

## PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

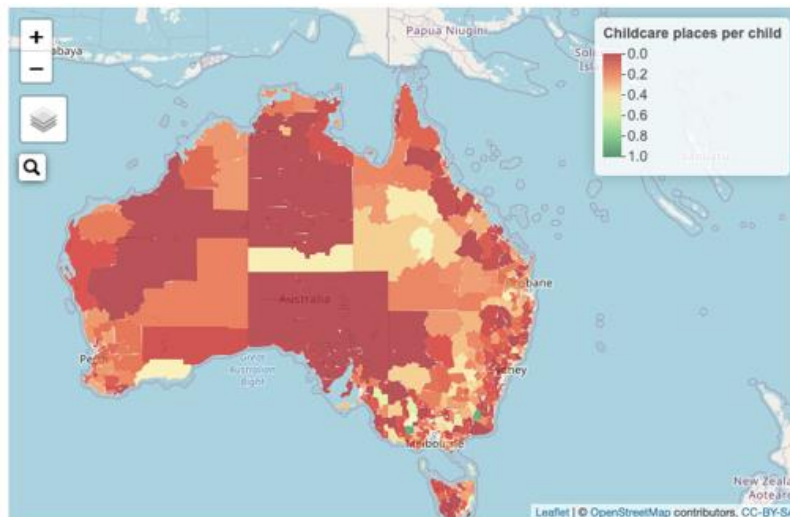
### EARLY CHILDHOOD REPORT

**Jane Hughes – Portfolio Holder, March 2023**

There were no Early Childhood motions at the 2022 State Conference.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> March, the Mitchell Institute released a report highlighting the many challenges faced by families trying to access childcare, particularly in rural remote Australia. With about 1.1 million Australians living in regional and remote areas where they have no access to childcare at all. Below is where you can find the report.

<https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia>



On 27<sup>th</sup> April, the West Australian Government announced that \$27.7 million will be allocated to Early Childhood Education (ECE) and out of home care in the 2022-23 State Budget.

On 9<sup>th</sup> May, I attended an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) joint portfolio meeting. Points of interest included:

- Minister for Home Affairs Karen Andrews responded to a letter from Federal Council detailing their progress with WWCC saying there was a National Cabinet commitment to eliminating red tape and streamlining the WWCC process.
- Letters were sent to then Minister for Education Alan Tudge and Acting Education Minister Stuart Robert regarding employment incentives for Early Childhood (EC) educators and EC programs in rural and remote areas and funding for mobile programs.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) report was released in May 2022 with results showing an increase in children who are developmentally vulnerable.

Below is an extract from the report, which can be found at <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>

The fifth AEDC data collection was undertaken between May and July 2021. Nationally, data was collected from over 305,000 children in their first year of full-time school and from approximately 7,500 primary schools.

At a national level, the AEDC data shows the percentage of children who were on track on 5 domains decreased for the first time since 2009 (from 55.4% in 2018 to 54.8% in 2021).

Results also show a slight increase in the proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable:

- Children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains increased from 21.7% in 2018 to 22% in 2021.

Children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains also increased from 11% in 2018 to 11.4% in 2021.

At the 2022 ICPA Federal Conference, 16 motions were put forward with issues surrounding:

- Assistance for Isolated Children allowance,
- In Home Care (IHC),
- To review pay rates and incentives to get Early childhood workers out into rural and remote areas,
- To prioritise re-establishing educational programs in regional and remote areas,
- A national WWCC and
- Better childcare funding for rural remote areas

On 7<sup>th</sup> September, childcare workers across Australia met in cities and some regional towns to protest for sector reform:

- Better wages,
- To be valued as an early education centre the same way that schools are valued and;
- For children to be put before profit.

One thousand childcare centres were shut down and approximately 70,000 families were affected.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-07/childcare-worker-protests-across-australia-amid-sector-shutdown/101413958>

BHP and Child Australia have teamed up to expand the Thriving Futures program with the launch of the Thriving Futures Educator Recognition Program, which is focused on attracting and retaining quality childcare workers and ensuring sustainability within the sector for future generations. BHP has made a commitment of \$2.5 million over the next three years. Due to the success of the program it is now being extended to the Nickel West Goldfields communities.

<https://thesector.com.au/2022/09/13/bhp-and-child-australia-team-up-to-expand-thriving-futures-program/>

Seventy initiatives have been launched by major ECEC stakeholders to fight workforce challenges. The Federal Government has launched 16 initiatives, all States and Territories have included their own initiatives also, except for Western Australia who did not feature at all.

