

**Figure 1.** Age group composition of overseas-born ECEC workers (\*), (\*\*), NT and Australia.

Notes: \*Overseas-born include NZ-born. Age groups in NT and Australia as a whole comprise each: (i) Australian-born, (ii) overseas-born and (iii) country of birth not stated. \*\*Encompasses: Childcare centre managers, early childhood teachers, childcare workers, family day care workers, nannies, child carers nfd and preschool aides.

Source: ABS 2011 Census, unpublished data.

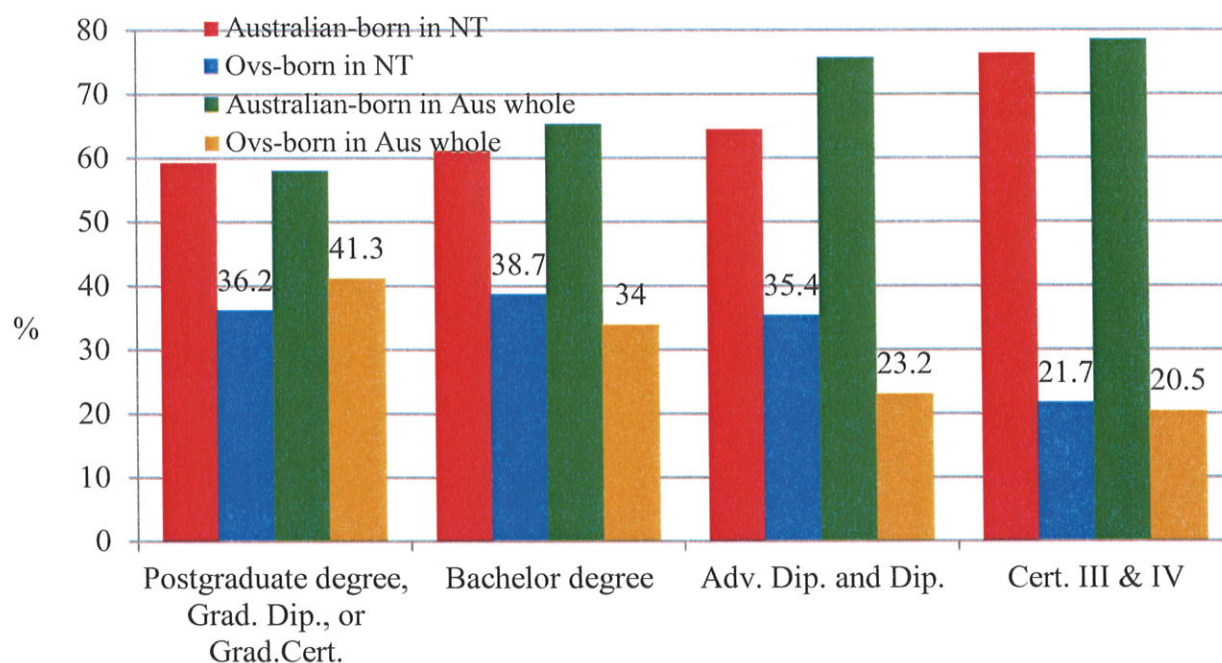
**Period of Arrival and Immigration Stream** The single largest proportion of the interviewees arrived in Australia between 1981 and 2000 (48%). Arrivals 2007–2010 represented 19% of the sample and the 2011 arrivals had a 15% share. The interviews suggest that few overseas-born ECEC workers in the NT have lived elsewhere in Australia: 81% reported moving to the NT directly from overseas. Of the remaining 19%, the majority had previously lived in Perth. The interviews further suggest that regardless of immigration stream, migration served to reunite a family or keep a nucleus family unit together, except those of refugee backgrounds (11% of the sample), where the migration party was not always the immediate family. The majority of the respondents were family stream migrants (63%). Some arrived as spouses or fiancées of either Australian or overseas-born husbands and others were sponsored by family members. All those who arrived as skilled migrants (15%) were dependents on their husbands' skilled visas. The majority of the remaining 11% of the sample were in the non-visaed categories.

