



**Department of  
Education and  
Early Childhood  
Development**

**Final Report**

**Evaluation of  
*Transition: A  
Positive Start to  
School Initiative***

**August 2010**

# Contents

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1. INTRODUCTION .....	3
1.2. AIM OF EVALUATION .....	3
1.3. KEY FINDINGS.....	3
1.4. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	4
1.5. LIST OF TABLES .....	5
1.6. LIST OF FIGURES .....	6
<b>2. BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>8</b>
2.1. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES IN VICTORIA .....	8
2.2. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE IN VICTORIA .....	9
2.3. POLICY BACKGROUND .....	9
<i>National Early Years Learning Framework (Birth to 5)</i> .....	10
<i>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Birth to 8)</i> .....	10
<i>Research and Development</i> .....	11
2.4. THE TRANSITION: A POSITIVE START TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE .....	11
<i>The Victorian Approach</i> .....	11
<i>A Transition Guide</i> .....	12
<i>Transition Learning and Development Statement</i> .....	12
<i>Transition Resource Kit</i> .....	13
<i>Professional Development and Support</i> .....	13
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<i>Evaluation Questions</i> .....	15
<i>Survey Tools</i> .....	16
<i>Consultations</i> .....	16
<b>4. THE TRANSITION: A POSITIVE START TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE</b> .....	<b>19</b>
4.1. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF THE INITIATIVE .....	20
4.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INITIATIVE.....	21
<i>Perceptions of Effectiveness by Early Childhood Professionals</i> .....	21
<i>Perceptions of Effectiveness by School Professionals</i> .....	22
<i>Comparison of Perceptions</i> .....	22
4.3. IDENTIFIED OUTCOMES OF THE INITIATIVE .....	23
<i>Identifying Children’s Strengths</i> .....	23
<i>Facilitating a Common Understanding</i> .....	24
<i>Facilitating Networking and Collaboration</i> .....	25
<i>Improved Knowledge of ‘What Works’ in Supporting Transition to School</i> .....	26
<i>Identifying the Extra Support Needs of Children</i> .....	26
<i>Confident and Ready to Learn</i> .....	27
<i>Triggering and Ensuring Supports are Provided</i> .....	27
4.4. PARTICIPATION IN TRANSITION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.....	29
<b>5. THE TRANSITION LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>32</b>
5.1. TRANSITION STATEMENTS COMPLETED AND SHARED .....	32
<i>Transition Statements Completed: Early Childhood Educators</i> .....	32
<i>Transition Statements Completed: Parents/Guardians</i> .....	34
<i>Consent to Share Transition Statement: Parents/Guardians</i> .....	35

<i>Transition Statements Received: Prep Teachers</i> .....	36
5.2. TRANSITION STATEMENT PROCESS.....	38
<i>Process of Completing the Transition Statement: Parents/Guardians</i> .....	38
<i>Process of Completing the Transition Statement: Early Childhood Educators</i> .....	39
<i>Issues Reviewing Transition Statements: Prep Teachers</i> .....	45
5.3. FEEDBACK ON THE TRANSITION STATEMENT.....	48
<i>Feedback to Parents/Guardians</i> .....	48
<i>Feedback to Early Childhood Educators</i> .....	49
5.4. IMPACT OF TRANSITION STATEMENTS .....	50
<i>Settling into School</i> .....	50
<i>Better Knowledge of Children Starting School</i> .....	51
<i>Better Knowledge of Children with Additional Needs</i> .....	52
<i>Curriculum Planning</i> .....	53
<b>6. IMPLEMENTATION.....</b>	<b>56</b>
6.1. TIMING OF THE INITIATIVE.....	56
6.2. SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT .....	57
<i>Resources and Materials</i> .....	59
<i>Advice Provided by the Department</i> .....	59
<i>Advertising and Promotion</i> .....	59
<i>Professional Development</i> .....	60
6.3. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT REQUIRED.....	61
<b>7. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>8. APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>66</b>
APPENDIX 1 – EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES .....	66
APPENDIX 2 – SURVEYS .....	69
<i>Prep teachers, Early Childhood Educators and OSHC Workers Survey</i> .....	69
<i>Principals and Early Childhood Managers Survey</i> .....	74
<i>Parents and Guardians Survey</i> .....	79
<i>Focus Group Questions for Parents/Guardians</i> .....	82
APPENDIX 3 – LIST OF INTERVIEWS & SITE VISITS .....	83
APPENDIX 4 – DEMOGRAPHICS .....	85
<i>Demographic characteristics: education and early childhood sector</i> .....	85
<i>Demographic characteristics: parents/guardians and children</i> .....	90

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. Introduction

Success Works was engaged by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to evaluate the *Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative* (the Transition Initiative).

The Transition Initiative aims to improve children's experience of starting school by strengthening the development and delivery of transition programs, acknowledging that transition is not a point-in-time event, but rather an experience that starts well before, and extends far beyond, the first day of school.

## 1.2. Aim of Evaluation

It is critical to evaluate the Transition Initiative in its first full year of implementation to ensure that what has been designed is both effective and sustainable. The evaluation will inform the refinement, improvement and further development of the Transition Initiative for subsequent years.

