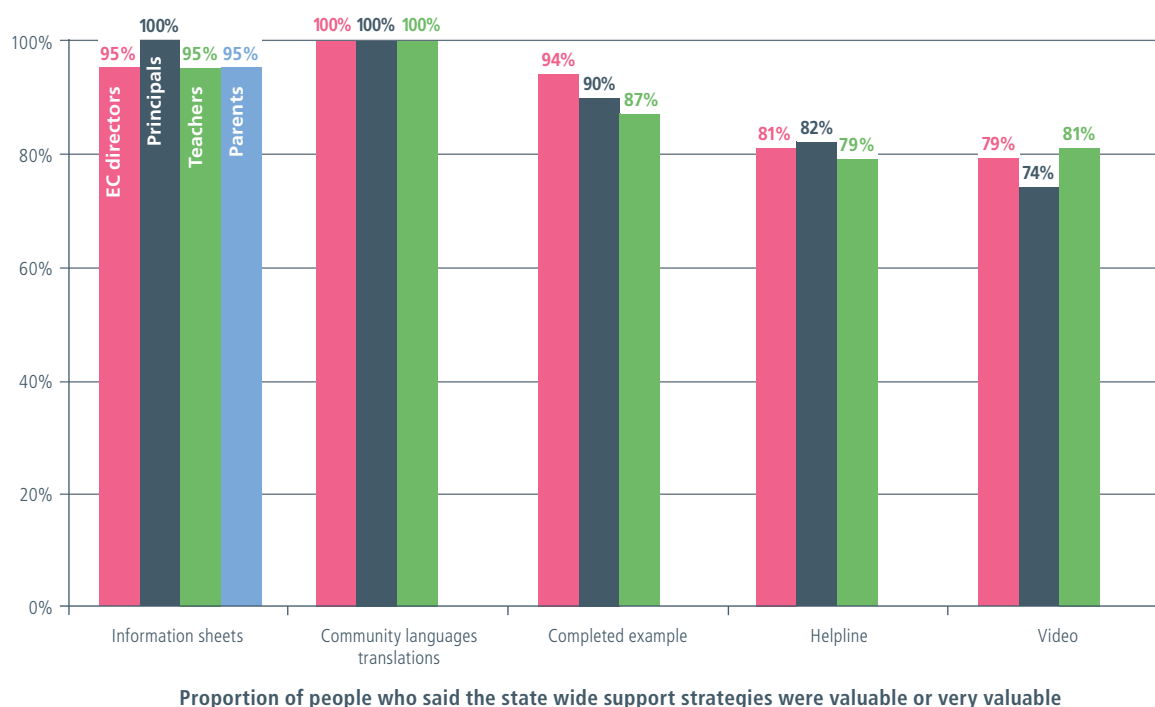
The analysis for the completed example is based on 393 EC directors, 112 principals and 179 teachers.

The analysis for the helpline is based on 350 EC directors, 105 principals and 179 teachers.

The analysis for the video is based on 370 EC directors, 111 principals and 179 teachers.

Figure 7.4:

Perceived value of the state wide support strategies among respondents



Note: The analysis for the information sheets is based on 319 EC directors; 13 principals; 21 teachers and 99 parents.

The analysis for the community language translations is based on 22 EC directors; 1 principal and 4 teachers.

The analysis for the completed example is based on 330 EC directors, 62 principals and 111 teachers.

The analysis for the helpline is based on 128 EC directors, 34 principals and 78 teachers.

The analysis for the video is based on 191 EC directors, 50 principals and 84 teachers.

Web analytics

Figure 7.5 shows that interest in the Department's transition webpage peaked at 32,446 pageviews and 30,026 unique pageviews in November 2014. From the launch in September to December 2014, the webpage received a total of 72,671 pageviews and 65,336 unique pageviews – the fourth most visited page on the Department's website. The total number of pageviews was 9,735 for the first six months of 2015, indicating that the total number of pageviews from the launch to 1 June 2015 was 82,352.

Figure 7.5:

Monthly summary of pageviews and unique pageviews for the DEC Transition webpage September-December, 2014



Note: A pageview is defined as a view of a page on the site that is being tracked by the Google Analytics tracking code. A unique pageview aggregates pageviews that are generated by the same user during the same session. A unique pageview represents the number of sessions during which that page was viewed one or more times.

7.3 Suggestions for future support strategies

The EC and school educators' most frequently suggested professional learning strategies to enhance uptake and sustainability of the Statement were:

- more localised training and networking to build relationships and collaboration between EC services and schools
- specific training or online webinars with helpful ideas on how to use the Statement
- joint training opportunities for EC directors and school educators to gain shared understanding of the EYLF and school curriculum and to enhance skills in preparing and interpreting strength-based writing.

While some educators requested financial support to attend professional learning activities, others preferred after-hours sessions so more educators could attend.

Many respondents suggested increased communication and more active promotion of the Statement to raise awareness of its importance and the development of more videos and resource materials for educators and parents, with guides and more samples on preparing and using the Statements.

Parents recommended more information sessions about the Statement and ideas on how parents can support their child's transition. Some parents and carers suggested smaller group activities for families to share and exchange information about their child using the Statement with EC educators and teachers.

Many educators and parents highlighted the need for more assistance for families who may experience difficulties in completing their sections or in understanding the information provided about their child, due to literacy or language barriers.

A commonly expressed view was the need for school leaders and teachers to give feedback to EC services, and to parents and carers, by acknowledging receipt of the Statements and sharing how they were using the information to support the child's transition.

Parents and carers were also interested in more follow up and the opportunity for feedback in parent-teacher interviews to discuss any additional strategies needed to support their child's transition.

8. Discussion and recommendations

The most striking observation from this evaluation is that EC services, families and schools almost universally felt that children were well supported in their transition to school. Most EC directors reported that they shared information about children with their families and local schools and more than half of all teachers reported receiving information directly from EC services. Irrespective of whether Transition to School Statements were used, almost all EC directors, principals and school teachers reported that children were well supported in their transition to school.

The generally positive disposition among surveyed stakeholders makes it difficult to isolate the additional benefits the Transition to School Statement made to children's transitions. Nevertheless, the 'encouragement design' employed for this study did reveal some differences in targeted sites relative to comparison sites. In targeted sites, where awareness and uptake of the Statement was much greater, significantly more Kindergarten teachers reported receiving information from EC services about students' strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning than did teachers in the comparison sites. The teachers used this information to get to know the child and family, thus, providing better transition support to enhance their students' continuity of learning.