The DIAC statistics of permanent additions of immigrants with ECEC-related occupations to the NT population revealed merely 24 such additions between 2001–02 and 2010–11. They were concentrated in the family stream (where qualifications do not determine eligibility for migration), followed by the skilled stream. 'Early childhood teacher', 'education aides' and 'childcare workers' were the most common. Similarly, in this period in Australia as a whole more permanent additions with ECEC-related qualifications were recorded in the family rather than the skilled stream (except two years).

**English Language Ability** Both the Census data and information obtained in the interviews are self-assessments and suggest reasonably high English language ability. The 2011 Census revealed that 40% of the overseas-born ECEC workers in the NT spoke only English and of those who also spoke other languages, 30% reported speaking English 'very well' and 26% 'well'. After excluding the NZ-born, the proportion of only English speakers dropped to 33.4%. In the interviews, 81% reported speaking English 'very well' and 19% 'well'.

Importantly, there was less confidence in reading and writing; 67% reported doing so ‘very well’ and 33% ‘well’.

**Highest Level of Education in Any Field of Study** The 2011 Census (Figure 2) showed that (a) the overseas-born ECEC workers in the NT and Australia as a whole have lower levels of education than the Australian-born, and (b) on comparing the NT with Australia as a whole, the overseas-born in the NT have higher proportionate shares of those holding Bachelor’s degrees, Advanced Diplomas & Diplomas, and Certificates III and IV than their counterparts nationally.



**Figure 2.** Highest level of education, employed Australian\* and overseas-born\*\* ECEC workers\*\*\*, NT and Australia.

Notes: \*Australian-born includes External Territories. \*\*Overseas-born include New Zealand born. Total population includes (i) Australian-born, (ii) overseas-born and (iii) persons who did not state their country of birth. \*\*\* Encompasses: Childcare centre managers, early childhood teachers, childcare workers, family day care workers, nannies, child carers nfd and preschool aides.

Source: ABS 2011 Census, unpublished data.

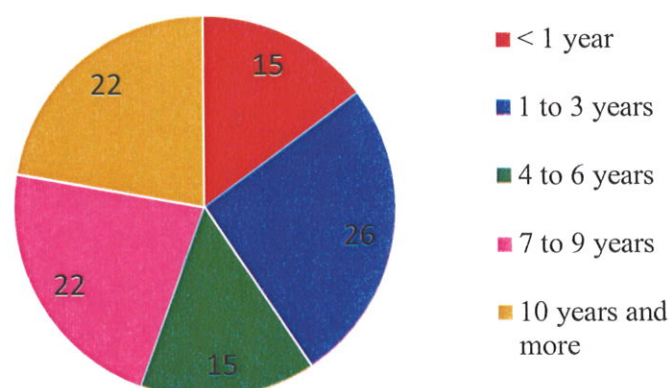
Determining the highest level of education of the interview participants was complicated by the fact that some held qualifications from both overseas and Australia, typically Charles Darwin University (CDU) in Darwin. All interviewees stated that they had post-school qualifications, with 56% obtaining their highest qualification in Australia. While 15% had had their overseas qualifications formally recognised in Australia, the majority had not. This was likely because (a) as family stream migrants they did not need to take this step in order to immigrate and (b) by the time of the interviews they had typically completed or were studying towards an ECEC-related qualification. Their formal overseas qualifications were sometimes at a higher level (for example a Bachelor’s degree or a Diploma) than the Australian qualifications (typically a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, previously known as Certificate III in Children’s Services). They were awarded in areas as diverse as biology, pharmacy, music, business, accounting, tourism, information technology and education.

Given that a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care is the minimum qualification to be held by staff working in ECEC services from 1 January 2014, it is important to note that 52% of the staff interviewed had already met this requirement. A



further 11% held other ECEC qualifications (Diploma in Children's Services, now known as Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care), 7% had teaching qualifications (3.5% in Early Childhood) and 30% had non-ECEC qualifications. Given the current child/staff profiles in the ECEC centres involved, the majority of those interviewed (67%) were already suitably qualified to work. Two-thirds (70%) were interested in upgrading their qualifications or already studying towards a higher level qualification, the majority in an ECEC-related field of study. The 30% not interested in further formal studies either gave no reason but some were approaching retirement, or would engage in further study if requested by their Director.

