



## Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce

The Australian Government will deliver a \$72.4 million package of measures to help support the skills and training needs of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) educators.

The initiatives will support the retention and professional development of educators, with a particular focus on regional and remote communities and First Nations services.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce package includes:

- \$34.4 million for grants to support professional development opportunities for up to 75,000 early childhood educators by enabling services to backfill educators
- \$33.1 million to support up to 6,000 existing educators as they work to complete current studies toward Initial Teacher Education or post-graduate Early Childhood Teacher qualifications
- \$4.8 million for an exchange program to connect up to 2,000 students with services to undertake practicum placements and strengthen workforce supply.

### How will these initiatives work?

#### Professional development grants

Grants will be provided to eligible services to support up to 75,000 early childhood educators to undertake mandatory or highly recommended training.

Grants will enable services to backfill while educators undertake professional development training, or provide staff with a supplement for paid training outside of work hours.

In the first year, the professional development grants will be targeted to priority educators and services, for example those in regional and remote locations and First Nations early childhood education and care services and staff.

#### Paid practicum

A paid practicum grant will support up to 6,000 existing educators' work to complete current studies in Initial Teacher Education or post-graduate Early Childhood Teacher qualifications.

Grants will be available to eligible services to support existing staff through paid leave to undertake a practicum as part of their course requirement.

In the first year, assistance will be targeted to priority educators and services, for example those in regional and remote locations and First Nations early childhood education and care services and staff.

## Practicum exchange

A practicum exchange program will be established to connect up to 2,000 students who are studying to become qualified educators with services.

The exchange will be open to all existing early childhood educators and to students studying an early childhood education and care qualification, including Certificate III, Diploma or initial teacher education course.

## Why is this important?

The challenges that all families and early childhood and care providers face have been building over a long time, and it is particularly severe in regional and remote communities.

A supported, valued workforce is critical to making early childhood education and care more accessible and affordable for Australian families.

Addressing workforce shortage and supply issues in the ECEC sector is also essential to realising the benefits of the Government's Cheaper Child Care reforms, and supporting more families to access quality services.

These new workforce measures add to the actions already being taken by the Government to address the long-term challenges for the early childhood workforce, including:

- providing 180,000 fee-free TAFE and vocational education places to support industries experiencing skills shortages – it is estimated that 16,400 places will be taken up by students in Early Childhood and Education courses
- creating 20,000 additional university places, including 1,469 places for early childhood teachers, and
- strengthening the ability of the Fair Work Commission to order pay increases for workers in low-paid, female dominated industries.

## Who will benefit?

Families, students, existing early education and care workers and services will all benefit from additional support for a stronger, better skilled workforce this package provides.

The Government's ECEC workforce package targets support to providers and educators in critical areas of shortage, such as regional, remote, or very remote communities.

The package will raise the status of the ECEC workforce, create rewarding career pathways and attract more men and First Nations people into the sector.

## How much will it cost?

The Australian Government is investing \$72.4 million over five years in the new Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce package.