



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010

DATA PROTOCOL

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Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1.	The Purpose of the National ECEC Workforce Census Data Protocol	4
1.2.	Data Collection.....	4
2.	DEFINITION OF THE NATIONAL ECEC WORKFORCE CENSUS DATA.....	4
3.	DATA PROTOCOL GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	5
3.1.	Privacy, Confidentiality and Legal Conformity.....	5
3.2.	Formal Responsibility.....	5
3.3.	Quality.....	5
3.4.	Security	6
3.5.	Appropriate Feedback to Data Providers	6
3.6.	Dissemination and Accountability	6
3.7.	Ongoing Review	6
3.8.	Transparency.....	6
4.	ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL ECEC WORKFORCE CENSUS DATA.....	6
4.1.	National ECEC Workforce Census Data Access Committee.....	7
4.1.1.	Purpose	7
4.1.2.	Role	7
4.1.3.	Membership.....	7
4.2.	Access to National ECEC Workforce Census Data	7
4.2.1.	Access to Published Final Results	7
4.2.2.	Access to Unpublished Detailed National ECEC Workforce Census Data	8
4.3.	Data Access Requirements	8
4.3.1.	Approved access	8
4.3.2.	Confidentiality agreements	8
5.	REPORTING RESULTS FROM THE NATIONAL ECEC WORKFORCE CENSUS	9
5.1.	Introduction	9
5.2.	Australian Government Release of Reports based on Unpublished Data.....	9
5.3.	Release of Reports by Other Entities based on Unpublished Data	9

1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government is seeking to improve quality of information used in developing and measuring the effectiveness of early childhood policy and programs. Existing data sources have been reviewed and new data collection mechanisms proposed to address data gaps, which includes the National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2010 (National ECEC Workforce Census).

Child and staff related data in approved child care services had previously been collected in the Australian Government Child Care Census (AGCCCS). These data are now largely available from administrative sources. The AGCCCS was generally collected every 2 years with the last collection in 2006. In 2008, the Department commissioned the Child Care Provider Survey (CCPS) to collect data to supplement the administrative data available from the Child Care Management System (CCMS).

A requirement remained, however, for the separate collection of more comprehensive information about the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce, as well as on children with selected characteristics in child care and access to preschool programs. The National ECEC Workforce Census was designed to collect data to address some of these critical information gaps and to supplement administrative data on children in child care and also collect information directly from staff.

The National ECEC Workforce Census will fulfil the baseline need of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE) on *the number of teachers delivering preschool programs who are four year university trained and early childhood qualified*. It will also inform the *Early Years Workforce Strategy* that complements and builds upon existing Commonwealth, state and territory government measures aimed at improving the supply and quality of the early childhood education and care workforce.

Information from the National ECEC Workforce Census will assist policy makers to better understand the challenges of providing quality education and child care, the capacity of the workforce to meet future demand and to put in place strategies to support early childhood development policies.

Aggregated information will be used to inform Departmental contributions to the Report on Government Services (RoGS), the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Annual Report, Parliamentary Budget Statements, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, the Early Years Workforce Strategy, and performance reporting requirements of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

1.1. The Purpose of the National ECEC Workforce Census Data Protocol

This Data Protocol document sets out the principles, rules and procedures governing the access, use and dissemination of the National ECEC Workforce Census data collected during 2010. The purpose of this protocol is to clarify the rights and responsibilities for all data users and to ensure the proper and effective use of National ECEC Workforce Census data.

1.2. Data Collection

The National ECEC Workforce Census is an initiative of the Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments. Data was collected in two stages.

The first stage was conducted from June-August 2010 and involved collecting provider level information from approved child care services and government and non-government preschool services. Child care services reported information on usage and the number of children with selected characteristics in child care. All services reported information on their workforce, which included selected demographics, main type of work, main role, qualifications (including exemptions), hours worked and employment status, as well as provision of access to preschool programs.

The second stage was conducted from July-October 2010 and involved collecting detailed information from individual ECEC staff on their roles, qualifications, nature of employment, professional development activities, pay and conditions and career intentions.

The target population for the first stage was all approved child care service providers and all government and non-government preschools. An approved child care service is a service that is approved under section 195 of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*. The target population for the second stage was all individuals who worked in an approved child care service or a preschool.

2. DEFINITION OF THE NATIONAL ECEC WORKFORCE CENSUS DATA

For the purpose of this data protocol, the National ECEC Workforce Census data are defined as:

All data collected in the 2010 National ECEC Workforce Census using approved data collection mechanisms.

It should be noted that the National ECEC Workforce Census was designed to provide comprehensive, current and nationally consistent data on access to ECEC services, staff qualifications and experiences. It also collected workforce information from individual ECEC staff and workers (e.g. staff roles, qualifications, professional development and experiences).

