

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

ACT ECEC and OSHC workforce

ACT EDUCATION DIRECTORATE



nous



ACT
Government



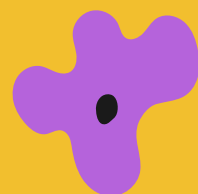
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Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the valuable contributions of all those who supported the development of this report. We thank the ACT's early childhood education and care (ECEC) and Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) workers, educators, leaders and peak bodies for sharing their insights and experiences.

We also extend our appreciation to the Valuing Educators Reference Group members, and all the organisations that supported engagement in focus groups and circulated the workforce survey.

Your input was essential in shaping the findings presented here.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

ECEC and OSHC in the ACT: a sector in transformation

In 2025, the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) sector is undergoing unprecedented change. These shifts are being shaped by new government policies, intensified attention on child safety and the changing needs of children and families.

National reforms are making early learning more accessible and affordable. The Australian Government is working towards a system where every family can get at least three days of subsidised care each week.¹ Making ECEC accessible for every family not only supports children's development but also helps parents participate in the workforce and enables productivity. Billions of dollars are being invested to support this, including higher wages for educators and better access for children who need it most.

Safety and quality are also in focus. New laws introduce additional powers for regulators and requirements for services administering the Child Care

Subsidy (CCS) related to ensuring quality and safety. A national register will track childcare workers, and new rules will govern technology use in centres, including mandatory CCTV and limits on personal devices. Many of these reforms aimed at strengthening child safety also introduce new responsibilities on educators and services, which could add strain to an already stretched workforce.

Educators are seeing more children with complex needs. Data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) shows more children are experiencing developmental vulnerability,² partly linked to the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.³ These pressures are influencing workforce requirements, including the skills and capabilities needed by educators.

Overall, the ECEC and OSHC sector is navigating a fast-changing environment, with new expectations, responsibilities and opportunities to improve outcomes for workers, children and families.

About the survey and needs analysis

Why did we do this work?

Identifying workforce capacity and needs is a key action in [Valuing Educators, Values Children: A Workforce Strategy for the ACT early childhood education and care profession \(2022-25\)](#). The ACT Education Directorate (EDU) partnered with Nous Group (Nous) to conduct a comprehensive survey and needs analysis of the ECEC and OSHC workforce in the ACT. This work is timely and important, as it provides a clearer picture of the sector's strengths, challenges and future needs.

The goals were to:

- **Listen to the sector:** Engage with a wide range of services and educators to build a clear picture of the workforce, including who makes up the workforce, what skills and capacity they have, and what support they need.
- **Plan for action:** Identify practical next steps for EDU based on what the sector shared. The findings of the survey and needs analysis highlight areas where investment and improvements could make a real difference.
- **Build a strong foundation for future decision-making:** Collect reliable data and create tools to support future policy decisions and workforce planning in the ECEC and OSHC sectors.

How did we do this work?

Nous and EDU wanted to find the answers to six key questions.

1

What is the structure of the sector?

2

What is the composition of the workforce?

3

What is working well in the workforce and the sector?

4

What are the needs/gaps in the workforce and sector?

5

What are the pressures on the workforce and sector?

6

What are areas for future focus in early childhood strategy for the ACT?

To find these answers, the survey and needs analysis drew on four sources of data:

- consultation with ECEC and OSHC educators, leaders and peak bodies
- the ECEC and OSHC workforce survey, targeted at all ACT sector workers with different questions for educators and leaders
- analysis of public datasets
- desktop review of policy, peer reviewed and grey literature documents.

Nous and EDU are very grateful for the strong engagement from educators, leaders and peak bodies in focus groups and in response to the ECEC and OSHC workforce survey. The input of sector workers was essential to making this work possible. The survey and needs analysis were informed by a wide range of voices and data. Figure 1 shows the different sources that helped shape the findings. The information in this sector snapshot comes from a combination of these sources.

What did we find?

Through focus groups, surveys, public datasets and desktop review, we explored four key areas that matter most to people working in ECEC and OSHC.

These areas are:

- **The big picture: what’s shaping the sector.** This includes trends in workforce growth and the number of children accessing services.
- **Workforce composition.** We looked at who makes up the sector – demographics, identity characteristics, qualifications and experience levels.
- **Workforce development, skills and professional learning in the sector.** This covers how educators and leaders are building their skills, the barriers they face, and what they need to keep learning and growing.
- **Recruitment, retention and workforce wellbeing in the sector.** We explored what attracts people to the sector, what might cause them to leave, and how their wellbeing is supported.

This sector snapshot shares key findings about each of these four areas. It summarises what people working in the sector told us in the survey and focus groups, alongside insights from public data. In the final section, we outline areas for future focus by EDU. These future priorities are grouped under the same four themes – current conditions, workforce composition, workforce development, and recruitment and wellbeing – to guide targeted action to support the sector.

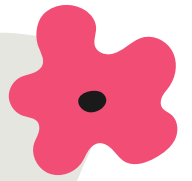


FIGURE 1

Data collection summary

CONSULTATION

9

Focus groups

9

Early childhood educators across 2 focus groups

15

ECEC leaders across 2 focus groups

6

OSHC educators across 1 focus group

12

OSHC leaders across 1 focus group

15

Peak body stakeholders across 2 focus groups

ECEC AND OSHC WORKFORCE SURVEY

135 Responses from ECEC and OSHC educators and workers

171 Responses from ECEC and OSHC leaders

PUBLIC DATA SETS

9 Datasets analysed, including from the ECEC National Workforce Census, Jobs and Skills Australia and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

DESKTOP REVIEW

11 Policy, peer reviewed and grey literature documents

THE BIG PICTURE: WHAT'S SHAPING THE SECTOR

Quick Snapshot

What does this mean and why does it matter?

The big picture: what's shaping the sector is about the big issues in the sector including workforce growth, enrolments in key qualifications, demand for services and pressures workers are feeling. Understanding these issues matters because they directly affect how well prepared the sector is to support future demands, and how sustainable current practices are.

What did we find?

The ACT workforce is growing more slowly than in previous years, with just 2 per cent growth between 2021 and 2024, which is lower than national growth (11 per cent) in this time. This marks a shift from earlier periods when ACT growth matched or exceeded national trends.

At the same time, demand for ECEC is expected to rise due to new policies that expand access and projected population growth of children. However, qualification enrolments in the ACT are declining or flat, especially in Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways, which may limit the supply of new educators locally.