Nearly all EC directors, principals and school teachers in both targeted and comparison sites equally agreed that children were well supported and generally well prepared for their transition to school. These findings are likely due to 'ceiling effects' and the difficulties in measuring improvement in these transition outcomes using survey methodology.

Nevertheless, school teachers who received Statements were more likely to agree that their students were well prepared for school than teachers who did not receive any Statements. Most teachers felt better able to respond to the learning needs of their students with a Statement compared to those students without a Statement. A further consideration is that EC services and parents who were using the Statement may also have been more proactive in their other transition activities, so this effect may not only be due to the Statement.

Although most families felt that their children made a smooth transition into Kindergarten, families with Statements were more likely than those without Statements to agree that their child was well supported in their transition to school. A substantial majority of surveyed parents agreed that having a Statement provided better support to help their child's transition to school compared to their other children who did not have a Statement.

Respondents gave overwhelmingly positive affirmation of the Statement as a valuable tool for sharing relevant information between families, EC services and schools to support a child's learning and additional needs. When surveyed in December 2014, three in four EC directors were already planning to use the Statement in 2015 with the bulk of the remaining services still considering it. There was clear consensus among parents, principals and school teachers that they would use the Statement, if received.

The Statement was clearly seen to be a useful resource among a number of EC educators and parents. The evaluation also sought to identify potential barriers to more widespread implementation. A lack of awareness about the Statement is one barrier. One quarter of EC directors, two in three school teachers and nearly half the school principals surveyed in the comparison sites had little or no knowledge of the initiative. The proportion of parents who are unaware of the Statement is also likely to be high given that 61 per cent of parents in the targeted sites reported knowing little or nothing about it. If the comparison sites are indicative of the state wide trend, efforts to improve awareness may be required across the state to increase utilisation of the Statement.

The most challenging issues for EC services implementing the Statement were the workload and time constraints in preparing Statements for the child and family. EC directors typically reported taking between 41-60 minutes, on average, to prepare their sections for each child's Statement and a further 10 minutes, on average, to complete the child's section. More options for electronic versions of the Statement would allay concerns expressed about the time and costs associated with photocopying,

tracking and storing paper copies of the Statements that could be easily lost. Many respondents suggested the Statement should be shortened with specific refinements to the language and structure of the questions in all sections.

Some EC directors, school educators and expert panel members noted considerable variability in the Statements received. Some respondents highlighted the need for ongoing support strategies for both the EC and school sectors to increase educators' understanding of the EYLF and school curriculum and to enhance skills in preparing and interpreting strength-based writing. Respondents also highlighted the need for more information sessions about the Statement and ideas on how parents can support their child's transition. Some respondents believed that schools should be encouraged to provide feedback to EC services and families about the individual Statements received to enhance children's transition experience.

The Department's professional learning sessions were very well received but there are potential costs and longer timeframes needed to provide state wide training opportunities – already many EC services and schools have commenced their transition programs and activities for the current cohort of children who will be starting school in 2016. Given the many stakeholders' requests for localised professional learning opportunities, the workshops could involve more local practitioners and advocates of the Statement and present exemplary transition practices to enhance local community partnerships and build better connections between the sectors. Awareness of the support strategies available was considerably lower amongst principals and teachers in schools than the EC directors. However, the respondents who had accessed the online resources highly valued them.

To enhance uptake and implementation of the Statement, it is recommended that:

- 1) The structure and content of the Statement should be refined, taking into consideration the feedback received in the evaluation.
- 2) The accessibility of the online Statement should be enhanced to give early childhood services more flexibility to utilise electronic options, conditional on those options being consistent with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.
- 3) Communications should commence earlier in the year, with consideration given to Terms 1 or 2 when early childhood services, families and schools are planning for transition.
- 4) A targeted communication strategy should be implemented state wide to raise awareness of the Statement and promote its potential benefits to early childhood services, families and schools.
- 5) The communication strategy should include support for professional learning including:
 - a) resource materials targeted at key users of the Statement - early childhood and school educators, parents and carers
 - b) specific training or online webinars targeted for educators in the early childhood education and school sectors with helpful ideas on how to use the Statement.
- 6) The strategy should also include delivery and/or support for professional learning including:
 - a) cross-sectoral training opportunities for early childhood and school educators to develop a shared understanding of the purpose of the Statement and its alignment with the Early Years Learning Framework and to enhance skills in preparing and interpreting strength-based writing to support children's transition to school
 - b) more localised training and networking to build relationships and collaboration between early childhood services and schools.
- 7) The communication strategy should encourage schools to provide feedback to early childhood services and families by acknowledging receipt of the Statements and sharing how the Statement has been used to support the children's transition.

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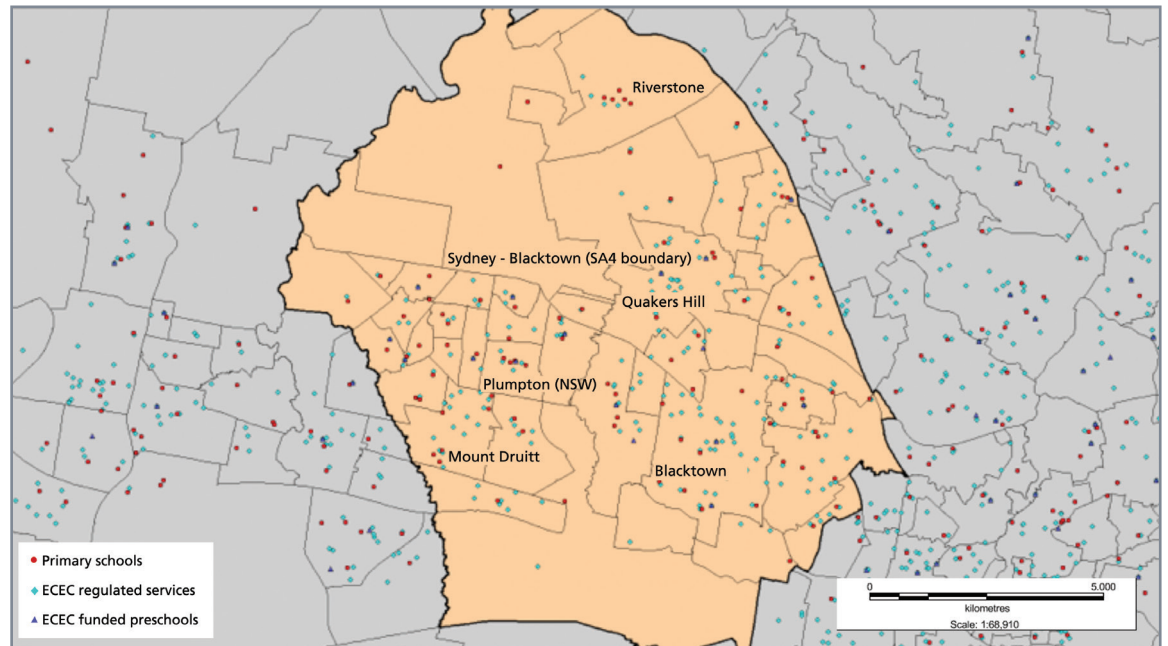
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Appendices

