



**Australian Government**  
**Productivity Commission**

# **Draft report: Early childhood education and care**

National Workforce Forum, 29 November 2023



**Lisa Gropp**  
Commissioner



**Deborah Brennan**  
Associate Commissioner



**Martin Stokie**  
Commissioner

# About the inquiry

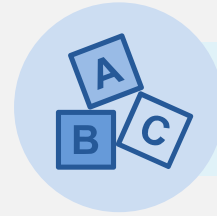


# Our task

We were asked to consider options for a universal ECEC system that supports:



labour force participation



child development

by improving

- affordability
- access
- quality
- equity
- efficiency of government investment



# Main recommendations



Entitlement to up to 30 hours or 3 days for all children age 0–5



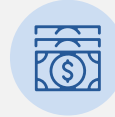
Relax the activity test



Raise maximum subsidy for lower income families



Prioritise workforce challenges



Significantly increase funding for ISP



Tackle persistently poor quality



New National Partnership Agreement and ECEC Commission

# Workforce challenges



# A snapshot of the ECEC workforce

## ECEC workforce snapshot

**224,000**

staff in the  
ECEC sector



**3%** identify as an  
Aboriginal or Torres Strait  
Islander person



**37**

is the average age



**93%**

of staff identify  
as female



**28%**

of staff are migrants



**24%**

of staff are casual  
employees



## The workforce provides different services

**67%**

Centre-based  
day care

**14%**

Out of school  
hours care

**13%**

Dedicated  
preschool

**6%**

Family day care

**0.5%**

In Home Care

## The workforce has different ECEC-related qualifications

**11%**

Degree

**40%**

Diploma

**29%**

Certificate

**15%**

No ECEC  
qualification

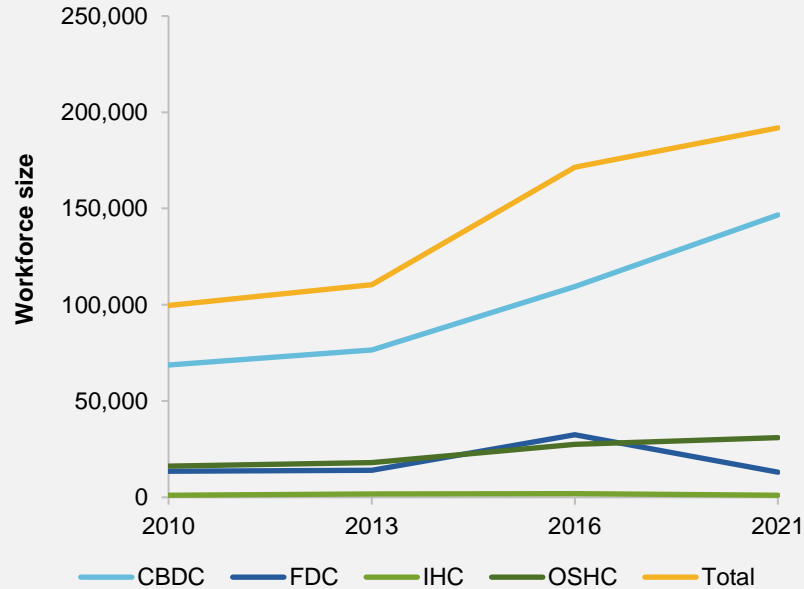
**6%**

Don't know

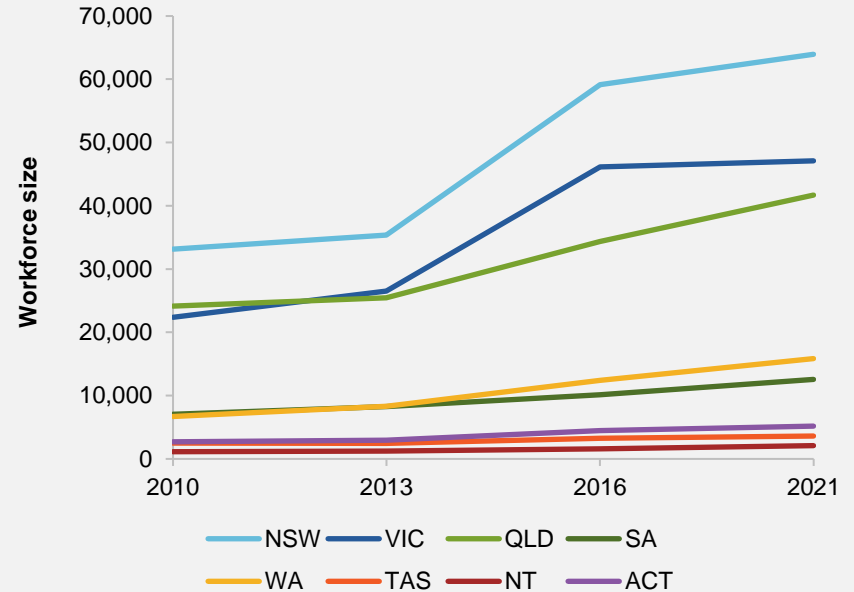
# While the workforce has grown significantly...