Most ACT educators work in centre-based day care (CBDC), and while the number of CBDCs has increased, child attendance has remained steady or declined slightly. An increased number of centres creates more choice for families and greater bargaining power for educators. On the other hand, the misalignment between trends in child attendance and centre openings has led to lower occupancy in some services, creating financial pressure and competition for staff. Educators also report rising workloads, increased media scrutiny, and more children with complex needs as key pressures.

In detail

The workforce is growing less than it has in the past while the number of children and families who want to use ECEC might increase

Between 2021 and 2024, the ACT ECEC and OSHC workforce grew by just 2 per cent, compared to 11 per cent nationally. This is a shift from previous trends where ACT growth was similar to or higher than the national average. For example, between 2013 and 2016, the ACT workforce grew by 48 per cent compared to 55 per cent nationally, and between 2016 and 2021, ACT growth was 19 per cent compared to 11 per cent nationally.⁴

There are new policies being introduced to help more families access ECEC and the population of children under five in the ACT is predicted to go up. This means more ECEC workers might be needed to meet increased demand from children and families.

ECEC qualification enrolments in the ACT are falling or flat, while they are rising nationally

Vocational Education and Training (VET) enrolments in the ACT declined by 34 per cent between 2019 and 2023, contrasting with an increase in enrolments nationally.⁵

University enrolments in ECEC courses are growing strongly across most of Australia, with a 9 per cent annual growth rate between 2019 and 2023, compared to 3 per cent for VET, but ACT university enrolments remain steady.⁶ This may reflect a shifting preference for online or out-of-territory study, given most educators surveyed (63 per cent) completed their studies locally. Falling enrolments in qualifications at ACT providers may also be contributing to slower workforce growth in the ACT, with limited new ACT-based educators in the qualification pipeline.

Most of the workers and services in the ACT are concentrated in centre-based day care

Around two thirds of the ACT ECEC and OSHC workforce are employed in centre-based day care (CBDC) based on National Workforce Census data.⁷ This aligns with the split of CCS approved services in the ACT, with around two thirds being CBDCs. There is a relatively higher proportion of OSHC workers in the ACT than nationally. The distribution of workers across service types is shown in Figure 2.

Between 2019 and 2023, enrolments in university ECEC qualifications at ACT providers increased by

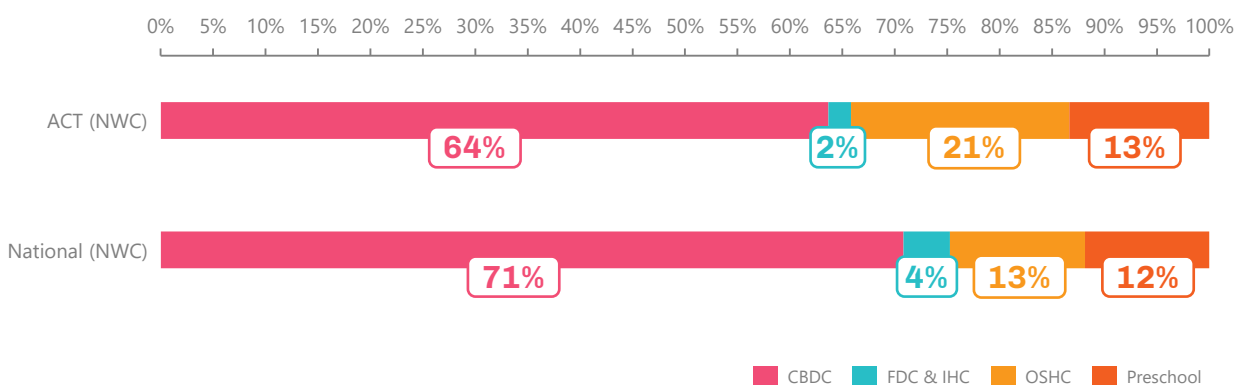
1%

Between 2019 and 2023, enrolments in VET ECEC qualifications at ACT providers fell by

