



C&K's Submission to the Australian Government's Productivity Commission In response to the Early Childhood Development Workforce Study

General Workforce: *includes long day care, family day care, in-home care, occasional care, outside school hours care, other childcare services.*

What are some other examples of integrated and co-located services within your organisation? What are the benefits and limitations of integrating and co-locating ECD services.

C&K integrated services are generally approved care services offering a combination of child care with a kindergarten/pre-prep program embedded within the service. A number of our services are based on this model, including our Kelvin Grove (Brisbane inner city) and Emerald services. The kindergarten room attracts funding from the Queensland Government which up until 2011 was based on salaries/wages for the teacher and an assistant. This funding is now based on the number of children attending and the location of the service. These kindergartens do not attract Child Care Benefit.

Only recently, the ACT has set up a number of early childhood schools operating in the ACT. These schools are early learning and development centres, providing integrated services, for children from birth to eight years of age. C&K has a collaborative partnership with the ACT Department of Education and Training (DET), to deliver and provide care and education for children, aged birth to five years in two of these schools.

Integrated and co-located ECD services have a number of benefits. Reflecting on the ACT service example, the location of the ECD service may assist with the child's transition to school, families with children from birth to eight years of age have the convenience of going to one location for their education. These benefits may also assist with centre enrolments. The traditional kindergarten model does not generally meet the needs of parents who work full-time, due to the operating hours. The integrated model, which has a kindergarten embedded in a childcare service, is ideal for parents who work full-time, as care can be provided for their child for the full working day.

Limitations: Our kindergarten and Childcare staff members do not share the same conditions. For example, staff members who are employed under kindergarten conditions receive a recess break during the school holiday periods and are paid during this time. Full-time childcare staff receive four weeks annual leave. Therefore, the first integrated model mentioned does have limitations in relation to staffing. Team members working in the same service are paid under different conditions, therefore there may be feelings of inequity. Additionally, there is a change in staffing during the recess periods, which results in lack of consistency for the children. The kindergarten room remains open during the school holidays and therefore difficulties in the adequate staffing of the service may arise in regional or remote locations.

What characteristics described the childcare and preschool workforces- in terms of demographics, wages and salaries, working conditions, employment status, staff turnover, unfilled vacancies and job satisfaction?

Our ECD workforce consists of a wide range of people, from various backgrounds. Approximately 97% of our ECD workforce is female. Our team members are from a wide range of nationalities; however no data is currently recorded regarding their nationality. We have a number of team members in our services who are above 60 years of age (3.5%), however also many between the ages of 17 to 25 (15.2%). Seventy two per cent (72%) of our workforce hold a formal qualification. Although this figure also includes our Central office (head office) team members, these staff members only make up a very small percentage of our entire workforce.



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ECD wages vary greatly from approximately \$19,000 (trainee entry level) to \$74,419 gross per annum (not including allowances or incentive payments). Wages depend on qualifications and experience and are based on our Enterprise Agreements.

C&K have a high percentage of ECD casual staff (currently approximately 45%) due to the stat legislation's staff: child ratio requirements and regular need for relief staff. A large number of these staff may only be utilised once or twice to ensure the staff: child ratio is correct. As a percentage of the total ECD workforce, part-time staff members make up 21%. The remaining 33% of our ECD workforce are obviously full-time.

Our overall staff turnover for December 2010 was 4.7%, the year to date total for 2010 was 22%. C&K generally experience low turnover, however find at the end of each calendar year turnover is much higher than average. C&K experience much higher turnover in our childcare services, in comparison to our Kindergarten services.

Regarding issues in filling vacancies, generally C&K experience issues filling ECD positions located in regional and remote areas. The positions that are also across the board difficult to fill are Childcare group leader positions and apprenticeships, even in the inner city Brisbane suburbs. We experience ongoing difficulties in filling most childcare positions located in the Australian Capital Territory. Recent review of our recruitment data-base supports this information.

In a recent employee survey conducted within C&K, all team members were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their current job. Team members were asked to score on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being highly dissatisfied, 5 being highly satisfied). The average rating of ECD team members was 3.74.

What data collections provide information on the ECD sector and it's workforce?

C&K collects data about our ECD workforce by capturing specific information upon employment commencement. This information is entered into our Human Resources Information system and payroll system, CHRIS21. Reports can then be generated from CHRIS21 when required.