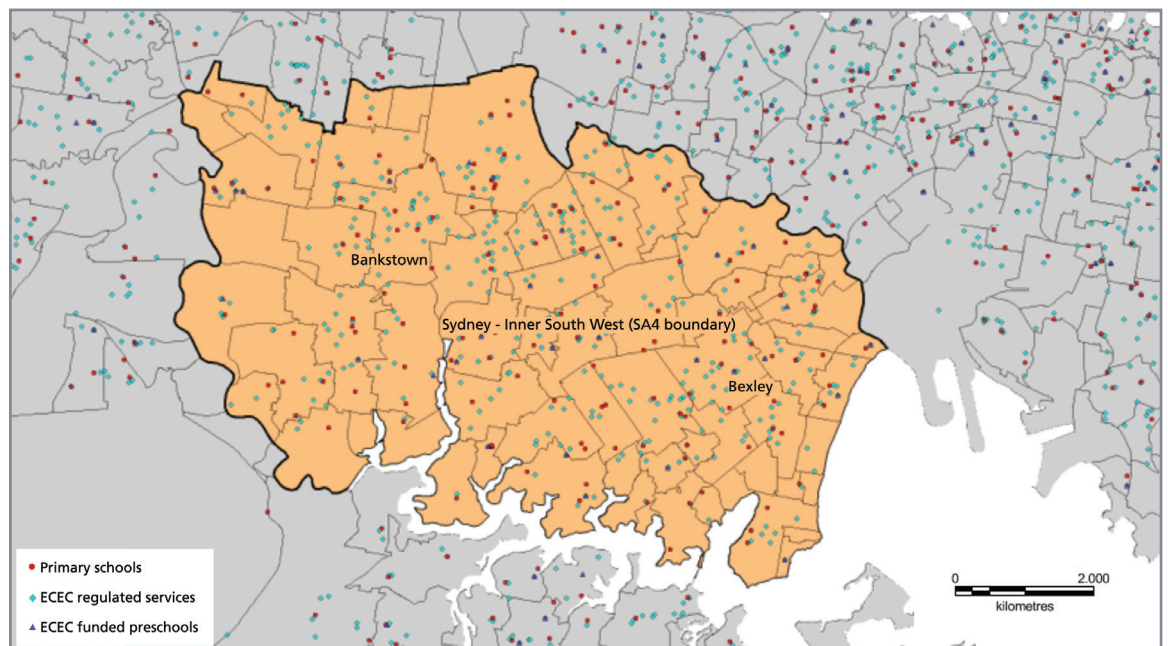
Appendix A: Maps and demographic profiles of the four evaluation sites

Map A1: Distribution of EC services and schools in evaluation sites

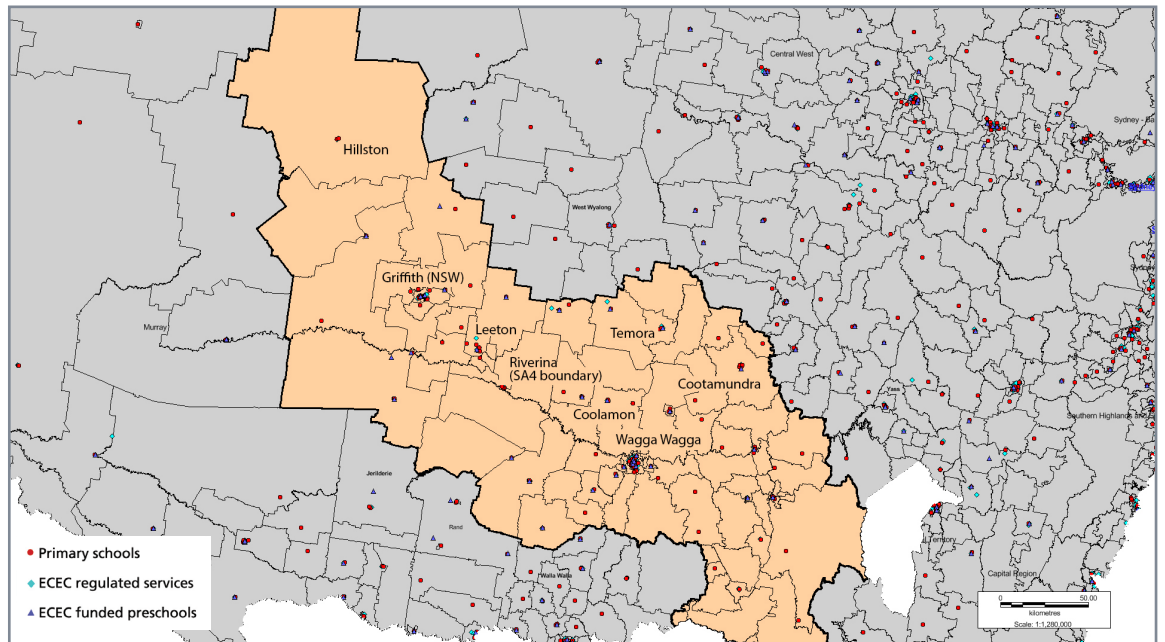
Sydney-Blacktown ABS Statistical Area 4 (Targeted site)



Sydney-Inner South West ABS Statistical Area 4 (Comparison site)



Riverina ABS Statistical Area 4 (Targeted site)



Central West ABS Statistical Area 4 (Comparison site)

