



Early Learning
& Care Council
of Australia

ELACCA response to Jobs and Skills Australia Core Skills Occupations List consultation

May 2024



The Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) welcomes the opportunity to submit our response to Jobs and Skills Australia for its Core Skills Occupations List consultation.

About ELACCA

The Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) was established to promote the value of quality early learning and care as an integral part of Australia's education system. Our 18 CEO members include some of the largest early learning providers in the country, representing both not-for-profit and for-profit services.

ELACCA members operate 1,984 long day care services, 310 preschool/kindergarten services and 92 OSHC services, covering every state and territory. They offer one-quarter of all the early learning places in Australia. Together, our members serve 369,776 children and their families, and employ more than 56,708 staff.

As well as promoting the value of quality early learning and the need for greater public investment, ELACCA advocates for the right of all children to access quality early learning and care, particularly children facing disadvantage. We do this by drawing on the knowledge and practical experience of our members and representing their views to decision makers in government, the media and the public.

Context

ELACCA supports Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) undertaking research and consultation into the workforce needs, including that of our sector.

This Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) analysis coincides with JSA's capacity study into the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce. These studies are timely and intersect and engage with recent and current federal inquiries led by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and Productivity Commission (PC) respectively. Both the ACCC and PC inquiries acknowledge and address significant workforce shortages in our sector, and the need to attract and retain a quality workforce.

Attraction and retention of a robust, qualified early learning workforce is vital for Australian children to ensure access to high quality early childhood education and care in their first five years. Further, early learning and care enables workforce participation for parents and carers of children in their first five years. Increased workforce participation also offers considerable productivity gains to the Australian economy.

Previous work submitted to Jobs and Skills Australia

ELACCA acknowledges JSA guidelines for this consultation process request that previous data and information submitted to JSA is not resubmitted for this CSOL consultation.

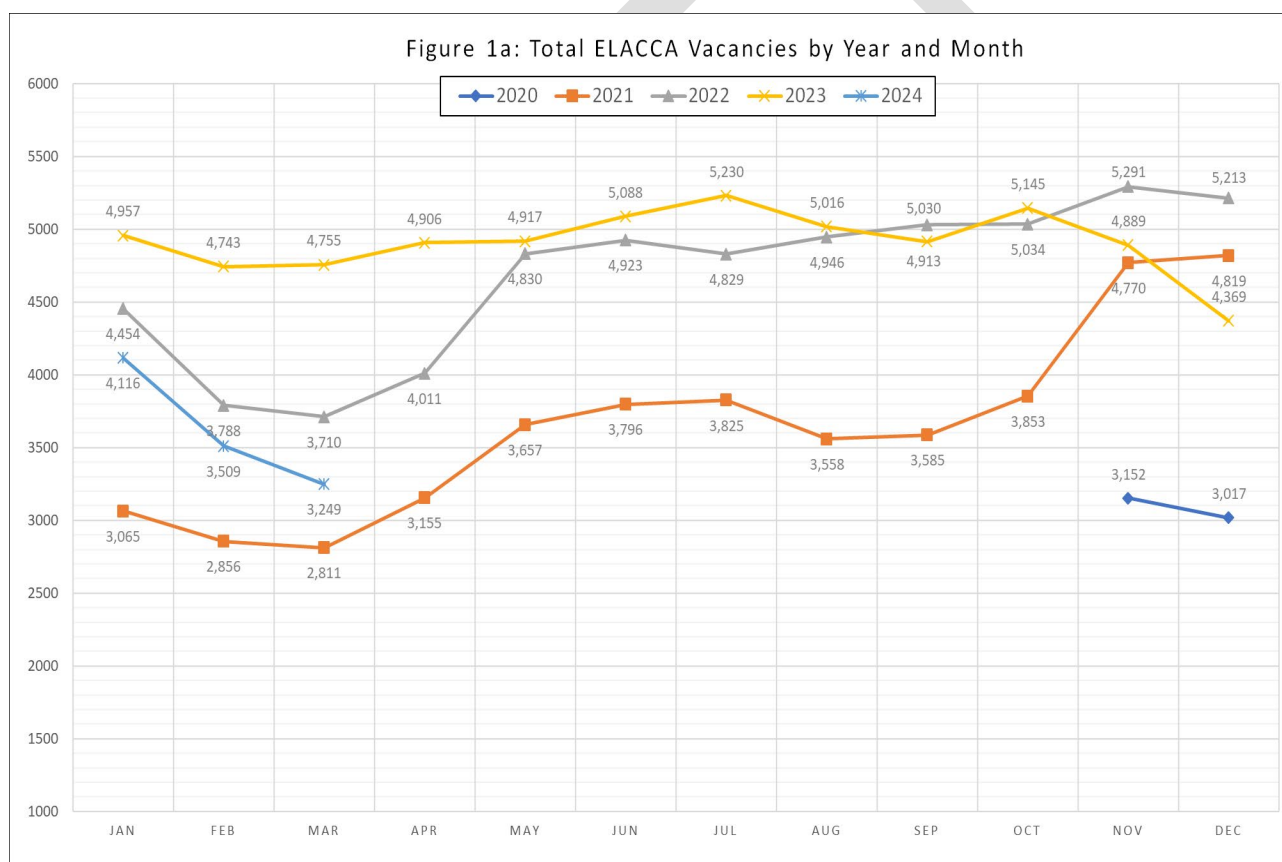
To this end, we direct JSA to ELACCA's submission to its Capacity Study into the ECEC Workforce. ELACCA's CEO also sits on the Steering Committee for this Capacity Study and has contributed data and intelligence that can also be used to inform the Core Skills Occupations List consultation with regard to the early childhood education workforce (241111 and 421111).

