

Questions for comment	Comment
<i>Given the terms of reference, is the suggested scope of the EC workforce appropriate for the purposes of this study? (p. 5)</i>	<p>There is some confusion about terminology and work roles in the EC field at large and these are reflected in this paper/report (see p.3). The distinction between Child Care and Early Childhood Education (preschools), in most cases, is one that exists, often, only in a funding sense and in terms of hours of operation. The distinction between 'care' and 'education' is one that the field has been trying to overcome for some decades. Clearly, care and education for infants and young children are inextricably entwined and must be integrated to optimise learning and developmental outcomes, plus accommodate families' demands for convenient and affordable care for children while they work. The way the terminology is used does not reflect this reality or the optimum fusing of care and education. Care and early education go hand in hand and should not be separated. Many, if not most child care centres, provide early 'education', and many, especially in NSW employ 4 year degree qualified early childhood teachers across their programs. 'Education' for young children is not something that can be confined to specific time slots. In states such as NSW most child care centres provide care AND education in an integrated manner. Further, the most vulnerable children require richest learning experiences – that should be provided from their earliest experiences in early learning centres/child care. They cannot afford to wait until they are 4 years old, in the year before school and access, if available, a 'preschool'. This need for strong, rich early childhood programs is most acute in remote Indigenous communities and other communities catering for children from low SES and/or CALD communities.</p>
<i>Which ECD services for children with additional needs should the Commission include in this study? (p.5)</i>	<p>Essentially, services that are located in CCC and preschools should be included in the scope of this study. That said, many important services exist outside the formal centre-based EC sector.</p> <p>Early childhood services that provide for children with additional needs in very remote communities (typically known as budget based services) seem to be outside the scope of this inquiry. These services are not usually licensed or accredited. Typically, these services often also cater for Indigenous children with additional needs (or should do so). There are disproportionate numbers of children with 'additional needs' in very remote communities due to a range of economic, social, well being and health related challenges. However, EC services in remote communities are amongst the poorest quality and with the greatest challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. It is almost impossible to recruit qualified staff, and certainly 4 year trained EC teachers with early intervention expertise, (either local or imported) to support children with additional needs.</p> <p>Indigenous children with 'additional needs' are a significant group in most remote communities, yet there is little possibility in the current funding models (and given other structural and social constraints) to employ relevant staff to support their developmental needs.</p>
<i>What are some other examples of integrated and co-located services? What are the benefits and limitations of integrating and co-locating EC services?</i>	<p>The key place to start when looking at <i>integrated services</i> and 'integrating' services is the <i>integration</i> of the often separated 'care' and 'education' functions. If we can't integrate 'care' and 'education' it will be almost impossible to 'integrate' other aspects of services – such as early intervention. Judging by the diagram outlining EC services, the accepted (and perhaps envisaged structure) is a clearly differentiated system of education and care (see p.3).</p> <p>Services that could be co-located (and sometimes are) are health services and of course, schools. While this co location is desirable in most settings it is especially desirable in remote communities. Co location of early childhood services and schools generally enables a seamless movement between EC and schooling. It operates extremely well on many sites as is welcomed by families.</p>