How might these data collections be improved?

The demographic information collected is limited. For example, until recently we did not provide new team members with the opportunity to indicate to us that they identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander upon commencement. We will now be collecting this information on appointment.

As our CHRIS21 system does allow us to record, report and analyse data, limited improvements are required in relation to the collection of data.

ECEC Usage:

What are some of the child development reasons families choose to use, or not use, different ECEC services? How is this changing over time?

C&K don't currently collect data to show why families choose to use one particular ECEC services over another, anecdotally though parents will choose a service that best suits their individual family needs at the time. This will



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differ depending on the service's hours of operation, service they operate and location. Although generally parents who enrol their child in a C&K Kindergarten acknowledge the level of teacher qualification will influence their child's development.

To what extent is female labour force participation influenced by the availability of formal childcare? (does spaces in childcare increase female labour force participation?)

We would assume to a great extent. If a family is unable to find a place in a formal childcare service (which may be their strong preference) the female (or male for that matter) in the family may delay returning to work for either the short-term or the long term. In some instances no formal or informal place is available for the child and there is no option but to delay returning to work. C&K team members have also experienced this, having to their return to work either partially or not at all due to being unable to secure a childcare place (especially in Inner Brisbane). Females who wish to return to the workforce (after a considerable amount of time out of workforce) also have challenges in returning to work if they require formal childcare. These job seekers may need to place their child in care and pay for the place to enable them to successfully find employment.

In terms of C&K's workforce, the inability to secure formal childcare is recognised as a key factor in attracting qualified and experienced staff. To address this factor, C&K provides employees with priority access in one of C&K's long day care services.

How might the demand for ECEC services be affected by changes to female labour force participation? (Is the demand higher as the female participation in the labour force increases?)

If there are more opportunities for women in the workforce, there is more likely to be a higher demand for formal childcare services. However, there may be less demand for kindergarten services due to some of the 'stand-alone' kindergartens current operational hours. Often mothers who do not work choose to take their children to kindergarten, rather than a childcare service due to the operational hours. Overall, however, it is assumed that as female labour force participation increases, the demand for ECECC services increases.

On the flip-side, C&K anticipates that one of the impacts of the federal paid parental leave scheme will be a tighter labour market, as the market is dominated by young female staff who will be away from the workforce for a longer period during the time(s) they have their children.

To what extent does the relative cost of ECEC services determine the demand for those services?

We can attribute about 35% of our market to price sensitivity. This means that if/when we increase fees; we can lose up to 35% of our enrolments. This is dependent upon location of the service and the fees in other services within the local area.

How will increased fertility rates, changing family structures, the introduction of paid parental leave and other demographic, social and policy factors affect the demand for ECD services?



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Research has shown that there has been an increase in fertility rates, which we would presume would increase the demand for ECD services. Additionally, due to our aging population some of our current ECD workers may retire and therefore require replacement employees to take their place. Additionally, these retirees may become permanent carers for their grandchildren, as an alternative to child-care, which may decrease the demand for ECD workers.

Our family structures are changing all the time, single parents are not uncommon and these parents may be relying on childcare to ensure they can attend work and support their family.

The South-East Queensland population is continually increasing; therefore we could assume more services will be required for the growing population. An example of this is C&K's partnership with the government to provide approximately 200 new kindergartens to the Queensland community.

When the Australian population start to utilise the newly introduced paid parental leave, this may result in a slight decrease in the need for ECD services (as the parents may wish to take a longer period of leave after the birth of their child). However, generally the babies' room at our services are full with a long waiting list, so the demand for ECD workers should not be affected.

Workforce for children with additional needs:

What characteristics describe the workforce that provides services to children with additional needs – terms of demographics, wages and salaries, working conditions, employment status, staff turnover, unfilled vacancies, and job satisfaction?

Within C&K services, our service Directors apply for funding to enable them to employ a staff member to provide additional assistance in the room or service in which a child with a diagnosed additional need/s is enrolled (called an additional needs assistant). Government funding is allocated on a yearly basis and is only applicable while the child is in attendance.

Currently, as at the beginning of January, we have five additional needs assistants employed. All additional needs assistants are paid according to the relevant assistant wage scale (based on our collective agreements) according to their qualification and years of experience. Currently the hourly rate for the additional needs assistants employed range from \$23.32 per hour to \$25.37 per hour.

