

Teachers in Early Education Project
(TEE)

Newsletter

Issue 4– April 2026

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Introduction

Welcome to our fourth newsletter of the Teachers in Early Education (TEE) study. The TEE project is a four-year longitudinal study (2024-2027) funded by the Australian Research Council (DP240100249) to support the supply of a quality early childhood teacher (ECT) workforce in Australia. This newsletter is our first for the year, providing you with insights and updates about the study.

TEE Project updates Component 1: Scoping

We have undertaken a second scoping review of Early Childhood Teacher Education programs in 2025 and finalising a paper for publication soon. There was an increase of approved programs for early childhood teacher education between 2024 and 2025. We have looked at entry requirements, course type, location, duration, recognized prior learning and placement.

Another paper that is close to submission, focuses on the initial teacher education programs for early childhood teachers that are overseen by course coordinators. Nineteen course coordinators, representing 44% of higher education institutions who run early childhood teacher programs, were interviewed to understand their perceptions of the preparedness of their graduates. The course coordinators were proud of their programs although were mindful of the challenges that their structures presented to students especially completing professional experience placements.

Component 2: Longitudinal surveys

We will soon be administering follow-up surveys to students who completed the Wave 1 TEE survey in 2023, 2024, or 2025 and expressed interest in continuing in the study. Data from these longitudinal surveys will provide valuable data enabling us to track career motivations, intentions, and pathways over time. All participants who

complete the survey can opt in to receive a \$25 gift card, as an acknowledgement of their continued investment of time in the study.

Component 3: TEE tool

TEE Tool Development: With input from our Stakeholders, we now have a prototype tool for assessing ECT quality in context - the TEE Tool. The TEE tool is a suite of instruments that together assess a range of elements related to the individual ECT (e.g., wellbeing) and their practices (e.g., pedagogical practices with children); elements related to the ECT workplace (e.g., service type); and ECT's impact (e.g., their contribution to children's wellbeing and development). We are planning to trial the TEE Tool in June - July this year with ECTs in the first five years of teaching. Invitations to participate, with more information about the trial and what it entails, will be circulated soon. We look forward to working with ECTs to trial this world first tool!

Component 4: Longitudinal case studies

The TEE longitudinal case studies focus on ECT graduates' career trajectories and development of quality teaching practice. In this component of our study we are particularly interested in the complex array of ecological factors that can influence ECT supply and quality. We are drawing on life history narrative interviews to generate nuanced data from participants' real-life contexts, which will enable deeper insights about the project's survey findings. We are excited to be currently recruiting participants and the first wave of this data collection will take place in coming weeks.

We are profiling three TEE members.

First up is:

Doctoral student Ms Ashley Zhou

It feels both exciting and surreal to say that I'm two years into my PhD, with only 1.5 years to go and some exciting work on the horizon. Although I am now deep in the analysis and publication-writing stages of my study, I've also found myself spending time baking sourdough and tending to the garden... my own small ways of taking care of myself along the way! With that in mind, I thought I'd share a brief update on where each stage of my study is currently at, as I continue exploring the efficacy of upskilling diploma-qualified educators to an early childhood teacher (ECT) qualification on workforce supply and quality.



Photograph of Ms Ashley Zhou

Survey data

Marianne, Tracy, Marwa and I have been working hard on a publication drawing on the diploma data in the TEE survey. The aim of this study is to examine the characteristics of diploma-qualified educators who are upskilling to an ECT qualification in Australia. Specifically, we are interested in who the diploma-qualified educators are, and what personal and program factors are associated with choosing a program or university for upskilling, retention in their initial teacher education program, career aspirations following completion of their program, and indicators of teacher quality. There is incredibly rich and interesting data from the diploma cohort in the TEE survey that will make an important contribution to the literature and sector.

Key informants

Mid 2025, I recruited four Australian ECEC employers (3 large and one medium organisation) to participate in my study. This stage of the study explored how roles and responsibilities of diploma-qualified educators differ from those of ECTs in their organisation; specific areas where ECTs are expected to have more knowledge, skills and expertise; specific working conditions that are unique to ECTs vs. diploma-qualified educators in their organisation; and, specific incentives or supports provided to encourage upskilling. Data collection involved interviews alongside the analysis of industrial and organisational documents such as modern awards, enterprise agreements, and job descriptions. I am excited to announce that my first

publication as part of my doctoral study has recently been published in the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood. This paper explores the distinctions between ECTs and diploma-qualified educators from employer perspectives. A really interesting and timely article that can be read here: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/18369391261434592>

Case Study

This stage of my study involves 3 interviews across one year with participants at different stages of their upskilling process. I am just about to schedule in the last interview with participants which will also officially mark the end of my data collection for my studies. Marianne, my two other amazing supervisors (Tina Stratigos and Erin Harper), and I have been accepted to contribute a paper on practicums and prior experience in an upcoming special issue. This paper will draw on the case study data and we are looking forward to sharing more information as this progresses.

Second TEE profile: Doctoral student and Project Manager Ms Katie Wright



Katie's (she/her) PhD is titled, ***'Investigating the translation of disability equity education in Australian early childhood education centre-based settings.'*** She is a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate at the University of Sydney and the TEE Project Manager. Katie is the recipient of the TEE Postgraduate Research Scholarship and the G. S. Caird Scholarship from Faculty of Social Sciences (FASS) at The University of Sydney.