	<p>Recent research in remote NT communities indicated a community desire for holistic health, care and education services (Elliott, Fasoli &amp; Nutton, 2009).</p> <p>While there are many benefits of co located services, aggregation of services on central sites may also serve to reduce a local sense of ownership for families and present significant transport and access issues. Plans to co locate services must consider the variable impacts of central locations on community and family access patterns. It may be that large services, become so impersonal as to remove any potential economy of scale benefits.</p>
<p><i>.....Is this an adequate representation of the broad roles and responsibilities of childcare and preschool workers? What characteristics describe the childcare and preschool workforces – in terms of demographics, wages and salaries, working conditions, employment status, staff turnover, unfilled vacancies and job satisfaction? (p. 7)</i></p>	<p>There has long been an artificial distinction between 'care' and 'education' that has historical roots (see Elliott, 2006 for details) and has been enshrined in policy and funding arrangements over decades. Evidence and common sense indicate there should be no distinction between care and education provision for young children in early childhood settings. Integrated care and education programs with qualified early childhood educators are provided in many early childhood (child care) settings especially in NSW, but because some jurisdictions do not require qualified early childhood educators (and especially qualified EC teachers) in child care centres there has been no incentive to employ EC teachers.</p> <p>Too often, the 'care/education' divide is institutionalised in existing structures on a daily basis. Children start their day at a child care centre early in the morning and are taken to <i>preschool</i> for their 'dose of education' (say 9 to 1pm) and then returned to child care to be collected after work. All children aged birth to 5 years need qualified early childhood educators. They all have the same developmental and learning needs whether these are provided in a preschool or child care centre. There is no developmental or pedagogical need to separate 'care' and 'education' and such divisions are wasteful of resources and staff.</p> <p>The traditional care and education distinctions are bolstered by differential policy, employment, staffing, and funding arrangements which tend to emphasise either 'care' or 'education'.</p> <p>My research shows that working conditions in the EC sector, rather than pay <i>per se</i>, the major drivers of employment preferences for qualified early childhood educators. In turn, differential working conditions and the required qualifications of staff help create differential community and professional perceptions of status. Preschool staff work school terms and school hours, with at least 10 weeks paid holidays to coincide with school holidays. Child care staff work 48 weeks a year between 7am to 6pm approx and typically work shifts and have 4 weeks (sometimes 6 weeks) holiday. Child care centres are also characterised by workforce casualisation. Because of their variable hours and associated child attendance patterns, most CCC employ significant proportions of casual staff.</p> <p>Child care services in very remote, predominantly Indigenous communities operate almost exclusively on casual workers living locally. Few have any formal qualifications and attendance can be irregular. Employees' limited, if any qualifications, and variable work patterns have serious implications for the provision of strong, rich learning programs, developmental continuity, educational significance and regular and consistent care. Limited/variable access to local staff means centres often close if key staff are sick or must be absent for other reasons.</p> <p>While there is a general perception that preschools in schools employ qualified early childhood teachers- this is not necessarily the case- as was found recently in the NT (Elliott, Fasoli and Nutton, 2009) and is evident elsewhere. Typically, staff in school-based preschools have a range of qualifications. Recent requirements in some employment jurisdictions (eg. NSW Dept of Education) to</p>

	<p>require teachers working in the preschool to have a qualification that enables them to teach children to the age of 12, will further reduce the specialist EC skills in the preschool and Kindergarten years.</p>
<p><i>What characteristics describe the workforce that provides services to children with additional needs – in terms of demographics, wages and salaries, working conditions, employment status, staff turnover, unfilled vacancies, and job satisfaction? (p. 8)</i></p>	<p>The workforce that provides for children with additional needs is variable and dependent on factors such as location of services, families' SES, and availability of staff. EI staff can be difficult to recruit and retain and few NGOs, the major providers of EI services in the EC sector can afford to pay salaries commensurate with those offered by schools. Given a typical EC teachers ability to teach in both the birth to 5 sector and the 3 to 8 age group, any qualified staff are typically drawn to the school sector where salaries and working conditions are more favourable.</p> <p>There are few if any early childhood teacher education courses that specialise in inclusion or early intervention. This is a serious omission.</p> <p>In remote Indigenous communities, where any qualified staff are difficult to attract and keep, and where there is an urgent need to provide rich learning opportunities for children with additional needs, including ESL, qualified early intervention and support educators are rarely available.</p> <p>Policy and funding logistics mean that resources are not generally available to provide EI services where most needed. In remote areas fly-in-fly-out services are not well resourced and/or organised.</p> <p>Reasons for lack of staff in remote communities- other than government commitment and funding, include lack of housing, safety, isolation, and additional living costs.</p> <p>There needs to be very serious focus on building a complement of qualified early intervention staff and consideration of incentives to attract qualified staff to remote and other 'hard-to-staff' locations.</p> <p>Importantly, there is an urgent and critical need to build local EC Indigenous workforce capacity through programs such as "Growing our Own" (Elliott &amp; Keenan, 2009; other references listed at the conclusion of this response).</p>
<p><i>What data collections provide information on the ECD sector and its workforce? How might these data collections be improved? (p.8)</i></p>	<p>The biggest problem with data collection in the EC sector is lack of consistency in terms of data points, timing and content. The study of NT early childhood services highlighted these inconsistencies (Elliott, Fasoli &amp; Nutton, 2009). Similar problems are mirrored nationally. For example, ABS and Child Care Census exercises collect different information at different points.</p> <p>There need to be consolidated data sets that reflect the complexity of the EC sector. For example, profiling 'preschool teachers' or children who receive 'preschool education' must include data from all sectors- state schools, private schools, community preschools and child care centres- at a national and state level- as 'preschool education' is found in each.</p> <p>Typically EC data are collected from only one or two sectors and the information is collected by different organisations, at different times, and focuses on different characteristics/indicators etc.</p>
<p><i>How do the differing roles and policies of governments affect the planning and provision of the EC workforce? (p. 10)</i></p>	<p>The lack of an integrated approach to early childhood education and care means that 'care' and 'education' services – and hence workforces- are funded differently. The main difference is in requirements for educators' qualifications (and hence quality provision). For example, an EC teacher for 4 year olds in a 'preschool' requires a 4 year university degree yet working with 4 year old in many child care centres, and certainly most outside NSW, requires, at a</p>