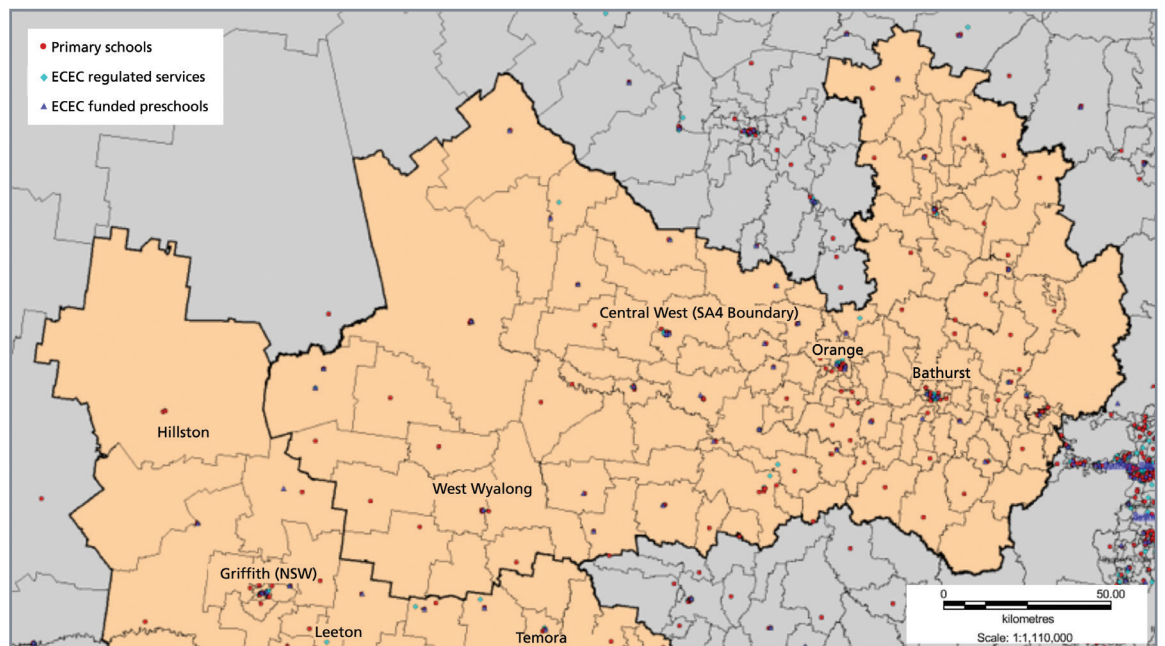


Table A1: Profile of evaluation sites

ABS Statistical Areas (SA4)							
	Targeted sites		Comparison sites		Totals		
	Sydney – Blacktown	Riverina	Sydney – Inner South West	Central West	Targeted sites	Comparison sites	Overall Total
Overall population	303,528	150,120	523,608	196,742	453,648	720,350	1,173,998
0-4 years population	25,624 (8.4%)	10,509 (7.0%)	37,077 (7.1%)	13,708 (7.0%)	36,133	50,785	86,918
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population	8,210 (2.7%)	7,029 (4.7%)	3,235 (0.6%)	10,517 (5.3%)	15,239	13,752	28,991
Median SEIFA score	978.4	970.6	987.1	968.6	974.5	977.9	976.2
Range of SEIFA scores	556–1194	553–1149	536–1161	623–1152	553–1194	536–1161	536–1194
ECEC services – total	177	84	313	78	261	391	652
LDC services	133	47	233	51	187	290	477
Mixed type services	3	4	9	6			
Preschool services (not part of a school)	12	29	31	16	41	47	88
Preschool services (part of a school)	14	1	8	–	15	8	23
FDC centres	15	3	38	8	18	46	64
Primary Schools – total	88	113	134	137	201	264	465
Government primary schools	60	83	80	101	143	172	315
Non-government primary schools (systemic)	16	23	34	26	39	57	96
Non-government primary schools (non-systemic)	12	7	20	10	19	35	54
Kindergarten enrolments – total	5,178	2283	7,440	3,020	7,461	10,460	17,921
Anticipated teachers Kindergarten children (govt primary schools)	190	114	249	149	304	398	702
SA3 statistical areas	Blacktown, Blacktown North, Mount Druitt	Griffith – Murrumbidgee, Tumut – Tumbarumba, Wagga Wagga	Bankstown, Canterbury, Hurstville, Kogarah – Rockdale	Bathurst, Lachlan Valley, Lithgow – Mudgee, Orange			

Notes: Population data was sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011 Census QuickStats. Accessed on 7 August 2014 at http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/113?opendocument&navpos=220, http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/119?opendocument&navpos=220, http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/116?opendocument&navpos=220 http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/103?opendocument&navpos=220

SEIFA data was sourced from ABS 2033.0.55.001 - Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2011 accessed on 14 May 2014.

Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate, CESE and Asset Management Directorate collated data on EC services that was extracted from NQA ITS on 3 February 2014 and data on Kindergarten enrolments in schools that was extracted from National Schools Statistic Collection 2013 in March 2014. The following terms are used for EC services: LDC – long day care; FDC – family day care; mixed type services offer multiple service types e.g. long day care and outside school hours care (OSHC). The numbers of teachers is based on the count of classes with Kindergarten children in government schools only. Comparable data was not available for non-government schools.

Appendix B: Data sources and collection methods

A broad range of stakeholders was consulted using surveys and case studies.

Review of administrative documents and associated data

Information on the policy context, the nature and timing of the roll-out of the Statement, communication strategies, workshop registrations and other relevant information related to the implementation of the Statement was gathered by content analysis of departmental briefings, guidelines provided on the department's website and correspondence sent to EC service providers and schools. Google Analytics data was used to describe visitor interaction with the department's transition to school webpages.

Surveys of participants in the workshops and parent forums in targeted sites

Five workshops and three parent evening forums were offered in Blacktown, Wagga Wagga and Griffith in September 2014. At the end of the workshops, 195 of 208 participants completed a survey, giving a response rate of 94 per cent. Across all workshops, 61 per cent of respondents were from EC services including directors or nominated supervisors (58%) or EC educators (33%). The school participants included: classroom or specialist teachers (49%); teaching principals or executives e.g. assistant or deputy principals, Early Stage 1 or P-2 Coordinator (37%) and non-teaching principals or executives (9%).

The 10 parents who attended the Griffith forum completed the evaluation survey. The six parents who attended the Blacktown forum were not surveyed. The Wagga Wagga forum was cancelled when no parents attended. Participants were asked questions on the perceived effectiveness of the professional learning support and to gather information on existing and planned transition to school initiatives. The surveys also invited services, families and schools who were interested and willing, to self-nominate for follow-up interviews and case studies.

Survey of EC directors in targeted and comparison sites

The sample of EC directors was drawn from the ACEQA National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS). Centre-based services (including long day care, community preschools, preschools that are part of a school) and mobile services were surveyed but not family day care services. The survey was conducted online with a telephone follow-up via Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). A market research company administered the survey over a period of two weeks in December 2014. Approximately one week following the survey launch via email, telephone interviewing commenced. Up to two reminder emails were sent to those directors who had not participated, opted out or made an appointment during the course of fieldwork. An attempt was made to obtain an interview with all 608 directors in the sample, with 531 interviews achieved (87% response rate). The following call outcomes summarise the response rate information for this survey:

- 531 surveys were completed – 395 by telephone (74.4%) and 136 online (25.6%)
- 29 numbers (4%) were non-contacts, inactive or unusable (answering machine, engaged or no answer, named person not known, wrong number or number disconnected)
- 20 appointments were made but could not be completed by the end of the fieldwork
- 15 directors were contacted but gave other reasons for not participating (away during the field work period; claims to have done survey)
- 4 directors were ineligible because the centre only catered for children up to 3 years old
- 9 directors refused to participate – five people via telephone with no specific reasons for refusal and four people opted out by using the "Unsubscribe" option in the email invite.

