

## Group Summary

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| 1 | Group Summary | SB23-000340 |
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## Hot Topic Briefs

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| 3 | Child Care Affordability   | SB23-000317 |
| 4 | Child Care System Integrity                                      | SB23-000318 |
| 5 | Child Safety   | SB23-000319 |
| 6 | Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce, Pay and Conditions | SB23-000321 |
| 7 | Youth  | SB23-000320 |

## Early Childhood and Youth 2023–24 Supplementary Budget Estimates

### Response/Facts

#### SB23-000316 - Child Care Access and Regional Access

##### **Regional and Remote Access**

- Approximately **25% (3,661)** of approved Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services (not including In Home Care) are located outside major cities. In the June quarter 2023, there were around **306,990 children** using services in regional and remote areas, representing approximately **22% of all children** attending ECEC services.

##### **Community Child Care Fund**

- The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) supports around **900 services** to reduce barriers to access, particularly for children and families in rural and remote communities experiencing disadvantage, First Nations communities, and where services are in limited supply. The CCCF will deliver approximately **\$597.5 million** over 4 years (2023–24 to 2026–27), with approximately 69% of allocated funding over 2 years (2023–24 to 2024–25) supporting services in regional and remote locations.
- The Government has announced the outcomes of the most recent competitive grant opportunity under the CCCF. From a total of 150 applications received, funding of **\$16 million** is being provided to fund **47 new services, across 38 communities** in priority regional and remote parts of the country. Successful providers are being funded to establish **13 new Centre Based Day Care** services and **34 Family Day Care locations**.
- On 4 April 2023, the Government announced the first **4 new CCCF Restricted Expansion grants** to First Nations led organisations. The **\$29.9 million** allocated to this Closing the Gap measure over 4 years from 2021–22 supports organisations to establish new services in remote and very remote areas.

##### **Changes to the Child Care Subsidy**

- The Government lifted the maximum CCS percentage to **90%** for families earning under \$80,000 and increased subsidy rates for families earning less than **\$530,000**. This will benefit around **1.26 million families**.
- For the average family on about **\$120,000 with a child in care 3 days/week**, the changes will cut costs by about **\$1,700 a year**. The CCS changes begun being paid to families from **10 July 2023**.

##### **Productivity Commission Inquiry**

- The Productivity Commission (PC) is considering the impact on access to quality ECEC, including by remoteness and whether different settings are required based on the location of services or family circumstances. The PC will release a draft report in **November 2023** and a final report to by **30 June 2024**.

##### **Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Inquiry**

- The ACCC is examining the costs and prices of child care services, and how these impact providers. The ACCC's first interim report was released on **5 July 2023**, and the second interim report was released on **1 October 2023**. A final report is due to be provided to the Treasurer by **31 December 2023**.
- The key findings from the first interim report were that child care fees are rising faster than inflation, that disadvantaged households spend a greater share of income on child care, and affordability influences use of child care services but location and quality influence choice.
- The key findings from the second interim report are costs to supply Centre-Based Day Care and Outside School Hours Care are increasing, workforce shortages impact the supply and cost of childcare, market dynamics encourage supply in more advantaged areas and major cities and existing price regulation mechanisms have limited effect in placing downward pressure on prices. In particular, the second interim report found that the market is not delivering accessible and affordable child care for all children and families in Australia. The ACCC also found:
  - Remote communities and locations with a higher proportion of low income households have fewer child care services.
  - Staffing shortages and associated high labour costs are having a significant impact on the supply of child care services, particularly in regional and remote areas.
  - Costs to supply child care are significantly higher in the most remote parts of Australia.

## Early Childhood and Youth 2023–24 Supplementary Budget Estimates

### SB23-000317 - Child Care Affordability

#### Child Care Subsidy

- The total estimated expenditure on Child Care Subsidy (CCS) (including Additional Child Care Subsidy) for the June quarter 2023 was **\$2.90 billion**.
  - **\$12.8 billion** is expected to be spent on CCS in 2023–24 (as at May 2023–24 Budget).
- June quarter 2023 data shows around **84.2%** of families using approved child care were entitled to a CCS rate of between **50 and 85%** (family incomes from \$0 to \$256,756).
  - This compares to **87.7%** in the June quarter 2022 (**decrease of 3.4 percentage points**).
- In the June quarter 2023 there were **804,090 children** in Centre Based Day Care (CBDC).
  - For **192,480 (23.9%)** children, parents’ out-of-pocket costs were less than **\$2 an hour per child**.
  - For **498,160 (62.0%)** children, parents’ out-of-pocket costs were less than **\$5 an hour per child**.
- The average out-of-pocket child care cost for Australian families using approved care in June quarter 2023 was **\$4.22** for all care types (excluding In Home Care).
  - The average out-of-pocket cost of CBDC was **\$4.36 per hour**. For Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), average out of pockets were **\$3.65 per hour**.
- The child care CPI increased by **1.5%** in the June quarter 2023. Over the year to June quarter 2023, child care CPI increased by **9.5%**. Child care CPI is based on out-of-pocket costs of child care borne by households.
  - This was higher than all groups CPI which increased by **0.8%** in the June quarter 2023 and **6%** over the year to the June quarter 2023.
- During the June quarter 2023, the average charged hours per child per week in CBDC was **32.9**.
  - This is **2.9%** higher than the **32.0 hours** in June quarter 2022.
- In the June quarter 2023, the average hourly child care fee per child, for all service types (excluding In Home Care) was **\$11.55** – an annual increase of **6.2%** and an increase since March quarter 2023 of **0.9%**.  
The 10-year average fee growth is **4.9%** per annum.

### SB23-000318 - Child Care System Integrity

- Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payment integrity measures were announced in the October 2022–23 Budget and the 2023–24 Budget to safeguard the CCS program from fraud and non-compliance.
- Combined, these measures will deliver net savings of **\$366.8 million** over 5 years from 2022–23 after accounting for costs of **\$81.5 million**.

| Financial year                   | 2022–23 | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | Total 5 years (2022–23 to 2026–27) |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Total Costs (\$million)</b>   | 5.01    | 21.80   | 19.27   | 18.50   | 16.90   | 81.47                              |
| <b>Total Savings (\$million)</b> | 39.29   | 94.80   | 102.41  | 105.90  | 105.90  | 448.30                             |
| <b>Net Savings (\$million)</b>   | 34.28   | 73.00   | 83.14   | 87.40   | 89.01   | 366.83                             |

- Portfolio Budget Statements set a target of **90%** or higher proportion of accurate CCS payments to all services. Payment accuracy for 2022–23 was **96.9%** [page 15, 2022–23 Annual Report]—the highest ever accuracy result recorded since its introduction in 2014.
- This is a **3.9% improvement** from the 2021–22 result of **93% accuracy**. This shows these measures are having a strong early impact.

## Early Childhood and Youth 2023–24 Supplementary Budget Estimates

### SB23-000319 - Child Safety

- The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a comprehensive national regulatory system to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of all children attending an approved ECEC service. The NQF is designed to support ECEC services in meeting their obligations to provide a child safe environment and minimise the risk of harm and hazard to children.
- There are numerous child protection safeguards nationally and within jurisdictions. These include the requirements for working with children checks, reportable conduct schemes, child protection training, teacher registration processes, mandatory reporting and report risks and serious incidents to regulatory authorities.
- All ECEC providers are required to have a range of critical safety measures in place, including that children are adequately supervised at all times.

#### **Review of Child Safety under the NQF**

- The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has been commissioned to undertake a Review of the child safety provisions under the NQF and related systems.
- The Terms of Reference for this Review are available from the ACECQA website.
- The Review is taking into account findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Safe and Supported – The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* and supporting action plans.
- ACECQA is consulting with the Australian Federal Police, the National Office for Child Safety, the Department of Social Services and all state and territory regulatory authorities. Input from these agencies will inform findings and recommendations for improvement in the operation and administration of the NQF and identify gaps and opportunities for greater alignment across the Government.
- A final report from the Review will be considered by all Education Ministers by the end of 2023.
- The Review complements ongoing collaboration between governments and respective agencies on specific operations and incidents, including Operation Tenterfield.
- The Commonwealth Government will host a Ministerial Forum on Child Safety on 24 November 2023, inviting all states and territory governments.

### SB23-000321 - Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce, Pay and Conditions

- The ECEC sector faces challenges in attracting and retaining the qualified workforce that it requires.
- The demand for ECEC has been steadily increasing in recent years, with approximately **1,412,320 children** in care across the country. This demand is placing additional pressure on the ECEC workforce, with over **7,700 ECEC job vacancies** reported in August 2023.
- In March 2022, the National Skills Commission (now Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)) projected the ECEC workforce would grow by **21,800** between November 2021 and November 2026, based on forecasts from 2020–21 MYEFO.

| Period               | Size of ECEC Workforce |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>August 2023</b>   | 233,200                |
| <b>May 2023</b>      | 230,200                |
| <b>February 2023</b> | 227,300                |
| <b>November 2022</b> | 224,400                |
| <b>August 2022</b>   | 221,600                |
| <b>May 2022</b>      | 219,000                |
| <b>February 2022</b> | 216,600                |
| <b>November 2021</b> | 214,400                |

## Early Childhood and Youth 2023–24 Supplementary Budget Estimates

### **Supported Bargaining**

- The *Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act 2022* includes measures to provide greater access to bargaining for better pay and conditions in lower-paid sectors through the supported bargaining stream which commenced on **6 June 2023**.
- On **6 June 2023**, the first supported bargaining application was made to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) by the United Workers Union, the Australian Education Union, and the Independent Education Union of Australia (together the unions), with the consent of **64 Long Day Care (LDC) employers**. The application represents around **540** of approximately **14,000 services** operating in the sector, with approximately **14,000 workers** out of a total workforce of around **233,200** (as at August 2023).
- Hearings were conducted on **16 and 17 August 2023**, and the FWC authorised the supported bargaining application on **27 September 2023**, agreeing that all employers and employees named on the application may begin bargaining together.

### **Government Initiatives**

- To attract and retain a quality workforce, the Government is:
  - delivering **180,000 Fee Free TAFE places** through the 12-month Skills Agreement, in partnership with states and territories
  - providing **20,000** (1,469 for Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs)) **university places** to provide more opportunities for under-represented groups to enter higher education across 2023 and 2024
  - supporting talented students to enter the teaching profession with **5,000 bursaries**
  - reducing Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts for teachers in the very remote areas program (Very Remote Teachers Initiative), where teachers, including ECTs, who have completed 4 years working in very remote Australia may apply to receive a cut to HELP debts.
- The Government has set the permanent migration program for 2023–24 to **190,000**, to help ease critical workforce shortages where the skilling of Australians cannot yet keep pace with industry demand.
- In the 2023–24 Budget, the Government announced **\$72.4 million** (from 2023–24 to 2026–27) for 3 grants programs measures to greater support the skills and training of the ECEC workforce: the professional development subsidy; the paid practicum subsidy; and the practicum exchange program.
- The Government is also working in partnership with stakeholders to implement the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy (the Strategy) to support recruitment and retention of the ECEC workforce.

### **SB23-000320 - Youth**

- In the 2022–23 Budget, the Australian Government committed **\$10.5 million** over 4 years to establish a new Youth Engagement Model (the model) to formally engage young people in policy and program design.  
This funding includes:
  - **\$7.0 million** to establish an Office for Youth which includes a Youth Steering Committee, an Australian Government Interdepartmental Committee on Youth, and an Australian Government Intergovernmental Coordination Committee on Youth.
  - **\$0.5 million** for the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy to be delivered in the first half of 2024.
  - **\$1.5 million** for the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) to support its critical role in youth advocacy, engagement, and research.
  - **\$1.5 million** for 5 youth advisory groups to work directly with Australian Government agencies on policy and program development.

## Early Childhood and Youth 2023–24 Supplementary Budget Estimates

### ***Youth Consultations and Issues of Importance Raised by Young People***

- The Office for Youth (OfY) is developing a youth engagement strategy to improve how government works with young people and to ensure that young people from all backgrounds can be engaged on government decisions that shape their lives. The OfY is working with young people and the sector to inform the strategy by conducting a survey, accepting responses to a discussion paper and facilitating the National Youth Consultations.

### ***Key Youth Statistics***

- Australia has over **3.9 million** young people aged 12–24, representing **15.7%** of the population.
- While general unemployment in August is at **3.7%** (seasonally adjusted), youth (15–24 years) unemployment increased to **8.2%** (seasonally adjusted).
- Youth (15–24 years) underemployment is at **14.6%** in August 2023 (seasonally adjusted).
- There are **331,048 young people** that identify as having a mental health condition. This represents **10.9%** of the youth population (15–24 years).

**Issue:** Child Care Access and Regional Access  
**Contact:** Kylie Crane  
 Ph: [s 22](#)  
 Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood and Youth Group

### Key Points

- The Australian Government delivers a range of supports to help families access the early childhood education and care (ECEC) services they need.
- The primary way the Government supports families is by reducing the cost of ECEC through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) which targets support to families who need it most.
- The Government is aware of the additional difficulty often faced by families living in regional and remote areas when looking for suitable ECEC services.
- The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) supports around 900 services to reduce barriers to access, particularly for children and families in rural and remote communities experiencing disadvantage, First Nations communities, and where services are in limited supply.
- The CCCF will deliver approximately \$597.5 million over 4 years (2023–24 to 2026–27), with approximately 69%<sup>1</sup> of allocated funding over 2 years (2023–24 to 2024–25) supporting services in regional and remote locations.<sup>2</sup>
- On 24 October 2023, the Government announced the outcomes of the most recent competitive grant opportunity under the CCCF, to establish new services in areas of limited supply.
- From a total of 150 applications received, funding of \$16 million is being provided to fund 47 new services, across 38 communities in priority regional and remote parts of the country.
- Successful providers are being funded to establish 13 new Centre Based Day Care services and 34 Family Day Care locations.
- On 4 April 2023, the Government announced the first 4 new CCCF Restricted Expansion grants to First Nations led organisations.
  - The \$29.9 million allocated to this Closing the Gap measure over 4 years from 2021–22 supports organisations to establish new services in remote and very remote areas where there is little or no ECEC service available.