	<p>minimum only a Cert III in Children's Services. Requirements around qualifications have been interpreted very liberally in recent years due the severe shortage of qualified EC teachers and other educators.</p> <p>In some remote communities (and other hard-to-staff areas) a centre may have no qualified staff at all. Yet it is children in these centres (especially the 'Budget-based centres) who require the best quality early childhood education.</p>
<p><i>What are some of the child development reasons families choose to use, or not use, different EC services? How is this changing over time? (p. 13)</i></p>	<p>A major concern from middle class urban families is the lack of qualified staff in early childhood centres and the high costs of quality care. Hence, the very strong attraction to early childhood services offered in conjunction with many independent schools- which are equally expensive but may offer education and care well aligned with families' visions for their children's developmental needs and families' cultural orientations.</p> <p>In some remote communities, non Indigenous parents (and Indigenous families) do not use services because of their perceived poor quality and irregular opening hours. Teachers may take their children to school with them. Most families want the best for their children, but 'best' is generally culturally determined.</p> <p>Conversations with some Indigenous families/caregivers in remote NT communities indicate that lack of appropriately qualified staff, irregular opening hours, and associated poor programming affects their perception and use of EC services. Generally, families want their children to have rich early learning programs with literacy, numeracy, dance etc, rather than TV watching and other passive activities. Families feel that their children should also have access to qualified educators offering rich learning programs rather than the very variable services so often the reality in remote communities.</p> <p>A complicating factor in some remote communities relates to skin/clan/family group affiliations and languages spoken. Families may not send children to the service where there are long-standing family conflict or clan issues with staff and/or where staff do not speak the language of their family group. In remote Indigenous communities where several languages are spoken this is a particular issue and challenge</p>
<p><i>To what extent is female labour force participation influenced by the availability of formal childcare?</i></p> <p><i>How might the demand for early childhood services be affected by changes to female labour force participation? (p. 13)</i></p>	<p>Families' use of an early childhood service is influenced by many factors but most women with children cannot participate in paid work unless they have reliable, affordable and quality child care.</p> <p>In many communities, including some remote communities, availability , cost (not an issue in very remote communities) and quality (due to staffing and other issues) is a major barrier to women seeking regular work.</p>
<p><i>To what extent does the relative cost of early childhood services determine the demand for those services? (p. 13)</i></p>	<p>Fees have a major impact of demand and participation- both in lower SES and upper SES families.</p> <p>Many families claim that high fees – even with the Tax rebate- mean that working is 'hardly worth the effort'. For many families – employing a nanny for a child aged birth to 2, especially if shared between 2 families, is a much more realistic and cost effective option and they have better control over the qualification of the worker and the type and quality of care and education provided their child.</p>
<p><i>How might the proposed qualification standards, staffing levels, and the implied mix of skills and knowledge assist the delivery of the desired outcomes for</i></p>	<p>While fully supporting across the board increases in qualification levels for early childhood education and care staff, I have long stressed that the inevitable increased costs associated with these improved qualifications must not be passed on to families.</p>

