

South Australian Royal Commission

Stakeholder Roundtable – Workforce

18 May 2023

The context

Moving to two years of preschool is a 'once in a generation' opportunity to transform outcomes for children and families, and strengthen the foundations and impact of the ECEC sector – the workforce is central to achieving this ambition



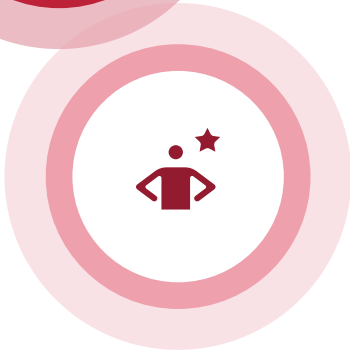
Teachers and educators are fundamental to implementing and generating impact from 3-year-old preschool

- The benefits and outcomes of ECEC are driven by interactions between teachers and educators and children in intentionally designed learning environments.
- The ability to attract and retain the workforce is the biggest handbrake on the scale and pace of implementation. Preschool can only expand as fast as the workforce grows.



There are longstanding, systemic issues with attracting and retaining a quality ECEC workforce

- These issues are well-known, extensively studied, and stubbornly persistent – and currently resulting in significant workforce shortages.
- Significant challenges can be anticipated in securing the estimated 660 ECTs, 880 educators and 120 Centre Directors and other staff needed for 3-year-old preschool.
- The approach to 3-year-old preschool recommended by the Commission will also ask parts of the workforce to work in new and different ways.



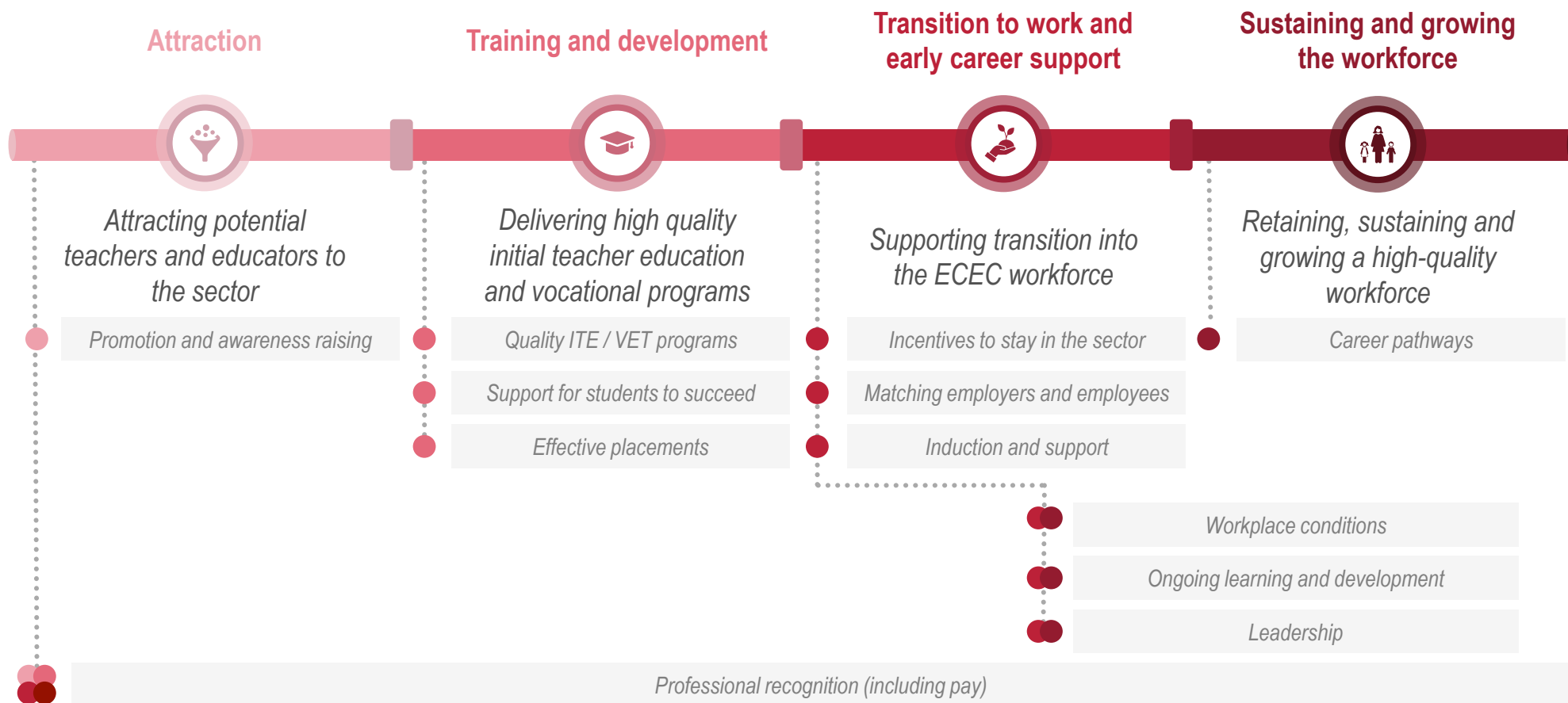
There's an opportunity for a stronger ECEC sector and workforce