### **FEDERAL/PEAK BODY INITIATIVES**

- Following extensive consultation with the outside school hours care (OSHC) sector, National Outside School Hours Services Alliance ([NOSHSA](#)) co-ordinated the development of a new nationally accredited Certificate III course for new OSHC educators.
- The Australian Government will establish a new agency, [Jobs and Skills Australia](#), which will be responsible for researching workforce trends and providing advice about current and future skills needs. The Government has committed to a tripartite approach to the new agency, which will work

with governments, employers and unions, and use data and insights from industry to inform the government labour market and skills policy.

- A range of early childhood teaching courses are being presented by Edith Cowan University through literacy units in early childhood education with updated Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) guidelines that reflect contemporary terminologies and research.
- The Australian Government will expand the ‘High Achieving Teachers Program’ to support up to 1,500 high achieving professionals to retrain as teachers.
- The Australian Government will offer up to 5,000 new students a \$10,000 a year bursary throughout their teaching degree. Bursaries will be available to high school-leavers who achieve an ATAR of 80 or above, First Nations students, and students from regional areas, with a top up payment of \$2,000 for placements in regional areas.
- The Australian Government will provide [465,000 Fee Free TAFE places](#) including 45,000 new TAFE places. In addition, the Australian Government has announced up to 20,000 additional university places to provide more opportunities for Australians to find a spot at a university.
- From 1 July 2022, the [Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System](#) will help increase completions, providing financial and non-financial support at the time the apprentice needs it. Government support is focussed on priority occupations, including ECEC workers.
- The Australian Government has committed to strengthen the ability and capacity of the [Fair Work Commission](#) (FWC) to order pay increases for workers in low paid, female dominated sectors and industries, such as the ECEC sector.
- Australian Government [Child Care Discount for Early Childhood Workforce](#) introduced in 2022 allows childcare 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 [Skills Assessment Pilots](#) seek to maximise the contribution of Australia’s onshore migrant workforce and address skills shortages and includes free, fast-tracked skills assessments for the Child Care Worker (Group Leader) occupation for eligible migrants who are residing in Australia.
- The Australian Government is investing \$9.1 million in the [National Intermediary THRYVE Pilot](#) led by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care ([SNAICC](#)), to support community-controlled early childhood providers to improve quality and increase access to training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.
- [Early Childhood Australia](#) has developed ‘[How to talk about early childhood education and care](#)’ to promote the use of consistent, affirmative, inclusive and sector-accepted language that supports professionalism.
- [Be You Early Learning](#) supports early childhood services to build a positive, inclusive and resilient learning community where every child, young person, educator and family can achieve their best possible mental health.
- In conjunction with Be You, peak body Early Learning and Care Council of Australia ([ELACCA](#)) launched a bespoke training program in mental health and wellbeing for its members, aimed at area managers. The online training program will aim to strengthen area managers’ ability to embed mental health and wellbeing initiatives across multiple early learning and care services.
- [JobTrainer](#) provides funding for anyone to have access to low-fee short courses and a range of approved qualifications including certificate III, IV and diploma level qualifications to work in the early childhood and school age education and care sectors.
- ELACCA launched [the ‘Big Roles in Little Lives’](#) in 2021, a campaign that promotes the value and benefits of a career in early learning and care to secondary school students and career-changers.

Copied from this website <https://thesector.com.au/2022/09/13/over-70-initiatives-launched-by-major-ecec-stakeholders-to-fight-workforce-challenges/>

The West Australian Government has recently appointed the Hon. Sabine Winton, MLA as Minister for the newly created Early Childhood Education portfolio.

From July 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 the Albanese Government's landmark reform will make early childhood education and care more affordable for around 86,000 families in Western Australia.

The McGowan Government has also launched a new Early Childhood Education and Care job-ready program which will deliver short, sharp training for jobseekers and young people.

The Federal Government are making an additional 1,469 university places available this year for early childhood teachers across Australia.

The Federal Government will also be providing funding for First Nations children which will involve 68 activities in Western Australia including an early childhood program at Halls Creek.

The University of Notre Dame in Western Australia has just launched a new fast tracked teacher training program with a Bachelor of Early Learning. This will allow students to complete training in just three years teaching children aged 0-4 years.

A Kimberley Development Commission report released on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022 showed Western Australia's Northwest Region is one of the hardest places to secure childcare services. Childcare services in the Kimberley are currently running at 69 percent capacity, staff shortages have caused several childcare centres to close due to low wages and a lack of affordable housing.