

May 2026

## **Submission from the Australian Early Childhood Teacher Education Network**

### **Early Childhood Education and Care Qualification Review**

The Australian Early Childhood Teacher Education Network (AECTEN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *Early Childhood Education and Care Qualification Review*<sup>1</sup>.

AECTEN comprises leaders of early childhood teacher education degree programs in the higher education sector across Australia. It has five branches: New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory; Victoria; Queensland; Western Australia/Northern Territory; and South Australia/Tasmania, representing in total, 43 higher education institutions. Established in October 2016, AECTEN advocates for the delivery of high-quality early childhood initial teacher education and seeks to inform national policy on key issues relating to early childhood education and the early childhood teacher workforce. In December 2017 AECTEN began operating as a network of the [Australian Council of Deans of Education](#).

AECTEN upholds the internationally accepted definitions of early childhood – understood to cover birth to eight years of age – and early childhood teachers as university-qualified teachers equipped to teach children from birth and up to eight years. However, there is diversity in the early childhood teacher education programs offered by member institutions, with a focus on birth – five years, birth – eight years, or birth – 12 years (for further information please see <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/ECA-How-to-Talk-about-ECEC-Brochure-A4-25112025.pdf>).

### **Overview**

Articulation pathways from the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care to a Bachelor qualification are critical to addressing Australia's ongoing early childhood teacher (ECT) workforce shortage. By creating clear and accessible pathways into higher education, diploma-qualified educators are supported to transition into ECT roles, increasing the supply of qualified teachers across the sector. These pathways also provide meaningful career progression opportunities for existing educators, enabling them to build on their current knowledge, skills and professional experience while advancing their qualifications and employment prospects.

Importantly, articulation pathways improve access and participation in higher education, particularly for students from regional, rural, low socioeconomic and underrepresented backgrounds. Recognition of prior learning and credit transfer arrangements reduce duplication of study, lower financial barriers and shorten the time required to complete a degree. This

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<sup>1</sup> 1 This submission has been developed by Dr Susie Raymond (AU) and Dr Fiona Boylan (ECU), with input from AECTEN members. See p. 4 for a list of AECTEN members and institutions.

supports an “earn and learn” model, where educators can remain employed in the sector while undertaking further study, reducing workforce attrition and simultaneously strengthening workforce capability.

Strengthening pathways from vocational to higher education also contributes to the ongoing quality uplift of the early childhood sector. Educators who progress into ECT qualifications bring extensive practical experience and established relationships with children, families and communities, which can enrich teaching practice and leadership capacity within services. Supporting educators to achieve their career aspirations through flexible and supported pathways also promotes workforce retention, professional identity and long-term sustainability in the sector.

These approaches strongly align with current Australian Government priorities focused on improving tertiary participation, equity and workforce development. The proposed Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) national credit recognition framework aims to strengthen pathways between TAFE and university and incentivise universities to reduce degree length for students with related vocational qualifications. Diploma-to-degree articulation pathways directly support these reforms while responding to pressing workforce needs in early childhood education.

## **Key considerations**

### **Consistency of Credit Arrangements Across Universities**

Consistency in credit arrangements across universities is essential to ensure fairness, transparency and confidence in Diploma-to-Bachelor articulation pathways. Without alignment, students may “shop around” for institutions offering the highest credit rather than selecting programs best suited to their learning needs and career aspirations. A key consideration is determining how much credit appropriately supports transition from the Diploma into Bachelor pathways, including Birth–5, Birth–8 and Birth–12 programs. This is particularly complex within dual registration teaching programs, which must still meet the equivalent four-year qualification requirements for teacher registration. Credit arrangements therefore need to balance recognition of prior learning with ensuring graduates meet professional, regulatory and pedagogical expectations.

### **Consistency in the Assessment of Credit**

Consistency in how credit is assessed is equally important to support equitable student outcomes. Universities need approaches that acknowledge students’ existing knowledge and experience while also identifying where further learning is required to support successful progression into higher education. Particular consideration is required in relation to recognition of prior learning (RPL) for professional placement. Although diploma-qualified educators often bring substantial workplace experience, ACECQA requirements do not permit placement hours completed within the Diploma to be credited towards an early childhood teaching qualification. As a result, universities must carefully design pathways that value prior experience while ensuring students continue to engage in supervised professional practice aligned to teacher standards. Therefore, parameters or principles for decision making that ensures quality improvement for students is needed.

### **Consistency Between RTOs and Credit Arrangements**

Universities must also have confidence in the consistency and quality of Diploma delivery across registered training organisations (RTOs). Variability in curriculum delivery, assessment practices and student support can affect students’ preparedness for Bachelor-level study.

Strong partnerships between universities and RTOs, alongside transparent credit arrangements, are critical to ensuring students are equipped with the foundational knowledge, skills and academic capabilities needed to succeed in an ECT qualification.

### **Supporting Student Transition into Further Study**

Effective transition support is critical for students entering university study through articulation pathways. Students may experience gaps or misunderstandings in learning and may require targeted academic support to navigate new expectations, assessment approaches and theoretical content. Universities can strengthen student success through mentoring, academic skills programs, scaffolded learning and flexible delivery approaches that support confidence, belonging and progression.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, our feedback has recommended the following:

- Review Diploma content to strengthen the Diploma-to-Bachelor articulation pathways and address early childhood teacher workforce shortages.
- Establish consistent credit transfer, recognition of prior learning and flexible “earn and learn” models to improve equity and participation in study and in turn the early childhood teaching workforce.
- Strengthen university–RTO partnerships to improve Diploma quality, transparency and student preparedness for higher education.
- Provide targeted transition supports, including mentoring and academic skill development, to improve student success and retention.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to Human Ability. Please contact us if you require any further discussion about this submission.

Dr Susie Raymond & Dr Fiona Boylan  
**AECTEN Co-Chairs**

## Australian Early Childhood Teacher Education Network Members

| State/Territory Branch                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Chair/Contacts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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