<sup>1</sup> **Note:** 69% has been calculated based on known system commitments in 2023-24 and 2024-25, including Connected Beginnings. This is not 69% of the total appropriation/budget, as this includes other components that cannot be seen in the grant management system (which shows locations of services).

<sup>2</sup> **Note:** a figure of \$575.1 million was included in the Regional Ministerial Budget Statement. This reflected the 4-year figure from 2022–23 to 2025–26.



- Since 10 July 2023, families can access a base level of 36 subsidised hours of child care per fortnight for First Nations children, regardless of their family's activity. This will benefit up to 6,600 First Nations families and encourage new engagement in ECEC.
- The Government also recognises the ongoing pressures on the ECEC workforce, which impact the availability of services.
- We remain committed to working across government, with our state and territory colleagues, and with the sector, to address workforce challenges.

### ***Changes to the Child Care Subsidy***

- The Government has lifted the maximum CCS percentage to 90% for families earning under \$80,000 and has increased subsidy rates for families earning less than \$530,000.
- The changes will benefit around 1.26 million families.
  - For the average family on about \$120,000 with a child in care 3 days a week, the changes will cut costs by about \$1,700 a year.
- The CCS changes begun being paid to families from the first CCS fortnight of the 2023–24 year, which commenced on 10 July 2023.

### ***Productivity Commission Inquiry***

- The Government has tasked the Productivity Commission (PC) with undertaking a comprehensive inquiry into Australia's ECEC system.
- The PC will make recommendations to support affordable, accessible, equitable and high-quality ECEC that reduces barriers to workforce participation and supports children's learning and development.
- Among other things, the PC has been asked to consider the impact on access to quality ECEC, including by remoteness and whether different settings are required based on the location of services or family circumstances.
- The PC will release a draft report in November 2023 and provide a final report to the Government by 30 June 2024.

### ***Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Inquiry***

- The Government has commissioned the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to conduct an inquiry into child care services.
- The ACCC is examining the costs and prices of child care services, and how these impact providers.



- The ACCC's first interim report was released on 5 July 2023, and the second interim report was released on 1 October 2023. A final report is due to be provided to the Treasurer by 31 December 2023.
- The key findings from the first interim report were that child care fees are rising faster than inflation, that disadvantaged households spend a greater share of income on child care, and affordability influences use of child care services but location and quality influence choice.
- The key findings from the second interim report are costs to supply Centre-Based Day Care and Outside School Hours Care are increasing, workforce shortages impact the supply and cost of childcare, market dynamics encourage supply in more advantaged areas and major cities and existing price regulation mechanisms have limited effect in placing downward pressure on prices.
- In particular, the second interim report found that the market is not delivering accessible and affordable child care for all children and families in Australia. The ACCC also found:
  - Remote communities and locations with a higher proportion of low income households have fewer child care services.
  - Staffing shortages and associated high labour costs are having a significant impact on the supply of child care services, particularly in regional and remote areas.
  - Costs to supply child care are significantly higher in the most remote parts of Australia.
- Further information on key programs and key initiatives is referenced in [Attachment A](#).

## Media

- ***Families report lengthy waitlists and increasing fees in preliminary survey results, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 29 May 2023***  
The media release reported on the results of the 'Parents and guardians survey' conducted by the ACCC which found that parents were delaying returning to work or study due to a lack of child care and expensive fees.
- ***Childcare woes hit return to office, Courier Mail, 29 May 2023***  
The article provided an overview the results of the 'Parents and guardians survey' conducted by the ACCC, reporting that Queensland parents were experiencing delays in returning to work due to a lack of child care and expensive fees.

- ***Childcare waiting lists make job search a struggle, The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 May 2023***

The article reported on the difficulty of returning to work or changing jobs while trying to find child care, making reference to the results of the ACCC 'Parents and guardians survey'.

- ***Long childcare waiting lists keeping parents out of the workforce, ABC, 29 May 2023***

The broadcast reported on the results of the ACCC 'Parents and guardians survey'.

#### Other documentation

- [Attachment A](#) – Key Programs and Initiatives

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Date Last Cleared | 25 October 2023 |
|-------------------|-----------------|

#### BACKGROUND

##### ***'Deserts and Oases: How accessible is child care?'***

- The Mitchell Institute's 'Deserts and Oases' report found that around 9 million Australians (35.2% of the total population) live in 'childcare deserts'.
  - The report defines a 'child care desert' as a populated area where there are less than 0.333 child care places per child, or more than 3 children per one child care place.
  - The report found that 568,700 children aged 0 to 4 years, or 36.5% of children in this age group, live in neighbourhoods which they classified as 'child care deserts'.
- The report presents an incomplete picture of child care in Australia due to flaws in the datasets and methodology used.
- The Director of the Mitchell Institute has publicly acknowledged that there are limitations with the approach taken in the report.

## Attachment A – Key Programs and Initiatives

### ***StartingBlocks Website***

- Families can access the information they need to make choices about their children's needs through the Starting Blocks website, which is hosted by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).
- StartingBlocks allows families to search for information on services in their area, including fees, vacancies and quality ratings.
- ACECQA also collects information about ECEC vacancies for publication on Starting Blocks, so families are able to locate available care options which are accessible to them.
  - The search engine allows families to find services with vacancies up to 50 km radius of the selected suburb. Vacancy information includes age ranges and available days. The search can be narrowed to include service type and quality rating.
  - Vacancy data is provided to ACECQA through daily data files from Services Australia, with the Starting Blocks website updated 5 times a week (Sunday to Thursday).
- Waitlists are kept by individual services. Waitlists are unreliable data sources because parents can choose to be on more than one waiting list at once. As such, waiting lists are not shown on Starting Blocks.
- The Starting Blocks Child Care Subsidy Calculator allows families to calculate their current CCS rates and fees and has been updated to provide families with an estimate of the CCS rates from 10 July 2023.
- Further enhancements to the Starting Blocks website are underway, to enable families to see average year-on-year fee increases, as well as revenue and profit information for large providers.
  - This is a big step in the Government's commitment to improving transparency in the ECEC sector.

### ***Regional and Remote Access***

- Approximately 25 per cent (3,661) of approved ECEC services (not including In Home Care) are located outside major cities.
- In the June quarter 2023, there were around 306,990 children using services in regional and remote areas, representing approximately 22 per cent of all children attending ECEC services.

- The Australian Government and state and territory governments have a shared responsibility for supporting access to ECEC in regional and remote Australia. These roles are distinct but complementary.
- States and territory governments have their own funding programs and initiatives to support access to ECEC and are responsible for regulating and approving ECEC services under the National Quality Framework. Local governments also plan, fund and deliver ECEC.
- In addition to funding, the Australian Government and state and territory governments work collaboratively to develop strategies and initiatives to increase access to ECEC in regional areas.
  - The national ECEC Vision and the National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy are examples of this collaboration.
- The ECEC sector faces challenges in attracting and retaining the qualified workforce that it requires.
  - Workforce shortages are more acute outside of metro areas.
  - The incidence of services in outer regional areas of Australia holding a temporary waiver for one or more of the staffing requirements under the National Quality Framework are 4.5 per cent higher than services within major cities.
  - The National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy is an important Government initiative designed to support the recruitment and retention of the ECEC workforce.

### ***Community Child Care Fund (CCCF)***

- To further support access to ECEC in regions where providers are reluctant to enter, such as regional and remote markets, the Government provides funding through the CCCF program.
- The CCCF provides support to approved ECEC services through:
  - Community Child Care Fund Competitive grants
  - Community Child Care Fund Restricted grants
  - Community Child Care Fund Special Circumstances grants
  - The Connected Beginnings Program.
- In August 2021, the Government announced an additional \$29.9 million over 4 years to establish new CCCF Restricted services, in mainly remote locations. The funding is part of the Government’s commitment to achieving Closing the Gap targets.

***Inclusion Support Program (ISP)***

- Funding of around \$133 million a year from the ISP supports around 23,000 children located across Australia, including in many regional, rural and remote areas.
- Services receive support to address barriers to inclusion, to give the most vulnerable children a strong start.
- For the 2022–23 financial year the program funding was \$174 million. This is a result of a one-off funding increase due to increased demand and post COVID-19 impacts.

***In Home Care (IHC)***

- IHC is an alternative for families unable to access other service types, especially in regional or remote areas. Families using IHC often work non-standard or variable hours, are geographically isolated, or have challenging or complex needs.
- In recognition that IHC educators working in remote and very remote areas may experience difficulties meeting qualification requirements, transitional provisions are in place until 31 December 2023.
  - These arrangements allow educators to meet requirements if they have access to and utilise the expertise of an educator with required qualifications for 20 per cent of the time care is provided to a family, including through remote communication means.

***Barriers for Priority Cohorts***

- Research and consultations suggest that many First Nations children can face barriers to accessing quality ECEC. This includes barriers associated with a lack of culturally safe environments, affordability, and living in regional or remote locations, including a lack of service infrastructure and workforce shortages.
- A number of mainstream and targeted measures help to address barriers. Connected Beginnings draws upon the strength and knowledge of First Nations' communities to increase children and families' engagement with health and ECEC.
- First Nations children can also now access a minimum of 36 hours of care regardless of their parents' activity levels.

***Connected Beginnings***

- Connected Beginnings works closely with First Nations communities to identify early childhood priorities for change, and to lift participation

in quality and culturally appropriate ECEC services and programs to improve school readiness and developmental outcomes for children.

- The program currently funds projects in 40 communities across Australia including metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote locations, and is expanding to 50 sites by 2024–25.
- The program supports around 16,500 First Nations children aged 0 to 5. Once expanded, around 20 per cent of First Nations children will be living in a community with Connected Beginnings.

### ***Market Strategy and Market Monitoring Framework***

- The department has finalised an ECEC Market Strategy to better support the Government's role in ECEC markets and strengthen the department's understanding of effective market stewardship.
- The department has also developed a Market Monitoring Framework which complements the Strategy by providing greater visibility of key ECEC market indicators.
- Publication of the Strategy or Framework is a decision for Government. See [SB23-000378](#) for further information.

**Issue:** Child Care Affordability  
**Contact:** Kylie Crane  
 Ph: s 22  
 Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood and Youth

### Key Points

- The total estimated expenditure on Child Care Subsidy (CCS) (including Additional Child Care Subsidy) for the June quarter 2023 was **\$2.90 billion**.
- **\$12.7 billion** is expected to be spent on CCS in the 2023–24 financial year (as at May 2023–24 Budget).

### Fees and Out-of-Pocket Costs

- CCS is designed to target support for families who need it most.
  - June quarter 2023 data shows around 84.2% of families using approved child care were entitled to a CCS rate of between 50 and 85% (family incomes from \$0 to \$256,756).
  - This compares to 87.7% in the June quarter 2022 (decrease of 3.4 percentage points).
  - It is estimated that in 2023–24 approximately 94% of families using CCS approved care will have a CCS rate of 50% or more.
  - In the June quarter 2023 there were 804,090 children in Centre Based Day Care (CBDC).
  - For 192,480 (23.9%) children, parents' out-of-pocket costs were less than \$2 an hour per child.
  - For 498,160 (62.0%) children, parents' out-of-pocket costs were less than \$5 an hour per child.
- The average out-of-pocket child care cost for Australian families using approved care in June quarter 2023 was \$4.22 for all care types (excluding In Home Care).
  - The average out-of-pocket cost of CBDC was \$4.36 per hour.
  - For Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), average out of pockets were \$3.65 per hour.
- The child care CPI **decreased by 13.2%** in the September quarter 2023 following the changes to CCS. Over the year to September quarter 2023, child care CPI **decreased by 6.1%**.
  - The 13.2% increase in affordability is larger than the 11.8% increase that was observed in the September quarter 2018 with the introduction of the CCS.
  - The all groups CPI which increased by 1.2% in the September quarter 2023 and 5.4% over the year to the September quarter 2023.



- Child care CPI is based on out-of-pocket costs of child care borne by households. A reduction in the child care CPI indicates that out of pockets costs have been reduced.
- During the June quarter 2023, the average charged hours per child per week in CBDC was 32.9. This is 2.9% higher than the 32.0 hours in June quarter 2022.
- In the June quarter 2023, the **average hourly child care fee per child, for all service types** (excluding In Home Care) was **\$11.55** – an annual increase of 6.2% and an increase since March quarter 2023 of 0.9%. The 10-year average fee growth is **4.9%** per annum.
  - The **average hourly fee in CBDC** was **\$12.10** in June quarter 2023 – an annual increase of 6.4% and a quarterly increase of 0.6%. The 10-year average fee growth for CBDC is **5.2%** per annum.
  - The **average hourly fee in OSHC** was **\$8.45** in June quarter 2023—an annual increase of 5.3% and a quarterly increase of 2.2%.

**Table 1 – Average Hourly Fees – Centre Based Day Care**

| State / Territory | Dec qtr 2022 | Mar qtr 2023 | Jun qtr 2023 |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| NSW               | \$11.95      | \$12.25      | \$12.30      |
| Vic.              | \$12.05      | \$12.20      | \$12.30      |
| Qld               | \$11.20      | \$11.45      | \$11.50      |
| SA                | \$11.55      | \$11.75      | \$11.80      |
| WA                | \$12.05      | \$12.20      | \$12.30      |
| Tas.              | \$10.70      | \$10.85      | \$10.95      |
| NT                | \$10.75      | \$10.95      | \$11.00      |
| ACT               | \$13.10      | \$13.40      | \$13.50      |
| Australia         | \$11.80      | \$12.00      | \$12.10      |

Source: Department of Education administrative data

- The hourly rate caps are indexed in July each year by the annual change in the CPI from the most recent December quarter. The CPI in the December quarter 2022 was 7.8%, leading to the CBDC cap increasing by \$0.99 (see Table 2).

