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August 2018



NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Early Childhood Education Workforce Strategy 2018-2022



Our vision

is a highly qualified and sustainable early childhood education workforce which meets the needs of children and families. This includes children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, those in regional and remote locations and children with additional needs.







This workforce strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

- valuing early childhood education and educators
- building capacity with professional development and training, and
- cultural respect and inclusion

The strategy also reflects our commitment to:

- universal access
- the National Quality Framework, and
- basing our policies and strategies on evidence of practices that work

Recent Australian early childhood research demonstrates the key role of the workforce in sustaining the quality of early childhood education. The Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions (2017) identifies the most important factor in delivering high quality early childhood education is a skilled and stable workforce.

The E4Kids Study (2016) concluded that the most important determinant of quality in early childhood education is the interaction between educator and child. This is further supported by the findings of the FEEL Study (2016). The E4Kids Study also confirms the link between higher-level qualifications and improved child cognitive outcomes.

The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), found that both the level and specialisation of the qualification were important: children whose teacher held a diploma or degree in early childhood education gained the most from attending preschool, as demonstrated in higher NAPLAN scores.



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The strategy

This strategy draws broadly on research reported in the Early Childhood Education Workforce Literature Review, and reflects extensive consultation with the sector, including representatives from peak organisations, universities, vocational education and training institutions, government agencies and early education services.



The strategy builds on the Department of Education's Strategic Plan: 2018 -2022, which sets out the government's priority for early childhood that 'all children make a strong start in life and learning and make a successful transition to school'. It also reflects the Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions (2017), which recommended that governments support the recruitment, retention, sustainability and enhanced professionalisation of the workforce, thereby improving service quality and children's outcomes.

Four focus areas

have been identified as priorities for 2018-2022.

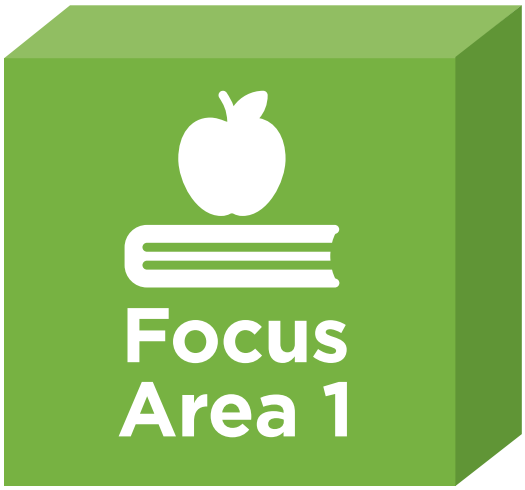


Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Promote the role of early childhood educators and teachers as a critical part of a child's educational journey, and early childhood education as an attractive and meaningful career	Support the workforce to obtain qualifications and experience to prepare them for the workplace	Build the skills and capability of the workforce by supporting educators and teachers to participate in professional development	Support all service types to embed sustainable practices that contribute to workforce stability and reduce the impact of staff turnover

This investment is expected to deliver:

- Improved understanding by the public of the key role that educators and teachers play in setting children up for lifelong learning
- An increased number of persons interested in becoming early childhood educators and teachers
- An increase in the number of educators who have qualifications, and more educators and teachers with higher-level qualifications
- A more structured approach to continuing professional development for educators and teachers
- Greater workforce stability resulting from improved business practices and workplace interactions between service leaders and the workforce

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Promote the role of early childhood educators and teachers as a critical part of a child's educational journey, and early childhood education as an attractive and meaningful career

The valuable work that early childhood educators and teachers do should be promoted widely so that more people are encouraged to consider a career in early childhood education. Despite the complexity of their work, the perception that educators are predominantly carers persists. The professional status of educators and teachers is too often viewed as lower than their qualifications and skills warrant. Diversity should be encouraged so that the workforce better reflects the cohort of children and their different abilities, service types, family composition and cultural background.

What we are doing:

'It Makes You Think' is a communications campaign to engage and educate families on the importance and benefits of early childhood education, including service quality and the expertise of educators and teachers.