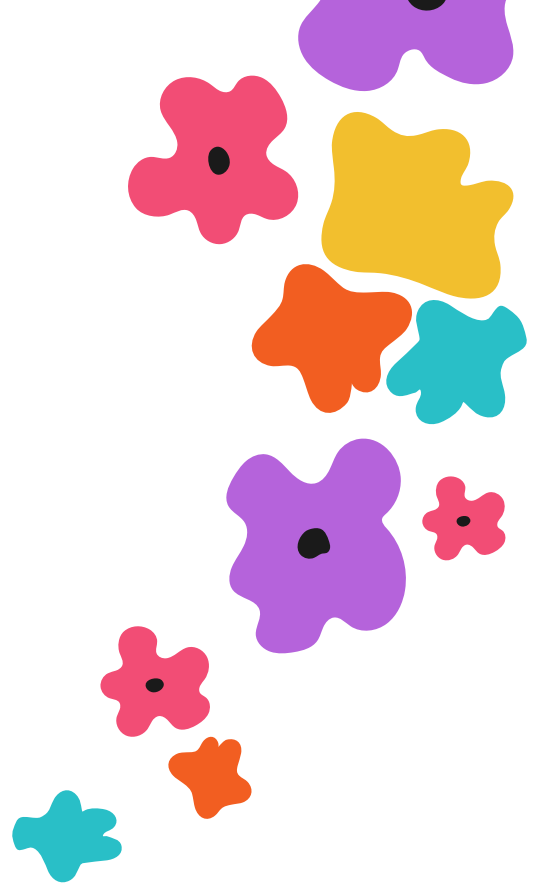
34%

FIGURE 2

Proportion of workers in different service types, ACT vs national



Source: National Workforce Census 2024

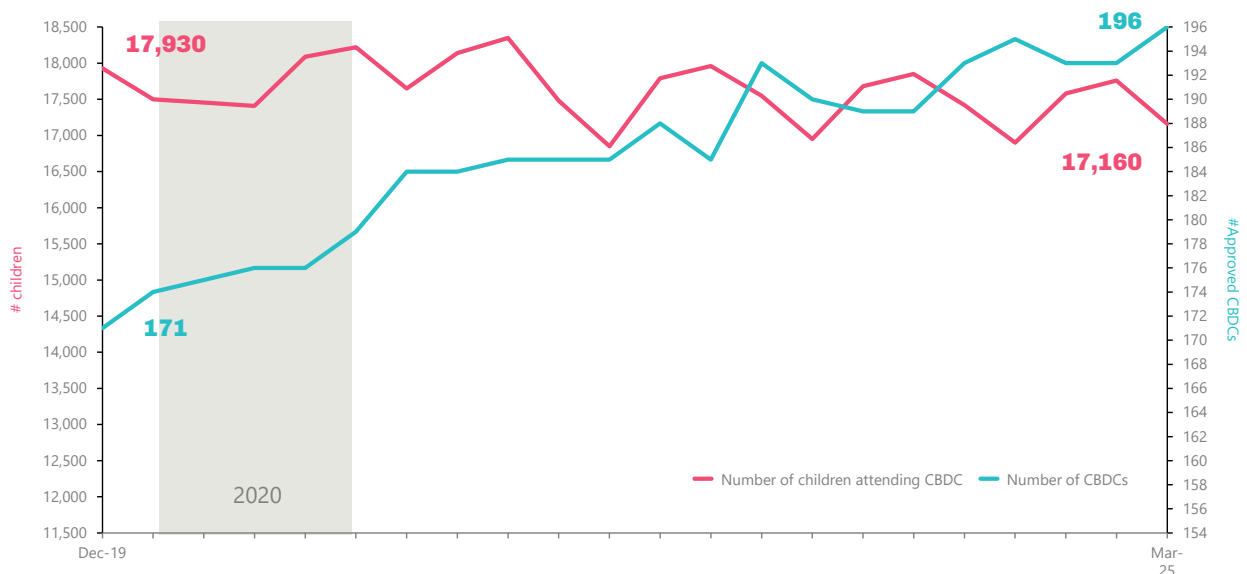


The number of CBDCs has increased but the number of children attending CBDC has remained constant

Between March 2020 and March 2025, there has only been one additional OSHC service approved and there are two less family day care services based on CCS data. In this time, an additional 22 CBDCs have been approved. However, over the same period the number of children attending CBDC has decreased slightly. This means the trend in growth of CBDCs is not currently well aligned to the changes in numbers of children attending care (Figure 3). A greater number of services means families have more choice, and educators have greater bargaining power when it comes to pay and conditions. However, it also creates competition for staff and enrolments. Across both ECEC and OSHC, some services are operating at more than 20 per cent below their approved capacity. When services operate well below their approved capacity, it can create financial challenges that affect sustainability. Lower occupancy means less revenue to cover fixed costs like rent, wages and insurance. This can lead to tough decisions, such as raising fees or limiting extra supports for staff. Maintaining healthy occupancy levels helps services manage costs and continue supporting children, families and educators.

FIGURE 3

Change in approved CBDCs and child attendance between December 2019 and March 2025



Source: quarterly CCS data, December 2019 – March 2025

The workforce is under a lot of pressure because of heightened media attention, high workloads and increasing needs of children

Educators and leaders across the ACT have shared that their work feels more demanding than ever. Many long-time professionals say this is the biggest change they've seen in the sector, driven by increased media scrutiny, rising workload and more complex needs among children:

- **Greater visibility and media attention.** Educators and leaders are feeling the pressure of increased media coverage of the sector, often critical in tone. This has left some feeling under constant scrutiny, which can affect confidence and morale. Leaders are concerned that negative news stories might discourage new workers from joining the sector.
- **Rising workload.** Educators and leaders say workload pressures are increasing. Documentation requirements can take time away from children and often spill into unpaid hours, with frequent changes and growing family expectations adding to the challenge. OSHC educators and workers had unique views on documentation, with some highlighting that documentation time can create additional paid work where hours are scarce. Current ratios were also cited as contributing to stress. While services meet legislated requirements, some educators feel these are not appropriate to ensure their wellbeing. Staffing above ratio seems to improve satisfaction among educators, but it is not always financially possible.
- **Supporting children with higher needs.** Educators are seeing more children with developmental vulnerabilities and complex needs. This was the most common challenge mentioned in surveys, appearing in 38 per cent of responses to "what is the most challenging part of your job?". These observations also reflect national trends, with the AEDC National Report 2024 illustrating rising vulnerability across all five domains since 2021 data collection. While this can be a challenging part of working in ECEC, most surveyed educators (72 per cent) felt confident in their ability to support children with additional needs.

The media pressure we're seeing at the moment is really having an impact on educators' confidence.

ECEC leader

It's really hard when new staff come in and don't know the strategies to support children with additional needs.

OSHC educator

The admin load is a separate full-time job that is squeezed into after hours and weekends

ECEC educator

WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

Quick Snapshot

What does this mean and why does it matter?

Workforce composition is about the characteristics of the ECEC and OSHC workforce in the ACT such as age, gender mix, qualifications, experience, and cultural and linguistic diversity. It matters because supporting the workforce appropriately depends on understanding where people come from and who they are.

What did we find?

The demographics of the ACT ECEC and OSHC workforces are very different and should be considered separately.

ECEC workforce

The ACT ECEC workforce is predominantly made up of women aged 25–44, with high cultural and linguistic diversity* compared to the broader ACT population. There is a slightly higher

proportion of male educators working in ECEC in the ACT than the national average. Most workers have a relevant ECEC qualification and have worked in the sector for 1 - 6 years and at their current service for less than 3 years.

OSHC workforce

The OSHC workforce has a more balanced gender mix, with about one-third men. Most workers are younger, aged 15–24, and have been in the sector and at their current service for three years or less. Around a quarter of OSHC educators are culturally and linguistically diverse*, lower than ECEC but higher than the ACT average. Only about one in five hold an ECEC qualification.

*Note these figures are based on the ECEC and OSHC workforce survey, the remaining demographic data is drawn from the National Workforce Census.



In detail

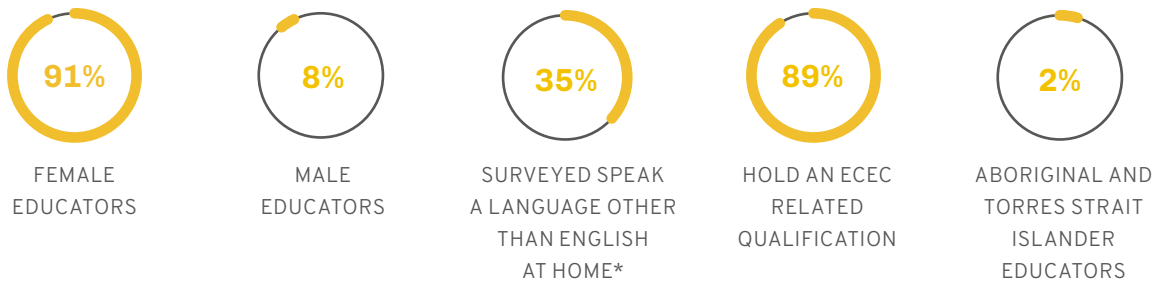
ECEC Workforce

The ACT ECEC workforce is mostly women (91 per cent) aged 25–44 (60 per cent), with slightly more men than the national average (5 per cent compared to 8 per cent). It is culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), with 35 per cent speaking a language other than English at home compared to 25 per cent of the ACT population. Most educators hold an ECEC qualification, and only 11 per cent lack one. The most common qualification is an advanced diploma/diploma, held by 38 per cent of the workforce.