Response to Core Skills Occupations List consultation

ELACCA notes and strongly supports that Early Childhood Teachers (241111) are in the confident on list. A robust supply of qualified Early Childhood Teachers is required to meet the current and future demand for quality early learning and care provision.

ELACCA is concerned that Child Care Worker (421111) is on the targeted for consultation list. (Please note that for the remainder of this paper, we will use the term Early Childhood Educator, or educator, for Child Care Workers. This is consistent with current terminology and qualifications, and the subject of our submission to review of skills classifications undertaken by Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations in 2023¹). There is a chronic shortage of early childhood educators in our sector.

Figure 1a below shows total vacancies across ELACCA's membership from November 2020 to our most recent data at end of March 2024². This data demonstrates significant issue with chronic unfilled vacancies in our sector.

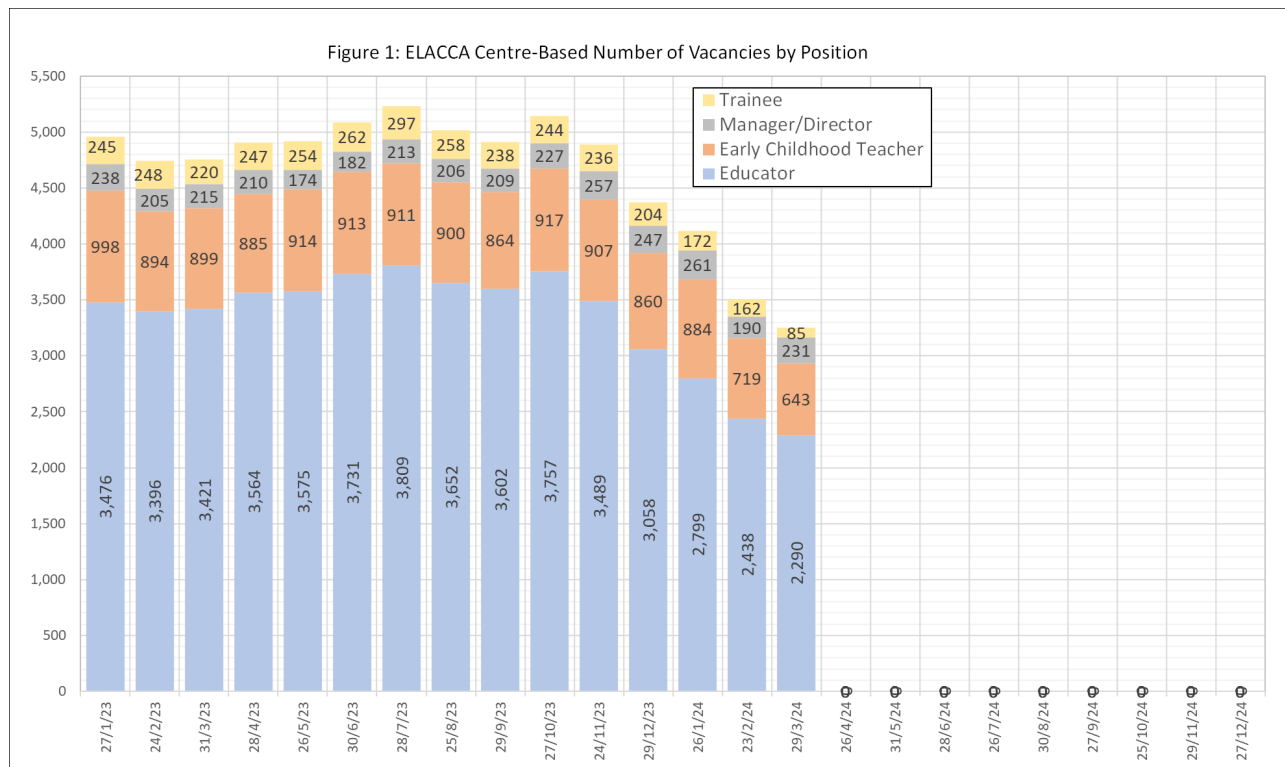


The total number across our membership hovers just under 3500 vacancies. Noting that ELACCA members comprise 26% of licensed places across Australia, this data suggests that current vacancies across the sector could total more than 14,000 nationally.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023), ANZSCO comprehensive review - consultation round 1 (accessed 19 December 2023) https://consult.abs.gov.au/standards-and-classifications/anzsco-comprehensive-review-round-1/results/final_consultationround1_preliminaryproposedchanges.pdf

² Note that from March 2024, data includes 17 rather than 18 members which will impact the total numbers in each of the following charts.