What we will do:

A campaign will be undertaken to promote public awareness of the key role that early childhood educators and teachers play in the education of children. New promotional materials will be developed specifically for this campaign. The campaign will take place across a range of channels, including:

- Websites maintained by the department and peak organisations
- Career guidance channels such as secondary schools and the VET system
- Social media
- Localised media targeting people living in rural and remote areas
- Tailored communications aimed at educators from under represented groups, including educators from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



To inform the campaign, work will be undertaken to better understand:

- Perceptions of careers in early childhood education
- Barriers that may be preventing some individuals from entering the sector
- Career paths and opportunities for early childhood teachers and educators

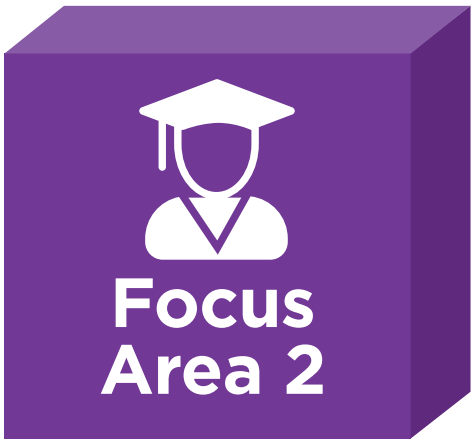
Resources addressing current gaps in career information will be developed and disseminated, including:

- A guide for prospective educators and teachers (such as school students) on commencing pre-service training and joining the workforce
- Online interactive resources for services on 'best practice' for recruiting, and alternative and accessible recruitment options
- A career pathways guide illustrating the different opportunities to specialise in early childhood education (such as teaching children with disabilities)

The options for establishing a centralised user-led system for educator registration and recognition will be explored.

The Government will continue to sponsor an Early Childhood Educator award in the NSW/ACT Young Achievers Awards to encourage and recognise outstanding educators.

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Support the workforce to obtain qualifications and experience to prepare them for the workplace

There is a need for qualified educators and teachers, particularly in rural and remote parts of NSW, as well as those who have specialised skills in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with disability and additional needs. Variability of the quality of training and education in the tertiary sector results in some graduates entering the workforce with misconceptions of the required work.

What we are doing:

The NSW Government supports a high quality early childhood workforce, and has awarded 255 scholarships since 2013. Current scholarship programs that boost the supply of teachers include:

- Rural and Remote Early Childhood Teaching Scholarships to support diploma-trained educators who live and work in rural and remote parts of the state upgrade their qualifications to a bachelor degree
- Early Intervention Scholarships to support teachers to complete postgraduate studies that prepare them to deliver services to children with additional needs
- Incentive Scholarships to support educators in rural or remote areas of NSW who have started a course leading to an early childhood teaching degree but may need financial support to allow them to complete this course
- Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Scholarships to support Aboriginal students who are studying for a bachelor degree in early childhood education

What we will do:

The Department is developing the next iteration of scholarships and other programs to support educators to obtain qualifications to enhance early childhood education and improve the outcomes for children.



Work will be undertaken to better understand aspects of current VET and university qualification-training systems including:

- Reasons for the current high non-completion rates of industry qualifications



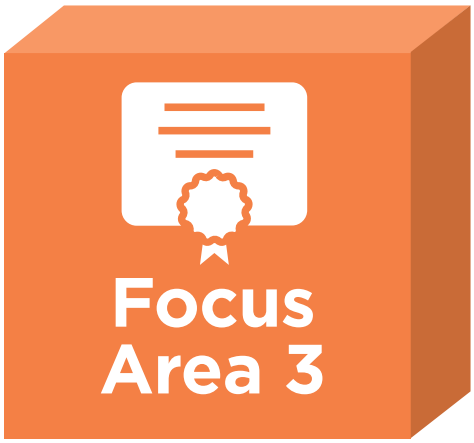
- Financial and other supports that are currently available to individuals who wish to gain qualifications
- Initiatives or supports which make a difference for students doing their qualification training

A trial will be undertaken to improve the process for, and the experience and outcomes of, student placements.

The department will investigate and conduct a trial of incentives to support employment of educators following the completion of a traineeship.

The department will work with stakeholders to support the establishment of Aboriginal Educators Leadership Initiatives.

