



SECTOR
PROFILE

Children's Education and Care



HumanAbility





Industry sector overview

The Children's Education and Care sector provides development, education and care from birth to school age.

The sector primarily consists of Early Childhood Educators and Teachers (including Educational Leaders), Family Day Care Educators, Outside School Hours Care and Education Aides. Services operate in a variety of settings including Long Day Care, Pre-Schools and Kindergartens, Occasional Care and in school settings.^{(3) (7) (38)}

“Children's education is vital – not only an enabler of children, as an enabler of workforce participation particularly in our sector but increasingly lack of access to childcare is a barrier to people accessing healthcare services for themselves. How can we raise the profile of the Childhood Education and Care sector as a super enabler for all of us?”

The sector plays a crucial role in supporting children's cognitive, emotional, and social development during their formative years, laying the groundwork for lifelong learning and wellbeing. By ensuring all children have equal access to quality early education and care, the sector also promotes social equity. Additionally, it supports families by allowing parents to engage in the workforce, thereby contributing to the broader economy and social structure.

“We must consider the language we use to describe this profession. As recommended by Early Childhood Australia 'language matters'. Government and agencies must use current terminology – 'children's education and care' to describe the workforce. Please stop referring to the profession as 'childcare'.”

The 3 largest occupation groups (based on ANZSCO codes) are:

- Early Childhood Educator (Child Carers)*
- Education Aides
- Early Childhood Teachers

While they represent a smaller portion of the Children's and Early Childhood Education and Care Sector, other essential occupations not included in the data for this sector include: support staff such as administrative staff, cooks, maintenance staff, centre managers and directors. There are also a number of allied health roles that support this sector such as psychologists, social workers, speech, behaviour and occupational therapists.

* While Child Carer is the term used in the ABS, it is no longer considered acceptable to use this term as it does not describe the encompassing roles and activities of these occupations. We have used Early Childhood Educator throughout this document.



SECTOR DEMOGRAPHICS

Children's Education and Care Workforce Key Industries⁽⁷⁾

728,000

people working in
Preschool and School
Education



78%
are female

43 years
average age

2%
are First Nations

46%
are part-time

65%
Bachelors Degree
or above

Early childhood
educators workforce
growth projection⁽²⁾

19%



Key Occupations

Early Childhood Educator, Education Aides,
Early Childhood Teachers

The data above is grouped by ANZIC codes which is aggregated at a high industry level and does not provide a great deal of specificity for the Children's Education and Care sector. The Productivity Commission and other ABS data provide information at a more nuanced level of industry data specifically for this sector. These sources report workforce estimated at 241,000 with 93% women, 24% in casual roles with an average age of 37.⁽⁶³⁾

Supply, Demand and Gap insights

The drivers for demand are:



Government policies and funding

aimed at improving access to services⁽⁶⁴⁾, increased quality⁽⁶⁵⁾ to reduce the number of 'developmentally vulnerable' children^{(66) (67)}, and universal access to early childhood education and care

Inclusive education policies and practices

as children with a disability and additional educational needs are increasingly taking part in universal education, additional support staff are required^{(68) (20)}



Reduction of Grandparents and other informal childcare^{(69) (70) (71)}

commonly due to their own work commitments, health and other responsibilities

Average hours of attendance per week at centre-based childcare **rose by 3 hours or 10%** between 2019 and 2023⁽³⁾



Increasing workforce participation of parents

particularly mothers, increasing the need for long day care and outside school hours care^{(70) (71)}

Quality and safety regulations

requiring ratios and minimum qualification levels⁽⁷²⁾













"Within Children's Education and Care, current data gaps extend to understanding the profile of employees, turnover rates, and how families utilise services, particularly in the context of post-COVID changes."



“Placement for students is a challenge, particularly for in-home [family day care] educators.”

Government policy and initiatives

This is an evolving and non-exhaustive list of strategies or initiatives that will inform or be informed by HumanAbility in some way. For overarching or cross-cutting strategies, see the HumanAbility Workforce Plan.

Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
Shaping Our Future – National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy	This strategy aims to foster a sustainable and high-quality workforce of early childhood teachers and educators.	     
	Investment in the workforce has significant benefits for children and young people.	
	HumanAbility’s immediate projects and qualification reviews in the Early Children’s Education and Care sector are part of the role we’ll play in addressing to current and future workforce planning, skills shortages and workforce challenges.	
Productivity Commission ECEC Inquiry	The Productivity Commission’s inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) examined Australia’s diverse ECEC sector, including centre-based daycare, preschools, family daycare, outside school hours care, and in-home care. Their final report examined ECEC sector workforce requirements and the capacity to meet these requirements within current Commonwealth, state and territory initiatives.	     
	HumanAbility’s development of contemporary, nationally endorsed qualifications and skillsets will form part of our role in contributing to strengthening the sector’s workforce capacity.	



Labour force shortages



Skills gaps



Training and qualification issues



Limited career pathways












Lack of diversity and inclusion



Data deficiencies



Policy and regulatory settings

Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
The Future of the Early Childhood Education profession	<p>Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), in collaboration with HumanAbility, has recently undertaken a comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Capacity Study, <i>The Future of the Early Childhood Education Profession</i>, to develop a deep understanding of critical workforce issues in the sector. This collaborative effort aimed to gain deeper insights into current and future workforce demand and supply factors, with a focus on improving attraction, retention, and development of ECEC professionals across Australia.</p> <p>HumanAbility’s development of contemporary, nationally endorsed qualifications and skillsets will form part of our role in contributing to strengthening the sector’s workforce capacity.</p> <p>This includes a project HumanAbility has commenced reviewing the entry requirements to the Diploma of ECEC qualification.</p>	     
Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Pay Boost	<p>The 2024–25 Federal Budget included the provision of a 15% pay rise to many early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals over two years and is announced in aimed at addressing longstanding workforce issues.</p> <p>This wage boost is expected enhance staff retention and attract new workers to the sector, ultimately benefiting children and families through improved quality and consistency of care.</p>	  



Labour force shortages



Skills gaps



Training and qualification issues



Limited career pathways



Lack of diversity and inclusion



Data deficiencies



Policy and regulatory settings

Enrolments and completions

The Children’s Education and Care sector plays a crucial role within the VET program, accounting for 6.7% of total completions in 2022. Enrolments have remained strong, though completions continue to trail behind. This discrepancy between enrolments and completions indicates challenges within the sector that impact student retention and progression.

The sector is heavily female dominated, with women representing over 93% of both enrolments and completions. Age distribution data shows a concentration of learners in the 30 to 39 age group, reflecting the participation of individuals re-entering the workforce, while younger learners under 30 also make up a significant share.

Geographically, most learners are from major cities, with New South Wales and Victoria leading in enrolments and completions. Despite strong enrolment numbers, the sector faces ongoing challenges, such as ensuring sufficient completions to meet the growing workforce demand. Exploring and addressing barriers to completion could complement increased enrolments and provide a more robust supply of qualified early childhood education and care professionals.

Stakeholders consistently told us there are several key factors affecting completion rates:

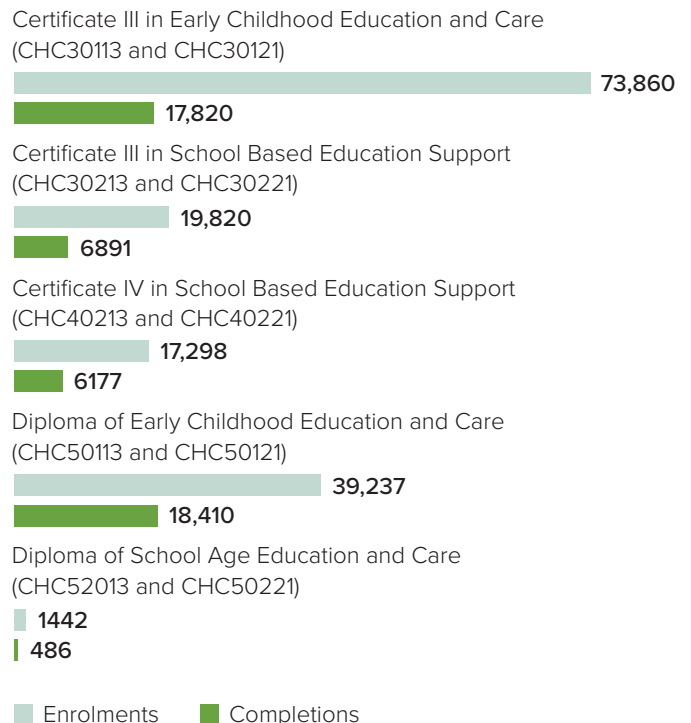
“The current entry requirement for the Diploma in ECEC is impacting enrolments and reducing the number of highly skilled people entering the workforce or upskilling for Unpaid placement career progression.”

“Entry requirements add an additional challenge and impact course completions.”

“It can be difficult for training providers to find qualified educators.”

“The Certificate III in ECEC is pitched too high and is challenging to complete which disincentivises further study for career progression.”

Enrolments and completions by qualification⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

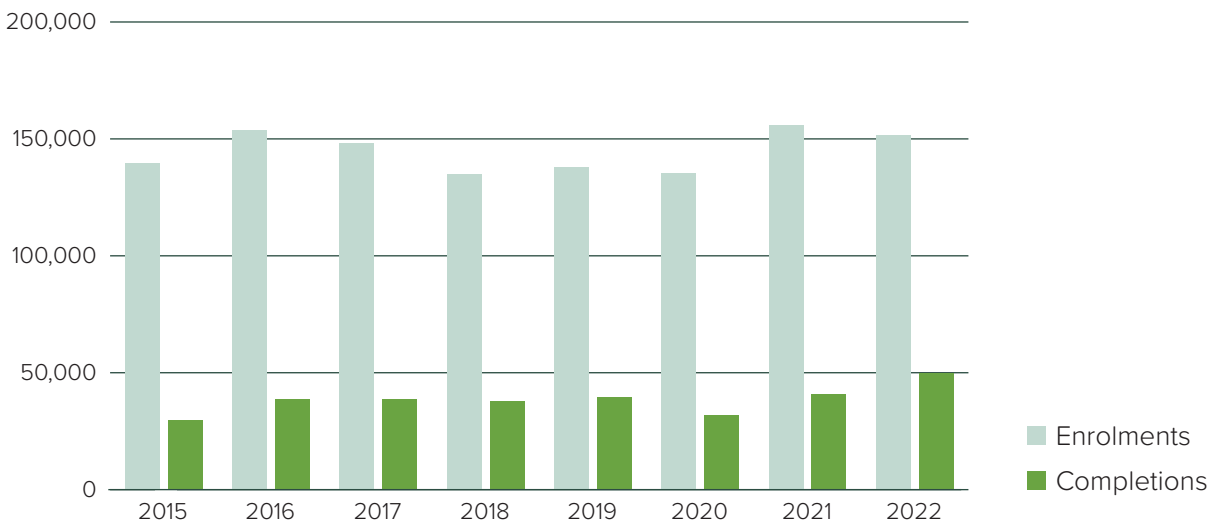


Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.



Enrolments for qualifications in the early childhood education and care sector remained relatively stable between 2015 and 2022. However, completions have continued to lag significantly. This trend is reflected across all qualifications in this sector, suggesting the need for further investigation into factors influencing student retention and course completion to address the rapid growth in demand within the industry.