**Table 2 – Hourly rate caps over time**

| Service Type     |                           | CCS Year             |                      |                      |
|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                  |                           | 2021-22 <sup>1</sup> | 2022-23 <sup>2</sup> | 2023-24 <sup>3</sup> |
| Hourly Rate Caps | Centre Based Day Care     | \$12.31              | \$12.74              | \$13.73              |
|                  | Family Day Care           | \$11.40              | \$11.80              | \$12.72              |
|                  | Outside School Hours Care | \$10.77              | \$11.15              | \$12.02              |
|                  | In Home Care              | \$33.47              | \$34.64              | \$37.34              |

<sup>1</sup> Hourly fee caps for CCS year 2021-22 applied from 12 July 2021 until 10 July 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Hourly fee caps for CCS year 2022-23 will apply from 11 July 2022 until 9 July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Hourly fee caps for CCS year 2023-24 will apply from 10 July 2023 until 8 July 2024.

Source: Department of Education administrative data

- During the June quarter 2023, 71.8% of CBDC services, and 83.9% of OSHC services, were charging at or below the hourly rate cap. This compares with:
  - 78.6% for CBDC in June quarter 2022 (decrease of 6.8 percentage points)
  - 83.9% for OSHC in June quarter 2022 (no change in percentage points).
- Fee setting practices are commercial decisions for child care providers. Family Assistance Law does not permit regulation of fees, however, there are other policy levers available to Government to put downward pressure on fees, such as CCS hourly rate caps which encourage transparency and consumer choice.
- The Government is implementing several measures to increase transparency in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector and the amount of information available to families.
  - From 1 July 2023, all large child care providers (operating 25+ services) will be required to report financial information to the department. Information reported about revenue, profit and rental costs will be published online on [www.startingblocks.gov.au](http://www.startingblocks.gov.au) (Starting Blocks) from late 2023 onwards.
  - The department is working with the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority to make enhancements to Starting Blocks, enabling families to see how fees charged by services have changed over time.

**Changes to the Child Care Subsidy**

- The Government delivers a range of supports for families to help them access the ECEC services they need.
- The primary support provided is through the CCS which helps families with the cost of ECEC.

- As part of the October 2022–23 Budget, the Government invested \$4.6 billion to increase CCS rates for families earning less than \$530,000 – reducing out-of-pocket fees for around 96% of Australian families – over 1.2 million families.

### **Role of the ACCC Inquiry**

- The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is investigating the drivers of ECEC costs and the impact of these costs on child care provider viability, quality and profits.
- The ACCC released its first ECEC price inquiry interim report on 5 July 2023. The ACCC found that, after subsidies, out-of-pocket expenses increased 7% for households using CBDC services during the past 4 years, by 12% for households using OSHC and 15.8% for households using FDC.
- The ACCC released its second interim report on 1 October 2023, identifying 7 draft recommendations and 18 draft findings.
  - The ACCC found that families with lower activity test entitlements face affordability challenges, as they use a greater share of unsubsidised hours, leading to higher out-of-pocket costs.
  - The ACCC also found child care in Australia is less affordable than most other OECD countries, despite the Government contribution to child care fees being significantly higher than the OECD average.
- The report makes draft recommendations to regulatory arrangements and to the broader ECEC system, to help keep fees in check and out-of-pocket costs down for families.
  - This includes a draft recommendation for stronger price monitoring by Government, supported by a credible threat of intervention, to place downward pressure on fees.
- The ACCC's inquiry will monitor the impact of the CCS increases in July 2023 on out-of-pocket fees. This analysis will be included in the ACCC's final report, which will be delivered to Government by 31 December 2023.
- The ACCC's recommendations and findings will be considered in the context of the Productivity Commission's (PC) comprehensive inquiry into Australia's ECEC system.
- In making recommendations, the PC has been asked to consider options that improve or support affordability of quality ECEC services that meet the needs of families and children.

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**Media**

- NIL

|                          |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Date Last Cleared</b> | 25 October 2023 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|

**Issue:** Child Care System Integrity  
**PBS Pg No.** 22  
**MYEFO Pg No** N/A  
**Contact:** Kylie Crane  
 Ph: s 22  
 Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood and Youth

**Total costs and savings – October 2022 and May 2023 Integrity Measures (combined)**

| Financial year            | 2022–23 | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | Total 5 years (2022–23 to 2026–27) |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------------------|
| Total Costs (\$million)   | 5.01    | 21.80   | 19.27   | 18.50   | 16.90   | 81.47                              |
| Total Savings (\$million) | 39.29   | 94.80   | 102.41  | 105.90  | 105.90  | 448.30                             |
| Net Savings (\$million)   | 34.28   | 73.00   | 83.14   | 87.40   | 89.01   | 366.83                             |

**Key Points**

**Child Care Subsidy Payment Integrity Budget Measures**

- Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payment integrity measures were announced in the October 2022–23 Budget and the 2023–24 Budget to safeguard the CCS program from fraud and non-compliance.
- Combined, these measures will deliver net savings of \$366.8 million over 5 years from 2022–23 after accounting for costs of \$81.5 million.
- The integrity measures included funding to:
  - bolster compliance activities
  - fraud investigations and prosecutions
  - introduce gap fee fees to be paid via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)
  - explore a digital attendance validation solution
  - support sector-led capacity building
  - enhance supporting IT systems
  - develop a learning management system for providers and workers.
- As a centrepiece of the integrity measures, the requirement for gap fees to be paid via EFT came into effect on 1 July 2023, after widespread consultation with the sector.
  - The audit program associated with the new EFT requirement has begun.

- The audit process will check that providers have collected gap fees appropriately, a key safeguard to prevent fraud against the program. Audits also have a strong deterrence effect against fraud.

### ***Improvement in CCS Payment Accuracy***

- The department's key performance metric for payment integrity is payment accuracy. Portfolio Budget Statement sets a target of 90 per cent or higher proportion of accurate CCS payments to all services.
  - Payment accuracy for 2022–23 was 96.9 per cent [page 15, 2022–23 Annual Report]—the highest ever accuracy result recorded since its introduction in 2014.
  - It is a 3.9 per cent improvement from the 2021–22 result of 93 per cent accuracy.
  - This shows these measures are having a strong early impact. Further detail on progress is at [Attachment A](#).

### ***Operation Velo***

- Operation Velo received significant media attention in August 2023. This fraud investigation was led by the department in collaboration with the Western Australian Department of Communities, Education and Care Regulatory Unit, and with assistance from Australian Federal Police (AFP).
  - The AFP restrained a property in Western Australia (WA) and more than \$4 million (\$5 million in total assets) from bank accounts following investigations made under Operation Velo.
  - As the investigation is ongoing, the department is unable to comment further.

### **Media**

- ***AFP restrains \$5 million in assets, including WA home, AFP Media Release, 3 August 2023***

The article provided an overview of a recent operation in which the AFP have restrained assets in relation to alleged CCS fraud by a family day care provider.

- ***AFP seizes assets linked to family daycare provider suspected of fraud, The West Australian, 3 August 2023***

The article provided an overview of a joint AFP and Department of Education operation in which assets have been seized in relation to alleged CCS fraud.

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**Other documentation**

[Attachment A](#): Progress since October 2022–23 Budget

|                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Date Last Cleared</b> | 21 September 2023 |
|--------------------------|-------------------|



OFFICIAL: Sensitive

SB23-000318 - Attachment A

**Integrity Budget Measures**

- Current integrity measures will deliver at least \$448.3 million savings, with a cost of \$81.5 million from 2022–23 to 2026–27 (five years).
- The department estimates a minimum of five times the return on investment. Already exceeding targets.
  - o October 2022–23 Integrity measure will deliver gross savings of \$283.7 million (cost \$59.3 million).
  - o May 2023–24 Budget Additional Integrity Measures will deliver gross savings of \$164.6million (cost \$22.2 million).

**Continued Strong Early Progress**

- In 2022–23, there has been a 3.9 per cent improvement in payment accuracy compared to the previous year.
- This equates to **savings of \$436 million** in 2022–23 compared to the previous year.<sup>1</sup>
- This is the highest ever payment accuracy result achieved.
- This major result shows integrity measures, particularly fraud and compliance activities, are having a strong impact.

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Measure savings target for 2022–23 | Actual savings just from fraud and compliance activities alone |
| <b>\$39.29 million</b>             | <b>\$78.5 million</b>  |

- Other successes since the October 2022–23 Budget include:
  - o **New Learning and Management System (LMS)** eLearning pilot courses received an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 stars from a sector user reference group of 386 members.
  - o The **requirement for electronic payment of CCS gap fees** has had a deterrence effect – resulting in a trend of family day care (FDC) providers, instead of educators, collecting gap fees.
  - o This ensures providers have adequate oversight of their service and reduces the risk of fraud and non-compliance.
  - o In addition, providers of new FDC services will now have an Ongoing Condition of Approval requiring electronic payments of gap fees to be made centrally.

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<sup>1</sup> Payment inaccuracy occurs when there is no legal entitlement to CCS. Increased CCS payment accuracy may not directly result in reduced CCS outlays as a non-compliant CCS claim can change to a compliant CCS claim when compliance occurs – example gap fees are enforced.

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

**Issue:** Child Safety  
**Contact:** Kylie Crane  
Ph: s 22  
Deputy Secretary  
Early Childhood and Youth

### Key Points

- All Australian governments take the safety, health and wellbeing of every child very seriously, and are committed to ensuring that all providers of early childhood education and care (ECEC) embed a child safe culture.
- Governments do this through the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The Government implements these principles through the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework.
- The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a comprehensive national regulatory system to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of all children attending an approved ECEC service.
- The NQF is designed to support ECEC services in meeting their obligations to provide a child safe environment and minimise the risk of harm and hazard to children.
- The NQF includes the *Education and Care Services National Law*, National Regulations, and national quality standards for service policies, programs and practices, including children's health and safety.
- There are numerous child protection safeguards nationally and within jurisdictions. These include the requirements for working with children checks, reportable conduct schemes, child protection training, teacher registration processes, mandatory reporting and report risks and serious incidents to regulatory authorities.
- All ECEC providers are required to have a range of critical safety measures in place, including that children are adequately supervised at all times.
- States and territories are responsible for the delivery of early childhood education in their jurisdictions and establishing regulatory authorities that ensure compliance with the NQF in their respective jurisdictions.
- The NQF is governed jointly, with Education Ministers providing ongoing oversight and ultimate decision-making for the NQF.

### **Review of Child Safety under the NQF**

- The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, and the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, commissioned the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to undertake a Review of the child safety provisions under the NQF and related systems.
  - The Terms of Reference for this Review were formally agreed by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Early Childhood Education on 25 May 2023 and are available from the ACECQA website (see [Attachment A](#)).
- The safety and protection of children attending ECEC services is the highest priority for all governments and is the paramount objective for education and care services approved under the NQF.
- All jurisdictions support this Review which is focusing on identifying systemic safeguards and structures that will better support providers, teachers and educators to protect children, with a focus on reducing harm, including abuse and neglect.
- The Review is taking into account findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*, the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse (2021–2023)*.
- ACECQA is consulting with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the National Office for Child Safety (NOCS), the Department of Social Services and all state and territory regulatory authorities. Input from these agencies will inform findings and recommendations for improvement in the operation and administration of the NQF, and identify gaps and opportunities for greater alignment across the Government.
- A final report from the Review will be considered by all Education Ministers by the end of 2023. Publication is a decision of the Government.
- The importance of child safety and ensuring the NQF remains contemporary is discussed regularly by regulatory authorities and ACECQA and reviewed through regular audits and from data collected.
- A core focus of the 2019 NQF Review was child safety and the majority of changes that have been implemented this year are to continuously improve the ECEC sector. The Child Safety Review builds on this work of the 2019 NQF Review.

- The Review complements ongoing collaboration between Governments and respective agencies on specific operations and incidents, including Operation Tenterfield.
  - Questions on matters related to Operation Tenterfield should be directed to the AFP.
  - Questions related to national policies and strategies to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse, principles for child safe organisations, including the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, should be directed to NOCS.
- The Commonwealth Government will host a Ministerial Forum on Child Safety on 24 November 2023, inviting all states and territory governments.
- The Government recognises that the protection of children is not something it can achieve alone. It is critical that we continue to partner with state and territory governments, all non-government stakeholders, and the broader community to educate, prevent, respond and disrupt those who seek to harm children.

### ***2019 NQF Review – Implementation***

- The work being undertaken by ACECQA will build on the 2019 Review of the NQF which made recommendations in 21 areas to improve children's health, safety and wellbeing, service quality and regulatory burden.
- All Education Ministers have agreed changes legislation, regulations and guidance to implement the recommendations and ensure the NQF remains contemporary and robust.
- Key changes in areas such as transport and sleep requirements were fast-tracked to commence in early 2023 with other regulatory amendments, such as safe sleep requirements, commencing from 1 October 2023.