<p><i>children? (p. 14)</i></p>	<p>The trend to higher and professional qualifications will have significant implications for already stretched staffing resources in many communities and especially remote communities. Critical to sustainability and quality of EC services in the longer term must be locally educated and recruited early childhood educators.</p> <p>Family identification with and support of a service- whether it be a remote Indigenous service or an Islamic focused preschool- will be critical to implementing new quality standards.</p> <p>Centres will only achieve good outcomes for children if they work in partnership with families using the service- and help families achieve the aspirations they have for their children.</p>
<p><i>What effect will the new standards and targets have on demand for early childhood workers? (p. 14)</i></p>	<p>The new qualification standards are likely to increase demand for qualified early childhood practitioners in areas/services with underqualified staff and will place additional stress on services/areas with already critical staff shortages. The shortages will be most acute in remote and other-hard-to staff areas – and in sectors with older staff and/or staff without relevant qualifications. For example, there are many preschool teachers, who do not have a formal 4 year early childhood degree qualification.</p> <p>There will need to be significant re education and professional learning programs to up-skill the EC workforce, even in preschools/kindergartens, which have been traditionally viewed as having appropriately EC qualified teachers.</p> <p>Problems in recruiting qualified EC staff will be most acute in remote Indigenous contexts. As mentioned earlier, programs such as <i>Growing our Own</i>, that target Indigenous educators provide a long term solution to preparing local early childhood educators for remote communities. The issue of educational pathways in remote communities is complex and cannot be explored in this short response.</p>
<p><i>What options are available for funding the increased wages and salaries of more highly qualified early childhood workers? (p. 15)</i></p>	<p>Clearly increased costs must be funded- but these costs should not be borne by families. Increased government /community investment is needed to fund the increased costs of employing qualified staff in early childhood services.</p>
<p><i>Do providers of early childhood services have difficulties finding staff?</i></p> <p><i>If so, are these problems more pronounced in some early childhood occupations or in some areas of Australia? (p. 16)</i></p> <p><i>Why is this the case? (p. 16)</i></p>	<p>Yes- finding qualified EC teachers is a major challenge in NSW and elsewhere. Of the Uni of Sydney, M.Teach EC graduates in Sept 2010, all had been offered early childhood teacher positions before they graduated.</p> <p>EC employers in Sydney and elsewhere, and especially in remote communities, report that finding qualified EC staff is a major challenge.</p> <p>In the NT, even in Darwin, most child care services struggle to find VET qualified early childhood staff let alone 4 year qualified early childhood teachers. Low salaries and poor career pathways are major obstacles to employment of qualified staff in many jurisdictions and services. The problem is most severe in remote communities where there are many complicating factors, such as isolation and lack of housing and transport.</p> <p>There are serious structural challenges to recruiting qualified Indigenous staff in remote communities. Literacy levels may be low and few people have been able to access relevant secondary or higher education within their communities.</p> <p>Few Indigenous people with significant cultural and family responsibilities are able to travel outside their community to participate in higher education.</p>

	<p>Recruiting the right balance of early childhood staff to accommodate the different skin/clan/language groups within many communities is also difficult</p> <p>(See Elliott &amp; Keenan, 2009, and other papers and Elliott, Fasoli &amp; Nutton, 2009 for more detailed discussion of these issues)</p>
<p><i>How much of the shortage is caused by low wages or wage differentials? Are there other factors (such as working hours or conditions) that are important in attracting staff to the sector? (p. 16)</i></p>	<p>My experience and research indicates that in terms of EC teachers, staff, shortages are not always so much about wages or 'status' but about working conditions and career options. Often actual salaries for EC teachers are similar in schools and child care centres (due to above award payments), especially in NSW.</p> <p>Generally, EC teachers prefer to work in the school sector (in preschools or Kindergarten) where they are able to enjoy school timetables (8 to 4pm) and holidays (10 to 12 weeks) plus a well established career structure.</p> <p>In the child care sector, EC teachers must typically work shifts (between 6 and 7pm) and holidays are shorter- typically 4 to 6 weeks.</p> <p>My research shows that a key concern for EC teachers is to have a job that fits with their current (or future) family responsibilities</p> <p>Severe staff shortages in remote Indigenous communities relate mainly to the complicated situation within communities and primarily the isolation, lack of housing and access to usual community services.</p> <p>In the case of local Indigenous communities, few local people have the traditional formal qualifications or opportunities to be early childhood practitioners. Schools have similar challenges in recruiting qualified early childhood teachers for their preschools.</p> <p>As indicated in recent research, there are significant challenges in recruiting appropriately qualified staff for early childhood centres in remote NT communities. Mitigating factors include lack of adequate housing, isolation, lack of social and recreational services and poor access to transport (Elliott, Fasoli &amp; Nutton, 2009).</p> <p>Attracting and retaining Indigenous staff with relevant qualifications and commitment working in a typical EC centre environment, including meeting work patterns and opening hours requirements, notwithstanding the demands of important kinship and community obligations, is difficult.</p>
<p><i>To what extent are ECEC, child health and family support services experiencing staff retention issues? Are there examples of effective staff retention strategies in the ECD sector? How might such strategies be replicated throughout Australia? (p.16)</i></p>	<p>Staff retention can be difficult in many child care environments. Strategies that appear to work in retaining staff include paying above award rates, flexibility in work hours (for example, a 3 day, 37 ½ hour week might suit some workers- rather than a longer working week), RDOs, strong, fair leadership, month-on-month-off rostering (especially in remote communities) and an appropriate complement of staff.</p> <p>Importantly, more attractive salaries would be a major incentive. There are many competing career options for qualified early childhood educators. At present a Certificate qualified child care worker can earn considerably more as a Nanny in a private family, or even as a house cleaner or as a 'nanny' in a pet day care centre.</p>
<p><i>What are the key factors influencing an individual's decision to work in the ECD sector?</i></p>	<p>Students entering the early childhood degree courses at Sydney University say their major motivations for being an early childhood teacher are – love of children, wanting to 'make a difference' in children's lives , seeking a meaningful career, having a career that will 'travel', and better work-life balance.</p>