Sample of EC directors achieved

The 531 respondents included: 464 directors or nominated supervisors (87.3%); 51 EC educator or teacher (9.6%) and 15 program coordinator such as child development officer/coordinator, program support or centre manager. The directors were experienced – 92 per cent had been working in the EC education and care sector for five years or more. Nearly all directors (97.7%) had been at the service when the Statement was introduced.

The range of services represented among respondents was comparable to the actual profile of services operating in the evaluation sites: 410 long day care services (77.2%); 78 preschools that are non school (14.7%); 16 preschool that are part of a school (3.0%); 10 mobile preschools (1.9%) and 17 mixed type services (3.2%).

EC director survey questions

The key questions included: whether the Statement had been implemented in their services; which aspects of the Statement were implemented; how well the implementation had proceeded; the perceived value of the statement and any suggested areas for improvement. Directors were also asked about the effectiveness of the targeted communication and state wide support strategies in the EC sector.

Survey of school principals in targeted and comparison sites

The survey of 334 school principals or their nominees was conducted online by CESE over a period of four weeks between March and April 2015. Up to three reminder emails were sent to those principals who had not participated during the course of fieldwork. Table 1.1 shows the response rate for the principal survey with 205 respondents was 61 per cent.

Data sources

In February 2015, principals of primary and combined schools in the four evaluation sites were invited to participate in the study. Principals were also invited to nominate a staff member who had responsibility for transition programs and collaboration with EC services to complete the principal survey. The sample for the school principal survey was obtained separately for public and private schools. The contact details for 319 government school principals were drawn from the department's Business Intelligence (BI) Enterprise Data Warehouse. A number of special schools for students with disabilities and rural schools withdrew from the study because they did not have Kindergarten students in 2015. Diocesan representatives from the Catholic Education Offices of Bathurst, Canberra-Goulburn, Parramatta, Sydney, Wagga Wagga and Wilcannia-Forbes provided contact details for 94 Catholic systemic school principals. CESE approached these government and Catholic systemic school principals with an option for their school to opt out. The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AIS NSW) made the initial approach to independent school principals and subsequently, provided CESE with contact details for 19 schools who had opted in for the principal and teacher surveys. Proportionally more government schools (84% compared to 68% in the four ABS areas) participated in the surveys than did non-government schools.

Sample of principals achieved

The 205 respondents included: 153 principals, headmasters or headmistresses (74.6%); 35 deputy or assistant principals (17.1%); 9 Early Stage 1 or year coordinators (4.3%); 5 teachers (2.4%) and 3 school managers or community engagement officers. Half the principals (53.2%) had been in this role at their current school for more than 3 years. Thirty-two principals (15.6%) were in their first year of the role at the school. The principal group were experienced – 84 per cent had been working in the school education sector for 16 years or more and a further 15 per cent for 6 to 15 years. The principal sample consisted of: Government schools (84%), Catholic systemic schools (10%) and Independent schools (6%).

Principal survey questions

The questions included: what transition strategies were generally used with EC services and families to support new Kindergarten children; whether and how the Statement was used in the school; what was the perceived effectiveness of the Statement, which aspects of the Statement were used; the perceived value of the Statement and any areas for improvement. Principals were also asked to rate the effectiveness of the targeted communication and state wide support strategies in the school sector.

Survey of Kindergarten teachers in targeted and comparison sites

The survey of 891 teachers in the schools whose principals had not opted out of the study was conducted online by CESE over a period of four weeks between March and April 2015. Up to three reminder emails were sent to those teachers who had not participated during the course of fieldwork. The response rate for the teacher survey with 532 respondents was 60 per cent.

Data sources

The contact details for government school teachers were drawn from the department's Business Intelligence (BI) Enterprise Data Warehouse and supplemented, where necessary, from the Best Start Assessment Program or direct contact with schools. The contact details for non-government school teachers were provided by their principals, facilitated by Diocesan representatives or the AIS NSW.

Sample of teachers achieved

The 532 respondents included: 402 classroom or specialist teachers (76.1%); 109 school executives e.g. deputy or assistant principals (20.6%) and 17 Early Stage 1 or year coordinators (3.2%). A few teachers chose not to describe their role. Ten respondents were teaching principals. Half the teachers (54.0%) had been in this role at their current school for more than 3 years. Eighty eight teachers (16.7%) were in their first year of the role at the school. One in four teachers (28.0%) had been working less than five years in school education. One in three teachers (37.5%) had been working in the school education sector for 16 years or more. The teacher sample consisted of: Government schools (91%), Catholic systemic schools (5%) and Independent schools (4%).

Teacher survey questions

The survey questions included: what transition strategies were used to support new Kindergarten children; whether and how the teachers used the Statement in the classroom; whether the teachers felt more prepared for the arrival of children with a statement than they did for children without a Statement; the perceived value of the Statement and any areas for improving the Statement and professional learning support provided as part of the targeted communication strategy.

Sample survey of parents and carers of Kindergarten students in the targeted sites

A quota sample of 1,029 parents and carers was surveyed using an online method with telephone follow up of non-responses via Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). The same market research company that had completed the EC directors' survey, administered the parent survey over a period of three weeks between March and April 2015. Approximately one week following the launch of the online parent/carer survey via email, telephone interviewing commenced. One reminder email was sent to those parent/carers who had not participated, opted out or made an appointment during the course of fieldwork. For parents/carers who did not have an email address, telephone interviewing commenced at the same time as the online survey and continued until the end of the fieldwork period.

Data sources for parents and carers

The parent sampling framework was designed to ensure that there were enough respondents with a child who had a Statement to draw meaningful conclusions by drawing the sample from the evaluation sites where the Statement was more likely to have been received. Following the completion of the EC directors' surveys to estimate the uptake of the Statement, only parents in the targeted sites were surveyed. Given the significant logistical difficulties obtaining parental views and to minimise the administrative burden on schools, the methods for obtaining the family contact details and informed consent of parents/carers was customised for the government and Catholic systemic sectors. The independent school sector chose not to participate in the parent survey. The parent sample consisted of: Government schools (80%) and Catholic systemic schools (20%).