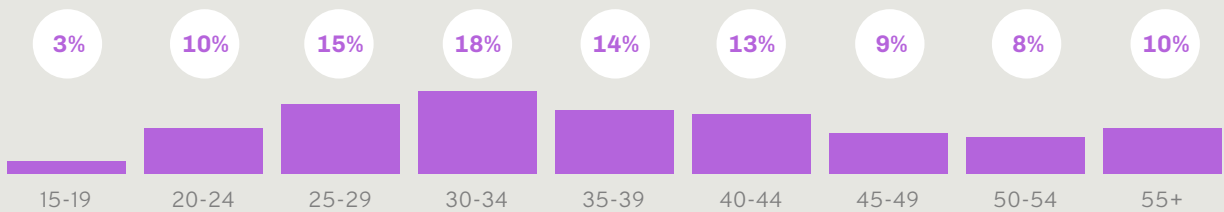
In terms of experience, 45 per cent have worked in the sector for three years or less, and 78 per cent have been at their current service for three years or less. These insights highlight a workforce that is feminised, diverse and mobile. These factors influence recruitment, retention, workforce wellbeing and professional development across the sector. Figure 4 is a visual representation of the ACT ECEC workforce.

FIGURE 4

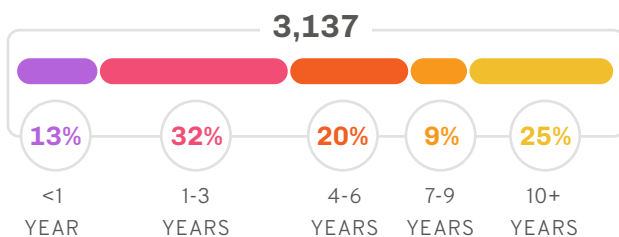
Visual profile of the ACT ECEC workforce



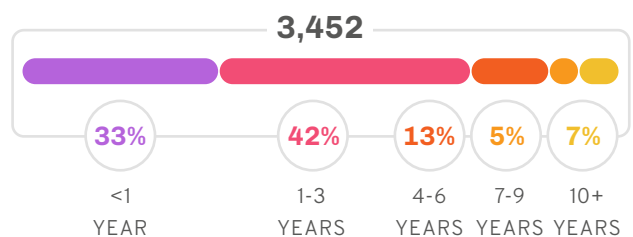
Age of the ACT ECEC workforce – NWC 2024 ACT disaggregated results



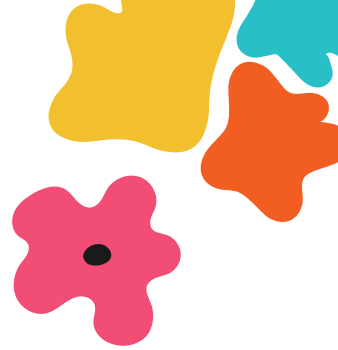
Years of experience in the ECEC sector – NWC 2024 ACT disaggregated results



Years of tenure in the ECEC sector – NWC 2024 ACT disaggregated results



Source: National Workforce Census 2024, *denotes data from ECEC and OSHC workforce survey



OSHC workforce

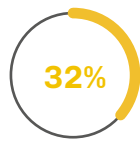
The OSHC workforce has a more balanced gender mix than ECEC, with about one-third men (32 per cent), which is also higher than the national OSHC average of 19 per cent. It is also much younger than both the national OSHC and ACT ECEC workforces, with 63 per cent aged 24 or younger. Qualification levels are lower than in ECEC – only 21 per cent of people hold a relevant qualification. The most common qualification is also an advanced diploma/diploma which is held by 10 per cent of educators. Most workers are relatively new to the sector, with 79 per cent having worked in OSHC for three years or less and 86 per cent at their current service for the same period. These figures highlight a workforce that is younger, less qualified, and has lower levels of experience compared to ECEC. Figure 5 is a visual representation of the ACT OSHC workforce.

FIGURE 5

Visual profile of the ACT OSHC workforce



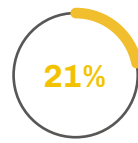
FEMALE EDUCATORS



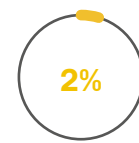
MALE EDUCATORS



SURVEYED SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME*

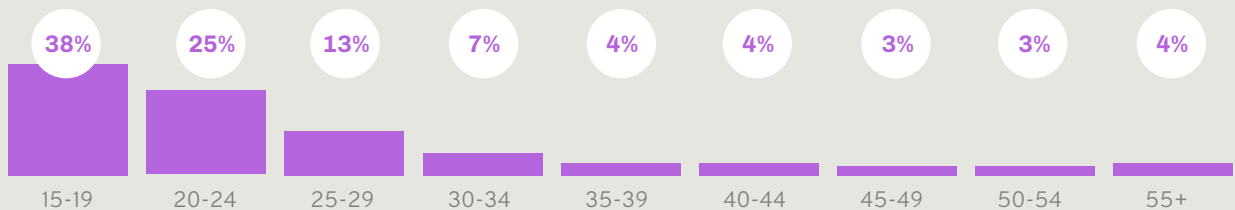


HOLD AN ECEC RELATED QUALIFICATION

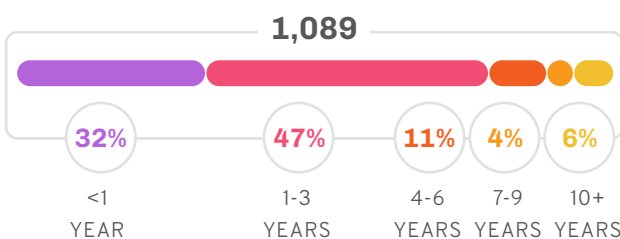


ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATORS

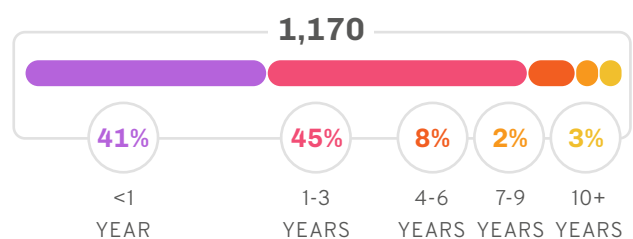
Age of the ACT OSHC workforce – NWC 2024 ACT disaggregated results



Years of experience in the OSHC sector – NWC 2024 ACT disaggregated results



Years of tenure in the OSHC sector – NWC 2024 ACT disaggregated results



Source: National Workforce Census 2024, *denotes data from ECEC and OSHC workforce survey

We get all the same kids with none of the same mandated training.