<i>Do these vary for different ECD occupations? (p. 17)</i>	
<p><i>Why are ECD workers paid less than those working in related sectors?</i></p> <p><i>Are the wages and salaries for workers in different early childhood occupations appropriate, given the skills and qualifications required? If not, how might this best be addressed? (p. 17)</i></p>	<p><i>ECD workers paid less than those working in related sectors</i> because there is limited recognition of the value of their work and community/govt pressures to maintain affordability of EC services.</p> <p>Higher wages (and consistent working conditions- rosters, holidays, shifts) are critical to attracting and retaining staff and improving the status of the profession. Salaries and working conditions must be consistent across child care and preschools/schools for staff with the same qualifications, experience and years of service</p> <p>Remote communities need to offer significantly more attractive working conditions, salaries and benefits (eg. free housing, utilities, transport, flights, and freight) to attract EC educators- as they do to attract and retain doctors, nurses and school teachers.</p> <p>Jurisdictional Teacher Registration Boards must immediately provide a national framework for the recognition of the early childhood profession, consistent with the recognition of school teachers.</p>
<i>Does the regulatory burden have a significant impact on attracting or retaining staff in the ECD sector? Do you expect recently announced reforms to make a material difference to the regulatory burden facing early childhood workers? What more could be done to reduce the regulatory burden? (p. 17)</i>	Improved and consistent national regulations and requirements are likely to have a long term positive effect on care and education quality as was case when qualifications were improved and teacher education regularised in the school sector some 50 years or so ago.
<i>How appropriate are the qualifications required for entry into various early childhood education occupations? Do differences in qualification requirements restrict workers' ability to move between jurisdictions or early childhood sectors? (p. 18)</i>	<p>It is important that qualifications are consistent across services that care for and educate young children. Just as we have nationally consistent qualifications in school teaching, nursing or medicine – so we need nationally consistent qualifications and entry standards in early childhood education.</p> <p>All young children but especially those in socially and economically vulnerable communities need the best quality early childhood care and education. The most vulnerable children need the best early childhood educators and services- not the worst.</p>
<p><i>Do newly-qualified ECD workers have the necessary skills and attributes to be effective in the workplace? (p. 19)</i></p>	<p>Yes and no. As in all occupations some <i>newly-qualified ECD workers</i> have the necessary skills and attributes to be effective in the workplace immediately, and some don't. Early childhood educators need mentoring and professional support just as do new graduates in medicine, nursing or law.</p> <p>Despite the need for a supported or scaffolded entry to the EC profession, there is considerable pressure in the early childhood sector to place new graduates in a leadership roles or other roles for which they were not prepared (eg. as a centre Director). Recent graduates from Higher education and VET courses with limited experience can find themselves in senior roles with no support, especially in traditionally hard-to-staff areas.</p> <p>Understanding the needs of English as a Second (or additional) Language</p>