All additional needs assistants are employed casually and complete work based on hours funded. This generally ranges from 4-10 hours per week; however from time to time funding can be much greater. C&K generally experience little difficulty in filling these positions. These positions seem to be of interest to the ECD workforce, suit those who only wish to work casually and no qualification is required.

Unfortunately we have no data collected on the turnover of our additional needs team members. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of additional needs assistants stay in the position whilst the funding is applicable.



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Additionally no data has been captured on this particular group specifically regarding job satisfaction, only on the ECD workforce overall (as discussed above).

Our current additional needs assistants vary in age, the youngest being 31 and oldest is 64. The average age of the additional needs assistants is 47. As mentioned, no formal qualifications are required for this position, however two hold a Certificate III or above in early childhood education. Currently five additional needs assistants are employed and all are female.

ECD workforce for children with additional needs:

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?

In Queensland an additional needs assistant does not need to hold any formal early childhood qualification. In many cases these unqualified assistants need to work closely with the qualified workers to provide the services appropriate to support the child. It would be advantageous for these workers to hold a minimum of a Certificate III in Children's Services, in addition they should complete training (a skill set) that would complement their work duties.

How appropriate are the remuneration and conditions for ECD workers for children with additional needs?

Considering the desired skills for an additional needs position, the remuneration does not seem sufficient. However, there appears to be limited issues in the attraction and retention of additional needs assistants. Increasing the remuneration may attract staff members who are more specialised in this area.

Governments' role in ECD sector:

How do the differing roles and policies of governments affect the planning and provision of the ECD workforce?

In Queensland there is one government department that is responsible for early childhood education and care within the state. This government department supports all service types including kindergarten, childcare, family day care and outside school hours' care. This move to one dedicated government department has assisted organisations like ours to streamline operational processes and improve service function. C&K work closely with the Queensland's Office for Early Childhood and Care on a number of collaborations, in particular the 240 project which will see a number of new kindergartens open in Queensland to support pre prep aged children's participation in early childhood education.

ECEC workforce supply/ demand:

What effect will the new standards and targets have on demand for ECD workers?

The increased number of Queensland Kindergartens will also increase the demand for qualified ECD staff due to the significant reforms in early childhood education and care. Within our services a number of staff already hold the



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required qualifications, however some will need to look at ways to upgrade their qualifications. Some of these team members, due to their personal circumstances may have no option to complete further studies.

How will increased fertility rates, changing family structures, the introduction of paid parental leave and other demographic, social and policy factors affect the demand for ECD workers?

Research has shown that there has been an increase in fertility rates, which we would presume would increase the demand for ECD services and therefore ECD workers. Additionally, due to our aging population some of our current ECD workers may retire and therefore require replacement employees to take their place. Additionally, these retirees may become permanent carers for their grandchildren, as an alternative to child-care, which may decrease the demand for ECD workers.

Our family structures are changing all the time, single parents are not uncommon and these parents may be relying on childcare to ensure they can attend work and support their family.

The South-East Queensland population is continually increasing; therefore we could assume more services will be required for the growing population. At least two staff members are required to be employed at each ECD service. An example of this is C&K's partnership with the government to provide approximately 200 new kindergartens to the Queensland community. All these services will require new and qualified team members.

When the Australian population start to utilise the newly introduced paid parental leave, this may result in a slight decrease in the need for ECD services (as the parents may wish to take a longer period of leave after the birth of their child). However, generally the babies' room at our services are full with a long waiting list, so the demand for ECD workers should not be affected.

Do providers of ECD services have difficulties finding staff? If so, are these problems more pronounced in some ECD occupations or in some areas of Australia? Why is this the case?

The extent of the difficulty in finding staff in our ECD services does depend on the location of the service and service type. For example, Kindergarten positions in the inner city or coastal are in high demand. However, services in regional and remote locations, whether kindergarten or long-day care do have difficulties in recruiting staff. Additionally, services in the Australian Capital Territory also experience great difficulties in recruiting staff.