A list of 5,025 government school students enrolled in Kindergarten was drawn from the department's Enrolment Registration Number (ERN) system on 12 February. Only parents or carers who had provided an email, telephone number or address details for their child's enrolment were considered for the potential sample. Only parents or carers of children who started school for the first time in 2015 were eligible for the study. To avoid selecting families who may be ineligible because their child was repeating Kindergarten, only parents of students who had not previously enrolled (defined as a period more than 180 days) in a government school (excluding a preschool) were considered for the study. In addition, only one student who had a sibling enrolled in Kindergarten in one of the schools in scope was chosen per family to minimize the likelihood of parents/carers receiving multiple survey requests. A random sample of 1,848 government school parents/carers were sent a letter or email with an opt-out option. Following opt outs, bounced emails or non-deliverable mail, the final available sample of government school parents/carers was 1,768. Principals of Catholic systemic schools managed the opt out process and provided family contact details for 325 Catholic school parents/carers.

Response rate for parents and carers

Overall, 2,093 parent/carers were emailed or called at least once. The following call outcomes summarise the response rate information:

- 1,029 surveys were completed – 892 by telephone (86.7%) and 137 online (13.3%)
- 868 numbers were non-contacts (answering machine (n=496), engaged or no answer (n=372), named person not known, wrong number or number disconnected)
- 87 numbers were unusable (number disconnected (n=73), named person not known or wrong number (n=12), not a residential number or a fax machine or modem)
- 40 appointments were made but could not be completed by the end of the fieldwork
- 5 families were contacted but gave other reasons for not participating (away during the field work period; claims to have done survey)
- 19 families were ineligible because they did not have a child starting Kindergarten in 2015
- 74 families refused to participate – 43 respondents or households via telephone with either no specific reasons for refusal or not interested, 29 mid survey terminations and two families opted out of the study by using the “Unsubscribe” option.

The nominal response rate for the parent/carer survey was 93.3 per cent (calculated by dividing the total number of completed interviews (n=1,029) by the total number of interviews plus the number of refusals (n=1,103). The overall response rate for the parent survey was 49 per cent, defined as completed surveys (n=1,029) divided by useable sample (n=2,093).

Just over four in ten families in the sample were non-contacts. The fieldwork commenced in March for just over three weeks and extended over the Easter school holiday period which is a possible reason for the levels of ‘no answer’ and ‘answering machine’ observed for this survey. Families that finished fieldwork as ‘no answer’ were tried, on average, 4.7 times and ‘answering machine’, 4.3 times.

The initial approach email or letter to parents/carers included advice that parents could request interviews to be conducted in languages other than English. For the CATI component, interviewers who spoke with a parent or carer whose preferred language was not English then received a followed up call in their nominated language, using the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). A total of 17 parent/carer surveys were conducted in a language other than English: Burmese (4); Cantonese (3); Arabic, Dinka and Punjabi (2 each) and Farsi, Mandarin, Mandingo and Turkish (1 each).

Parent survey questions

The survey questions included: what strategies helped to support their child’s transition to Kindergarten; whether their child had received a Statement; whether parents/carers felt better informed about the strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning of their child with a Statement than they did for their children without a Statement; the perceived value of the Statement and any suggested areas for improvement. The 58 parents (6%) who had more than one child in Kindergarten in 2015, were asked to answer all questions only for their youngest child to minimise responses about children who may be repeating Kindergarten and thus, could not have received a Statement.

Sample of parents and carers

Table B1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the parents who responded and comparable population data for government school families in the ABS SA4 Sydney-Blacktown and Riverina areas.

The sample included a higher proportion of parents from English speaking backgrounds and in the occupation groups for business managers, arts/media/sportspersons and associate professionals than the population of government school parents in the targeted areas.

Among the respondents, there was considerable interest in the Statement initiative demonstrated by the fact that 80 per cent of parents, 73 per cent of EC directors, 41 per cent of principals; 35 per cent of teachers volunteered their name and contact details for possible follow up for the evaluation.

In-depth case studies of EC services, schools and parents

Seven case studies were undertaken during November to December 2014 to document the experiences of EC educators and families in preparing the Statement and to identify effective and innovative strategies for the use of transition statements. The selection of services was based on the following factors:

- Inclusion of a range of EC services and schools who attended the department's professional learning workshops in Blacktown or Riverina areas
- Inclusion of families of Aboriginal children, low socio-economic families and families from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Self-nomination of directors and/or educators of services who had decided to use the Statement and volunteered for follow up interviews in their workshop survey response and
- Willingness of the service to host a small group discussion of parents and carers for their feedback on the Statement and informed consent to release their child's de-identified statement to the researchers.

Whilst not representative of the overall impact of the Statement, the case study approach enabled systematic tracking of students from their EC service to schools and the opportunity to collect de-identified copies of children's Statements for further analysis. The case study sites included long day care centres, community-managed preschools and preschools that are part of a school. Funding to cover relief time for educators was provided. Each case study involved an interview with the nominated supervisor or director and/or educators and a parent group interview. A total of 15 EC directors and educators and 29 parents and carers were interviewed. When the cohort of children started school in 2015, eight out of 27 parents provided anecdotal feedback on their child's transition by email or telephone interview.

Forum with EC and school educators with specialist expertise in transition to school initiatives

CESE collected 21 de-identified Statements from five EC services that had participated in the department's professional learning workshops and case studies. A panel of 10 EC and school educators with specialist expertise in transition to school initiatives reviewed these Statements in April 2015. The panel also identified implications for improving the Statement for future implementation and for professional support for the EC sector and schools during 2015. The panel included: an academic researcher with EYLF expertise; EC service directors; an assistant principal; educators with expertise in transition initiatives for Aboriginal children and regional early learning officers with recent Kindergarten teaching experience.