	<p>(ESL), learners and learners with additional needs is especially challenging for many new graduates from VET and Higher Education courses.</p> <p>Few new EC education graduates have the complex set of skills to operate an early childhood service and especially one in a remote or other vulnerable community where a range of health, education and community capacity building skills are required. Few EC education courses prepare students to work in remote or other hard-to-staff areas or in situations with very vulnerable families. No courses prepare students to be unsupported and alone in their first jobs- nor should they!</p>
<p><i>To what extent are qualification requirements a barrier to entering the EC sector?</i></p> <p><i>How could any such barriers be overcome?</i></p> <p><i>Do people from indigenous and CALD backgrounds face particular barriers to obtaining entry-level EC qualifications? (p. 19)</i></p>	<p>It has been of interest to note that a significant proportion of students entering the new EC teacher education courses at the University of Sydney are from CALD backgrounds- particularly Asian, Indian and Middle Eastern backgrounds.</p> <p>All students, whatever their linguistic backgrounds require a high standard of English language skill to complete a university or VET course successfully and to support young children's literacy learning.</p> <p>Poor English language skills (whatever their source) are a significant barrier to entry to tertiary education courses – and by definition create a barrier to completing both VET and HE courses.</p> <p>There needs to be further discussion in some Indigenous communities about the extent to which English language skills are needed and/or wanted and/or relevant. If English language skills are wanted/needed there needs to be a concerted effort to teach English from the preschool years so that students have the English language fluency and confidence to complete primary and secondary school successfully and to progress to tertiary education.</p> <p>Learning English as an additional language (in addition to the main family and community language/s) to attain written and spoken fluency is a complex and difficult task and must be supported by specialist ESL teachers. At present there are no specialist EC ESL teachers and few, if any rich English immersion programs at the preschool level. There are useful lessons to be learned about teaching additional languages in countries where bilingualism is the norm- such as Singapore.</p> <p>Clearly, approaches to teaching and learning English in remote communities where the mainstream community languages are other than English is a controversial matter. However, it is evident that new approaches are needed to develop English language proficiency- if indeed this is required and/or desired by families and communities. There needs to be increased opportunity for self-determination- and focusing on what families want for their children. Further, because families tend to want different things for their children (even within the one community), preschool/child care programs must be flexible enough to accommodate needs. This might mean an English-rich program for some children and a local language rich program for others. Importantly, services must pay more than lip service to 'consultation' and 'partnerships' with families- including the teaching of English language skills.</p>
<p><i>Are workers who obtain additional skills and qualifications sufficiently rewarded? Is expertise sufficiently recognised and valued?</i></p> <p><i>How could opportunities for career progression within the ECD sector be enhanced? (p.19)</i></p>	<p>No.</p> <p>A 5-year-trained EC teacher with a Master of Teaching EC qualification earns an extra 70c per week in at least one NSW industrial award.</p> <p>The salary, work conditions and career pathway differentials across EC services and schools are similarly skewed.</p>



	<p>The issue of EC salaries is one that requires intensive review and action.</p> <p>Lack of parity within and between salaries, working conditions and career pathways paid in school and various EC sectors and services and employers presents serious barriers to building a competent, qualified and satisfied EC workforce.</p>
<p><i>Are in-service training and professional development programs meeting workforce development needs?</i></p> <p><i>Are there barriers to early childhood staff accessing training and development programs? If so, how could such barriers be overcome? (p. 19)</i></p>	<p>There is an urgent need for on-going professional development in EC services.</p> <p>Workforce development must be linked to accreditation (or similar) of services and when implemented to registration of EC educators- as is the case in other professions.</p> <p>A major impediment to on-going professional development is the cost/difficulty of replacing staff while they attend PD. In remote communities this is a near impossibility. Further, already low paid staff commonly argue they should not have to do PD 'in their own time'.</p> <p>See Elliott, Fasoli &amp; Nutton ( 2009) for a discussion on professional learning in the NT and especially in remote communities.</p>
<p><i>Do you consider professional status to be an issue for the EC workforce?</i></p> <p><i>What factors determine professional status in the sector?</i></p> <p><i>How might a change in status be achieved? What would be the effects of such a change? (p. 20)</i></p>	<p>The long standing gulf between education and care lies at the source of status difference in the sector.</p> <p>Teachers in schools enjoy better working and holiday and conditions than do staff in the CC sector, even if they have the same qualifications and teach children of the same age.</p> <p>Overall, teachers in schools are regarded more highly than teachers in CC and this is an on-going issue- but not surprising given the history of EC and its close links with mothering. While staff are poorly qualified and poorly remunerated the status of EC work will remain low.</p> <p>Graduates with an EC degree that enable them to teach children up to the age of 8 often prefer to work schools because of the better working conditions and higher status.</p>
<p><i>Will the supply of qualified EC workers expand sufficiently to meet COAG's objectives?</i></p> <p><i>How might the training of additional workers be funded? (p.20)</i></p>	<p>The main issue is to provide salaries and working conditions that are attractive and competitive enough to recruit and retain EC staff at all levels.</p> <p>There also needs to be some serious discussion about the professional, paraprofessional and 'unqualified' mix, roles and responsibilities in EC centres.</p>
<p><i>Are training providers and courses of sufficient quality to meet the needs of the EC sector? (p. 20)</i></p>	<p>There are some serious issues with the quality of VET courses provided by some RTOs that must be investigated as a matter of urgency</p>
<p><i>What can be done to ensure that there is an adequate supply of skilled trainers to meet future increases in demand for training? (p.20)</i></p>	<p>In EC education and education more broadly, we prefer to talk about 'education' rather than 'training'.</p> <p>The focus on 'training' is one of the underlying reasons for the low 'status' of child care practitioners and child care <i>per se</i>. The question of whether EC is a profession has been a long standing debate and the focus on 'training' rather than professional learning and education is at the source of this debate.</p> <p>While we focus on 'training' (and all this implies), rather than 'education' salaries,</p>