This report presents findings and recommendations arising from the evaluation.

## 1.3. Key Findings

- Overall, people responded positively to the Transition Initiative and felt that it provided an opportunity to create stronger links between early childhood services<sup>1</sup> and schools, although that opportunity is yet to be fully realised.
- The close proximity of the trial and validation of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and introduction of the Transition Initiative created significant change for the early childhood sector.
- The introduction of the Transition Learning and Development Transition Statement (the Transition Statement) presented significant administrative challenges for early childhood services.
- Early childhood services and schools feel that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department) needs to broaden its efforts to communicate with families about their role in transition to school.
- High-quality professional development on transition to school needs to be provided to early childhood services and schools.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report the term early childhood service includes outside school hours care providers.

## 1.4. Recommendations

Based on collected data, feedback and analysis, the following recommendations have been presented to the Department for consideration.

No.	Recommendations for Department	Page
D1.	That further feedback is sought from outside school hours care services on the implementation of the Transition Initiative.	17
D2.	That material to explain a 'strengths-based' approach is developed and relevant training to early childhood educators and Prep teachers is provided.	24
D3.	That transition to school arrangements for children with additional learning and development needs, a disability or developmental delay are reviewed with a focus on how this could be improved.	29
D4.	That privacy and consent requirements for Transition Learning and Development Statements are clarified and communicated to all early childhood services, schools and families.	29
D5.	That further feedback is sought from childhood educators to determine time spent with families to complete Transition Learning and Development Statements, with a focus on how this could be improved.	39
D6.	That the Transition Learning and Development Statement be refined to make it easier to print and collate.	44
D7.	That research on checklists is communicated to early childhood services and schools.	44
D8.	That advice is provided to early childhood educators on the recommended length of their comments in the Transition Learning and Development Statements, in order to provide information that is relevant for Prep teachers.	47
D9.	That a central phone number is provided on all resources, materials and websites for services seeking support or further information about the Transition Initiative in general.	59
D10.	That material for families is refined to clarify the Transition Learning and Development Statement and transition to school processes more generally.	60

No.	Recommendations for Department	Page
D11.	That a multimedia and multilingual communications campaign to promote the <i>Transition: A Positive Start to School</i> initiative is developed to reach a wider audience of families.	60
D12.	That tailored professional development opportunities that encourage engagement with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, support the effective use of the Transition Learning and Development Statement in the school environment and foster local networks continue to be provided.	61
D13.	That clear advice through regional offices to early childhood service managers and principals about the importance of their staff engaging with the transition process is provided.	62

The following recommendations are also presented to the early childhood and schooling sectors for consideration.

No.	Recommendations for Early Childhood Services and Schools	Page
S1.	That early childhood services and schools further familiarise themselves with privacy and consent requirements for Transition Learning and Development Statements and support the development of a greater understanding of these in families.	29
S2.	That the issue of time release to complete the Transition Learning and Development Statement is discussed with relevant employer and employee representatives, and the Department.	42
S3.	That early childhood services and schools work together to agree on an acceptable time frame, at the local level, for writing and forwarding Transition Learning and Development Statements to schools, and a process for providing feedback on the content of Transition Statements.	49

## 1.5. List of Tables

No.	Table	Page
1.	The Victorian Approach	12
2.	Consultations with Early Childhood and School Professionals	17
3.	Consultations with Parents/Guardians	18

## 1.6. List of Figures

No.	Figure	Page
1.	Early childhood educators and managers: Perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative	21
2.	Prep teachers and principals: Perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative	22
3.	Prep teachers and early childhood educators: Perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative	23
4.	Parents/Guardians: Child's additional needs adequately supported	28
5.	Parents/Guardians/Children: Participation in a transition activity	30
6.	Parents/Guardians: Engagement with transition activities	31
7.	Early childhood educators: Number of Transition Statements prepared	33
8.	Early childhood educators: Proportion of children for whom a Transition Statement was not prepared	33
9.	Parents/Guardians: Engagement with Transition Statement process	34
10.	Parents/Guardians: Reasons for not completing the Transition Statement	35
11.	Parents/Guardians: Consent to share Transition Statement	36
12.	Prep teachers: Number of Transition Statements reviewed	37
13.	Parents/Guardians: How Transition Statements were completed	38
14.	Early childhood educators and managers: Issues with completing the Transition Statements	41
15.	Early childhood educators and managers: Negative comments about completing the Transition Statements	42
16.	Prep teachers and principals: Issues with reviewing the Transition Statements	46
17.	Parents/Guardians: Feedback on Transition Statement from Prep teacher	48

No.	Figure	Page
18.	Parents/Guardians: Child's adjustment to school	50
19.	Prep teachers: Better knowledge of children starting school	52
20.	Prep teachers: Better knowledge of children with additional needs	52
21.	Prep teachers and principals: Helped with curriculum planning	53
22.	Early childhood educators and managers: Perception of the Department support measures	57
23.	Prep teachers and principals: Perception of the Department support measures	58
24.	Early childhood educators and Prep teachers: Comparison of perception of the Department support measures	58
25.	Early childhood educators and managers: Additional support to engage with Transition Initiative	61
26.	Prep teachers and principals: Additional support to engage with Transition Initiative	63

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Early Childhood Education and Care Services in Victoria

Children and families in Victoria have access to a range of services that support learning and development. These include long day care, family day care, occasional care, playgroups, kindergarten programs, outside school hours care and schools. Children and families can also access Maternal and Child Health Services that deliver a universal health service free of charge for all Victorian families with children from birth to six years of age. The service supports families and their children in the areas of parenting, child health and development, child behaviour, maternal health and wellbeing, child safety, immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition and family planning.