Difficulties in these areas relating to finding staff are usually for the following reasons:

- The living expenses in the location are too high (based on wages received)
- Competition from other employers in the region (eg. Mining companies or government departments)
- The service is located in a mining town, where the family can afford to live on one family member's (usually an employee of the mines) wages (therefore reduce the supply of ECD workers).
- Inability to find housing in the location

Kindergarten positions have always traditionally been more popular due to the service operating hours and recess leave provided. These conditions are extremely attractive for women with young children or children of school age.



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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?

It is difficult to define, as we have received limited exit survey data and have little anecdotal evidence to support. Our employee survey did ask participants (obviously existing employees) to rate how satisfied they were with their pay. Team members were asked to score on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being highly dissatisfied, 5 being highly satisfied). The average rating for ECD workers was 2.95, which is below an external benchmark for all workers (not just ECD).

The survey did illustrate that our ACT team members were least satisfied with their pay. Anecdotal evidence also supports that ACT team members find the cost of living high, compared to the wages paid in Childcare.

What are the key factors influencing an individual's decision to work in the ECD sector?

Again, it is difficult to define, due to the individuality of the ECD workforce, however anecdotal evidence suggests the following:

- Ability to make an impact on children's lives
- Ability to provide greater job satisfaction
- Ability to be creative, artistic, musical whilst at work
- Love of working with children and families
- Ability to have time off during school holidays and working hours fitting in with school times (kindergarten)
- Ability to work at a service and have their child at the service with them
- Other benefits provided by the ECD employer eg. Professional development opportunities, networking, how closely their values are in-line with the EC organisation

Do these vary for different ECD occupations?

Again this is difficult to answer, as there is no evidence available to support an answer of 'yes' or 'no'. Generally the key factors would be the same across all ECD occupations, however job seekers find positions in the kindergarten sector more desirable due to their working hours and ability to access recess leave during the school holiday periods.

Why are ECD workers paid less than those working in related sectors?

There does not seem to be a reason why this is the case. When the offerings for the children are the so similar, the wages and conditions should be the same. Teachers in Queensland kindergartens are paid at rates comparable to the State sector – however the State sector teacher enjoys other conditions which are more favourable (i.e. higher number of non-contact hours, etc.). Teachers in Queensland long day care centres, however are generally paid considerably less than their kindergarten counterparts and have longer working days and weeks per annum.



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C&K recognise that the wages of our childcare staff are low, however in order to remain operating in an extremely competitive market it has been necessary for C&K to remunerate in accordance with award provisions or slightly higher. In previous years, C&K supported employees and the LHMU (union) in a recent successful application before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to increase the wage rates for childcare staff. This case also included many references to pay equity between equivalent jobs (more traditionally held by males) and the role of a childcare worker (more traditionally held by females).

Are the wages and salaries for workers in different ECD occupations appropriate, given the skills and qualifications required? If not how might this best be addressed?

In our recent employee survey, all team members were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their pay and benefits, by being asked to respond to the statement: 'the pay and conditions I receive are fair considering the work that I do'. Team members were asked to score on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being highly dissatisfied, 5 being highly satisfied). The results showed that our ECD workforce, are less satisfied in comparison to a sample of other organisations (C&K average rating of: 2.76). Through our online survey exercise, we had access to compare our ratings amongst a sample of other organisations (general comparison rating was equal to 3.24).

Currently there is a great difference between the wages (of some roles) and conditions of childcare team members in comparison to our kindergarten staff members. The roles are the same in some instances, yet rates are vastly different.

The critical factor to achieve wage parity, however, is the balance between increasing parent fees to a point at which increased wage costs are covered but care and education remains affordable for families.

Will the supply of qualified ECD workers expand sufficiently to meet COAG's objectives? How might the training of additional workers be funded?

Already in Queensland there are a number of state-wide training initiatives such as traineeships and apprenticeships schemes to up skill potential employees. In addition to this, those who have completed an Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood should receive equitable credits at university level to ensure articulation to a higher level qualification.

ECEC workforce retention:

To what extent are ECEC, child health and family support services experiences staff retention issues?

C&K's average monthly voluntary turnover is 1.7% with an annual voluntary turnover rate of 22%.

As discussed previously (and turnover results support this) – C&K's four services in the ACT are the highest contributors to the turnover statistics.

Are there examples of effective staff retention strategies in the ECD sector?