Total enrolments and completions for Children’s Education and Care sector qualifications⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	139,619	153,550	148,217	134,883	137,915	135,424	155,912	151,612
Completions	29,525	38,847	38,524	37,922	39,712	31,896	40,722	49,784

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Gender⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

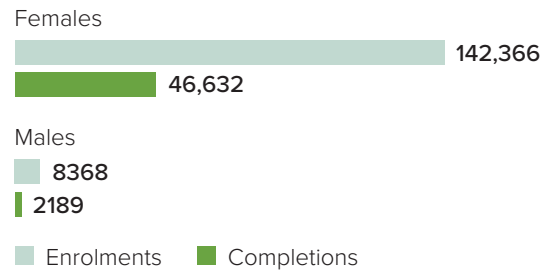
Females accounted for **93.9%** of enrolments and **95.0%** of completions

Males represented **5.5%** of enrolments and **4.5%** of completions

People who identified as 'Other' made up **0.1%** of enrolments and completions

Learners whose gender is not known comprised **0.5%** of enrolments and completions

Enrolments and completions by gender



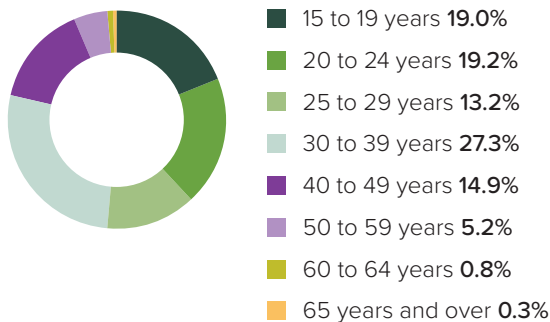
* Other: 115 Enrolments; 37 Completions
Not known: 100 Enrolments; 34 Completions

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

The sector is heavily female-dominated, with women representing over 93% of enrolments and completions in 2022. The gender disparity in this sector is pronounced, indicating an opportunity to consider how to best support males in lifting both enrolments and to understand the barriers to male completions.

Age⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

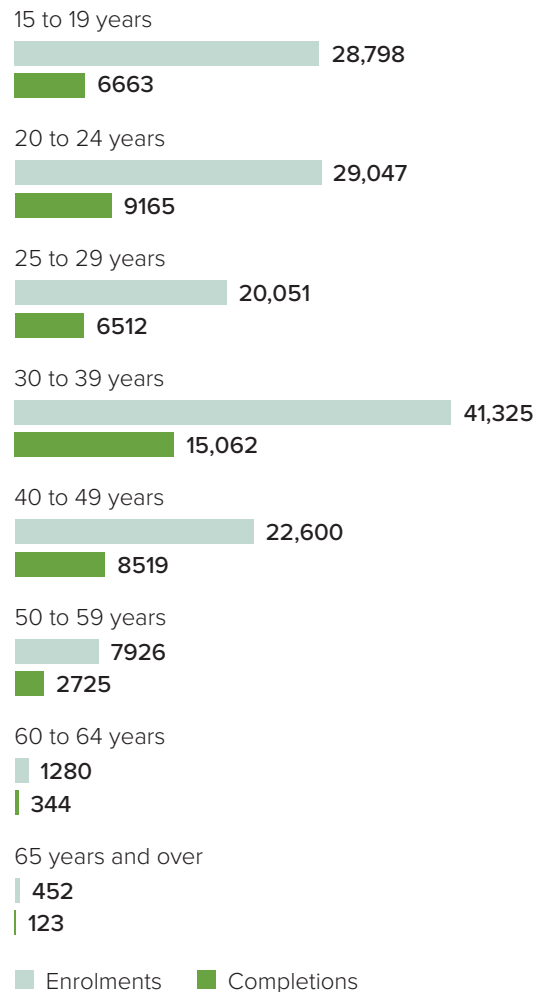
% of overall enrolments by age



Compared to overall VET program data, the Children's Education and Care sector has a greater concentration of learners in their 30s and 40s. In 2022, individuals aged **30 to 39 years** had the highest share of both enrolments (**27.3%**) and completions (**30.7%**), followed by those in the **40 to 49 age group**. In contrast, the overall VET sector typically has a stronger representation of younger age groups. This highlights the sector's appeal to mid-career individuals, possibly linked to workforce re-entry or career shifts.