Size of ECEC workforce by service type and jurisdiction, 2010–2021

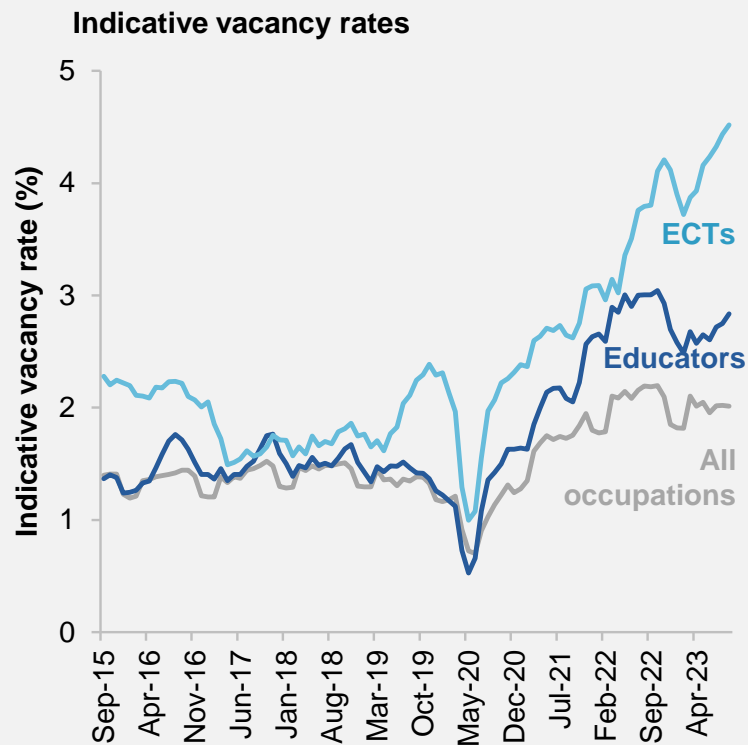
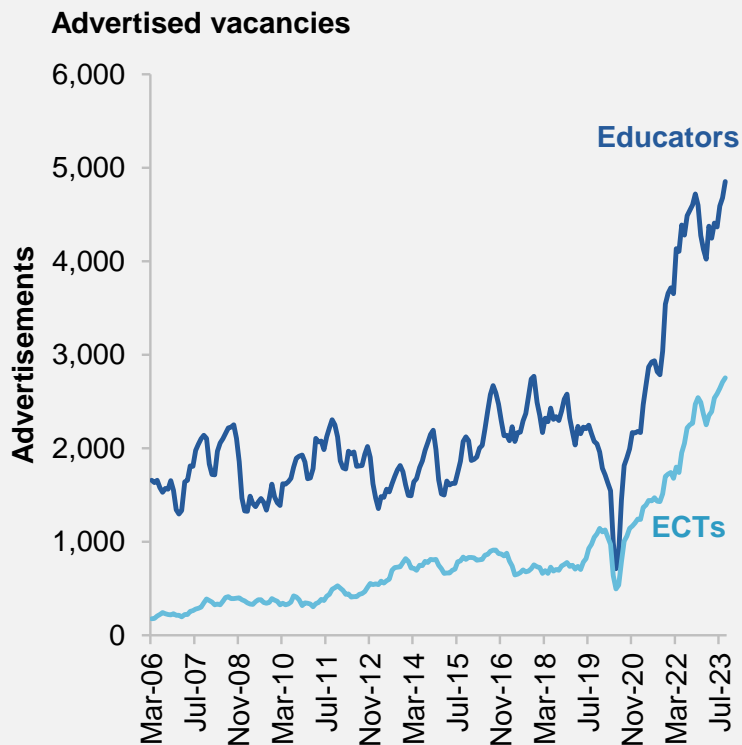
By ECEC type