Figure 1 (below) using monthly data provided by ELACCA members to demonstrate the number of vacancies by position. As clearly shown, the bulk of vacancies are early childhood educators³.



The early learning and care sector underpins and enables workforce participation of parents and carers across Australia. Workforce shortages can result in capped enrolment and attendance across services and rooms, unable to be staffed at capacity. This impacts children’s opportunity to learn and development, as well as parents and carer’s ability to work and study.

The early childhood education and care workforce works under an internationally regarded regulatory system through a National Quality Framework and National Quality Standard. Minimum qualification requirements are required to work as an early childhood teacher and educator. Meeting current shortages, and building the pipeline of a future workforce, takes time, due to the qualification requirements of these roles. JSA data used to inform the current Capacity Study for the ECEC Workforce will attest that the domestic skills pipeline is currently inadequate in meeting the future needs of the sector.

Targeted, skilled migration can play a strong role in supporting the needs for this sector for a qualified and quality workforce.

Recommendation

In order to meet current and future demand for quality early learning and care, and remove barriers to workforce participation for parents and carers, ELACCA strongly recommends that 421111 Child Care Workers (Early Childhood Educators) are included in the Confident On List.

ELACCA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to this consultation process,

Thank you for considering our submission.

³ Note that from March 2024, data includes 17 rather than 18 members which will impact the total numbers in each of the following charts.



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