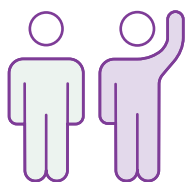
Younger learners aged **15 to 29 years** also contribute significantly to the sector, representing **51.4% of enrolments**. However, completions for this demographic are lower than those of older age groups. Even a modest increase in completions among this younger demographic could significantly contribute to addressing workforce shortages in the sector.

Enrolments and completions by age



Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

First Nations students⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners accounted for **5.2%** of enrolments and **3.3%*** of completions

* 1625 students

Non-Indigenous learners made up **88.3%** of enrolments and **87.6%** of completions

Not known learners represented **6.5%** of enrolments and **9.1%** of completions

In 2022, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** learners represented **5.0%** of enrolments across the overall VET program, while in the children's education and care sector, they represent a slightly higher proportion of learners (**5.2%**).

However, despite higher levels of enrolment, these learners comprise only **3.3%** of completions, revealing a considerable gap between these numbers. This points to possible challenges in retention and progression for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the sector.

Students with disability⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾



Learners with a disability represented **6.9%** of enrolments and **5.5%** of completions in the Children's Education and Care sector*

* 2704 students

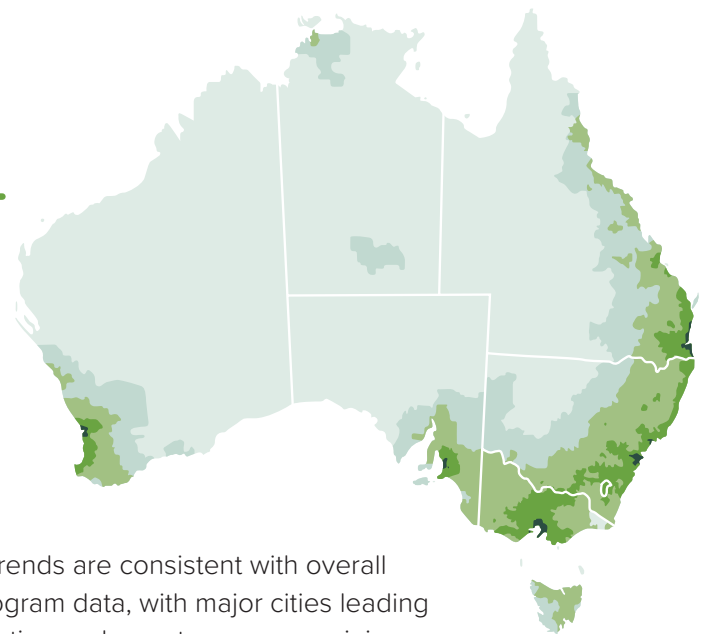
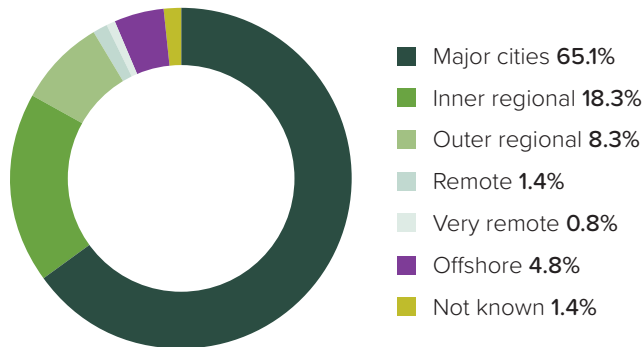
Compared to overall VET program data, the participation of learners with disabilities in this sector is similar to or slightly higher. Still, the completion gap remains consistent, highlighting the need for targeted support to improve these learners' outcomes.