By jurisdiction



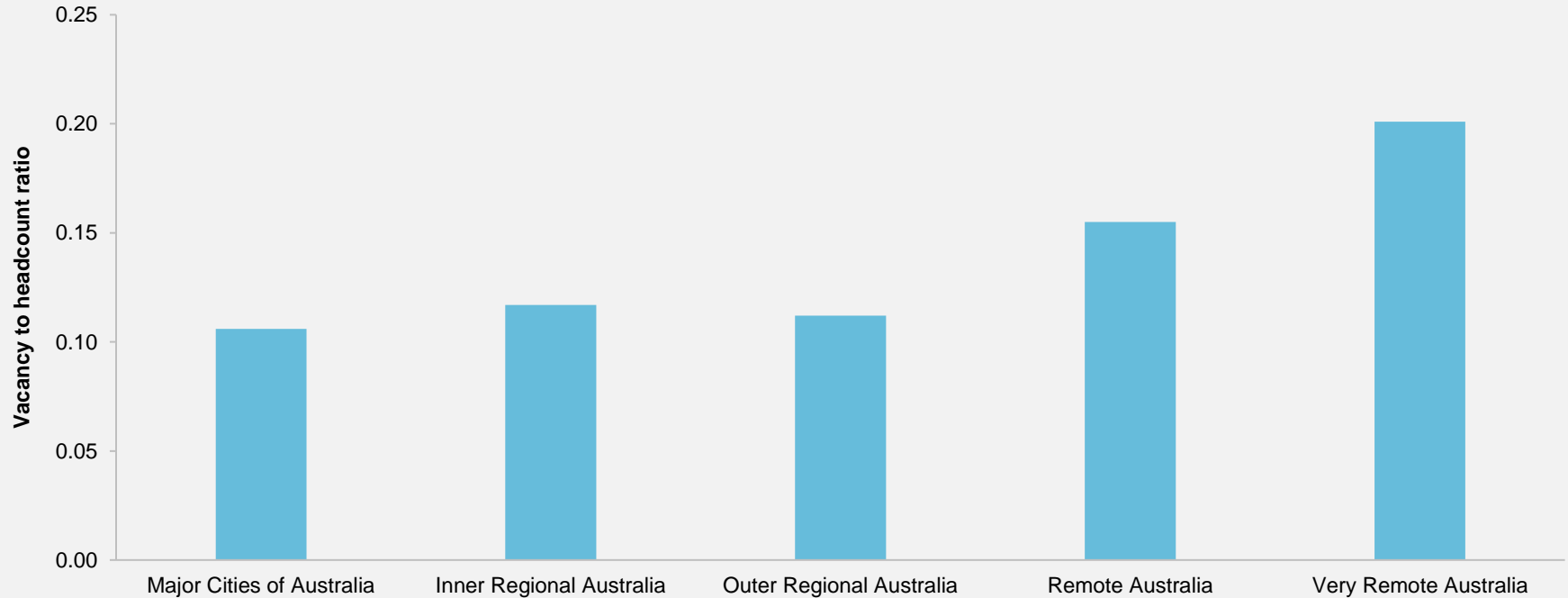
# ... vacancies and vacancy rates have increased





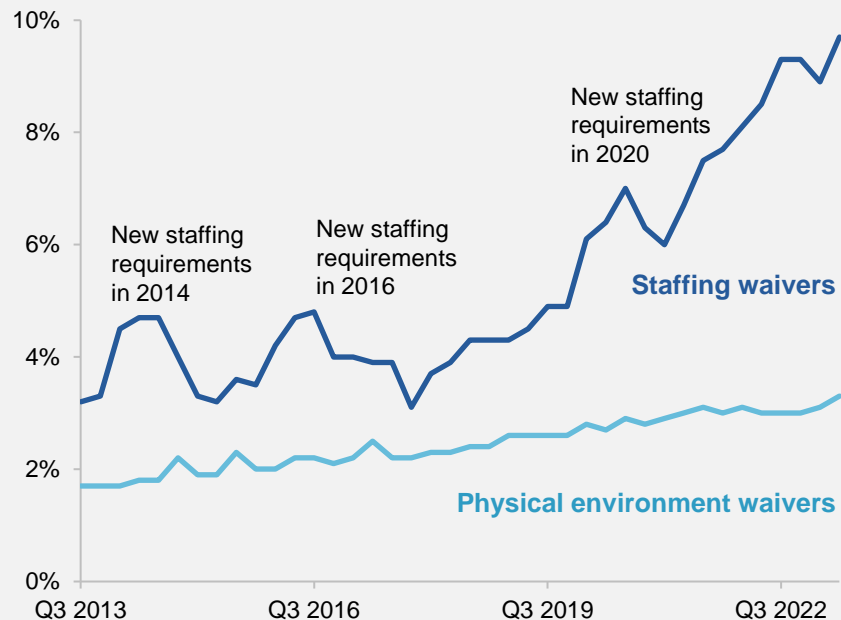
# Vacancies are higher in remote and very remote areas

