

# 2023 | EARLY LEARNING MATTERS WEEK



## 24–28 JULY 2023

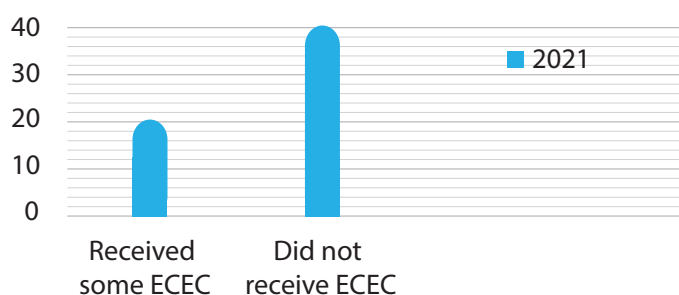
## Why early learning matters

In the first 5 years of life, children's brains are wired to learn quickly. Early learning helps to amplify their natural skills and abilities.

Young children learn best through play-based activities that are suited to their age. When children have inclusive, positive and rich early learning experiences, they are more likely to go on to become successful learners, with high levels of wellbeing. Early childhood education and care is an important way of providing learning experiences, especially for children experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

Professional early childhood educators support and extend play to maximise learning through exploration, inquiry and problem-solving and fostering children's connection to their world. Educators also help families understand and support their child's development.

Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains



Data source: Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services

## Snapshot of Australia:

- 1.3 million children attend an approved early childhood education and care service.
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- 339,016 children aged 4 or 5 years were enrolled in a preschool program
- In 2021, children who did not receive any ECEC were twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains when starting school than children that received some ECEC (40.7% compared to 20.3%).
- One in three children in Australia, live in 'childcare deserts' (areas where there are more than three children for every early childhood education service)
- The number of children (aged up to 5 years) using early learning services has risen over the past 10 years, from 39.4 per cent in 2013 to nearly 48 per cent in 2022.
- Children from low-income households, children from Indigenous backgrounds, children from non-English speaking backgrounds, and those with a disability are under-represented in early learning services.
- As of 1 May 2023, 89% of services were rated as meeting or exceeding the National Quality Standard.
- The median weekly cost of centre based early learning services has increased from \$431 in 2018 to \$565 in 2022.
- Australia's investment in early learning is below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (0.7% of GDP). Australia is ranked 11th among 21 OECD nations.



The goal of fully realising the benefits of early learning for all children in Australia has not yet been reached. To make better progress, we need to prioritise:

- **Access to Early Learning:** A high-quality, play-based ECEC place for every child where and when they need it.
- **Affordability of Early Learning:** A simplified subsidy system that delivers affordable and predictable ECEC.
- **Inclusion in Early Learning:** Well-resourced systems and practices that put ECEC services in reach for all children and families.
- **Stability of Early Learning:** A well supported and professionally paid workforce that are thriving in their work.

**Early Learning Matters Week** is a nationwide event to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of early childhood education and care in Australia. Visit [www.earlylearningmatters.org.au](http://www.earlylearningmatters.org.au) to get involved.

## About ECA

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has been a voice for young children since 1938. We are the peak early childhood advocacy organisation, acting in the interests of young children, their families and those in the early childhood field. ECA advocates to ensure quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children aged birth to eight years.

**Our vision: Every young child is thriving and learning.**

Our role in achieving this vision is to be an effective advocate for young children and a champion for quality outcomes in early childhood education and care.