Geographic location⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

Remoteness

Remoteness Index of Australia

% of overall enrolments by remoteness



Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

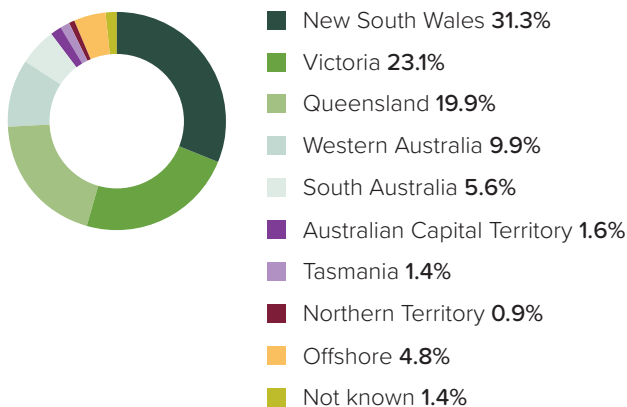


Major Cities represented 65.1% of enrolments and 65.8% of completions

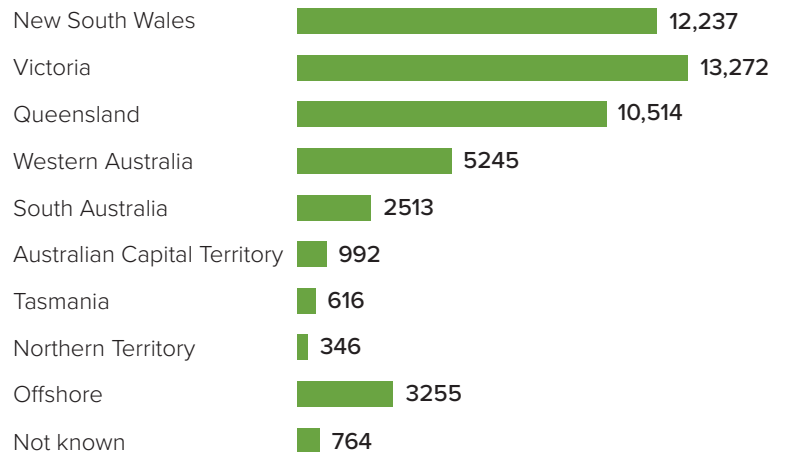
These trends are consistent with overall VET program data, with major cities leading participation and remote areas remaining underrepresented. This highlights the ongoing challenge of accessibility and support for learners in remote locations.

State/territory

% of overall enrolments by state/territory




Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory



New South Wales had 31.3% of enrolments and 24.6% of completions, while Victoria made up 23.1% of enrolments and 26.7% of completions.

Queensland followed with 19.9% of enrolments and 21.1% of completions. Less populous states like Western Australia and South Australia had less participation, contributing under 10% of both enrolments and completions. Compared to overall VET program data, the trends are similar, with larger states dominating participation.

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

A photograph of a classroom setting. A female teacher with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue t-shirt, is sitting on the floor facing three children. The children are also sitting on the floor on colorful cushions. One child is wearing a blue shirt, another a grey shirt, and the third a pink shirt. They appear to be in a circle, engaged in a conversation. In the background, there is a wooden table with various supplies like pens and pencils, and a whiteboard with some papers pinned to it.

“Children’s education is vital – not only an enabler of children, as an enabler of workforce participation particularly in our sector but increasingly lack of access to childcare is a barrier to people accessing healthcare services for themselves. How can we raise the profile of the Children’s Education and Care sector as a super enabler for all of us?”

Actions

Research



Completion rates project: understanding the drivers and opportunities for intervention to address low completion rates in key qualifications.

Training Package Development and Review



Identify priority qualifications for review and update annually.



Project to review entry requirements for Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care: Using several mechanisms, this review aims to increase accessibility to the *CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care*. By developing tools to support pathways into the Diploma, the project will address workforce needs, available places and service quality.



Creation of a nationally endorsed Outside School Hours Care qualification: In response to the training needs of the outside school hours care sector, work with industry to transition the existing accredited qualification into the CHC Community Services Training Package, resulting in the qualification being available to all Registered Training Organisations to respond to industry's training needs.

Note: For all references in this sector profile, please refer to the HumanAbility 2024 Workforce Plan.

HumanAbility

ABN 36 665 836 608

Suite 4, 109 Union Road, Surrey Hills VIC 3127 | 1800 486 262

humanability.com.au



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