**OSHC educator,
focus group**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, SKILLS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Quick Snapshot

What does this mean and why does it matter?

Workforce development, skills and professional learning are about how educators and leaders in early learning and out of school hours care build their skills, grow their careers, and get the training they need to do their jobs well. Having access to good quality training and clear career pathways helps everyone feel more confident and supported at work. It also means children and families get the best possible care and education.

What did we find?

Educators and leaders told us they are keen to keep learning and developing their skills, but sometimes face barriers like cost, time, or not enough support from their service. Many want more opportunities for mentoring, further study, and practical training that matches the real work they do every day. OSHC educators, in particular, said they often miss out on training that is tailored to their needs. Leaders across ECEC and OSHC highlighted that they want to offer more training opportunities for their staff but are also held back by budgets, time and training availability.

We have very little training that you can access that's affordable and meets the needs of a new educator.

ECEC educator

We want to offer lots and lots of opportunities for training, but it eats up a lot of our budget, and we don't want to be the most expensive centre in the ACT for families.

ECEC leader

In detail

Strengthening career pathways in the sector starts with better access to professional learning and more consistent qualification standards

Professional identity is strengthening across the ECEC sector, with growing efforts to build this in OSHC as well. Many educators report high confidence and capability in core skills in their roles and want to continue developing. Ongoing investment in workforce development will help sustain and build on these strengths, supporting educators to thrive and grow in their careers.

Key themes in consultations about workforce development were concentrated in three areas:

- a strong desire across educator and leader cohorts for more career development opportunities, including mentoring and further study
- the importance of accessible and inclusive professional learning with a considered focus on OSHC
- stronger consistency and quality in qualifications.

ECEC and OSHC educators in the ACT are confident and capable

ECEC and OSHC educators surveyed exhibit high confidence in core tasks in their role, as shown in Figure 6.

There is strong engagement in professional learning across the surveyed cohort, with 83 per cent having participated in professional development over the past year. This shows commitment to continuous improvement across the sector.

There is strong appetite among educators for career development and professional learning in both ECEC and OSHC, but barriers remain

Educators and leaders across both ECEC and OSHC in the ACT are motivated to grow. Focus groups revealed strong interest in professional learning, especially in areas like trauma-informed care, cultural safety and supporting children with high needs – needs that were consistent across both ECEC and OSHC. Further, most surveyed educators and leaders are considering or intending to pursue further study (62 per cent). However, time, cost and limited support such as study leave can make access challenging.

FIGURE 6

Percentage of educators who feel very or mostly confident to deliver core tasks in their role n=104

81%

Facilitate compliance in a children's education and care service

88%

Analyse information to inform children's learning

84%

Plan and implement children's education and care curriculum

83%

Embed environmental responsibility in service operations

95%

Maintain a safe and healthy environment for children

92%

Foster holistic early childhood learning, development and wellbeing

96%

Nurture creativity in children

92%

Foster positive and respectful interactions and behaviour in children

85%

Implement strategies for the inclusion of all children

88%

Work in partnership with children's families

Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey

There are some training providers who treat qualifications like a tick and flick... [this means] you have to train your team up from scratch, even though they have qualifications.

ECEC leader, focus group



While surveyed leaders feel they offer enough development opportunities in their service, fewer than half of educators agree (Figure 7) pointing to a need for better communication and alignment on career development ambitions. Leaders expressed they want to offer more professional learning opportunities for their staff but are often constrained by accessibility and affordability.

OSHC educators, in particular, feel overlooked in professional learning, despite playing a vital role in caring for many of the same children as their ECEC colleagues.

While educators and leaders question the feasibility of OSHC as a long-term career pathway, they also emphasise that this does not diminish the importance of professional development

OSHC educators and leaders acknowledge that the structure of their work, such as split shifts, limited hours and lower qualification requirements, can make it challenging to pursue OSHC as a long-term career. However, they also emphasise that this does not lessen the importance of professional learning. OSHC educators are deeply committed to the children they support and consistently called for more tailored, high-quality training opportunities that reflect the unique nature of their work.

There are concerns that current pathways into ECEC are not preparing new educators

There are growing concerns across the ECEC sector that current entry pathways are not adequately preparing new educators for the realities of working with children. Leaders report that many new staff arrive with formal qualifications but lack the practical experience and confidence needed to work effectively in early learning environments. Leaders identified inconsistency in the quality of qualifications across Registered Training Organisations (RTOS), particularly those that are fast-tracked and mostly online. The importance of practical experience was a strong theme, and leaders noted this component is lacking from some qualifications and may not always be well-designed or appropriately assessed where it is offered.

52%

of survey respondents indicated time is a barrier preventing them from further study

49%

of survey respondents indicated cost is a barrier preventing them from further study

Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey, n=124

Inconsistent qualification quality creates:

- recruitment challenges, as leaders cannot rely on formal qualifications to guarantee educator skill and competency
- additional training burden for staff, as existing educators and leaders have to pick up the training slack where new hires are underprepared
- strain on educator wellbeing, as new educators are expected to perform beyond readiness.

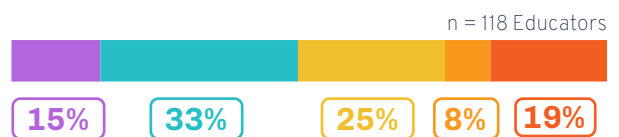
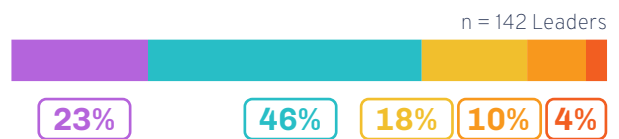
These issues highlight the need for strengthened qualification consistency and quality, particularly of practical training elements.

FIGURE 7

Leader and educator perceptions of the career development opportunities at their service

LEADER SURVEY

Staff employed at the centre/service(s) I lead are offered sufficient opportunities for career progression and development



EDUCATOR SURVEY

I am offered sufficient opportunities for career development at the centre/service I work in

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey

Wellbeing support is so important but it's just not consistent.