During the 2010 year, C&K has not formally captured information regarding how effective our retention strategies are/were. However, anecdotal evidence suggests (and our generally low turnover rates) would indicate that or



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employee benefits have assisted in retaining our team members, considering wage satisfaction is low. C&K also enjoys a strong reputation as a not-for-profit organisation committed to early childhood education and care. In addition, examples of implemented retention strategies/benefits include (but are not limited to):

- Team members are able to have their birthday as a paid leave day
- Employee Assistance Program
- Various learning and development opportunities – eg. Apprenticeship programs, individual development plans, development workshops, conferences, access to e-learning courses
- Priority access to childcare
- Pre-tax childcare payments for our team members
- Payment for maintaining first aid and resuscitation
- Reimbursement for blue cards and police checks
- Salary packaging
- Vaccination programs

How might such strategies be replicated throughout Australia?

Government bodies could assist in educating organisations on how to incorporate cost effective retention strategies and provide case studies of other organisations that have had success in this area. Childcare benefit and the ability to offer employees pre-tax fee payments for kindergarten programs would also be advantageous

Does the regulatory burden have a significant impact on attracting or retaining staff in the ECD sector?

Yes. Our employee survey supports this. Increased administrative duties are affecting the ability of our staff to 'do what is important in their job' (according to our team members). These admin duties include those required due to regulations. For example, our Directors need to keep abreast of government changes regarding accreditation, licensing and meet WHS requirements. All these tasks are time consuming at require employees to complete some sort of professional development (even at the very minimum a large amount of professional reading).

Additionally, in our recent employee survey, team members have stated that they do not have adequate time to complete their job requirements.

Whether these increased administrative requirements are the sole causal factor for resignations is difficult to establish. However, anecdotal evidence suggests, for example, that Assistant Directors in our Childcare services have often felt reluctant to apply for Directors roles due to the administrative workload.

Qualifications and Career Pathways:

Do differences in qualification requirements restrict workers' ability to move between jurisdictions or ECD sectors?

At present there are differences between states/territories regarding employment requirements however the new National Quality Framework will set a new National Quality Standard for early childhood education and care



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providers in Australia including blanket staff qualification requirements to ensure staff have the ability to move between jurisdictions.

Do newly-qualified ECD workers have the necessary skills and attributes to be effective in the workplace?

The current Community Services Training Package, which includes early childhood qualifications is designed to address the full range of services, modes of delivery and client profiles that are characteristic of the community sector and has been structured to avoid embedded bias or discrimination for any individuals or groups. For example qualifications and units of competency have been reviewed and streamlined to:

- meet industry needs now and as far as appropriate into the future
- provide improved career pathways
- ensure sufficient flexibility for use across a range of sectors where appropriate
- facilitate specialised outcomes in line with identified requirements of employers in sectors where this is required and appropriate (CHC08 Community Services Training Package; 2008).

It is fair to conclude that the training package does facilitate the necessary skills and attributes to be effective in the workplace – it is the responsibility of the RTO in their interpretation of the training package, delivery of content and development of assessment benchmarks that really determines if a new ECD worker is effective in the workplace.

To what extent are qualification requirements a barrier to entering the ECD sector?

It is fair to say that the cost of study is a very real barrier for ECD workers. Coupled with the low pay conditions and the national quality standards qualification requirements workers who are also students struggle to meet the financial costs of courses and the progression timeframes regardless of a number government initiatives.

There is also a very realistic restriction for ECD students in rural and remote, and some regional areas to be able to access bias-free and holistic assessment processes. In essence ECD students are very limited in accessing high quality training.

Registered training organisations (RTO's) must be flexible in their delivery of training packages to ensure that workers can benefit from a wider national skills base however practically location and environmental factors influence the availability and accessibility of quality qualifications. Free training initiatives may relieve financial burdens but do not ensure quality training and effectiveness of an ECD worker in the workplace. E-learning and online options are not always the right choice or available to students in some locations, and there is no government travel subsidy for a full fee for service student.

How could any such barriers be overcome?

Solutions:

- Government financial assistance for RTO's to allow travel to students enrolled in regional or remote areas.
- Equitable Government subsidy for RTOs delivering early childhood qualifications.



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Do people from Indigenous and CALD backgrounds face particular barriers to obtaining entry-level ECDS qualifications?

Delivery and assessment strategies need to be designed and implemented to enhance and encourage participation by all groups. Trainers and assessors need to be able to identify and address particular needs of different groups.