**Media**

- Recent media on child safety primarily relates to Operation Tenterfield and the 1 August 2023 announcement by AFP of the investigation and arrest of a Gold Coast man in relation child abuse in multiple child care centres spanning 15 years:
  - [Man charged with rape and sexual assaults at childcare centres | Australian Federal Police \(afp.gov.au\)](#)
  - [Operation Tenterfield: Childcare review after allegations of worker abusing 91 young girls across two states \(9news.com.au\)](#)
  - [How Taskforce Argos and the AFP tracked down the Gold Coast man accused of 1,623 child abuse offences - ABC News.](#)
  - [Predator 'kept library of files on his victims' - Minister Clare mentioned](#)
  - [Systemic Failures Imperil our Kids - Minister Clare mentioned.](#)

**Other documentation**

- [Attachment A](#): Child Safety Review – Terms of Reference
- [Attachment B](#): Child protection portfolio responsibilities

|                          |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Date Last Cleared</b> | 17 October 2023 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|

## BACKGROUND

- The department engaged ACECQA to undertake the Review on 10 May 2023. The Terms of Reference for the Review were published on the ACECQA website on 10 July 2023: [www.acecqa.gov.au/media/37201](http://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/37201).
- The 2019 NQF Review had a strong focus on increasing safeguards for children attending approved education and care services with additional requirements based on alignment with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, transporting children, multi-storey buildings regarding emergency evacuation during fire related events, and sleep and rest. These changes were based on evidence about the higher level of risk associated with these activities.
- The timing of the next NQF Review has not been determined. The Early Childhood Policy Group (ECPG) is undertaking targeted reviews rather than large-scale reviews, to enable the 2019 NQF Review changes to be implemented and their impact understood. This Review will complement the work underway through ECPG and is consistent with the NQF's commitment to continuous quality improvement and the protection of children's health, safety and wellbeing.
- The NQF introduced new quality standards in 2012 to improve education and care across the sector, mandating staff qualifications and ratios of staff to children.
- There are currently over 17,300 services regulated under the NQF across Australia which include centre-based day care, family day care, outside school hours care and preschool.
- State and territory regulatory authorities have day-to-day contact with ECEC services for most issues like granting all approvals, assessing and rating services, ensuring compliance with the NQF.
- State-based regulatory authorities work with the ACECQA to promote continuous quality improvement and educate the sector and community about the NQF.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) was established a decade ago to provide a comprehensive national regulatory system to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending approved early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. The NQF is designed to support ECEC services in meeting their obligations to provide a child safe environment to minimise the risk of harm and hazard to children attending ECEC services. These services include long day care, family day care, kindergarten, preschool and outside school hours care.

The safety and protection of children attending services is the highest priority for all governments.

There are numerous child protection safeguards nationally and within jurisdictions, including requirements for Working with Children Checks, Reportable Conduct Schemes, child protection training, teacher registration processes, mandatory reporting and, under the NQF, requirements to report risks and serious incidents to Regulatory Authorities.

Given the critical importance of child safety and the numbers of reported critical incidents, it is timely and imperative that the NQF system remains contemporary and fit for purpose. This Review will take into account and build on the additional safeguards achieved through the 2019 NQF Review. To this end, at the request of the Federal Minister for Education and Minister for Early Childhood Education, the Department of Education has engaged the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to undertake a comprehensive review of the child safety provisions under the NQF and related jurisdictional arrangements.

### Objectives

A review of child safety provisions and arrangements, with a particular focus on reducing harm, including abuse and neglect, in approved ECEC settings to identify:

- existing provisions for child safe environments under the NQF in relation to three key areas including:
  - physical and online environment
  - staffing and supervision
  - child protection requirements
- how these provisions interact with, and are supported by, broader child safety and protection arrangements in each state and territory
- contemporary best practice international standards for child safe environments in ECEC settings
- any gaps within, and opportunities for strengthening, NQF provisions.

### Scope

#### 1. NQF and child protection

A review and analysis of how the NQF operates to ensure a child safe environment including what is covered, potential gaps and the upcoming changes to the NQF involving child protection training and obligations and mapping of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. This will be informed by analysis of National Quality Agenda Information Technology System (NQA ITS) data



regarding prescribed notifications to Regulatory Authorities about:

- serious incidents
- complaints
- circumstances at the service which pose a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children; and
- any incident or allegation that abuse, including physical or sexual, of a child/children has occurred or is occurring while the child/children are being educated and cared for by the service.

The review will consider the effectiveness and adequacy of record-keeping and information sharing arrangements between jurisdictions and within the NQA ITS.

## *2. Interrelated child protection mechanisms*

Analysis of the child protection safeguards nationally and within states and territories including Working with Children Check processes, mandatory reporting and teacher registration processes. The review would identify the intersections with the NQF, areas for improvement and better alignment of these mechanisms. The review will be undertaken with consideration of the National Office for Child Safety's (NOCS) work with the States and Territories to improve national consistency of Working with Children Checks.

## *3. International best-practice*

A literature review and research of international best practice in systems and structures comparative to the NQF and its intersecting child protection regulatory frameworks. This would help inform the recommendations for the final comprehensive report, outlining any potential options and their impacts.

## *4. Targeted Stakeholder Consultation*

As part of the review, ACECQA will conduct targeted consultations with NQF regulatory authorities, governments and relevant statutory bodies. ACECQA will liaise with NOCS and the Department of Social Services (DSS) to consider how the NQF interacts with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030* and *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*.

## *5. Existing or proposed reforms*

ACECQA will examine existing strategies, action plans or system reviews/reforms designed to further support and enhance the safety and wellbeing of children. For example, *Shaping our Future – the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy (2022–2031)* has a number of actions that will provide for more effective assessment, and monitoring, of suitability for people seeking to work with children, such as the development of an educator register.

Recommendations from the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) will be considered, where relevant for example, NQF intersections with Reportable Conduct Schemes established by state and territory governments.

**Deliverable**

A comprehensive report on the effectiveness of the NQF and related national and jurisdictional systems and structures (laws, regulations, standards and practices) to safeguard children's safety while attending an approved ECEC service will be provided to the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee and the Education Ministers Meeting later this year.

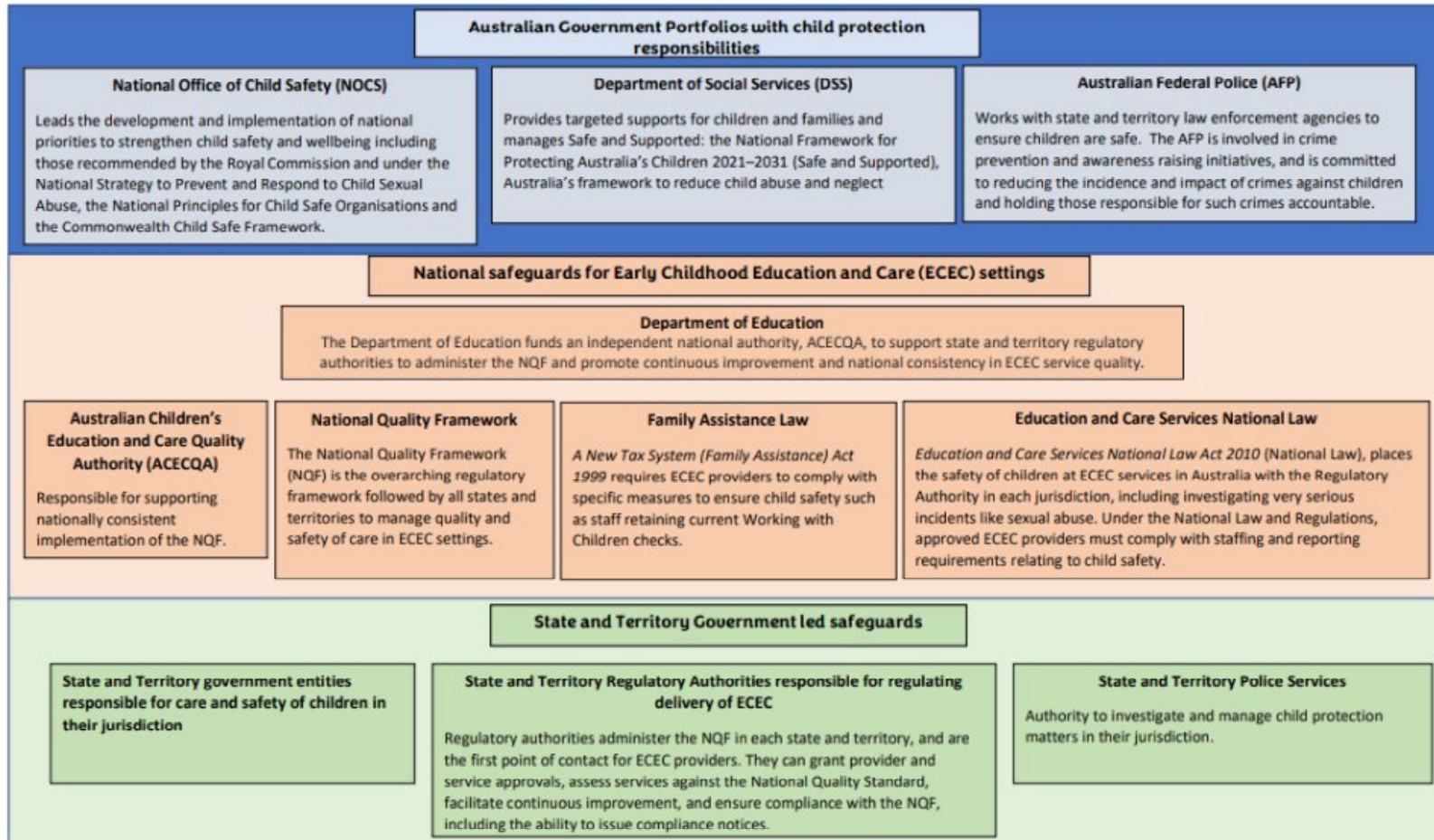
The report will include an analysis of, and comparison with, international best practice systems and structures for the protection of children attending ECEC, and recommendations for improvements and opportunities for improved systems' alignment and/or integration.

**Governance arrangements**

It is proposed to use existing and targeted mechanisms across relevant portfolios and agencies to ensure that this project is both time and cost efficient. The NQF Regulatory Practice Committee, the Early Childhood Policy Group (ECPG), the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) and Education Ministers (EMM) will be briefed as the project progresses. A draft report will be provided by end of October 2023, along with any updated advice, to NOCS and DSS, ECPG, AESOC and EMM, with a final report due by end of 2023.

For Official Use Only

## Attachment B: Child Protection portfolio responsibilities



For Official Use Only

## Further information on key agencies

### National Office for Child Safety

The [National Office for Child Safety](#) (NOCS) leads the development and implementation of national priorities to strengthen child safety and wellbeing including those recommended by the Royal Commission and under the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse*, the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* and the *Commonwealth Child Safe Framework*. NOCS is working with jurisdictions to develop options for national reform to enhance child safety and reduce regulatory barriers around working with children checks. Reform options will be developed as a joint responsibility between all governments.

### Department of Social Services

The Department of Social Services is responsible for contributing to stronger and more resilient children and families by providing targeted supports. They have carriage of Australia's framework for ensuring children and young people grow up in safe and supported homes free from harm and neglect '*Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*'.

### Department of Education

The Department of Education funds an independent national authority, ACECQA, to support state and territory regulatory authorities to administer the NQF and promote continuous improvement and national consistency in ECEC service quality.

### Family Assistance Law

*A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999* requires ECEC providers to comply with specific measures to ensure child safety such as staff retaining current Working with Children checks.

### Education and Care Services National Law

*Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law), places the safety of children at ECEC services in Australia with the Regulatory Authority in each jurisdiction, including investigating very serious incidents like sexual abuse. Under the National Law and Regulations, approved ECEC providers must comply with staffing and reporting requirements relating to child safety including:

- Requirement for each nominated supervisor and person in charge of the service to have completed the child protection training required in their jurisdiction, have the correct working with children checks and teacher registrations in place, as well as having policies and procedures in place to ensure the provision of a child safe environment.
- requirement for providers to notify the relevant Regulatory Authority of any circumstances which pose a risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of children. This includes incidents or allegations of physical or sexual abuse of a child while a child is in care.

### National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) is the overarching regulatory framework followed by all states and territories to manage quality and safety of care in ECEC settings. The NQF includes a range of child protection safeguards including requiring all ECEC services comply with relevant child protection legislation in their jurisdictions.

### Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has developed a register of prohibited persons and suspended educators that ECEC services review prior to hiring staff.

### State and Territory Governments

Legal responsibilities of each state and territory government for child protection and law enforcement. The Australian Federal Police works in partnership with state and territory police authorities to manage child protection matters.

**Issue:** Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce, Pay and Conditions  
**Contact:** Kylie Crane  
 Ph: s 22  
 Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood and Youth Group

### Key Points

- There are long-term and persistent challenges for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce which impact the availability of services.
- The demand for ECEC has been steadily increasing in recent years, with approximately 1,412,320 children in care across the country<sup>1</sup>.
- This demand is placing additional pressure on the ECEC workforce, with over 7,700 ECEC job vacancies reported in August 2023.
- In March 2022, the National Skills Commission (now Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)) projected the ECEC workforce would grow by 21,800 between November 2021 and November 2026, based on forecasts from 2020–21 MYEFO.
  - In November 2021, at the start of the projected growth period, there were 214,400 educators, early childhood teachers (ECTs) or centre managers employed in the workforce.
  - In August 2023, there were 233,200 educators, ECTs or centre managers employed in the workforce, which is an increase of 1.30 per cent from 230,200 in May 2023 (see below table).<sup>2</sup>

| Period        | Size of ECEC Workforce |
|---------------|------------------------|
| August 2023   | 233,200                |
| May 2023      | 230,200                |
| February 2023 | 227,300                |
| November 2022 | 224,400                |
| August 2022   | 221,600                |
| May 2022      | 219,000                |
| February 2022 | 216,600                |
| November 2021 | 214,400                |

### Improving Pay and Conditions

- The Fair Work Commission (FWC) is the independent workplace relations tribunal responsible for setting minimum wages and employment conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education administrative data, June Quarter 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia seasonally adjusted ABS Labour Force Survey, Quarterly (May 2023)

- The Australian Government is committed to reducing the gender pay gap across a number of industries, including the ECEC sector where over 92 per cent of the workforce are women.<sup>3</sup>
- The *Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act 2022* delivers on the Government's commitment to deliver fairer workplace relations by providing job security, gender equity and sustainable wage growth.
- The reforms introduced through this legislation put gender equality at the heart of the workplace relations system and ensure the FWC considers whether gender-based assumptions have resulted in historical undervaluation of work when deciding pay equity cases.