National ECEC Workforce Census data are presented in separate data sets, recognising the different nature of data collected. The National ECEC Workforce Census data are not designed or intended to be used to assess legislative compliance or update administrative records. Ownership of the National ECEC Workforce Census data resides with the Australian Government (represented by DEEWR).

3. DATA PROTOCOL GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To ensure the proper and effective use of the National ECEC Workforce Census the following guiding principles govern the access, use and dissemination of all National ECEC Workforce Census data.

3.1. Privacy, Confidentiality and Legal Conformity

The National ECEC Workforce Census was conducted in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the DEEWR Privacy Policy both of which can be found at: www.deewr.gov.au/Pages/Privacy.aspx.

All releases of information from the National ECEC Workforce Census are covered under the *Privacy Act 1988*, which states that personal information may only be disclosed to third parties under strict conditions. 'Personal information' is defined in the Privacy Act as:

... information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database), whether true or not, and whether recorded in a material form or not, about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information or opinion.

In accordance with the *Privacy Act*, National ECEC Workforce Census data must be released in such a way that the identity of individuals cannot be 'reasonably ascertained'. As the National ECEC Workforce Census collected 'personal information' primarily about individual staff, it is necessary to apply confidentiality rules to the release of data pertaining to individual staff.

For the purpose of the National ECEC Workforce Census, the collection of information from approved child care services was authorised under section 21 of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*. Under this legislation, all information collected is protected and subject to strict release conditions.

At all stages of the National ECEC Workforce Census data collection and reporting process, the privacy of individuals and services was maintained by adhering to the above legislation and policies. It was the responsibility of the consultant (The Social Research Centre employed by DEEWR) to ensure that this was the case during the contract period.

Release of data from the National ECEC Workforce Census by DEEWR, in any publication or in answer to data requests, must ensure that the confidentiality of individuals and service providers conforms to the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999* and the *Privacy Act 1988*.

3.2. Formal Responsibility

The Department will manage the provision of data to states and territories, researchers and other interested parties, within the constraints of privacy legislation and the *Family Assistance Act 1999*.

3.3. Quality

The consultant has ensured that all procedures undertaken in the collection and subsequent composition of the datasets adhered to the highest possible standards. Every effort was made to ensure that National ECEC Workforce Census data was complete and as accurate as possible. Measures were taken to ensure that the data has been collected and output in a consistent way from all participants.

3.4. Security

The data collection techniques and reporting technologies ensured the integrity and security of the National ECEC Workforce Census data. DEEWR has custodianship of National ECEC Workforce Census data and within DEEWR, secure storage and access to confidentialised and/or unit record data is restricted to officers who have authorised access. This access relates to processing the data received, undertaking validation and compilation or dissemination of detailed data.

All users of the data are to comply at all times with any security requirements notified by DEEWR in relation to security of embargoed information and the storage and use of detailed datasets (refer to section 4.2 for information regarding access to National ECEC Workforce Census data).

3.5. Appropriate Feedback to Data Providers

Information about the results of the National ECEC Workforce Census will be available to data providers and all interested parties through the DEEWR website, published articles and other relevant communication vehicles.

3.6. Dissemination and Accountability

Ongoing analysis and dissemination of results using the National ECEC Workforce Census data are seen as important outcomes from the National ECEC Workforce Census. Data provided to users authorised by DEEWR should be used in accordance with the Data Protocol and/or for the purposes for which access has been granted.

3.7. Ongoing Review

To ensure that this protocol remains a contemporary document and relevant to the emerging data needs of stakeholders, this protocol will be reviewed periodically.

3.8. Transparency

Clear documentation describing all the procedures associated with access, use and dissemination of National ECEC Workforce Census data will be publicised and made available to interested parties through the National ECEC Workforce Census webpage via the DEEWR website or in a suitable format to accompany data. Documentation will also be available in formats to stakeholders who do not have ready access to the internet.

4. ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL ECEC WORKFORCE CENSUS DATA

Any requests for access to National ECEC Workforce Census data will be considered by the DEEWR National ECEC Workforce Census Data Access Committee (DAC). Subject to meeting access requirements, confidentialised unit record files (CURFs) from the National ECEC Workforce Census will be made available for any legitimate research or analysis purpose.

4.1. National ECEC Workforce Census Data Access Committee

4.1.1. Purpose

DAC (for which DEEWR will provide secretariat support) has been established to provide strategic direction and oversight for National ECEC Workforce Census data, to ensure that:

- confidence in the integrity and quality of National ECEC Workforce Census data for its agreed purposes is achieved and maintained;
- the potential value of National ECEC Workforce Census data are realised over time;
- the legitimate interests of National ECEC Workforce Census data stakeholders are acknowledged and addressed; and
- strategic National ECEC Workforce Census data risks and issues are identified and effectively addressed.