OSHC educator



RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND WORKFORCE WELLBEING

Quick Snapshot

What does this mean and why does it matter?

Recruitment, retention and workforce wellbeing is about why educators and leaders in ECEC and OSHC come into the sector, what might make them leave and how they can be better supported. Recruiting and keeping passionate, skilled and supported educators is essential to continue delivering high-quality education and care. Understanding the motivations of workers, their challenges and wellbeing needs can help make changes to improve their experience and keep them in the sector.

What did we find?

Most people working in ECEC and OSHC in the ACT are driven by a strong commitment

to children's wellbeing. While many plan to stay in the sector, high workloads and increasing expectations are intensifying the risk of burnout. Educators and leaders also feel they are not appropriately compensated for the complexity and volume of their work.

Recruitment and retention are becoming more difficult due to strong competition for quality staff. Workplace culture and levels of wellbeing support vary across services, but child safety is mostly embedded and well understood. Educators and leaders highlighted child safety is strongly linked to a well-supported, adequately sized and high-quality workforce. Educators continue to call for greater recognition of their work, better support for wellbeing, and improved pay and conditions to help them stay in the sector.



Community perceptions about the value of ECEC will one day be the reason I choose to either stay or leave as an early childhood teacher and leader after 30 years.

ECEC leader

RECRUITMENT-RETENTION

Seeing how much children grow and how much they learn makes me feel really happy and motivated in my job.

ECEC educator

Balancing documentation while ensuring children receive the attention and care they deserve can be challenging.

ECEC educator

In detail

Most people choose to work in ECEC and OSHC in the ACT because they care deeply about children's wellbeing

The ECEC and OSHC workforce in the ACT is values-driven and most people were motivated to join the sector because they are passionate about working with children (see Figure 8). Building relationships with and educating children was consistently identified as the most rewarding part of a career in ECEC – 76 per cent of survey responses to the question “what is the best part of your job?” highlighted this.

While building strong relationships with children and families is at the heart of ECEC and OSHC, it can also be tough.

Educators shared that these relationships are becoming more demanding, especially as children are spending more time in care and their needs are increasing. On top of this, growing paperwork and documentation requirements are making it harder for educators to spend quality time with children – the part of the job they value most. Many educators and leaders have said this shift is frustrating and could lead some to leave the sector. Educators and leaders called for changes like simplifying documentation or giving extra time to complete it, so they can focus on what matters most: caring for children and building strong, supportive relationships.

FIGURE 8

Top 3 reasons ECEC and OSHC educators and leaders joined the sector



Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey n=289, participants could select multiple options

We're passionate about what we do... The relationships you can build with children and seeing them grow and flourish is amazing.

OSHC educator

72%

of **educator** survey respondents intend to stay in the sector

Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey, n=290

Most educators and leaders surveyed plan to stay in the sector but there is risk of burnout because of high workload

Most educators and leaders surveyed say they plan to stay in ECEC or OSHC, showing strong commitment to the sector. Many are passionate about working with children and see it as a meaningful career. However, high workloads, low pay and limited flexibility are putting pressure on the workforce and increasing the risk of burnout.

Only 56per cent of educators feel their workload is manageable, and less than half believe they are paid fairly for the work they do. Many educators described juggling multiple responsibilities like cleaning, documentation, planning and mentoring on top of caring for children. This workload is often not reflected in their pay or conditions.

Retention is especially challenging in OSHC, where split shifts, lower pay and fewer hours make it harder to see the role as a long-term career. OSHC educators are also more likely to be

75%

of **leader** survey respondents intend to stay in the sector

younger, with many still studying or exploring other career options, which makes it harder to retain them.

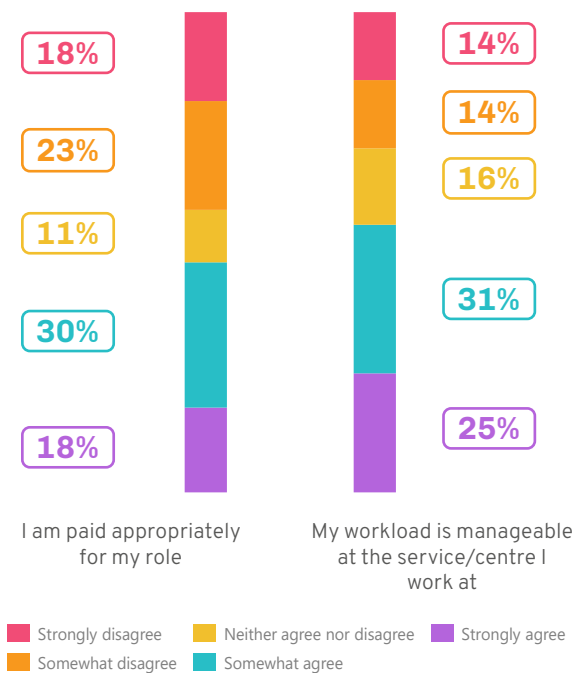
Younger workers across both ECEC and OSHC are more likely to be considering leaving. One in four educators under 35, and nearly one in three leaders under 25, are thinking about leaving the sector in the next year according to the workforce survey. This highlights the need for targeted strategies to support and retain younger staff.

There is strong competition for quality staff across the sector

With more ECEC services opening and not enough new workers entering the sector, competition to attract and keep qualified staff is increasing. Educators often move between centres, especially in the ACT, where the workforce is more mobile. While many surveyed educators are experienced, over half have been at their current service for three years or less (Figure 10).

FIGURE 9

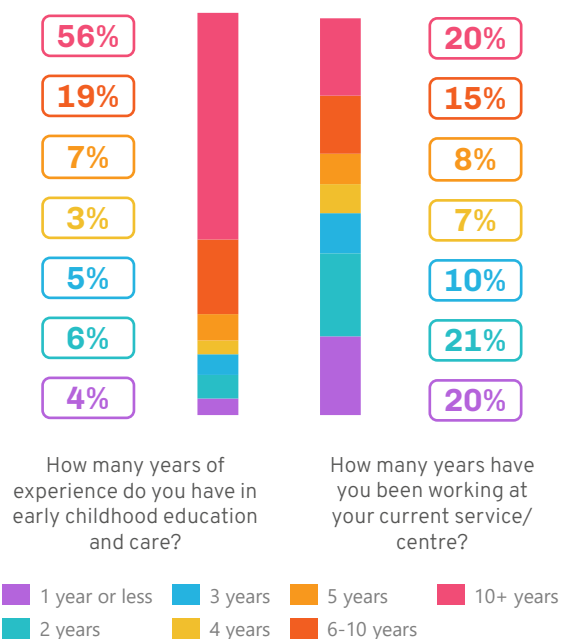
Educator's views on their pay and workload