### **Supported Bargaining**

- The *Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act 2022* includes measures to provide greater access to bargaining for better pay and conditions in lower-paid sectors through the supported bargaining stream which commenced on 6 June 2023.
- The ECEC sector is one of the key sectors which the reforms are intended to support. The Government welcomes the ECEC supported bargaining application which is currently being considered for authorisation by the FWC.
- On 6 June 2023, the first supported bargaining application was made to the FWC by the United Workers Union, the Australian Education Union, and the Independent Education Union of Australia (together the unions), with the consent of 64 Long Day Care (LDC) employers. The application represents around 540 of approximately 14,000 services operating in the sector, with approximately 14,000 workers out of a total workforce of around 233,200 (as at August 2023).
- Hearings were conducted on 16 and 17 August 2023, and the FWC authorised the supported bargaining application on 27 September 2023, agreeing that all employers and employees named on the application may begin bargaining together.
- It is expected the Government will be asked to participate in conferences in the near future. The Government will assist the FWC processes as required.

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<sup>3</sup> National ECEC Workforce Census, 2021



## Recent Wage Increases

- Each financial year the FWC reviews and sets minimum wages. Most workers in the ECEC sector are covered by 2 Modern Awards which establish the minimum wages and conditions for:
  - Child educators who are covered by the **Children’s Services Award (2010)**<sup>4</sup>
  - Early Childhood (pre-primary teachers) who are covered by the **Educational Services (Teachers) Award (2020)**<sup>5</sup>.
- The Annual Wage Review for 2022–23 delivered a 5.75 per cent increase to these awards from 1 July 2023.<sup>6</sup> The Government welcomed this decision, covering around 62 per cent of the ECEC workforce.
- Additionally, on 1 January 2022, the FWC increased wages under a new classification structure in the Teachers Award, by between 3 and 13 per cent depending on classification level and work setting of the early childhood teacher.

## Government Initiatives

- To attract and retain a quality workforce, the Government is:
  - Delivering 180,000 Fee Free TAFE places through the 12-month Skills Agreement, in partnership with states and territories (it is estimated as many as 16,400 places will be taken up by students in Early Childhood and Education courses this year, with data reported by states and territories indicating almost 12,000 enrolments in Early Childhood and Education courses supported by Fee Free TAFE in 2023 between January and June 2023).
  - Providing 20,000 (1,469 for ECTs) university places to provide more opportunities for under-represented groups to enter higher education across 2023 and 2024.
  - Supporting talented students to enter the teaching profession with 5,000 bursaries.
  - Reducing Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts for teachers in the very remote areas program (Very Remote Teachers Initiative), where teachers, including ECTs, who have completed 4 years working in very remote Australia may apply to receive a cut to HELP debts. The average debt reduction will be around \$35,000 per teacher and the initiative is expected to support 2,000 teachers in 2023.

<sup>4</sup> (<https://services.fairwork.gov.au/download/payguides.html?file=childrens-services-award-ma000120-pay-guide.docx>)

<sup>5</sup> (<https://awardviewer.fwo.gov.au/award/show/MA000077>)

<sup>6</sup> FWC Annual Wage Review 2022-23.



- The Government has set the permanent migration program for 2023–24 to 190,000, to help ease critical workforce shortages where the skilling of Australians cannot yet keep pace with industry demand.
- In the 2023–24 Budget, the Government announced \$72.4 million (from 2023–24 to 2026–27) for 3 grants programs measures to greater support the skills and training of the ECEC workforce: the professional development subsidy; the paid practicum subsidy; and the practicum exchange program.
  - The professional development and paid practicum subsidies commenced on 3 July 2023.
  - As of 30 September 2023, there has been a total of 15,298 professional development and paid practicum subsidies paid at a cost of \$9.81 million. In 2023–24, these initiatives prioritise support for First Nations educators, and educators in regional and remote areas.
  - The practicum exchange will commence in early 2024.
- The Government is also working in partnership with stakeholders to implement the National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy (the Strategy) to support recruitment and retention of the ECEC workforce.
  - On 31 August 2022, National Cabinet agreed to a priority focus on issues relating to workforce shortages, including accelerating key actions under the Strategy.
  - A summary of complementary initiatives released with the Strategy identifies over 70 recent workforce commitments and initiatives from all Australian governments and the sector.
- On 20 July 2023, the Australian Education and Care Quality Authority published an online reporting dashboard monitoring the implementation of the actions under the Strategy. All 21 actions are on track.

### **Workforce Shortages**

- The ECEC sector faces challenges in attracting and retaining the qualified workforce that it requires.
- JSA has identified early childhood educators as having above-average job mobility which poses retention-related risks across the sector<sup>7</sup>. JSA also listed ECTs (Pre-primary School) in the top 20 jobs in demand nationally for every state and territory.

<sup>7</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, Labour Market Update, February 2023

- The Internet Vacancy Index, a monthly count of online job advertisements compiled by JSA, reports over 7,700 vacancies across the early childhood sector in August 2023—close to double the levels reported in December 2020.
  - This includes 4,679 job advertisements for childhood educators, 2,707 job advertisements for ECTs, and 373 job advertisements for child centre managers.
- In Quarter 2, 2023, around one in 10 services (9.7 per cent) had a staffing waiver, generally for not having access to a qualified ECT<sup>8</sup>.

### **Pipeline of Students**

- As at 31 December 2022, 15,845 trainees were in-training in an apprenticeship pathway to gain an ECEC qualification.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2022, there were approximately 35,600 training completions for Certificate III and Diploma courses in early childhood, including:
  - 17,610 Certificate IIIs in Early Childhood and Care
  - 17,995 Diplomas of Early Childhood and Care.
- In 2021, there were 1,992 training completions for Initial Teacher Education courses.
- In 2021, just under 23 per cent of the workforce were undertaking further qualifications in the sector<sup>10</sup>.

### **Employment Projections**

- In March 2022, the National Skills Commission (now JSA) projected the ECEC workforce would grow by 21,800 between November 2021 and November 2026, based on forecasts from 2020–21 MYEFO.
- These projections do not consider recent announcements made on expanding preschool programs in Victoria or New South Wales or expected increases in demand for ECEC as a result of the Government's Cheaper Child Care policy.
- Some sector representatives (e.g. The Parenthood and Goodstart) are reporting the Government's Cheaper Child Care policy will put further strain on the workforce and will require an additional 9,000 educators. This figure is not able to be verified by the department.
- The department is working with JSA to update employment projections in partnership with states and territories.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority National Snapshot Staffing waiver Q2, 2023

<sup>9</sup> NCVER, Australian vocational education and training statistics: apprentices and trainees 2022 Dec Quarter

<sup>10</sup> National Workforce Census (2021)

**Additional Workforce Initiatives**

- The child care discount for early childhood workforce measure, introduced from 24 January 2022, allows child care providers to discount the gap fee their employee pays when the employee’s child is enrolled at a service where they work or that their employer owns.
- The Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System that commenced on 1 July 2022 which provides wage subsidies for employers and incentives for apprentices (trainees) to study priority occupations.
  - From 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022, 3,250 trainees commenced in an ECEC qualification.
  - As at 31 December 2022, 15,845 trainees were in-training in an apprenticeship pathway to gain an ECEC qualification.<sup>11</sup>
- The establishment of JSA on 16 November 2022 will help the Government improve employment opportunities and economic growth, as an independent agency responsible for providing advice to Government to underpin Australia’s response to current, emerging and future labour market and workforce skills and training needs.
  - The JSA 2023–24 annual workplan includes a capacity study for the ECEC workforce, which commenced in August 2023.
- Be You is a mental health and wellbeing program for educators in schools and ECEC sectors. Be You provides teachers and early childhood educators with resources, guidance and advice related to supporting wellbeing of educators and children.
  - The Be You program is funded by the Health portfolio.

**Stakeholder Response**

| Stakeholder                                | Response summary  |
|--|---|
| Women’s Economic Equality Taskforce (WEET) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The WEET wrote to Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Women, on 24 March 2023, providing advice ahead of the May 2023–24 Budget.</li> <li>• One of 6 recommendations involved investing in an interim pay-rise for all early childhood educators, in recognition of the historical undervaluation of their work and the need to retain and attract workers to the sector.</li> </ul>    |
| Employer Organisations                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peak representative bodies and certain large providers are calling on the Government to fund a wage increase for the ECEC sector. This includes Business Council of Australia, Australian Childcare Alliance, Early Learning and Care Council Australia, Early Childhood Australia, Thrive by Five, Early Learning Association Australia, Goodstart Early Learning, and G8 Education.</li> </ul> |

<sup>11</sup> NCVET 2022, Australian vocational education and training statistics: apprentices and trainees 2022 December quarter

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SB23-000321

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many representative bodies have likened the ECEC workforce to the Aged Care workforce, which is receiving a government funded wage increase of 15%, because of their similarities as undervalued and female-dominated professions.</li> <li>• Many representative bodies and large providers have welcomed the Government's workplace relations reforms, including the introduction of the supported bargaining stream, but have expressed the need for a Government funding commitment to ensure wage increase costs don't get passed onto families.</li> <li>• On 6 June 2023, the United Workers Union, the Australian Education Union, and the independent Education Union of Australia (with the support of 64 LDC Employers) submitted a supported bargaining application to the FWC. The application covers approximately 14,000 workers under 64 LDC providers, including G8 Education.</li> </ul> |
| Unions       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The United Workers Union's <i>Big Steps Campaign</i> calls for a new ECEC standard, including the uptake and updating of enterprise agreements to secure a Government funded 25% wage increase to the awards, and improved conditions.</li> </ul>  |
| Opposition   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms Angie Bell MP, Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education, criticised the Government during the Cheaper Child Care legislation passage for a perceived lack of action on ECEC workforce issues.</li> </ul>   |
| Greens       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Greens have expressed that the ECEC sector should be highly valued and paid as professionals.</li> <li>• Senator Mehreen Faruqi expressed a view during the Cheaper Child Care legislation passage that the ECEC workforce must be recognised and valued through improved pay and conditions, and the Government should fund an interim wage supplement.</li> </ul>  |
| Independents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independents, such as Senator David Pocock and Ms Kylea Tink MP, have expressed views that the ECEC workforce must be recognised and valued through improved pay and conditions.</li> </ul>  |

**Media**

- Coverage on ECEC continues to be strong, with a recent focus on quality and safety concerns and the potential connection to workforce issues including staff shortages and retention issues. The United Workers Union has recently called for a 25 per cent wage increase for ECEC educators and teachers in the context of addressing quality and safety issues.

**Attachment**

[Attachment A](#): Detailed workforce data and information on the uptake of skills programs.

|                          |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Date Last Cleared</b> | 17 October 2023 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CHILD CARE WORKFORCE – as at 11 October 2023

**Total Employment**

2017-2023 The figure is based on ABS Labour Force Survey data that is trended by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA).

|      | February | May     | August         | November |
|------|----------|---------|----------------|----------|
| 2023 | 227,300  | 230,200 | <b>233,200</b> |          |
| 2022 | 216,600  | 219,000 | 221,600        | 224,400  |
| 2021 | 209,300  | 210,700 | 212,400        | 214,400  |
| 2020 | 205,800  | 206,400 | 207,100        | 208,100  |
| 2019 | 204,300  | 204,600 | 205,000        | 205,300  |
| 2018 | 202,400  | 203,000 | 203,500        | 203,900  |
| 2017 | 198,200  | 199,600 | 200,700        | 201,600  |

Source: August 2023, Detailed Labour Force Survey (Table EQ08), ABS, Data trended by Jobs and Skills Australia. Figures represent total persons employed under the ANZSCO unit level codes 4211 Child Carers, 2411 Early Childhood (Pre-Primary) Teachers and 1341 Child Care Centre Managers. JSA have approved use of these figures publicly.

**Total Employment - selected 4-digit occupations**

| ANZSC O Code        | ANZSCO Title                                  | Aug-2018       | Aug-2019       | Aug-2020       | Aug-2021       | Aug-2022       | Aug-2023       |
|---------------------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 4211                | Child Carers                                  | 144,500        | 142,300        | 140,800        | 142,300        | 147,400        | 154,900        |
| 2411                | Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers | 43,500         | 46,600         | 49,900         | 53,200         | 56,500         | 59,500         |
| 1341                | Child Care Centre Managers                    | 15,500         | 16,100         | 16,500         | 17,000         | 17,700         | 18,700         |
| JSA's trended total | *Child Care Occupations                       | <b>203,500</b> | <b>205,000</b> | <b>207,100</b> | <b>212,400</b> | <b>221,600</b> | <b>233,200</b> |

Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, trended by Jobs and Skills Australia, August 2023. \*Figures are rounded to the nearest 100. Calculations based on rounded figures may result in differences to the total number shown.

**Workforce by Service Type**

| Service Type              | Proportion of Workforce |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Centre Based Day Care     | 61.4%                   |
| Family Day Care           | 5.5%                    |
| In Home Care              | 0.4%                    |
| Outside School Hours Care | 13.0%                   |
| Vacation Care             | 10.3%                   |
| Dedicated Preschool       | 9.4%                    |

Source: 2021 National ECEC Workforce Census.

**Workforce Shortages**

Skills Priority List 2023 and Skilled Migration Occupation Lists (2021)

| ECEC Occupations in shortage, with future demand by State / Territory |                   |               |  |   |
|---|-------------------|---------------|--|---|
| ANZSCO Occupation   | National Shortage | Future Demand | State / Territory shortages              | Skilled Migration Occupation Lists                  |
| 421111 Child Care Worker  | Yes               | Strong        | Shortages across all states/territories. | ROL-Regional Occupation List (Group Leader only)    |
| 241111 Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teacher                   | Yes               | Strong        | Shortages across all states/territories. | MLTSSL – Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List |
| 421112 Family Day Care Worker   | No                | Moderate      | No shortages                             | N/A   |
| 421114 Out of School Hours Care Worker                                | Yes               | Strong        | Shortages across all states/territories. | N/A   |
| 134111 Child Care Centre Manager                                      | No                | Moderate      | Shortage in WA only                      | MLTSSL – Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List |

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia , Skills Priority List, October 2023. Note: Skilled Migration Occupation Lists were not updated in October 2023.