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Build the skills and capability of the workforce by supporting educators and teachers to participate in professional development

High quality and cost effective professional development opportunities are a key ingredient for educators and teachers. Service providers benefit from having well trained and highly capable staff and share a responsibility to support and encourage their employees to attend professional development. Educators and teachers face challenges in engaging in professional development. For example there is the need to access these opportunities outside service hours. While early childhood teachers have access to a structure that records their professional development under the teacher accreditation system, educators do not.

What we are doing:

The Sector Development Program supports the early childhood education workforce by offering training, support and resources to build the capacity of services, educators and teachers. The Sector Development Program panel of pre-qualified providers has been approved to 2020/21.

As part of this program, in 2017 the NSW Government provided Early Childhood Professional Development Grants to community preschools. The grants were designed to improve access to professional development opportunities for early childhood education staff employed in community preschools and mobile preschools, and to enhance the knowledge and skills needed to ensure the delivery of quality early childhood education. Suitable professional development activities included in-house courses delivered by an external provider; attendance at training courses, seminars, workshops, forums or conferences and online learning, webinars or other training.

In response to feedback from the early childhood education sector, the NSW Government also provided additional professional development opportunities in 2018 for early childhood education staff employed in community preschools and mobile preschools. These opportunities provided training on four priority areas:

- Understanding and supporting children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
- Understanding and responding to challenging behaviour: strategies to support children who have experienced trauma
- Leadership Development
- Financial Systems and Processes

Funding grants have also been made available to support educators and service leaders to attend NSW and national conferences and other events as part of their continuing professional development.



What we will do:

Complementary channels will be explored to ensure high quality professional development opportunities are more accessible for educators and teachers. This could involve:

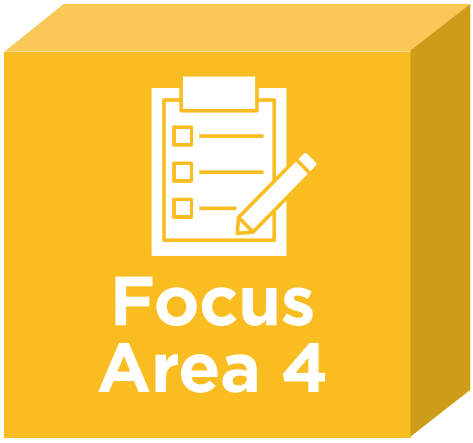
- Online and other training resources
- A dedicated professional development portal
- Regular provision of updates and sharing of best practices
- An online system that allows educators to track their own professional development (see Focus Area 1)

A trial of a formal mentoring and networking program to support the professional development of educators and teachers will be established.

Work will be done to improve understanding of the professional development needs of the workforce so that government can respond with evidence based solutions.

The department is developing engagements that meet the priority needs of the NSW Government and the early childhood education sector from 2018/19. This includes professional development activities for educators and staff across all service types. There will be an increased focus on activities that support NESA accreditation and the availability of these professional development opportunities to educators from a range of service types.

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Support all service types to embed sustainable practices that contribute to workforce stability and reduce the impact of staff turnover

Workforce stability is essential to service continuity and the provision of high quality early childhood education for children.

Retaining and attracting staff will lead to improved skills and opportunities for mentoring and peer-to-peer learning. Service leaders would benefit from increased access to leadership training to address any shortage of skills and experience.

What we are doing:

The Sector Development Program supports professional development activities across all service types, including community preschools, long day care services, mobile preschools, family day care services and outside schools hours care services. The Sector Development Program is currently delivering leadership development training for service leaders of community preschools.

What we will do:

Workforce-related engagements will be recommended to the Minister as a priority for funding in 2018-19. The panel of pre-qualified providers under the Sector Development Program will be engaged to develop and disseminate resources to assist services to better support and retain educators and teachers. These resources could include:

- An induction program to guide educators and teachers who are new to the industry. This would include access to mentors who have been trained to undertake this role
- Guidelines to assist service leaders to improve business practices (governance, compliance, workforce issues generally) in their service
- Guides and tools to strengthen peer-to-peer networking within services and across local professional networks

A new program will be developed to trial internships to give prospective educators experience of the sector before they register for a VET or university course.





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