Table B1: Sample characteristics of parents and carers and their children

Characteristic		Survey n=1,029		Population ² n=5,025	
		N	%	N	%
Role (n=1,026)	Mother, step-mother, grandmother, female carer	863	84.1	5,145	97.6
	Father, step-father, grandfather, male carer	163	15.9	124	2.4
Child's gender (n=1,026)	Female	508	49.5	2,525	47.9
	Male	518	50.5	2,744	52.1
Age of child starting school (n=1,027)	4 years old	228	22.2	1,497	28.4
	5 years old	758	73.8	3,675	69.7
	6 years old or more	41	4.0	97	1.8
(Child's Aboriginality n=1,022)	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin	60	5.9	484	9.2
	Non-Aboriginal	962	94.1	4,785	90.8
Child's home language (n=1,023)	English	824	80.5	3,532	67.0
	Other than English	199	19.5	1,737	33.0
Child's Country of birth (n=1,025)	Australia	951	92.4	4,893	92.9
	Other	74	7.2	376	7.1
Child's attendance in EC services and care prior to school ³ (includes children who attended multiple services) (n=1,024)	Preschool	548	57.3	1,829	45.9
	Community managed preschool (n=202)				
	Preschool as part of a government school (n=153)				
	Preschool as part of a non-government school (n=131)				
	Other e.g. private, mobile service, early intervention class (n=26)				
	Long day care with a preschool program (n=415)	467	48.7	2,221	55.7
	without a preschool program (n=52)				
	Family day care	70	7.3	206	5.2
	Other care (e.g. occasional care, playgroup, grandparent, relative, nanny, friend, neighbour)	125	13.1	339	8.5
	Number of children attending one or more EC service	957		3,989	
	None/child did not attend	58	5.7	n/a	n/a
	Unknown/not provided/unsure/prefer not to say	9	0.9	1,036	20.64
Parent's home language (n=1,025)	English	753	73.5	3,326	63.1
	Other than English	272	26.5	1,943	36.9
Highest level of schooling completed ¹ (n=1,004)	Year 12 or equivalent	730	72.7	3,276	62.2
	Year 11 or equivalent	63	6.3	439	8.3
	Year 10 or equivalent	167	16.6	1,106	21.0
	Year 9 or equivalent or below	44	4.4	383	7.3
Highest qualification completed ¹ (n=1,004)	Certificate I to IV (e.g. HSC, trade certificate)	272	27.1	1,459	27.7
	Advanced diploma or diploma	130	12.9	614	11.7
	Bachelor degree or above	400	39.8	1,443	27.4
	No non-school qualification	202	20.1	1,562	29.6
Occupation (current or if retired or stopped work in the last 12 months) ¹ (n=1,009)	Have not been in paid work in the last 12 months	321	31.8	2,270	43.1
	Machine operators, hospitality staff, assistants, laborers and related workers	118	11.7	718	13.6
	Tradesmen/women, clerks and skilled office, sales and service staff	215	21.3	1,019	19.3
	Other business managers, arts/media/sportspersons and associate professionals	217	21.5	538	10.2
	Senior management in large business organisation, government administration and defence and qualified professionals	138	13.7	550	10.4
ABS Statistical Area ⁴ (n=1,029)	Sydney-Blacktown	712	69.2	3,733	70.8
	Riverina	317	30.8	1,536	29.2

Note:

- Percentages do not always add to 100% because a very small proportion of parents chose not to answer these questions.
- Population data was sourced from the Department's Enrolment Registration Number (ERN) data for Kindergarten students in the ABS SA4 areas of Sydney-Blacktown and Riverina. The ERN data extract automatically populates 'Parent 1' with the female parent/carers (if there is one) and 'Parent 2' with the male parent/carers (if applicable) and does not reflect the order in which parents were recorded on the enrolment form. All population percentages relating to parent's home language, education and occupation relate to 'Parent 1'.
- Children who attended more than one service are counted multiple times so percentages add to more than 100%. In the survey, parents were given the option to indicate if their child did not attend any EC services and care prior to school. Comparable population data is not available in the enrolment system on the number of Kindergarten students who did not attend EC services prior to school. It is likely that a proportion of these students in the population data are in the category 'unknown/not provided/prefer not to say'. Due to the large number in the 'unknown' category and the inability to identify those who did not attend any EC, the percentages of children attending each service are based on the number of students attending one or more services (n=3,989) whereas the percentages of children not attending or where this information is unknown is based on total students (n=5,025). This method was applied for the sample survey parents where the percentages of children attending each service are based on the number of students attending one or more service (n=957) and the percentages of children not attending or where this information is unknown is based on total respondents (n=1,024).

Appendix C: Proportion of respondents who were familiar with the Statement

Given some EC services and schools were already using transition statements, a picture of the Department's Statement was provided in the online surveys or described in detail for the telephone surveys to ensure respondents were discussing the 'correct' Statement. Table C1 presents the proportions of EC directors, principals and school teachers surveyed in the targeted and comparison sites who reported whether or not they were familiar with the Statement. The table also shows the proportion of parents in the targeted sites who indicated their level of familiarity with the Statement.

Table C1: Proportion of respondents who were familiar with the Statement in targeted and comparison sites

Level of familiarity with the Statement	Targeted sites %	Comparison sites %
EC directors ***		
Our early childhood service has used it	60.2	26.4
Our early childhood service considered it but did not use it this year	32.4	40.1
Our early childhood service did not consider using it, but I know something about it	3.7	9.8
Our early childhood service did not use it and I know little or nothing about it	3.7	23.8
<i>Total number in the group</i>	216	307
Principals ***		
Our school received Statements for some or all students who started in Kindergarten this year	54.5	17.6
Our school has not received any Statements, but I have considered it	10.2	20.6
I have not seen the Statement, but I know something about it	18.2	16.7
I have not seen the Statement and know little or nothing about it	17.0	45.1
<i>Total number in the group</i>	88	102
Teachers ***		
I received Statements for some or all students who started in Kindergarten this year	50.0	15.6
I have not received any Statements, but I have considered it	5.5	6.2
I have not seen the Statement, but I know something about it	8.5	9.3
I have not seen the Statement and know little or nothing about it	36.0	68.9
<i>Total number in the group</i>	200	257
Parents		
A Statement was prepared for my child by his/her early childhood service and/or my family	28.0	not surveyed
I have seen it, but no Statement was prepared for my child	4.5	
I have not seen it, but I know something about it	7.0	
I have not seen it, and I know little or nothing about it	60.5	
<i>Total number in the group</i>	913	

Note: *** $p=0.000$ for targeted vs comparison sites – EC directors, principals and school teachers. Parents were not surveyed in comparison sites.

Appendix D: Analysis of outcomes measures

Tables D1 to D5 present the results of the chi square tests of significance for each outcome measure of communication and transition support for EC directors, principals, teachers and parents in the targeted and comparison sites. Survey questions for EC directors and parents were on a four point scale: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. Because of small numbers of respondents in some categories, significance testing was not always possible on all four points of the scale. Hence, unless otherwise indicated, the categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were combined as were the categories 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. Survey questions for principals and school teachers in Tables D2 and D3 were on a two point scale: 'yes' or 'no'.