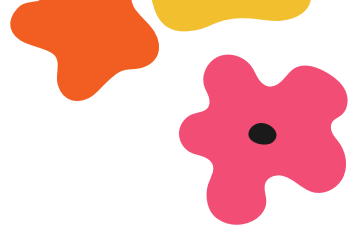
Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey, n=104

FIGURE 10

Level of experience compared to level of tenure of educators and leaders



Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey – includes leader and educator cohorts



61%

of **non-CALD educators** feel they are provided appropriate support for their wellbeing n=54

Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey

42%

of **CALD educators** feel they are provided appropriate support for their wellbeing n=42

Leaders say it is becoming harder to recruit staff, with only 37 per cent feeling that recruitment is manageable at their service. Pay, job titles and modern facilities are all factors that influence where educators choose to work. Reputation also plays a big role – services known for paying well and treating staff fairly are more likely to attract and keep good educators. The sector also struggles to compete with the public service and school sector, which offer better pay, more flexible hours and stronger public recognition.

Workplace culture is highly varied across services.

Workplace culture in ECEC and OSHC services can be very different from one service to another. Positive culture is often shaped by strong relationships between leaders and educators, good connections with the local community – especially where services are linked to schools – and having enough staff to support each other, including staffing above ratio where possible. Not all educators feel equally supported in the sector, especially First Nations educators and those from CALD backgrounds. All educators stand to benefit from more visible and active support for their wellbeing, especially given the emotional and physical demands of their job.

The majority of educators surveyed have completed recent training in child safety and felt confident in this workforce responsibility.

Despite differences in culture and support, child safety is a strength across the sector’s workforce (Figure 11). Most educators surveyed have completed recent training in child safety and feel confident in their responsibilities. A large majority of educators and leaders agreed that child safety is part of their service’s everyday culture and that there is a supportive environment for reporting concerns. Overall, the sector’s workforce showed a strong and shared commitment to keeping children safe.

Educators and leaders talked about how child safety is linked to a lot of other aspects of workforce challenges, including making sure workers have the right skills and feel valued. Some suggested that better wages, ratios and increased recognition are equally impactful ways to ensure child safety as regulation changes.

FIGURE 11

Views on child safety across ECEC and OSHC in the ACT



Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey, note agree includes respondents who somewhat and strongly agreed

The sector continues to seek stronger recognition of the complexity and importance of their work.

Many educators and leaders feel their work is still misunderstood and undervalued by the public, which has a sustained impact on workforce wellbeing. Educators say that improving public recognition of their profession would help them feel more supported and encourage them to stay in the sector. Many also highlighted the link between perceived value of the sector and the pay and conditions of workers, expressing that improved public recognition could translate to improvements in pay.

While there is still work to be done, advocacy efforts in this space are having an impact. Most surveyed educators across ECEC and OSHC feel that their role is valued by their local community (Figure 12). A sustained focus on improving public recognition and professional respect could further uplift educator wellbeing and strengthen retention across the sector. Educators suggested that sharing good news stories could help counter the current media focus on negative issues in ECEC and OSHC and better reflect the positive impact of their work.

We could use this moment to highlight some of the good work that's being done through the media.

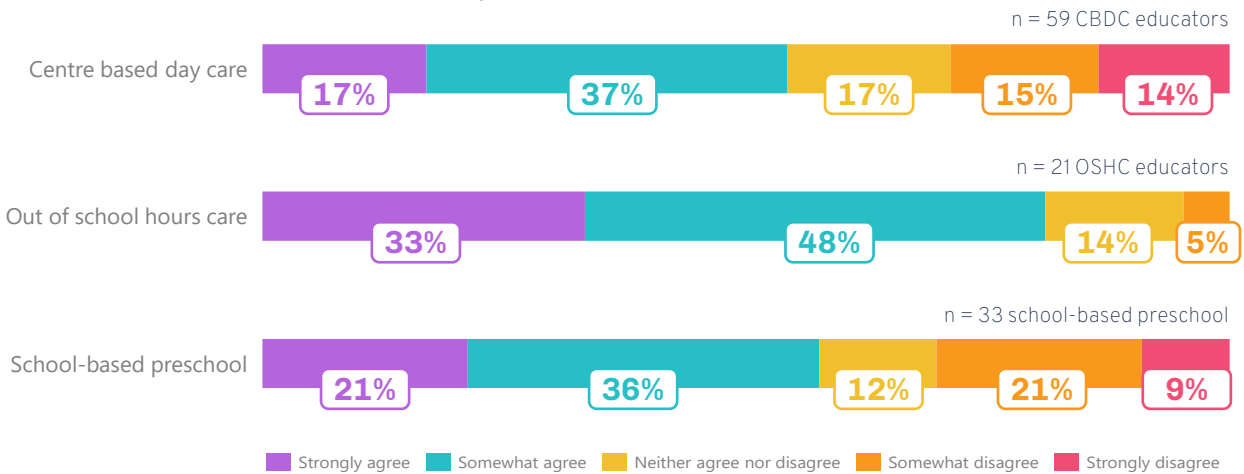
ECEC leader



FIGURE 12

Differences between how valued educators feel across service types

I feel my role is valued by communities, families and government



Source: ECEC and OSHC workforce survey 2025, n=100

AREAS FOR FUTURE FOCUS

Areas for future focus for EDU

Data collected and analysed through the survey and needs analysis highlighted the importance of a considered focus in future workforce planning and strategy on eight key areas. These are identified below.