4.1.2. Role

The role of the National ECEC Workforce Census Data Access Committee is to:

- oversee the use of National ECEC Workforce Census data and ensure the Data Protocol and related documents, including comprehensive data dictionaries, are published or easily accessible;
- determine policies and processes for the access, use and dissemination of National ECEC Workforce Census data;
- manage requests for access to and appropriate use of National ECEC Workforce Census data; and
- monitor and address strategic National ECEC Workforce Census data risks and issues.

4.1.3. Membership

The membership of the DAC and its Secretariat are at suitable senior levels within DEEWR. To ensure that the needs of stakeholders are taken into account, the DAC may review its membership from time to time. It may also seek specific expertise as needed.

4.2. Access to National ECEC Workforce Census Data

4.2.1. Access to Published Final Results

Published final results will be made available in a variety of formats, including reports, fact sheets, tables, and articles.

Jurisdictions will receive embargoed copies of the final report on the National ECEC Workforce Census prior to its release and detailed confidentialised and weighted State and Territory tables based on those reports, as appropriate.

Information from the National ECEC Workforce Census will be available to the public through the DEEWR website.

4.2.2. Access to Unpublished Detailed National ECEC Workforce Census Data

Any access to unpublished detailed National ECEC Workforce Census data must be for appropriate use, consistent with the guiding principles in this Data Protocol. The Australian Government (represented by DEEWR) has access to all unpublished detailed data from the National ECEC Workforce Census.

4.3. Data Access Requirements

All Organisations (government and non-government), researchers and/or individuals must obtain approved access to unpublished detailed data and sign relevant confidentiality agreements.

4.3.1. Approved access

State and Territory government agencies in partnership with the Australian Government on the National ECEC Workforce Census have approved access to unpublished detailed data available from the Australian Government, subject to section **3.1**.

For all other organisations, researchers and/or individuals, the process to gain access to unpublished National ECEC Workforce Census data held by DEEWR is:

- i All data requests, in hard copy letters or emails, are to be sent to the following:
 - a. Data Access Manager
National ECEC Workforce Census Data Access Committee Secretariat
Location Code: C17MR5
GPO Box 9880
CANBERRA ACT 2601
 - b. ECECCensus@deewr.gov.au
- ii The DAC will assess the request and provide the appropriate documents, including relevant confidentiality agreements, for formal application and signature.
- iii All original, completed and signed documents are to be returned to the Secretariat.
- iv If approved, the applicant will be informed and the Secretariat will manage the release of the data to Authorised Users.

Depending on circumstances, applicants may be given the option to re-apply (for example if the original application does not contain enough information).

4.3.2. Confidentiality agreements

All Organisations, researchers and/or individuals will be required to sign one or more of the following confidentiality agreements:

- i Organisations – this applies to any organisation (government and non-government) requesting access to National ECEC Workforce Census Data;
- ii Individuals – this applies to any individual internal or external to an organisation requesting access to National ECEC Workforce Data; or
- iii Researchers – this applies to independent researchers requesting access to National ECEC Workforce Census Data.

5. REPORTING RESULTS FROM THE NATIONAL ECEC WORKFORCE CENSUS

5.1. Introduction

The following concepts underpin and support the meaningful reporting and release of reports based on National ECEC Workforce Census data:

- reporting will be in accordance with the nationally agreed Data Protocol (this document);
- no information that permits the reporting of individual services or workers is permitted;
- disaggregated information will only be released where the data is assessed to be of a suitable level of quality;
- information should be presented so that it can be clearly understood; and
- all data should be appropriately footnoted and the data source acknowledged.

5.2. Australian Government Release of Reports based on Unpublished Data

If the Australian Government (represented by DEEWR) wishes to publish a report based on previously unpublished National ECEC Workforce Census data at a level below the national level, then the Australian Government will, as a courtesy, provide State and Territory Education Department representatives with a copy of the material prior to its release.

5.3. Release of Reports by Other Entities based on Unpublished Data

State and Territory Education departments may release reports, including presentations, papers and other materials based on previously unpublished National ECEC Workforce Census data that is held by them. As a courtesy, prior to the release of any materials by these entities, the report or other materials should be provided to the DAC ahead of its release.

All other entities (including research and other private and/or public sector organisations not identified above) that have applied and been granted access to previously unpublished National ECEC Workforce Census data (as noted through section 4.3) should provide a draft, embargoed copy of the proposed reports, including presentations, papers and other materials to the DAC ahead of a release.