- Ambitious reform opens the opportunity for creative new solutions to old problems, to create new norms and ways of working.
- The Interim Report makes recommendations with significant potential to strengthen and support the ECEC workforce.

The workforce pipeline

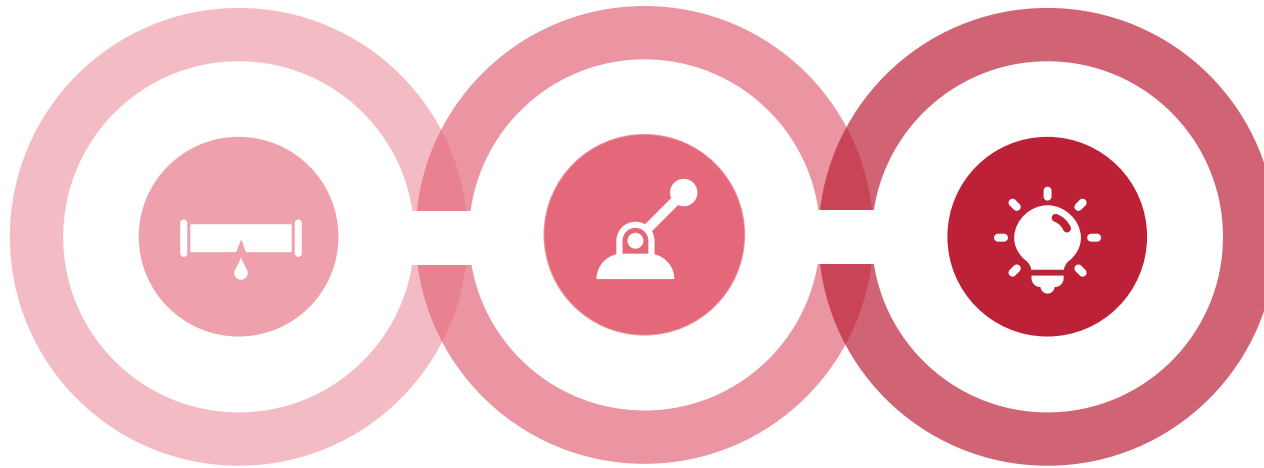
There are currently gaps in each stage of the workforce pipeline. It will be important to identify the most critical issues, where South Australia has scope to act, and what's required to unlock innovation.

To increase the total size of the preschool workforce while ensuring quality and diversity, we need to focus on:



Key questions

Across the pipeline, we need clarity on where the biggest challenges lie, what South Australia can feasibly influence, and where there are opportunities for innovation or overcoming barriers.



Challenges

Where are the biggest challenges, and which are priorities?

Lever

Who holds responsibility for addressing them?
What levers does South Australia hold?

Innovation

What are the opportunities for innovation, and what's required to unlock them?

Attraction | Increasing the number, quality and diversity of people interested in an ECEC career

Attraction

Training and development

Transition to work and early career support

Sustaining and growing the workforce



Key challenges include:



Public perceptions – boosting the public perception of the sector and countering negative perceptions



Perceived barriers - addressing financial and logistical barriers to studying (especially for upskillers and mature entrants)



Ensuring a diverse workforce – across gender, socio-economic status, race and cultural background – including attracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and educators, men, people from culturally diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds



Attracting candidates with the right attributes – targeting people with the attributes and mindsets needed to succeed in ECEC

Levers available to SA



- Communication and messaging / social marketing
- Targeted recruitment programs for priority cohorts
- Careers advice through schools

Examples of innovation

- Victoria's social marketing campaign for early childhood teachers
- Targeting Diploma-qualified educators for upskill programs
- Targeted recruitment and engagement with priority communities
- Guaranteed employment offers or other incentives that make preschool more attractive than primary teaching
- Fee waivers for VET programs and scholarships for Bachelors programs

Training and development | Ensuring ITE/VET programs are effective, students are supported to succeed and effective placements help students to be job-ready

Attraction

Training and development

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Key challenges include:



Content and structure of ITE programs – including amount of early childhood content in Birth to 8 degrees and level of child development focus.