Future focus for the sector's operating context and outlook

- 1 Use consultation and analytics to anchor future strategic workforce initiatives

Future focus for workforce composition

- 2 Set parameters and provide clarity to the market on service demand to help manage competitive workforce pressures

Future focus for workforce development, skills and professional learning

- 3 Work with the sector to implement measures that improve the uptake and value of qualifications in the ACT
- 4 Further formalise career pathways and broaden professional learning in ways that meet ECEC and OSHC's unique needs and retains skilled people in the education sector
- 5 Work with the sector to understand and adjust administrative burdens so that maximum time is spent on the provision of education and care

Future focus for recruitment, retention and workforce wellbeing

- 6 Continue to support wellbeing measures in workplaces for the sector
- 7 Continue to foster culturally safe and inclusive working environments for the workforce
- 8 Continue to champion the value, impact and importance of ECEC and OSHC in the ACT

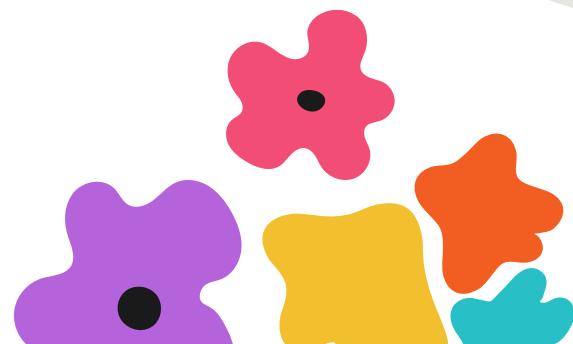
Areas for national collaboration

Some of the changes educators and leaders are calling for go beyond what EDU can directly control. We have included them in this snapshot because these issues matter deeply to people working in the sector and came up often during consultations (see Table 3). EDU is well placed to play a strategic advocacy or advisory role on behalf of the ACT ECEC and OSHC sector in discussion with peak bodies, other sector leaders and governments on these recurring and complex issues.

Future focus areas for continued advocacy

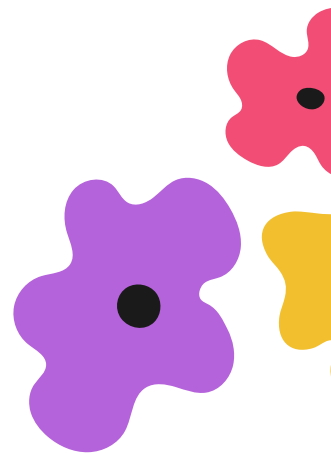
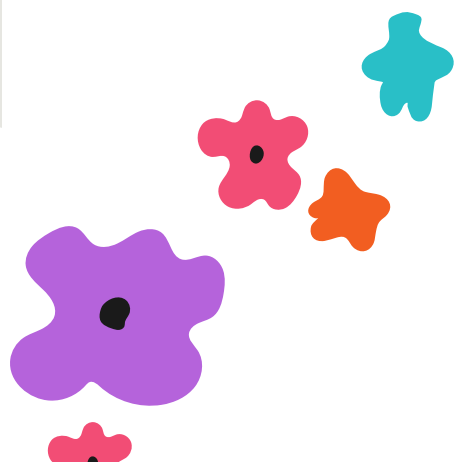
Recurring themes which the workforce thinks need further consideration by governments

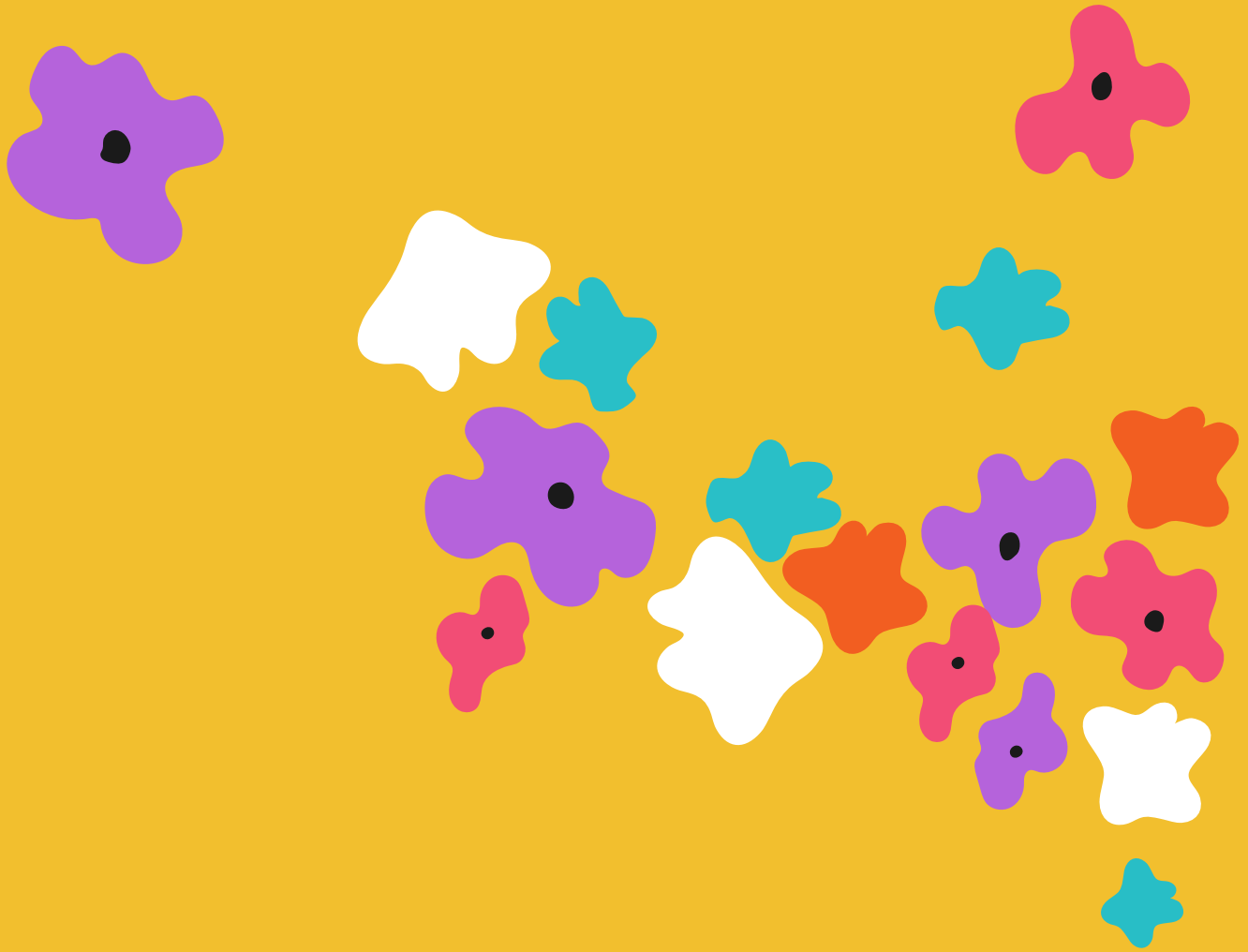
- 1 Alignment of legislated ratios with sector needs
- 2 Appropriateness of the award for ECEC and OSHC workers
- 3 Suitability of leave entitlements, including the potential to expand mental health and carers leave



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