**Employment Projections**

The Jobs and Skills Australia Employment Projections:

| Employment projections for five years to November 2026 |                           |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Occupations  | Employment level Nov 2021 | Jobs and Skills Australia Projections |  |  |
|  |                           | Projected Employment level Nov 2026   | Projected Employment Growth five years to Nov 2026 | Projected Employment Growth five years to Nov 2026 (%) |
| Educators  | 134,200                   | 142,100                               | 7,900  | 5.9%   |
| Early Childhood Teachers                               | 49,300                    | 59,900                                | 10,600   | 21.6%  |
| Centre Directors                                       | 15,300                    | 18,700                                | 3,300  | 21.8%  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>198,800</b>            | <b>220,700</b>                        | <b>21,800</b>                                      | <b>11.0%</b>   |

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, Labour Market Insights, 31 March 2022.

**Vacancies**

The Jobs and Skills Australia Internet Vacancy Index of major recruitment websites:

| Occupation                                    | August 2022  | July 2023    | August 2023  | % change Aug22-Aug23 | % change Jul23-Aug23 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Child carers                                  | 4,549        | 4,593        | 4,678        | 2.85%                | 1.85%                |
| Early childhood (Pre-Primary School) teachers | 2,253        | 2,641        | 2,707        | 20.15%               | 2.52%                |
| Child care centre managers                    | 361          | 405          | 373          | 3.32%                | -7.82%               |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>7,163</b> | <b>7,639</b> | <b>7,759</b> | <b>8.32%</b>         | <b>1.57%</b>         |

**Wages**

Current Award Rates as at 1 July 2023

| Position                   | Level | Hourly Rate | Weekly Rate LDC (*) | Approx. Annual F/T Salary (LDC) |
|----------------------------|-------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Educator (Certificate III) | 3.1   | \$26.18     | \$995.00            | \$51,919                        |
| Educator (Diploma)         | 3.4   | \$29.48     | \$1120.40           | \$58,462                        |
| Early Childhood Teacher    | 1     | \$35.41     | \$1345.60 *         | \$70,214                        |
| Early Childhood Teacher    | 5     | \$49.00     | \$1861.90 *         | \$97,154                        |

An educational leader's allowance of \$4,253.32 per annum will be paid to an employee who is required to discharge the responsibilities of the educational leader under Regulation 118 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. Commenced 1 January 2022 for educational leaders employed under the Educational Services (Teachers) Award (2020) and commences 1 November 2022 for educational leaders employed under the Children's Services Award (2010).

\*Under the Educational Services (Teacher) Award (2020), long day care Early Childhood Teachers are paid a 4 per cent loading above the award rate for preschool and school teachers (reflected in the table). Source: Fair Work Commission, Children's Services Award (2010) and Education Services (Teachers) Award (2020).

**Actual Earnings (including salary increases 2012-2021)**

| Occupation                                    | May 2012 avg salary | May 2016 avg salary | May 2018 avg salary | May 2021 avg salary | % and \$ increase (2012 – 2021) | % and \$ increase (2016 – 2021) |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Child carers                                  | \$25,467            | \$33,768            | \$34,607            | \$40,562            | 59% \$15,095                    | 30% \$6,794                     |
| Early childhood (pre-primary school) teachers | \$43,623            | \$45,990            | \$61,967            | \$64,809            | 49% \$21,186                    | 41% \$18,819                    |
| Child care centre managers                    | \$59,839            | \$67,364            | \$67,791            | \$69,241            | 16% \$9,402                     | 3% \$1,877                      |

Source: Drawing from data sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Average Ordinary Time Earnings May 2021, Data Cube 11 Average weekly total cash earnings, average age - sex: by detailed occupation (ANZSCO 4 digit).

**Workforce Demographics**

National ECEC Workforce Census 2021 Key Findings:

- 92.1% female workforce (96% in Centre Based Day Care) (up from 91.1% in 2016).
- The median age of staff was 36 years for females and 27 years for males.
- 2.9% of staff are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander workers (up from 2.0% in 2016).
- The average years of experience for paid contact staff with an ECEC qualification was 8.1 years (up from 7.4 years in 2016).
- The average years of job tenure for paid contact staff with an ECEC qualification was 4.0 years ( up slightly from 3.6 years in 2016).

Source: 2021 National ECEC Workforce Census.

**Visa Processing**

Questions on Visa statistics eg number of Visas processed should be taken on notice and referred to Home Affairs for a cleared response.



EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CHILD CARE WORKFORCE

Qualifications

- In 2021, 84.8% of paid contact staff held a relevant qualification. This compares to 70% in 2010, 82% in 2013 and 85.2% in 2016.
- 30.1% had a certificate III or IV
- 41.8% had an advanced Diploma or Diploma
- 11.9% had a bachelor degree and above in an ECEC related field

Source: Department of Education National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census (2021).

Workforce Supply - from training

Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care:

| Cert III | Enrolments | Commencements | Completions |
|----------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| 2018     | 52,840     | 32,645        | 15,725      |
| 2019     | 55,005     | 38,055        | 15,695      |
| 2020     | 55,030     | 32,675        | 12,260      |
| 2021     | 64,415     | 37,250        | 15,730      |
| 2022     | 70,695     | 46,180        | 17,610      |

Source: NCVET 2023, Total VET students and course 2022, NCVET, Adelaide. Note: Completions data for 2022 are preliminary. They may be revised upwards in August 2024 to account for completions submitted after the reporting deadline.

Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care:

| Diploma | Enrolments | Commencements | Completions |
|---------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| 2018    | 52,240     | 19,850        | 13,565      |
| 2019    | 48,750     | 26,005        | 12,610      |
| 2020    | 44,945     | 21,590        | 9,965       |
| 2021    | 49,905     | 21,935        | 13,860      |
| 2022    | 38,240     | 13,505        | 17,995      |

Source: NCVET 2023, Total VET students and course 2022, NCVET, Adelaide. Note: Completions data for 2022 are preliminary. They may be revised upwards in August 2024 to account for completions submitted after the reporting deadline.

Early childhood Initial Teacher Education courses

| Year                | Enrolments | Commencements | Completions |
|---------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| 2018                | 12,975     | 3,556         | 2,283       |
| 2019                | 12,604     | 3,541         | 2,144       |
| 2020                | 12,999     | 4,288         | 2,051       |
| 2021 <sup>(a)</sup> | 13,899     | 4,683         | 1,992       |

Source: Department of Education Higher Education Statistics, Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2018-2021, Initial Teacher Education courses registered in early childhood education (excluding professional development and research qualifications)

Course enrolment, commencement, and completion broken down by gender (average)

|                                     | Female | Male  |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Cert III and Diploma by gender      | 95.26% | 4.08% |
| Initial Teacher Education by gender | 96.23% | 3.69% |

Skills and Training Initiatives

Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System (Incentives System)

- ◊ The Incentives System, valued at \$2.3 billion over 4 years from 2022-23, is strengthening the apprenticeship system to target skill shortages, improve completions and ensure supports are accessible.
- ◊ Government support under the Incentives System came into effect from 1 July 2022 and is focused on priority occupations (including early childhood education and care), ensuring a combination of financial and non-financial support is targeted to the skills most in demand in the Australian economy.

| Apprentices and Trainees in Training at 31 December 2022 | Count  |
|--|--------|
| Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care    | 10,710 |
| Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care            | 5,135  |

- **Job-ready Graduates package:** Since the JRG reforms were introduced in 2020, the cost of an early childhood teaching qualification has come down by 42 per cent. Enrolment data indicate a 18.7 per cent increase in early childhood teaching commencements in 2021 compared with 2020 (from 4029 commencements in 2020 to 4783 in 2021).
- **The Commonwealth Scholarships Program for Young Australians** provides scholarships of up to \$13,000 over a two year period, for young Australians in 10 nominated regions across Australia to undertake an eligible VET qualification and complete a paid internship, including in early childhood education and care. Of a total of 807 scholarships awarded over four rounds of the program, 91 (11 per cent) were to support qualifications in early childhood education and care.
- A \$1 billion 12-month National Skills Agreement, in partnership with the States and Territories, delivering 180,000 **Fee-Free TAFE places** in January 2023. It is estimated as many as **16,400** Fee-Free TAFE and vocational education places will be taken up by students in Early Childhood and Education courses around the country this year. This is comprised of around 10,600 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and an estimated 5,800 places in Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care delivered through Fee-Free TAFE. Based on data reported by States and Territories, almost 12,000 enrolments in early childhood education and care courses have been supported through Fee-Free TAFE in 2023 between January and June 2023 (Table 1).

| Fee-Free TAFE Early Childhood and Education Courses  | Enrolments    |
|--|---------------|
| Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care  | 9,524         |
| Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care  | 2,104         |
| Introduction to Early Childhood Education and Care Skill Set   | 154           |
| Statement of Attainment—Develop Positive/Respectful Relationships with Children, Identify/Respond to Children/Young People at Risk and WHS | 36            |
| Statement of Attainment in Early Childhood Education and Care (Food Safety and WHS.  | 29            |
| Statement of Attainment—Health/Safety/Wellbeing of Children and Support Children's Play/Learning.  | 15            |
| Statement of Attainment—Identify/Respond to Children/Young People at risk and WHS.   | 6             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>11,868</b> |

- 20,000 **additional university places** to provide more opportunities for under-represented groups to enter higher education across 2023 and 2024, with 1,469 in early childhood teaching.

| NSW | VIC | QLD | SA | WA  | TAS | NT | ACT | OTHER | Total |
|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|-------|-------|
| 395 | 481 | 47  | 0  | 464 | 0   | 54 | 5   | 23    | 1,469 |

ACECQA Staffing Waivers

Staffing Waivers primarily relate to qualification level, for example, when a service needs to replace an early childhood teacher and needs time to recruit.

- As at 1 July 2023, 9.7 per cent of services had a staffing waiver:
  - ◊ Long Day Care (LDC) at 17.0 per cent
  - ◊ Family Day Care at 0.2 per cent
  - ◊ Preschools at 2.4 per cent
  - ◊ Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) at 2.2 per cent
  - ◊ Centre-based services (LDC, preschool/kindergartens and OSHC) at 10.0 per cent.

Source: ACECQA NQF Snapshot Report Q2 2023, W1 and W9 data tables.

Gap fee discount for ECEC workers

- Announced 17 December 2021
- Applicable from 24 January 2022
- Example
  - ◊ Educator average family income is \$110,000 and her family's CCS rate is 71.67%.
  - ◊ Child attends 3 days at the same service.
  - ◊ Daily fee of \$106.50 for a 10-hour session, weekly fee comes to \$319.50.
  - ◊ After CCS is applied, the service charges her a gap fee of \$90.51 per week.
  - ◊ If the service offers a discount of \$20 per session of care, the remaining gap fee would be \$30.51 per week.

Be You - National Mental Health in Education Initiative

Through the **Be You** national mental health in education initiative, ECEC staff are being supported to develop mental health skills and knowledge. Extended for two years to 2023 with additional Government investment of \$46.0 million. 6,590 ECEC services have been recruited (August 2023).

Source: Beyond Blue, August 2023.

**Issue:** Youth  
**PBS Pg No.** Page 30, Department of Education 2022–23 October Budget  
**Contact:** **Kylie Crane**  
 Ph: s 22  
 Deputy Secretary  
 Early Childhood and Youth Group

**Budget – Youth Engagement Model**

| Financial year    | 2022–23 | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | Total  |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Budget Allocation | 1.931   | 2.826   | 2.868   | 2.903   | 2.922   | 10.528 |
| Committed         | 1.931   | 2.826   | 2.868   | 2.903   | 2.922   | 10.528 |
| Uncommitted       | -       | -       | -       | -       |         | -      |

**Key Points**

- In the 2022–23 Budget, the Australian Government committed **\$10.5 million** over 4 years to establish a new Youth Engagement Model (the model) to formally engage young people in policy and program design. This funding includes:
  - **\$7.0 million to establish an Office for Youth** which includes a Youth Steering Committee, an Australian Government Interdepartmental Committee on Youth, and an Australian Government Intergovernmental Coordination Committee on Youth.
  - **\$0.5 million for the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy** to be delivered in the first half of 2024.
  - **\$1.5 million for the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition** to support its critical role in youth advocacy, engagement, and research.
  - **\$1.5 million for 5 youth advisory groups** to work directly with Australian Government agencies on policy and program development. In 2023, the Youth Advisory Groups are:
    - First Nations Youth Advisory Group in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency.
    - Youth Advisory Group on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in partnership with the Department of Health and Aged Care, National Mental Health Commission, and Suicide Prevention Office.
    - Youth Advisory Group on the Promotion of STEM in partnership with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.

- Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change and COP28 in partnership with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.
- Safe and Supported Youth Advisory Group in partnership with the Department of Social Services.
- The model is currently on track for implementation.

### ***Youth Consultations and Issues of Importance Raised by Young People***

- The Office for Youth is developing a youth engagement strategy to improve how government works with young people and to ensure that young people from all backgrounds can be engaged on government decisions that shape their lives.
- The Office for Youth is working with young people and the youth sector to inform the strategy by conducting a survey, accepting responses to a discussion paper and facilitating the National Youth Consultations. As at 28 September 2023, the Office for Youth:
  - has consulted with more than 3,800 young people in total including:
    - over 2000 young people at 52 consultations
    - over 1800 young people through an online survey and
  - has received 32 responses to the discussion paper.
- When asked about how they would like to be involved in working with Government on an issue important to them, the top five responses included:
  - Filling out a survey
  - Events at school, TAFE or University
  - Social media
  - Youth organisations
  - Advisory Groups or committees.
- More information on the new Youth Engagement Model is at [Attachment A](#).