***Length of Work Experience in the ECEC Sector*** The interviewed workers were highly experienced with 44% reporting more than seven years' experience (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Percentage distribution of length of work experience. Overseas-born ECEC workers, NT. Source: Interviews July-August 2012.

Only 15% of the interviewees reported formal work experience in the ECEC sector overseas. Other previous formal areas of employment were hospitality, small business ownership, customer support and administrative duties in large companies, government administration and human services. More than three-quarters (78%) had no prior formal ECEC work experience overseas, which includes those who had worked in the human services sector as nurses or teachers. Another 7% with no formal work experience in the ECEC sector said that they were looking after children in the family.

***Level of Employment and Type of Contract*** The majority (59%) of the interviewed overseas-born ECEC workers worked as assistants/aides. Group leaders and teachers in charge accounted for 37% and 4% were Centre Directors. The 2011 Census permits comparing shares of employed Australian and overseas-born workers in selected ECEC occupations. While the results in the NT should be interpreted with caution (small numbers were randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data), it is interesting to note that the NT had possibly a higher representation of the overseas-born childcare Centre Directors than Australia as a whole (31% vs. 20%). Similarly, the overseas-born might have been slightly better represented as childcare workers in the NT than nationally (30% vs. 25%, respectively). However, they might have had a lower share of the early childhood teaching positions than in Australia as a whole (11% vs. 20%). An overwhelming 96% held permanent employment contracts.

***Integration at Work and Perceptions of Workplace*** Multiple answers could be given to questions relating to self-perceived integration at work and perceptions of the workplace, so their

responses do not add up to 100%. The most common comments were the love for working with children, work being fun, bringing satisfaction and coming to work enjoyable because of its nature (85% of responses). The next most often made observation (sometimes this was an opening comment) regarded the healthy and welcoming work environment (63%). Co-workers were perceived as friendly and references were made to good team environment, where people worked very well together and for a long time, and who looked after each other. Staff were also helping one another with their studies. Further illustrations of a supportive work environment (22%) included a supportive, likeable manager who was encouraging staff to study and helping set up practice for assignments. Comments were made about the workplace providing opportunities for learning new skills and a confidence boost received by staff when their centre passed the accreditation test, which involved learning and implementing new professional practices (7%). Ethnic and cultural diversity of staff and children was perceived as another highlight (11%).

**Suggestions for Improving the Employment Experience** These fell into financial and education-related suggestions. As above, interviewees were invited to give more than one response, so they do not add up to 100%. First, 85% cited higher wages and 22% thought that higher qualifications should be better financially recognised. Second, more time to upgrade formal qualifications was desired by 48% and 22% wished for a more flexible mode of formal training. Importantly, 7% of respondents who came from Asia and Africa noted that their prior learning should be better recognised by the ECEC sector in Australia. Finally, 41% wished for a less stressful work environment. One person commented that it felt like they needed ‘more hands’, which indicates that the children to staff ratio would benefit from being lowered.

**Mobility Motivations and Intentions** Table 2 reveals that family ties and the NT lifestyle and climate were the two principal reasons for migration to and staying in the NT. Participants were invited to give multiple responses so they do not add up to 100%.

**Table 2.** Top five mobility motivations, overseas-born ECEC workers, NT.

Motivations	Rank	
	Come	Stay
Family ties	1	2
NT lifestyle & climate	2	1
Other (friendly, multicultural community, small city)	3	1/2
Education for children	4	4
Job offer (not visa-related)	5	na
To meet visa conditions	5	na
Satisfied with pay conditions	na	5
Overall work satisfaction	na	2
Good personal relationships with other staff	na	3
Supportive management	na	3

Source: Interviews July-August 2012.

First, 85% said that they had migrated to the NT to join their immediate or extended families already settled there. The NT lifestyle and climate reminiscent of that in countries of Southeast Asia was the second most important reason (19%). Short distance to the country of origin was also important (11%). ‘Other’ reasons included the multicultural and friendly Darwin community and the convenience of small city living where all facilities were close. These ‘other’ motivations support the notion of an attractive lifestyle. The remaining motivations for coming shown in Table 2 were mentioned by between 4% and 7% of respondents.

Reasons for staying were similar to the above with lifestyle (74%) and sense of community (74%) being the equal top. The Filipino-born interviewees in particular spoke of their