

PHILLIP ISLAND EARLY LEARNING CENTRE SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ENQUIRY INTO THE ECEC SECTOR 2023

SCOPE

The purpose of this report is to address the barrier of lack of availability to accessing ECEC

Barrier to accessing ECEC: staff shortage

PIELC often suffers from a shortfall in Child Care staff, finding it difficult to attract high-quality Child Care employees during recruitment drives.

As a result, we are unable to enrol more children from our waitlist, due to staff shortages. Some children have been on the waitlist for nearly 2 years.

PIELC has also lost Child Care staff to the Kindergarten sector, due to the more favourable work conditions for the kindergarten workforce. The state of Victoria has offered many incentives to the kindergarten workforce in order to attract more staff to the sector, in line with its expansion of access to 30 hours of preschool for children. While this benefits the 3-year-old-and-above age group, our longest waitlist is for the under-3-year-old age group, which is cared for by Child Care Educators.

The National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy illustrates the wage disparity between Child Care Educators and other Educators.



This table reflects the similarities between the tasks performed by Child Care staff and Primary School Teachers.
It also shows a comparison between revenue and work conditions of Kindergarten staff compared to Child Care staff

Primary School Teachers	Early Childhood Educators
Plan and implement a range of teaching programs or courses of study	Plan and implement a range of teaching programs within the Early Years Learning Framework
Provide a child safe environment in accordance with the child safe standards	Provide a child safe environment in accordance with the child safe standards
Teach an area of the curriculum or a general curriculum to a year level	Teach an area of the Early Years Learning Framework to a child's next level of abilities
Monitor, evaluate and report student progress in key learning areas	Monitor, evaluate and report student progress
Implement strategies to achieve targets related to student learning outcomes	Implement strategies to achieve targets related to student developmental outcomes
Maintain records of class attendance and recording student progress	Maintain records of attendance, time dropped off and time collected, and recording student progress
Implement effective student management consistent with the school's strategic plan	Implement effective student management consistent with the Centre's philosophy statement
	Change nappies, wipe noses, wash toys and blankets

Wages-to-revenue comparison: Kindergarten vs. Child Care

Kindergarten wages as a percentage of kindergarten revenue: 74%, with 9 staff	Child care wages as a percentage of child care revenue: 63%, with 15 staff
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Work Conditions Comparison - Kinder staff compared to Child Care Staff

Kindergarten Teachers	Child Care Educators
Teachers: 7.5 hours non-contact time per 15 hours teaching	Room Leaders: 2 hours non-contact time per 38 hours teaching
Class size: 22 children each week	Class size: Between 24 and 49 children each week
Assistants: 3.75 hours non-contact time per 15 hours teaching	Assistants: zero non-contact time
12 weeks' leave per year	4 weeks' leave per year
16 weeks paid parental leave	NO paid parental leave

Addressing staff shortage (staff employed under the Childrens Services Award 2010)

The Australian Community Children's Services' (ACCS) Trends in Community Children's Services 2019 Survey states "Analysis of TICCSS data, using the rates of revenue spent on annual staff expenditure and tenure-stability measures, support previous research findings which suggest that expenditure on staff is linked with better pay and conditions outcomes for educators. Greater stability of staff will, in turn, lead to better care and development of children"

"Not-for-profit services are providing a high quality setting to support teachers and educators' welfare and wellbeing. Working conditions can alleviate or exacerbate burnout. For instance, having limited time allocated for planning and programming, or to collaborate with colleagues, was one factor which was raised..." [Jovanovic, J. (2013). Retaining Early Childcare Educators. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 20(5), 528–544.]

The ACCS analysis of TICCSS 2019 data also states "including the provision of other entitlements, the majority of not-for-profit services have consistently provided pay and entitlements for educators above their relevant industry award (71% 2014; 75% 2017; and 2019 73%) . . .

. . . Positive organisational cultures support teachers and educators to feel valued and appreciated. One measure of this is the proportion of services' budget that is allocated to staff costs. Generally, the larger the proportion of annual revenue is spent on staffing costs, the better qualified and greater number of staff employed at the service. This in turn leads to higher quality care." [<http://ausccs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/TICCS-2019-National-report-v5-27112020.pdf>]

Due to some organizational constraints, some Centres are unable to pay their staff above-award wages (constrained to pay exactly at the Wage Award rates) as per the previous two paragraphs. This makes it an uneven playing field when they are trying to hire child care staff, if other Centres are offering above-award wages.

Barrier to continuing high-quality ECEC: staff burnout

PIELC offers high-quality education and care, as reflecting by our Rating of Exceeding the National Quality Standard.

Part of the many systems in place is the Quality Improvement Plan, Assessment and Rating, and Compliance Visits. While these are all vital parts of ensuring excellence in quality care for children, it seems that pastoral care of childcare staff is left out of the equation.

In order to meet the burden of compliance and meeting regulatory requirements without reducing the amount of time that Educators can spend in quality engagement with children, Educators can experience burnout, which is one of the factors in staff leaving the Child Care sector to work in the Kindergarten sector. While emphasis on the needs of children is paramount, there also needs to be emphasis on staff wellbeing and empowerment.

This would include

- A higher hourly wage rate
 - More programming time
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Accessibility to Early Childhood Education and Care is a key foundation to childhood development and wellbeing. Investment in attraction and retention of high-quality staffing is a factor in increasing availability of ECEC to families.