### ***Existing Youth Funding***

- The Department of Education is providing \$1.2 million in sponsorship funding to the National Australia Day Council to coordinate, administer and promote the Young Category of the Australian of the Year Award from 2022 to 2025.



## Key Youth Statistics

### Definition

- There is no universally agreed definition of Youth.
  - Australia defines young people as those aged 12–25 years.
  - The OECD defines young people in its Youth Action Plan as those aged 15–29 years.
  - The United Nations—without prejudice to any other definitions made by Member States—defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.
- Where data for those aged 12–25 years are not available or readily published, or the numbers are too small for robust reporting, a different age range (most commonly 15–24 years) is used. This range is the most common as it aligns with ABS reporting brackets.
- The Government defines youth as those aged 12–25. This age range covers young people through major life transitions, including as they enter adulthood.

### Statistics

- Australia has over 3.9 million young people aged 12–24, representing 15.7 per cent of the population.<sup>1</sup>
- General unemployment in August is at 3.7 per cent (seasonally adjusted) while youth (15–24 years) unemployment is at 8.2 per cent (seasonally adjusted).<sup>2</sup>
- Youth (15–24 years) underemployment is at 14.6 per cent in August 2023 (seasonally adjusted).
- There are 331,048 young people that identify as having a mental health condition. This represents 10.9 per cent of the youth population (15–24 years).<sup>3</sup>
- More youth statistics are at [Attachment B](#) and Budget announcements at [Attachment C](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Source: ABS 2021 Census

<sup>2</sup> ABS April 2023 Labour Force release

<sup>3</sup> ABS 2021 Census

**Media**

- ***ABC Mildura, Debra Price interview with Eve Currie (Youth Steering Committee) Thursday, 29 June 2023.***
  - Debra Pearce interviewed Eve Currie from the Australian Government's Youth Steering Committee, discussing the Youth Steering Committee, youth engagement strategy and upcoming consultations in Mildura.
  - Full interview at [Attachment D](#).
  
- ***Radio Fremantle 107.9 Fremantle, Ethan Murray interview with Oshay Riley (Youth Steering Committee) Saturday, 8 July 2023.***
  - Ethan Murray interviewed Oshay Riley from the Australian Government's Youth Steering Committee, discussing his role as a Youth Steering Committee representative, voting eligibility for 16 and 17-year-olds and conflict resolution.
  - Full interview at [Attachment E](#).

**Attachments**

- [Attachment A](#): Youth Engagement Model
- [Attachment B](#): Youth Statistics
- [Attachment C](#): 2023–24 Budget Commitments – Youth
- [Attachment D](#): Transcript – Debra Pearce Interview
- [Attachment E](#): Transcript – Ethan Murray Interview

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| <b>Date Last Cleared</b> | 16 October 2023 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|

## Attachment A - SB23-000320

### Youth Engagement Model

#### Office for Youth

- The Office for Youth has been established as a dedicated unit in the Department of Education to support the contribution of young people and advocates, improve and harmonise youth policy across government and ensure the government is communicating effectively with young people.
- The 2022–23 October Budget provided resourcing for 10 ASL, as well as for consultations with government and the sector.
- As at 14 September 2023, the Office for Youth consisted of 15 staff including a dedicated Assistant Secretary and a communications specialist.
- The Office for Youth is responsible for three key advisory groups to support the implementation of the model: (1) the Interdepartmental Committee for Youth (IDC), (2) the Intergovernmental Coordination Committee for Youth (IGCC); and (3) the Youth Steering Committee (steering committee).

#### *Youth Interdepartmental Committee (IDC)*

- The IDC has representation at the First Assistant Secretary level from 18 Australian Government agencies.
- The IDC provides oversight and governance of the model and its implementation across government.
- The IDC has met on 3 August 2022, 15 November 2022, 11 May 2023 and 18 August 2023. It will meet again in November 2023.

#### *Youth Intergovernmental Coordination Committee (IGCC)*

- The Assistant Secretary IGCC provides feedback on, and coordination of, the development of the Youth Engagement Strategy. The IGCC also acts as an information sharing mechanism on whole-of-government activity affecting young people.
- The IGCC has met on 28 February 2023, 8 June 2023 and 3 October 2023. It will meet again in November 2023.

#### *Youth Steering Committee*

- The committee is made up of 14 members aged 13–24 from across Australia. Full membership of the committee was announced on 19 November 2022 and is available on the department's website.
- The committee is under the direction of the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Youth, and the Office for Youth. The committee is supporting the establishment of the new Youth Engagement Model including development of a youth engagement strategy.
- The first meeting of the committee took place in Canberra from 21 November to 23 November 2022. The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is funded under its

current contract to support the committee and meet the costs of in-person meetings including travel, accommodation, and catering.

- The committee has also met on:
  - 8 December 2022 (online)
  - 24 January 2023 (online)
  - 29-31 March 2023 (in-person)
  - 25 May 2023 (online)
  - 27 July 2023 (online)
  - 5 October 2023 (online)

### **Australian Youth Affairs Coalition**

- In June 2022, the department provided \$422,551 (GST incl.) in grant funding to fund AYAC for the National Youth Policy Project.
- The project supports a range of youth engagement, research and coordination activities. The department's contract with AYAC expires 31 July 2023.
- As announced in the October 2022–23 Budget, the department will provide recurrent funding to AYAC—\$1.528 million (GST excl.) over three years from 2023–24—to support the Office for Youth and development of the model.
- The new contract for 2023-24 was signed on 22 June 2023.

### **Youth Engagement Strategy**

- The Youth Engagement Strategy is being developed by the Australian Government Office for Youth to improve how government works with young people and ensure that young people from all backgrounds can have a say on government decisions that shape their lives.
- The development of the strategy is being informed by responses to a discussion paper, online survey and consultations with young people and the youth sector.
- The consultations included workshops with young people, stalls at community events and festivals and roundtables with the youth sector.
- This includes 52 consultations between 7 June and 28 September 2023 with more than 2,000 young people. These occurred online and in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations and in every state and territory.

### **Youth Advisory Groups**

- Five youth advisory groups have been established to work directly with Australian Government agencies on the development of policies and programs that affect young people.
- On 11 January 2023, the Minister for Youth agreed to the following policy areas of focus for 2023 groups:

- First Nations Youth Advisory Group in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency.
  - Youth Advisory Group on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in partnership with the Department of Health, National Mental Health Commission and Suicide Prevention Office.
  - Youth Advisory Group on the Promotion of STEM in partnership with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
  - Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change and COP28 in partnership with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.
  - Safe and Supported Youth Advisory Group in partnership with the Department of Social Services.
- The members represent the diversity of Australia's young people including First Nations young people, regional, rural and remote young people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
  - Groups met in Canberra on 29-31 March 2023 to receive training and meet with Minister Aly and other portfolio ministers, representatives from the Office for Youth as well as officials from Australian Government agencies.
  - Groups continue to meet virtually with their partner agencies and the Office for Youth.
  - Planning is underway for 2024 Youth Advisory Groups.

## Attachment B

### Youth statistics

#### Total Young People

- Australia has over 3.9 million young people aged 12–24, representing 15.7 per cent of the population (Source: ABS 2021 Census).

#### Employment

- Youth unemployment is at 8.2 per cent (seasonally adjusted) in August 2023.
- Youth underemployment is at 14.6 per cent (seasonally adjusted) in August 2023.
- General population unemployment remains at 3.7 per cent in August 2023 (seasonally adjusted) (Source: ABS July 2023 Labour Force release).

#### Cost of Living and Housing Affordability

- More than half of young people (54 per cent) identified cost of living as a concern that needs to be addressed urgently
- Two in five young people (42 per cent) identified housing affordability as a concern that needs to be addressed urgently  
(Source: headspace National Young people Mental Health Survey 2023)

#### Mental Health

(Source: census data provided below, SQ22-000242 provides mental health data from various reports, as provided to OFY from DHAC)

- There are 331,048 young people that identify (self report) as having a mental health condition. This represents 10.9 per cent of the youth population (15-24 years)  
(Source: ABS Census of Population and House, 2021. Self reported data)

#### Youth Homelessness

- In 2016, 1.61% of young people aged 15-24 were estimated to be homeless or marginally housed.
- This compares to 0.91% of the total population 15 years and overestimated to be homeless or marginally houses in 2016.  
(Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016 (2021 data not released yet)

#### Justice

(Source: 2022 data, Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing)

- Rate (% per 10,000 young people) of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, by supervision type, states and territories, 2020–21.
- Trends:

| Type of Supervision         | National | NSW  | VIC | QLD  | SA  | WA   | TAS  | ACT  | NT   |
|-----------------------------|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|------|------|
| Community-based supervision | 11.4     | 11.4 | 5.7 | 17.1 | 8.4 | 13.6 | 14.0 | 11.7 | 11.4 |
| Detention                   | 2.6      | 1.9  | 1.6 | 4.0  | 1.5 | 3.6  | 1.5  | 2.0  | 2.6  |
| Supervision (any type)      | 13.9     | 13.3 | 7.3 | 21.0 | 9.7 | 17.0 | 15.5 | 13.5 | 13.9 |

- Over the 5 years from 2016–17 to 2020–21, the number of people aged 10 and over who were under supervision on an average day fell by 12% (5,329 to 4,695), however the number fluctuated throughout this period, with a high of 5,675 in 2018–19. The rate for people aged 10–17 dropped from 19 to 14 per 10,000.
- In community-based supervision, the number of young people on an average day fell by 12% (4,447 to 3,934) over the 5-year period. The rate dropped from 16 to 11 per 10,000 for those aged 10–17.
- In detention, the number on an average day fell by 13% (910 to 787) over the same period. The rate fell from 3.2 to 2.6 per 10,000 for those aged 10–17 between 2016–17 and 2020–21.

## Attachment C

### 2023–24 Budget commitments – Youth

In the 2023–24 Budget, the Australian Government has made significant investments for young people across multiple priority areas.

#### **Social Services – (Department of Social Services)**

##### Welfare Support

- Rates of JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment (Partnered), Austudy, ABSTUDY, Youth Disability Support Pension, and Special Benefit will rise by \$40 a fortnight commencing from 20 September 2023.
- The Government will reduce the eligibility age for the higher JobSeeker rate for single people on the payment for 9 continuous months or more, aiding young carers.
- These changes will help around 318,000 young people under 25.

##### Social and Affordable Housing

- Additional \$2 billion for more social and affordable rental housing, increasing NHFIC's liability cap from \$5.5 billion to \$7.5 billion from 1 July 2023.
- More social and affordable rental homes by providing lower cost and longer-term finance to community housing providers.
- \$2.7 billion over five years to support around 1.1 million Australians with the rising cost of rent by increasing the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 15 per cent.
- The Government is also offering incentives to increase the supply of rental housing by improving taxation arrangements for investments in build-to-rent accommodation.



## **Health and Mental Health - (Department of Health and Aged Care)**

### Access to Medical Care

- The Government is investing \$5.7 billion over 5 years from 2022–23 to strengthen Medicare and make it cheaper and easier to see a doctor.
- This includes tripling the incentive paid to GPs to bulk bill consultations for families with children under 16 years.
- \$143.9 million will be invested over 2 years to encourage GPs to stay open for longer hours, increasing accessibility for young people.

### Vaping and Cigarettes

- \$234 million will be spent on the fight against vaping, including \$63 million for an information campaign to discourage smoking and e-cigarettes.
- Excise on tobacco products will be lifted by 5 per cent a year, in a change that will push up the cost of cigarettes and add \$3.3 billion to the budget bottom line.

### Cheaper Medicines

- Australians will be able to buy two months' worth of medicine for the price of a single prescription.
- At least 6 million Australians will halve their medicine costs and need fewer visits to the GP and pharmacist to get the medicines they use the most, saving patients \$1.6 billion over the next four years.

### Mental Health Support

- \$6.9 million over two years from 2023–24 announced to continue child and youth mental health supports, including supporting digital work and study, and student mentoring.
  - Headspace Digital Work and Study program.
  - Raise Foundation to continue the Student Mentoring Program for more than 4,000 year 7-9 students across Australia.
  - Investments in the Butterfly Foundation's Butterfly Body Bright program to promote healthy attitudes towards body image, eating and exercise in schools.

## Central Australia - (Education, Health, ADGs and NIAA)

### *A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*

- \$40.4 million for On-Country Learning to improve school attendance, engagement and learning outcomes for First Nations students in Central Australian schools. These Schools will be empowered to engage with local communities and community-based organisations to flexibly develop tailored solutions that meet First Nation students' needs.
- \$23.5 million to expand the Child and Youth Assessment and Treatment Services and fund the building of a Health Hub in Alice Springs.
- \$3.9 million will be invested over three years (2023–24 to 2025–26) to develop a Youth Services Action Plan for Central Australia and support the provision of cultural camps for young people at risk to keep them engaged, connected to their culture and communities and to prevent emerging issues from escalating.
- \$10 million will be invested from the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) to go towards project solutions that deliver new or upgraded broadband or upgraded mobile services to support First Nations digital connectivity needs in Central Australia.
- \$9.2 million to strengthen community safety and support increased engagement and diversion of 'at-risk' First Nations youth.
- \$10 million for justice reinvestment initiatives in Central Australia. Justice reinvestment allows First Nations communities to identify the best ways to prevent and reduce contact with the criminal justice system and empowers those communities to make decisions about the policies, programs and decisions that affect their lives. This funding will be pooled into the National Justice Reinvestment Program, which the Government committed to in the October 2022–23 Budget. Communities in Central Australia will be able to apply for justice reinvestment funding when the National Justice Reinvestment Program opens for applications from mid-2023.