	status and expertise will be compromised.
<i>Have initiatives to increase the supply of EC workers been effective? (p.21)</i>	<p>Salaries and working conditions remain the chief barrier to staff recruitment and retention to EC services.</p> <p>Supply of EC educators for remote communities is more complex and affected by salary, plus factors including local community education levels, housing availability, transport, and PD and general isolation including cost of living</p>
<i>Will workers who are required to upgrade their qualifications do so, or will they leave the EC sector? (p.21)</i>	They will upgrade their qualifications if it is financially attractive to do so.
<i>In the context of increasing integration of EC services, does the involvement of multiple unions and professional associations affect the capacity for innovation and flexibility in the EC workforce? (p.22)</i>	<p>There should be national registration of early childhood educators along with national registration for teachers of older children, plus aligned workers- teacher assistants and other early childhood educators.</p> <p>There is a major lack of understanding of the common educational goals and experiences for children in child care, preschools and schools and the similar staff qualifications required to enhance children's development and learning.</p> <p>A greater national focus on qualifications and accreditation is likely to be accompanied by union reforms</p>
<i>What skills must EC workers have in order to provide effective services to Indigenous children? Do all EC workers who work with Indigenous children have these skills? Given the challenges faced by many services for Indigenous children, how appropriate are the remuneration and conditions for workers in those services? (p. 23)</i>	<p>There are many complex factors affecting the provision of EC services in remote communities with predominantly Indigenous populations, but two of the most important are-</p> <p>Challenges in building the academic capacity, including English literacy skills, to enable potential EC education staff to access relevant tertiary and higher education, and</p> <p>Providing culturally relevant education programs in remote communities such as <i>Growing our Own</i> (see Elliott &amp; Keenan, 2009) or other on-site delivery - eg VET programs</p>
<i>What strategies are being used to attract ECD workers from Indigenous communities and to build Indigenous workforce capability? How effective are these strategies? (p. 23)</i>	See Elliott, Fasoli & Nutton (2009) and Elliott & Keenan (2009) for details of the <i>Growing our Own</i> strategies
<i>Do ECD workers have the skills to provide effective services to all the children who they regularly work with, including those with disabilities and other special needs and from CALD or low SES backgrounds? What additional skills or support might they require in order to do so? (p. 24)</i>	<p>This varies dramatically from region to region and service to service and individual to individual.</p> <p>Importantly, there needs to be increased foci on preparing specialist staff to work with ESL learners and children with additional learning needs. This work needs to be a post graduate level (and/or professional learning level)– and contextualised to specific situations.</p>
<i>How appropriate are the remuneration and conditions for ECD workers for children with additional needs? (p. 24)</i>	While some qualified EC educators are remunerated in much the same way as are educators in schools with the same qualifications and experience, there are wide variations in salaries and working conditions- as mentioned above.

	<p>A key barrier for EC educators of children with additional needs relate to working conditions and especially career options etc.</p> <p>Further, in remote communities there are issues relating to isolation, additional living costs, travel restrictions, lack of housing etc</p>
<i>To what extent are workers from CALD backgrounds represented in the EC sector? (p.24)</i>	<p>This varies from area to area, but very encouragingly, there seems to be a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse EC teacher education and VET student mix that more closely matches wider population demographics. This is certainly the case in the student population studying EC education at the University of Sydney, at many RTOs and TAFES and is increasingly reflected in staffing in child care services.</p>

## References and readings

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