Photograph of Ms Katie Wright

Katie is supervised by TEE Lead CI Professor Marianne Fenech and Associate Professor Kathy Cologon, the Associate Director Children, Families, and Communities Children's Voices Centre at Charles Sturt University, where Katie is an Adjunct Research Fellow.

Katie is most proud of being a mum to two delightful young people (and one dog!). As an early childhood teacher, she is a passionate about inclusive education and has worked in a variety of early childhood settings as an educator, teacher and director, as well as an academic, a research assistant and an inclusion consultant. Katie is an advocate for inclusive early childhood education and enjoys working with the TEE team researching high quality early childhood education. Through her doctoral research, she is investigating what is involved for early childhood teachers and educators when translating disability equity education to practice including the barriers to, and enablers of, applying disability equity education in early childhood education centre-based settings.

With little understood about how to translate disability equity education to early childhood education, Katie's study plans to address this gap through a critical research paradigm. Two theoretical perspectives will be utilised for collecting and analysing data: a disability equity education approach and theory of practice architectures. Critical practitioner research will be conducted across a three-phase study with three early childhood case study settings in New South Wales. Qualitative data will be collected through a variety of methods across a 10-month data collection period. It is anticipated the proposed study will benefit inclusive early childhood education for children, families, early childhood teachers and educators, service providers, policies, initial teacher education programs and inclusive ECE professional development. Katie's study is informing the inclusive education practice component of the TEE tool.

Are you an ECT working in an early childhood centre-based setting in NSW?




Permission from Cooper to include this drawing.

I am conducting a PhD research study on inclusive early childhood education, investigating how the anti-bias approach of disability equity education can be applied in early childhood settings.

Like to express interest in participating in the study?

Click the following link or QR code:
https://sydney.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eIKU8jIXp7vkgd0



Katie is currently recruiting for her study and invites you to participate. If you are an early childhood teacher working in an early childhood centre-based setting in NSW, and you are committed to working toward inclusion, then please consider participating! If you would like to express interest in participating in the study, click on the following link or QR code:

https://sydney.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eIKU8jIXp7vkgd0

Image description
A blue background with the words:
Are you an ECT working in an early childhood centre-based setting in NSW?
I am conducting a PhD research study on inclusive early childhood education,
investigating how the anti-bias approach of disability equity education can be applied in
early childhood settings.
The image also contains a child's drawing of inclusion with three people inside a series of
concentric bubbles and a green shining sun. The image has the caption:
Permission from Cooper to include this drawing

Third TEE profile: CI Professor Wendy Boyd

CI Wendy Boyd is Professor and Chair of Early Childhood Education in the Faculty of Education at Southern Cross University. Wendy's research focuses on quality early childhood education and care for children within Australia and globally. Her research focuses on the provision of quality education. Wendy has been awarded Researcher of the Year at Southern Cross University and has received multiple teaching awards in the early childhood teaching programs.

In her role as Chair of Early Childhood Education Wendy leads a dynamic team of outstanding early childhood academics implementing ongoing development and continuous improvement of initial teacher education programs and a making a significant contribution to research in early childhood education.

Wendy's 25 years working in the early childhood sector provides a strong platform for researching what matters in early childhood education including the provision of a quality early childhood workforce, early childhood peer mentoring, pedagogical approaches, parents' perspectives, and sustainability. Her commitment to transforming education is exemplified by her membership of the Australian Early Childhood Teacher's Education Network.



Photograph of Professor Wendy Boyd

We welcome three new TEE members



Dr. Marwa Asbe is a cognitive developmental and educational psychology researcher and quantitative analyst, currently appointed as a Research Associate in the School of Education at UNSW Sydney, and as a Research Assistant in the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. She works on the Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded Teachers in Early Education (TEE) project, contributing quantitative analyses that support research on teacher workforce development and early education.

Ms Melanie Dickerson is the post-doctoral research fellow on the TEE Tool Project, a sessional lecturer at the University of Sydney and, an early childhood teacher with 13-years combined experience in Australian and Singaporean early childhood contexts, and in South Korean elementary schools. Melanie's recent doctoral research, undertaken at the University of Sydney, investigated early childhood teachers' and educators' emotional labour and wellbeing experiences in their work with families.





Ms Lauren Carn is a Master by Thesis candidate at Southern Cross University whose research explores international students' pathways in Australian initial teacher education, with a focus on workforce attraction and early career transition in Early Childhood Education and Care. Her work draws on migration, career, and ecological perspectives to better understand how policy, university and placement experiences as well as workforce contexts, shape participation in the sector.

TEE knowledge exchange

Zhou, A., & Fenech, M. (2026). The Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce in Australia: Exploring Distinctions Between Degree-Qualified Teachers and Diploma-Qualified Educators From Employer Perspectives. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/18369391261434592>

TEE CI Professor Sandie Wong and Dr Li Kan recorded a podcast with Dr Jodie Torrington from Macquarie University's early childhood education team (Feb., 2026). Sandie and Li share findings from TEE as it is Australia's first longitudinal survey of early childhood teacher education students, revealing who is entering the profession, what motivates them, and what their career intentions look like, with some surprising results about wellbeing, workforce preferences, and where graduates want to work. Listen here:

<https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-hcxbx-1a4b6f4>

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