Some specific issues and/or community groupings which trainers and assessors may need to respond to, include:

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), who may:

- have language and literacy issues and needs
- require different or extra input and experience of trainers and assessors
- have preferred learning styles and assessment methods
- require sensitivity to cross-cultural issues

The special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are recognised as a key focus for the Community Services Training Package.

The issues include:

- Potential language and literacy needs that impact both clients and workers in the community sector
- Impact of rural and isolated communities and experiences on the training, learning and assessment needs
- need for trainers and assessors to be aware of the impact of European colonialism on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Potential for particular consultative requirements by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities which may impact the training and assessment experience
- The inclusion (by assessors) of methods which refer to community activities and reflect community culture and standards
- Need for trainers and assessors to be conscious of community protocols, codes of ethics and guides to consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities
- The impact of cultural safety issues on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the community sector, both in their work in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and in mainstream community sector work (CHC08 Community Services Training Package; 2008).

It is worth noting that 12% of employed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people work in community services or health industries (CHC08 Community Services Training Package; 2008).

Are workers who obtain additional skills and qualifications sufficiently rewarded?

Industrial instruments do generally recognise higher qualifications in the wage classification table and therefore these attract a higher wage rate. However, there are some circumstances in which a higher qualification does not bring any reward. For example, if a kindergarten assistant completed an Advanced Diploma, her/his wage would not change as a result.



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Anecdotal evidence suggests that many team members have little motivation to complete additional qualifications due to the little financial benefit they will receive as a result of completion and the extra responsibility placed on them if they take on a position that requires a qualification. Additionally, the survey results discussed earlier regarding our team members feeling on perceptions of fairness in relation to wage supports these views.

Qualifications, unless government funded, can be very expensive and when for an employee paid on an ECD wage it can be extremely difficult financially to make the decision to complete further study.

Is expertise sufficiently recognised and valued?

The majority of ECD industrial instruments that affect this organisation do make provision for both qualifications and experience – however whether the quantum is sufficient to recognise and value this expertise is likely to be considered by the sector as unlikely.

How could opportunities for career progression within the ECD sector be enhanced?

With the Introduction or continuation of programs such as;

- Succession planning programs
- Government and organisational scholarship programs
- The continuation of C&K's apprenticeship programs
- The Productivity Places Program is a wonderful program which has greatly assisted with career progression – the continuation of this program in 2012 would be extremely beneficial.
- Graduate programs – with rotation to regional and remote locations

Are in-service training and professional development programs meeting workforce development needs?

Although not included in this organisation's 2010 employee survey, the 2008 survey revealed that 78% of employees did believe that they were properly trained for their job. Since that time, however, C&K is in the process of implementing an organisation-wide competency project to fully determine whether in-service training & professional development programs are meeting these current and future needs.

Are there barriers to ECD staff accessing training and development programs? If so, how could such barriers be overcome?

There are a number of barriers evident.

- Barriers noted in the Award/Agreement –for example; this limits the time we can require team members to participate in learning and development (especially for Kindergarten team members).
- Time and Distance. As our team members are now dispersed throughout Australia, arranging in-services is difficult and extremely costly.
- As our ECD workforce is primarily female, they often have caring responsibilities and therefore may have difficulties in travelling for professional development.



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- Requirement to meet the staff: child ratio at all times. This causes particular difficulties for services in regional and remote areas. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to find qualified staff and therefore the team members at that service/s are less likely to request Professional development if required to take the day off.
- Many services are located in regional and remote locations where EC Professional development is difficult to source.

Although not all these barriers can be overcome, C&K have recently introduced some initiatives to assist with the issues of distance, cost and the competing demands of our sector:

- We have recently introduced an e-learning centre, which provides team members access to a number of online professional development courses.
- Additionally we have purchased Elluminate Live!®, our virtual classroom or conference room which allows team members to access online learning, training and meetings. Additional equipment needs to be purchased to also use this system to its full capacity.

Do you consider professional status to be an issue for the ECD workforce?

Yes, mainly for our childcare team members. Although C&K have been working consistently to improve this and change is evident, professional status does continue to be an issue for the childcare sector. Despite all childcare staff being required to hold a Certificate III or above, childcare team members are often seen or feel as though they are merely babysitters. Additionally there are very little males working in the ECD profession, as it is deemed a female dominated industry.