Quality of VET programs – some programs do not provide sufficient rigor or support, reducing the value of the qualification



Drop-out rates – high drop-out rates indicate challenges with attracting the right candidates and providing the level of support needed to succeed at university



Placement effectiveness – placements are critical but hard to access, cause financial stress and services can't always provide the level of support and coaching students need.



Preparation for the workforce – students do not always feel adequately prepared for their role

Levers available to SA



- Regulatory and policy influence over ITE program requirements
- Promotion and support for known quality providers
- Investing in wrap-around programs for target cohorts
- Brokering partnerships between ITE/VET providers and employers

Examples of innovation

- Partnerships between ITE providers and employers to support placements and guaranteed jobs
- 'Earn while you learn' employment-based pathways
- Accelerated Bachelor programs
- Flexible delivery of ITE programs (part-time, online)



Transition to work and early career | Increasing the number of early childhood-trained teachers and educators who work in the sector, and ensuring their entrance into the workforce sets them up for success

Attraction




Training and development

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Sustaining and growing the workforce



Key challenges include:

-  **Dual-trained teachers choosing schools** – usually because of differences in pay, access to professional support / learning / networks, and conditions
-  **Some settings are preferred over others** – preschools can be more valued than LDCs, reflecting differences in pay, conditions and perceived professional recognition
-  **Attracting teachers and educators to 'hard to staff' services** – services in regional and remote areas, and in disadvantaged communities, struggle to attract quality staff



Variable support for induction – not all workplaces adequately support new teacher and educators and help manage early career challenges (including any mismatch between expectations and practice, professional isolation, and practice development)



Teacher registration – provisionally registered teachers often struggle to access the mentoring and support needed for full registration

Levers available to SA



- Reducing financial / housing barriers to working in regional and remote areas
- Regulatory requirements
- Strengthening support for teacher registration
- Communication and messaging about the value of all ECEC services

Examples of innovation

- Financial incentives to work in regional and remote services, including provision of housing
- Structured (and remunerated) mentoring programs focused on enabling teacher registration
- Graduate teacher professional networks
- Local learning networks, facilitated / enabled by departmental staff, bringing together educators, teachers and/or centre directors from LDCs and preschools



Sustaining and growing the workforce | Ensuring positive workplaces that provide conditions that support effective teaching, ongoing learning, strong leadership and career pathways.

Attraction

Training and development

Transition to work and early career support

Sustaining and growing the workforce



Key challenges include:

S Career pathways – there's limited career planning and opportunities for specialisation in ECEC

Leadership development – leadership is a key determinant of employee satisfaction and retention, service quality and children's learning and development, but few leaders in early childhood have access to dedicated learning and support



Variability in workplace conditions – not all teacher and educators have access to the workplace conditions that support quality teaching, including:

- Time for planning
- Access to quality professional learning opportunities, including ongoing, embedded learning and reflection
- Opportunities to connect, learn and reflect with peers and colleagues
- Opportunities for autonomy, ownership and input into decisions
- Flexibility and rostering models that account for individual circumstances
- Support for wellbeing – positive work cultures, access to EAP, contemporary HR practices

Levers available to SA



- Minimum requirements for receiving preschool funding (i.e. guaranteed minimum planning time)
- Provision of leadership training for centre directors
- Industry support for small business to strengthen operating models

Examples of innovation

- In-house leadership programs for new Centre Directors
- Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher accreditation
- Specialist coaching roles (i.e. in literacy, inclusion, etc)
- Support, resources and coaching to enable preschools and LDCs to adopt new structures / operating models



Key questions

Attraction



Attracting potential teachers and educators to the sector

Are you aware of examples of effective initiatives to attract people to the sector – particularly those from priority cohorts and in regional and remote areas?

Why were they effective?
Are there barriers to scale up?

Training and development



Delivering high quality initial teacher education and vocational programs

What are the priorities for strengthening ITE / VET program quality and supporting students to complete?

What are the opportunities for innovation in this space, and how can they be supported – including employment-based pathways and collaborations with ITE / VET providers and employers?

Transition to work and early career support



Supporting transition into the ECEC workforce

What are the key barriers to early childhood-trained teachers staying in the sector?

Sustaining and growing the workforce



Retaining, sustaining and growing a high-quality workforce

What are most important workplace conditions for supporting quality teaching and learning, as well as the wellbeing of educators and teachers?

Are you aware of effective models for supporting ECEC sector leaders?
Why were they effective?
Are there barriers to scale up?