

The top 10 key findings in your state:

1. 110 ECEC educators from the ACT responded to our nationwide March survey of almost 4000 educators.
2. Educator retention and turnover will be a major problem for ACT in the near future. 42% of ACT educators told us they intend to leave the sector long term. A shocking 80% of educators who say they want to leave intend to do so within the next three years. This figure is drastically higher than the national figure of 73%. 28% of these educators intend to leave in the next 12 months.
3. The best and brightest educators in ACT are the most likely to leave the sector. An alarming 50% of educators upskilling to a master's degree and 60% upskilling to an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) degree intend to leave the sector in the long-term, compared to 43% who are not upskilling. The percentage of educators upskilling to an ECT degree and intending to leave is 20% higher in ACT than educators nationally.
4. Like educators across Australia, educators in ACT told us that the top three reasons they want to leave the sector are:
 - 'Excessive workload and insufficient time to provide quality ECEC' (63%)
 - 'Low pay – I can't afford to stay' (78%)
 - 'Feeling undervalued' (39%)

It is very concerning that educators in ACT are feeling the pressure of low pay far more than educators from any other state, and more than the national rate. For comparison, 63% of educators nationally nominated 'low pay'.

5. Of the ACT educators who do intend to stay in the sector 35% say that they think about leaving 'all the time' or 'most of the time'.
6. Over half (52%) of ACT educators would not recommend a career in the sector. This is the highest rate of all the states, and 6% higher than the national rate of 46%.
7. The workforce crisis is at breaking point in ACT:
 - Understaffing is rampant with 66% of educators saying that their centres are understaffed.
 - Over half (51%) of educators surveyed say that their workload has increased 'greatly' in the last few years.
 - Educators are not able to take leave when sick. Almost three quarters of educators (72%) said they 'often' felt pressured to avoid taking leave, which is significantly higher than the national rate (67%). 59% also said that they had come to work when sick or stayed at work after becoming sick due to staff shortages.
 - Over 95% of educators said they were concerned with 'under-the-roof' ratios, which is 5% higher than the national rate. 90% of educators also agreed that they compromise quality ECEC for children and 88% agreed that they compromise children's safety and wellbeing.
8. Low pay is putting severe financial stress on early educators in ACT. Almost three quarters (74%) of educators surveyed said they 'always' or 'often' worry about their financial situation, and 81% of said they would find it difficult to cover an unexpected, emergency \$400 expense.
9. The impact of all these issues – high turnover, understaffing, excessive workload, and low pay – is compromising the care and education of children in ACT every day:
 - 76% of educators say they feel they do not have sufficient time to provide children with the quality ECEC they need.
 - 82% of educators report feeling rushed when performing key caring and/or educational tasks.
 - A majority of educators 'strongly agreed' that increased workload has compromised their ability to provide high quality early learning to children (70%) and to provide them with the emotional support they need for their wellbeing (71%).
10. ACT educators in their own words on overwork, stress, low pay and their impact on children and educator mental health:
 - "I am really passionate about being an early educator. But there are a lot of factors, especially in the last couple of years, that make it difficult for me to see myself here in the long term. At my centre the hours are too long, our workload often feels impossible, there is not enough staff to cover educators when they are sick. The industry lacks support and educators are facing burn out."
 - "The pay does not represent the workload or the hard work we put in. Educators care for children and help them to grow and learn, but we are under appreciated, under-funded and constantly pushed to the side. We need more recognition and that starts with higher wages."
 - "It is very difficult to manage a work and life balance in this job, which often affects my mental health and well-being. The workload is huge every single day, which is really stressful. It's bad for the kids under our care and it's bad for my own kids: so often I get home so exhausted that I barely have energy to spend time with them."