What factors determine professional status in the sector? How might a change in status be achieved? What would be the effectiveness of such a change?

Professional status is determined by a person's qualifications required for the position, wages and conditions.

In addition to improving these factors, educating the community on the values and importance of early childhood education would be beneficial. The promotion of these positions may improve the community's perception and thus attract more applicants to the ECD sector.

Quality of training:

Are training providers and courses of sufficient quality to meet the needs of the ECD sector?

There are a number of providers who are of poor quality. The drive for profit margins and cost effective training and assessing often means that delivery of qualifications can be compromised. Even government initiatives offering free training does not ensure the qualification will be of high quality.

It is essential that all components of planning, delivery and evaluation of training and assessment be carried out in consultation with the particular community. A number of RTO's do not consult with industry especially training organizations who deliver more than one vocation therefore losing touch of what is needed for workers to be



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effective. RTOs working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities need to identify the content and the type of training and assessment that is appropriate to the community.

Training officers must consider the needs of all groups, including the language used and any cultural issues that may affect the response of the person being assessed. Training officer's evidence gathering methods must be equitable to all groups of participants and assessment procedures should also be culturally appropriate for the individual and the situation.

What can be done to ensure that there is an adequate supply of skilled trainers to meet future increases in demand for training?

Solutions:

- Provide training forums for newly introduced units to the training package. This is to ensure training officers understand the content to be delivered - for example broad awareness of relevant cultural, historical and current issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to inform their interactions and to provide a culturally safe work environment for clients.
- Consistent pay conditions for training officers regardless of the working sector.
- Subsidised training for trainers.

Workforce Planning:

Have initiatives to increase the supply of ECD workers been effective?

The government initiatives put in place in recent years have been utilised within C&K, especially the Productivity Places Program and the Traineeship and Apprenticeship Program. These measures have been effective, but how effective is difficult to state as no data has been collected in relation to this.

At least one Group Leader has now been promoted and relocated to a regional Director position, due to the PPP program and another has been acting as Director for two months in the absence of their Director. Without the PPP program, these team members may not have been able to afford to complete their Advanced Diploma. As a result of the Trainee and Apprenticeship scheme, C&K has employed approximately forty new employees (who have either obtained or are obtaining a Certificate III or Diploma in Children's Services) through C&K's College of Early Childhood.

Will the workers who are required to upgrade their qualifications do so, or will they leave the ECD sector?

This will depend on each individual and their personal situation.

For example;

- If some are close to retirement there may be little incentive to upgrade their qualification.
- If funding is available for them and they have adequate annual leave to allow them to complete their practicum, they may be happy to complete additional studies.
- Team members with caring responsibilities may find 'juggling' work, study and family responsibilities too difficult and thus leave the sector



C&K's Submission to the Australian Government's Productivity Commission In response to the Early Childhood Development Workforce Study

Overall, there needs to be a significant incentive for these workers – whether financial or opportunities for career progression in the future.

In the context of increasing integration of ECD services, does the involvement of multiple unions and professional associations affect the capacity for innovation and flexibility in the ECD workforce?

Yes, although a number of innovative and flexible working arrangements have been implemented, it has been problematic to negotiate two separate agreements with two unions in the past. This is particularly so when type of work is the same but in different environments (for example, the employment conditions for an assistant with a Cert III qualification is vastly different depending on whether they work in long day care or a kindergarten service).

Whilst this organisation has developed relationships with the two key unions which are mutually respectful, with a changing landscape in the ECE sector, the issue of areas of union coverage frequently emerges.

How will the ageing of the population, the introduction of paid parental leave, and other demographic, social and policy changes affect the supply of ECD workers?

Not to a great extent. C&K have a range of different workers within the ECD sector. Previously we offered six weeks paid parental leave, so do not envisage that the introduction of the new paid parental scheme will have a significant effect on the supply of ECD workers (within our current workforce). Although we have a wide range of ages within our workforce, we do have approximately 3.5% of employees likely to retire in the next 3-5 years and a further 7.3% likely to retire in the next 5-10 years.

This could cause issues in years to come, trying to fill these positions with adequately qualified and skilled kindergarten teachers – especially in the regional and remote locations as we would issue these situations are similar across all organisations.