## **Skills & Training - (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations)**

### *National Skills Agreement and Fee-free Places*

- The Government is prepared to invest an additional \$3.7 billion for a five-year National Skills Agreement (NSA) to be negotiated with states and territories, in addition to \$400m to support another 300,000 TAFE and vocational education and training (VET) Fee-Free places.
- Places are targeted to areas of skills shortage.

### *Australian Skills Guarantee*

- \$8.6 million over 4 years from 2023–24 (and \$1.5 million per year ongoing) to implement the Australian Skills Guarantee which will ensure one in 10 workers on major Australian Government-funded projects is an apprentice, trainee or paid cadet.

### *National Careers Institute*

- \$5.1 million in 2023–24 to continue functions of the National Careers Institute, including the Your Career website to continue the delivery of the School Leavers Information Kit to enable young people to make informed decisions about their education, employment, and training pathways.

### *Targeted Support for Apprenticeships*

- \$54.3 million over 5 years from 2022–23 to introduce a new non-financial support model for Australian Apprenticeships to increase apprenticeship completion rates and the diversity of the apprentice workforce.

### *Foundation Skills Reform*

- The Government will fundamentally reform the delivery of foundation skills, so more Australian over the age of 15 can access training to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

**Radio Transcript****PREPARED: Thursday 29 June 2023****TITLE: DEBRA PEARCE INTERVIEW WITH YOUTH STEERING'S EVE CURRIE.****DESCRIPTION: DEBRA PEARCE INTERVIEW WITH YOUTH STEERING'S EVE CURRIE DISCUSSING THE YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES.****CHANNEL: ABC MILDURA SWAN HILL MILDURA****PROGRAM: BREAKFAST WITH DEBRA PEARCE (MON TO WED) & REBEKAH LOWE (THURS/FRIDAY)****DATE BROADCAST: 29 JUNE 2023****TIME BROADCAST: 8:51 AM - 8:56 AM****TRANSCRIPTION**

**DEBRA PEARCE:** It can be really difficult for young people to have their voices heard and especially when the people that they're trying to make listen are politicians and Federal Government departments. But we know from the recent Takeover Mildura summit that was held just how extraordinary the ideas and ambitions of our youth can be, especially when they see their visions realised. Tonight, there's another opportunity for young people in Sunraysia to speak up and be heard. The Australian Government Office for Youth and the Youth Steering Committee are in town and they want to speak to you.

Eve Currie is a member of the Youth Steering Committee. Good morning, Eve.

**EVE CURRIE:** Good morning, Deb. Thank you so much for having me.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** Thanks for joining us. Who will young people have the chance to talk to if they come along?

**EVE CURRIE:** Yeah, if they come along we have representatives from the Office for Youth in town at the moment to talk about the Youth Engagement Strategy and hear from young people about how they want to work with the government and how the government can support them.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** What are some of the issues that you tend to hear from young people? The things that are important to them these days?

**EVE CURRIE:** Yeah, so, Mission Australia released a 2022 Youth Survey and the top three issues identified by young people in that survey were the environment, equity and discrimination and mental health. And that's something that we definitely discuss as the Youth Steering Committee. And we're really excited to hear from young people in Mildura about what issues that they find really important and what they would like to work with the government to improve.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** As far as that Youth Steering Committee, what does that mean? What do you steer? What do you get out of it?

**EVE CURRIE:** Yeah, so the Youth Steering Committee is a group of 15 young people, representatives from every state and territory, and we work with the Minister for Youth. So, we have been developing the Youth Engagement Strategy and as part of that, we have the National Youth Consultations that we're running at the moment to speak with young people and inform how that Youth Engagement Strategy will work.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** And what's the definition of young people for this, Eve? What ages?

**EVE CURRIE:** For this we're looking for ages 12 to 25. So, quite a broad array of young people, but we're really hoping to encapsulate all of those different perspectives from people as young as 12 and right up to 25.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** So, how do young people get involved? Or where can they get a bit more information?

**EVE CURRIE:** Yeah, young people can head to [youth.gov.au](http://youth.gov.au) where they can find out about local consultations, take a survey or read our discussion paper. But we're also really excited to be in town at the moment So, as you said, tonight we're running a workshop with the Mildura Rural City Council on Deakin Avenue at 5:00 p.m. So, young people are more than welcome to come along to that. If you're listening or if you know a young person, definitely encourage them to come along. And we'll also be hosting a stall at the Hattah Desert race on Friday and Saturday.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** Oh, fantastic, that's good to know. And if they pop along tonight, I hear that it includes a free dinner.

**EVE CURRIE:** Yes, we love free food. So, come along and get a free feed and have your opinions heard by the government, because it's really exciting to have young people involved in this and it's really exciting to have this opportunity to speak with the government about issues that impact us. So, free feed and also the opportunity to have your voice heard.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** Fantastic. Eve, thanks so much for joining us. I hope it goes really well.

**EVE CURRIE:** Thanks so much. Have a great day.

**DEBRA PEARCE:** You too. Eve Currie is a member of that Youth Steering Committee. If you want to head along for those consultation sessions or tell another young person in your life about it, that's happening 5:00 at the - 76 Deakin Avenue in Mildura, 5:00 this evening. But as Eve said, they'll also have a stall at Hattah, which is great. Lots of young people there will have their opportunity to be heard.

**END**

Radio Transcript  
PREPARED: Saturday 8 July 2023

**TITLE: ETHAN MURRAY INTERVIEW WITH YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE'S OSHAY RILEY.**

**DESCRIPTION: ETHAN MURRAY INTERVIEW WITH YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE'S OSHAY RILEY DISCUSSING HIS ROLE AS A YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE, VOTING ELIGIBILITY FOR 16 AND 17-YEAR-OLDS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION.**

**CHANNEL: RADIO FREMANTLE 107.9 FREMANTLE**

**DATE BROADCAST: 8 JULY 2023**

**TIME BROADCAST: 2:17 PM - 2:27 PM**

#### **TRANSCRIPTION**

**ETHAN MURRAY:** And on the phone, I've got Oshay Riley from the Youth Steering Committee. Yes, he's a youth representative. Welcome to the programme, Oshay.

**OSHAY RILEY:** Hello? Can you hear me?

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah, I can hear you. How are you going?

**OSHAY RILEY:** I'm going very good. How are you?

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah, not too bad. We've got a big show today on Saturday Afternoon Roundup and I was very excited about interviewing you, making it the highlight of the show. So, what does your role as a youth representative involve, Oshay?

**OSHAY RILEY:** With the Youth Steering Committee, we're basically just giving our insight, our personal experiences and drawing from them to represent the groups of people that we do and basically just have a youth voice in the Government today.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** That is fantastic. So, what is the main reason you do this?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Just seeing all the hardships of my family and people and the things that they had to go through. I really don't want that to happen to the younger members of my community and family. So, I think that's what motivates me.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Very, very interesting. And so you're very passionate about giving a youth voice to the community. What do you think the future is for Gen Z? Is it a bright one or do you think that this is a future that you're trying to help change, in what way? And what is in your control, if you know what I mean?

**OSHAY RILEY:** With Gen Z, I think it is very uncertain just because of all the things like the internet and the media and how exposed we are to that. But I feel like if we can sort of correct past wrongs a bit and maybe use what we have, like these youth representative groups, I think we can strive towards a brighter future.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** That's fantastic. So, when you're representing young people, how many people are in the committee you work for?

**OSHAY RILEY:** It is 15.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** 15 people. And so are they subdivided in roles and what does your role involve?

**OSHAY RILEY:** So, there's at least one from each state. So, there's two people from WA. I'm one of the people from WA. So, we're representing our state and territory and also our group of people, if you will.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** That's brilliant.

**OSHAY RILEY:** I know, yeah.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Now into another question here. So, what type of hobbies do you do in your own life and how do you balance that with your work in the Youth Steering Committee?

**OSHAY RILEY:** I play a bit of rugby through school. In the past, I played a bit of footy outside of school, and right now I'm doing some martial arts, like Muay Thai.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** That's fantastic. And so how does this help you - inspire you to do what you do on top of what you talked about earlier? Is hobbies a big part of inspiring your passion for giving young people a local voice?

**OSHAY RILEY:** That's an interesting question. I feel like the more you can connect with people, the more things you can get on board and the more things you can use to reach out to people. That's obviously a big bonus. So, if you are able to get your voice into things like sports clubs and recreation, I feel like that would be just great to connect with people. Especially kids. Many kids love their footy, love their basketball.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Wow.

**OSHAY RILEY:** If we could use that, that would be great.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Oh, yes you like to do sports stuff. Do you help out much in sport then as well?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Pardon?

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Do you help out much in sport? Are you too busy? Is this Youth Steering committee stuff, how many hours a week is it as a commitment for you?

**OSHAY RILEY:** We usually have an online meeting every one or two months and then an in-person meeting every I think it was three months.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Oh yeah, so when you do those in-person meetings you have to travel, is that correct?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Yep.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** So how does it go travelling? Do you - are you able to get yourself across to the next place or is it a bit tricky?

**OSHAY RILEY:** No it's usually all well and good, it's all sorted out, it's nice.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** What are your visions for the future in terms of your career or do you feel like you're going to be working once you finish high school and what year are you in?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Year twelve to answer your question, and I'm kind of aimless right now as to what I want to do when I finish school but like either uni or take a gap year and work full-time and then go to uni?

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah it's a tough decision isn't it? And so is there anything you're looking at in doing in uni or you just want to give it a go if you know what I mean?

**OSHAY RILEY:** I want to do something in social sciences so just maybe like something in politics, like international affairs, something like that.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** That sounds very cool, so you kind of...

**OSHAY RILEY:** That's what I really want to do.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yes you kind of want to make a difference for young people then?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Not just young people, man, I just want to make a difference.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** For society as well. That's really cool. So, often, like with my show I often like to say that I'm about giving a young voice to the wider generations as well. So what sort of inspiration do you want to cast for people? Young, especially younger people but anyone who wants to get into leadership, what would you say to them?

**OSHAY RILEY:** I feel like just the number one thing you can do is just back yourself, just have confidence, because you do have a voice and there are people out there that will care about what you have to say. Don't ever feel that your voice has no value, is what I'm trying to say.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah, it's very important. And this show, we have a lot of different young people as guests. So how could we improve life in the world for younger people and also broader society as a whole? And what would you like to see happen?

**OSHAY RILEY:** I feel like just trusting young people with more. I know there's a whole debate around lowering the voting age and that's something that I'm a pretty big proponent for. I feel like we already trust kids with so much. Like, you could be 16, paying taxes, being criminally responsible.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah, dead right.

**OSHAY RILEY:** And you don't have the vote.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** We're criminally responsible. We can consent to other things at age 16. So, at the end of the day, I'm going to be controversial. I don't know if it's that controversial, but I am going to agree with you on that state. I know professionally, I'm going to keep being inquisitive and asking questions because I want to learn from you. Yes. So, you believe in giving young people more freedom to have a voice in terms of, like, voting as well. So, if 16 and 17-year-olds could vote, would it be the same way as 18-plus, where you think it should - where you'd want it to be compulsory? Or would you look at it more of an approach, where you want it to be more optional voting for 16 and 17-year-olds that want to get involved?

**OSHAY RILEY:** In my personal opinion, I'd probably want it to be compulsory, but I know practically a lot of 16 and 17-year-olds wouldn't be too ecstatic to vote, but a lot of them would.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** I would be, to be honest. I mean, I'm not too politically involved, but I do want to have my say. Yes. So, in terms of Youth Voices, when you work in a team with people, there must be like, people that are, like, art-focused and people that are more sport-focused. So, how do you combine things together to create a really good team and work together? Or is it not always that bright and you have to really overcome a lot of challenges?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Like challenges in discussion? Like conflict?

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Because everyone would have because of people's different interests, I suppose it might - does it - it might not, but does it create a clash in what you want to achieve for your voice as a young person and for other people in the committee? Or is it more of a or does it actually work well, having different interests?

**OSHAY RILEY:** I feel like just with my experience, there haven't been any arguments, so to speak. I feel like conflict in a committee environment is a pretty good thing, pretty healthy thing, and all the conflicts I don't want to call them that, but -

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah, disagreements.

**OSHAY RILEY:** Any difference of opinion has just led to a discussion that has led to understanding people better.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah, I'm going to interject. That's really interesting because I know that a lot of people in politics, right, I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, but a lot of them actually, once they're in parliament, they're arguing because they're trying to get their different ideas out so we can create a healthy democracy. But outside of Parliament, sometimes politics on other sides, like a Labor and a Liberal or an Independent and a Green and a One Nation and a Liberal Democrat, they might all be good friends in real life. Do you know what I mean?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Yeah. It's just that - in that environment, when they're supposed to debate, they just change.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Yeah, they do their job, which is a very important part about that. Obviously, I'm going to go too much into the political side of things, but do you speak much with the people, the politicians, or do your voices in the committee more get delivered through someone else to get to the politicians?



**OSHAY RILEY:** So, we're to do with youth. So, we are in contact with the Minister for Youth, the Office for Youth, which was established, like, at the start of the Albanese Government. So, that's Minister Anne Aly of Perth. And so, anything has to go through her, and then from there, it's on her after that.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Oh, yeah. So, she can decide to say, okay, we have this really strong idea that I want to put out for the world. Oh, that's very interesting. Oshay, when you've been... I actually want to ask how long have you been doing this for and how long do you intend to do this for?

**OSHAY RILEY:** I went to Canberra last November and the terms of the committee were 18 months, I think. So, yeah. I don't know. What I want to do is, if I can be on this committee for the future, I definitely want to.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Fantastic. Well, Oshay, I might have to wrap up the interview now. Is there any last things you want to say?

**OSHAY RILEY:** Just a message to young people to back themselves in and be confident. You have a voice.

**ETHAN MURRAY:** Fantastic. Oshay Riley from the Youth Steering Committee, a representative body to the Minister for Youth. Thank you for joining, Oshay. Look forward to hearing from you soon. You're on Radio Freemantle.

**ENDS**