Vacancy to staff headcount ratio for centre-based day care, by remoteness, 2022

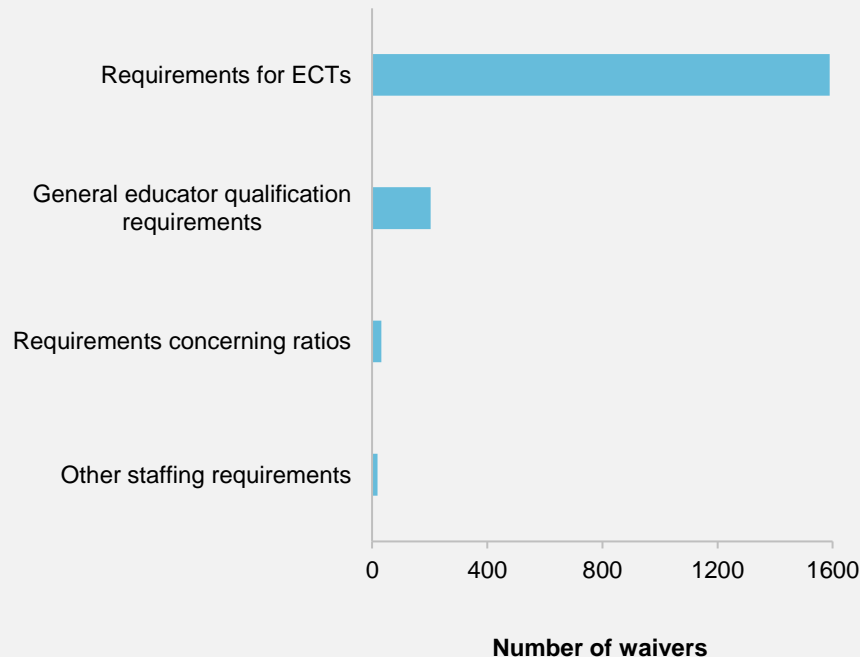


# The share of services with staffing waivers has increased significantly

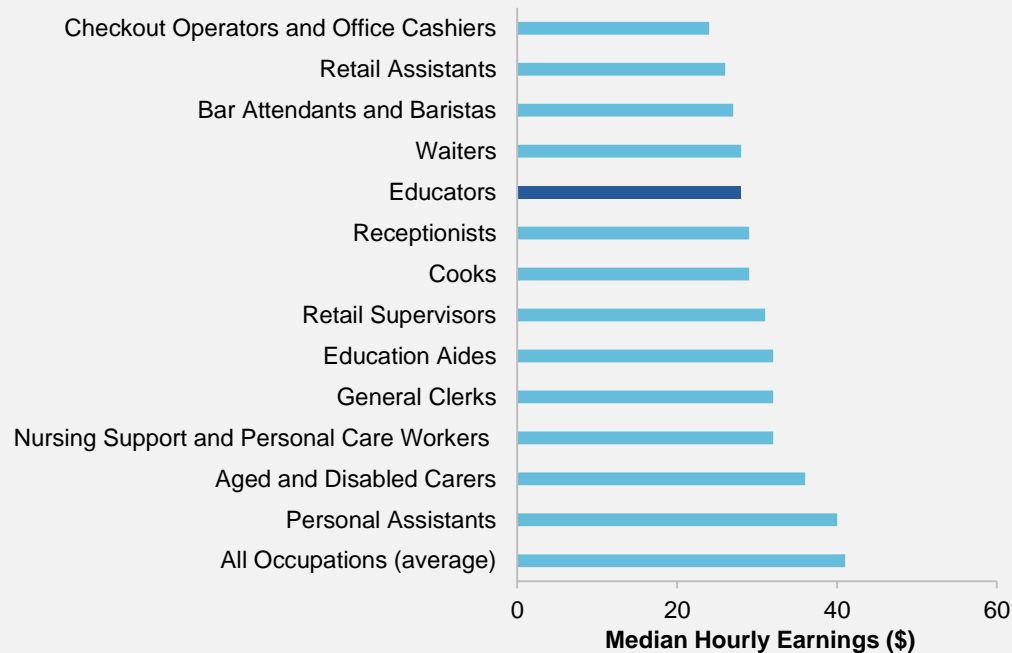
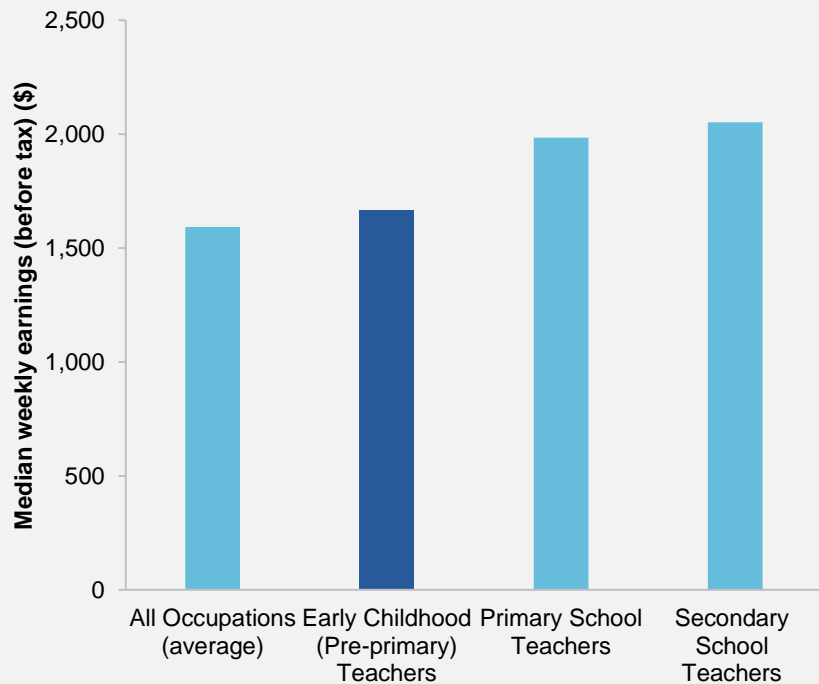
Proportion of services with a waiver, by quarter, by category, 2013–2023



Number of waivers in force as of 15 February 2023, by exemption area, all service types



# Pay in the sector is less than ‘competing’ occupations



# Our draft recommendations and findings on the ECEC workforce



# Processes addressing pay and conditions



Pay and conditions '**long at the heart**' of recruitment and retention challenges



Likely that the pay for many in the sector will increase as a result of:



FWC authorisation to commence **supported bargaining**.  
'Rope in' provisions could also have an effect



FWC examining where there is **gender pay inequality and potential undervaluation of work and qualifications** to inform future award wage reviews

# Reduce barriers to upskilling



Governments should **reduce barriers for educators seeking to upskill** to ECTs by:



working with unis and the sector to **develop and promote** accelerated ECT degrees



**expanding wrap-around supports** (e.g. mentoring) for educators undertaking ECT qualifications



**providing financial support** to ECEC services so they can provide paid leave for educators completing practicums

# Improve pathways and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to obtain ECEC qualifications



Improve pathways and **support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to obtain ECEC qualifications**, such as by:



using different approaches – such as culturally appropriate interviews



using teaching assessment models that might be more accessible or culturally appropriate



providing tailored, small group or one-on-one supports

# Better supporting and developing the workforce



S&T governments should **improve teacher registration arrangements** for ECTs



any ACECQA-approved ECT qualification should be recognised



Govts should **develop structured mentoring and support programs** for ECTs, recognising they often provide pedagogical leadership



Govts should **contribute to the cost** of professional development that promotes quality and inclusive ECEC



# Improving the National Workforce Strategy



Several features of the strategy are commendable



But there is scope to improve the strategy, including by:



**articulating a clearer objective** and including projections on future workforce need



**clarifying how actions will be resourced**



**Govts producing annual updates** on how their actions align with the strategy

# Next steps

**Consultation and  
public hearings**



**Draft report  
submissions**



Due 14 February 2024

**Final report  
to Government**



30 June 2024

**Thank you**