Table D1: Communication outcomes for EC directors

	Targeted vs Comparison sites						User vs Non-users					
	% agree or strongly agree		N				% agree or strongly agree		N			
EC Directors	T	C	T	C	Total	p-value	U	NU	U	NU	Total	p-value
Our early childhood service shares information with families about their child's strengths.	100.0	100.0	216	315	531	na	100.0	100.0	211	312	523	na
Our early childhood service shares information with families about their child's interests.	100.0	100.0	216	315	531	na	100.0	100.0	211	312	523	na
Our early childhood service shares information with families about their child's preferred ways of learning.	96.7	98.1	214	312	526	ns	98.6	96.8	209	310	519	ns
Our early childhood service shares information with families on ways to help their child's transition to school next year.	99.5	99.4	215	314	529	na	99	99.7	210	311	521	ns
Our early childhood service shares information with schools about the strengths of individual children.	88.2	86.8	212	304	516	ns	92.7	83.4	206	302	508	0.002
Our early childhood service shares information with schools about the interests of individual children.	86.0	82.6	214	304	518	ns	91.8	78.1	208	302	510	0.000
Our early childhood service shares information with schools about the preferred ways of learning of individual children.	84.0	76.1	213	301	514	0.028	86.7	73.8	210	298	508	0.000
Our early childhood service shares information with schools on ways to help individual children transition to school.	84.8	80.0	210	305	515	ns	88	77.6	208	299	507	0.000

Note: T = Targeted Sites, C = Comparison Sites, U = Users, NU = Non-users, ns = not significant, na= not applicable (no test due to small numbers or zeros in one or more categories)

Table D2: Communication outcomes for principals

	Targeted vs Comparison sites						User vs Non-users					
	% Yes		N			p-value	% Yes		N			p-value
Principals	T	C	T	C	Total		U	NU	U	NU	Total	
Our school received information from early childhood services about the strengths of individual children.	61.6	51.5	104	81	185	ns	79.4	42.3	97	77	174	0.000
Our school received information from early childhood services about the interests of individual children.	58.3	45.0	94	90	184	ns	79.4	35.5	89	84	173	0.000
Our school received information from early childhood services about the preferred ways of learning of individual children.	39.0	28.6	56	112	168	ns	50.9	22.8	52	106	158	0.000
Our school received information from early childhood services on ways to help individual children transition to school.	47.6	47.5	88	97	185	ns	58.7	42.0	84	91	175	0.033
Our school received information from families about their children's strengths.	68.2	67.3	128	61	189	ns	71.4	67.8	123	55	178	ns
Our school received information from families about their children's interests.	63.9	71.2	127	60	187	ns	72.1	67.0	121	55	176	ns
Our school received information from families about their children's preferred ways of learning.	36.4	37.5	64	109	173	ns	40.0	36.1	61	102	163	ns
Our school received information from families on ways to help their children's transition to school.	49.4	58.8	96	80	176	ns	50.9	57.8	92	74	166	ns

Note: T = Targeted Sites, C = Comparison Sites, U = Users, NU = Non-users, ns = not significant

Table D3: Communication outcomes for teachers

	Targeted vs Comparison sites						User vs Non-users					
	% Yes		N			p-value	% Yes		N			p-value
Teachers	T	C	T	C	Total		U	NU	U	NU	Total	
I received information from early childhood services about the strengths of individual children.	65.7	52.0	262	190	452	0.003	84.8	46.3	248	178	426	0.000
I received information from early childhood services about the interests of individual children.	57.1	43.3	223	229	452	0.004	81.8	34.5	209	216	425	0.000
I received information from early childhood services about the preferred ways of learning of individual children.	41.2	27.3	146	290	436	0.002	61.4	20.6	137	277	414	0.000
I received information from early childhood services on ways to help individual children transition to school.	46.5	37.6	183	257	440	ns	63.1	32.3	176	245	421	0.000
I received information from families about their children's strengths.	67.0	58.9	286	172	458	ns	72.0	57.0	265	165	430	0.003
I received information from families about their children's interests.	68.9	63.3	306	159	465	ns	75.6	59.9	283	154	437	0.002
I received information from families about their children's preferred ways of learning.	31.0	30.3	136	308	444	ns	41.2	24.8	126	295	421	0.001
I received information from families on ways to help their children's transition to school.	45.2	37.8	195	241	436	ns	55.1	39.6	184	231	415	0.003

Note: T = Targeted Sites, C = Comparison Sites, U = Users, NU = Non-users, ns = not significant

Table D4: Communication and children's transition outcomes for parents

	User vs Non-users					
	% agree or strongly agree		N			p-value
Parents	U	NU	U	NU	Total	
The school provided information about transition to school in ways that were useful to me as a parent/carer.	97.6	94.0	255	652	907	0.024
My child's early childhood service provided information about transition to school in ways that were useful to me as a parent/carer.	92.7	84.0	245	561	806	0.001
Prior to my child starting school, I felt I had good two-way communication with the school staff.	87.7	89.1	252	635	887	ns
Prior to my child starting school, I felt comfortable to approach the school with any concerns I had.	95.7	96.1	254	647	901	ns
I feel I currently have good two-way communication with the staff of my child's school.	95.3	95.2	255	648	903	ns
I currently feel comfortable to approach the school with any concerns I might have.	96.1	97.5	254	649	903	ns
My child was well supported by his/her early childhood service in the transition to school.	98.8	93.5	246	570	816	0.001
My child was generally well prepared for his/her transition to school.	98.4	96.9	256	650	906	ns

Note: U = Users, NU = Non-users, ns = not significant.

Table D5: Children's transition outcomes

	Targeted vs Comparison sites						User vs Non-users					
	% agree or strongly agree		N			p-value	% agree or strongly agree		N			p-value
	T	C	T	C	Total		U	NU	U	NU	Total	
EC directors: Children in my EC service are well supported in their transition	99.1	100.0	216	314	530	ns	99.5	99.7	211	311	522	ns
Principals: Children in my school were well supported in their transition	95.7	97.2	93	109	202	ns	92.4	98.4	66	124	190	ns
Teachers: Children in my class were well supported in their transition	93.2	94.7	206	265	471	ns	96.4	92.4	139	302	441	ns
EC directors: Children in my EC service are generally well prepared for their transition	99.5	100.0	216	314	530	ns	100.0	99.7	211	311	522	ns
Principals: Children in my school were generally well prepared for their transition	90.3	96.3	93	108	201	ns	90.3	96.3	93	108	201	ns
Teachers: Children in my class were generally well prepared for their transition	85.4	89.0	206	263	469	ns	93.5	84.2	138	303	441	0.007

Note: T = Targeted Sites, C = Comparison Sites, U = Users, NU = Non-users, ns = not significant



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