Targeted and intensive services also provide learning and development support for children and families. These include child and family support services, as well as a range of community, primary and specialist health services. In addition, the early childhood intervention system in Victoria provides a range of services which support inclusion of children in early childhood programs and primary school settings.

It is important to recognise the contribution all services can make to ensure a positive start to school for all children in Victoria.

In Victoria, early childhood services are provided through a mixed market. Commonwealth, State and local governments, as well as not-for-profit and community organisations and for-profit private providers are all engaged in funding or provision of early childhood services and programs in Victoria.

Although the State regulates services to deliver an educational program which extends children's learning and reflects their abilities and interests, the regulatory lever is limited to directing the specific activities in early childhood services. The Department, therefore, often takes on an influencing, rather than directive role in implementing reforms in the early childhood sector. This has particular relevance when evaluating the impact that new initiatives, such as *Transition: A Positive Start to School*, have had on practice in the early childhood sector.

In October 2009, the Department introduced an additional funding requirement for organisations to be eligible to apply for and receive kindergarten funding, "...early childhood educators in a funded kindergarten program will be required, for the first time, to prepare a Transition Learning and Development Statement for every child transitioning into school in the following year."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria update 2009, Supplements 2, 3, 5 and 9

Further information about the early childhood education and care service system in Victoria is found at Appendix 1.

## 2.2. Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce in Victoria

Early childhood services are provided by professionals with a broad range of qualifications and experience. These include early childhood educators and teachers, early childhood intervention workers, preschool field officers, inclusion support facilitators, education support officers, maternal and child health nurses, allied health professionals including social workers and psychologists, student support officers, primary school nurses, primary welfare officers and family support workers.

As highlighted in *Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce: Working to give Victoria's children the best start in life* (2009) (the Workforce Strategy), local government employs a large number of early childhood professionals. Early childhood professionals are also employed by private businesses and community-based organisations that are involved in the delivery of early childhood services. Employers are represented by several peak associations with valuable expertise in shaping and delivering services.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, while the Victorian Government funds a range of early childhood services, it employs only a small proportion of the early childhood workforce.

## 2.3. Policy Background

In February 2008, the Premier announced "End of year transition statements will be introduced for all kinder students by the end of 2009"<sup>4</sup>.

This commitment was also reflected in the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* (2008) Action 2: Improved Transitions, which stated that the Government would "pilot transition plans for children entering primary school". It also responds directly to the goal: "By the time Victorian children start school they will be ready to learn at school and schools will be ready for them".

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<sup>3</sup> *Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce: Working to give Victoria's children the best start in life*, 2009 website is located at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/ecworkforce.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Brumby, J (Premier of Victoria) 2008, *New laws to make child care safer for children*, media release, 5 February 2008, Department of Premier and Cabinet <http://www.mobile.premier.vic.gov.au/newsroom/1359.html>

## National Early Years Learning Framework (Birth to 5)

The national Early Years Learning Framework was launched for implementation in all early childhood education and care services in July 2009, in order to ensure delivery of nationally consistent early childhood education across sectors and jurisdictions.

The Early Years Learning Framework (the National Framework) describes the principles, practices and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. The National Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is the best vehicle for young children's learning providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. The National Framework also recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development.<sup>5</sup>

## Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Birth to 8)

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (the Victorian Framework) identifies the same five outcomes for children's learning and development as the National Framework, which form the basis of the Transition Learning and Development Statement. They are:

- Children have a strong sense of identity (Identity)
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world (Community)
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing (Wellbeing)
- Children are confident and involved learners (Learning)
- Children are effective communicators (Communication).

Transition is recognised as a key element of the Victorian Framework which was released for trial and validation in August 2009, and finalised in November 2009. The Victorian Framework is designed to assist families and early childhood professionals to advance children's learning and development in the critical first eight years of a child's life.

It complements the discipline-specific resources that already support early childhood professionals, for example the national Early Years Learning Framework, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and the Maternal and Child Health Service Activity Framework. In this way, the Victorian Framework supports common understanding and shared conversation with professionals and families on supporting children's learning and development.

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<sup>5</sup> *Belonging, Being and Becoming: Early Years Learning and Framework*, 2009

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy\\_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx)

## Research and Development

A range of evidence was collected and reviewed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development during 2008/09, to inform the development of the Transition Initiative:

- Family focus groups were conducted in November 2008, providing a limited insight into the way families conceive of early learning and transition to school, as a context for the Victorian Framework and the Transition Initiative.
- In 2009, a literature review was conducted of national and international peer-reviewed articles on transition to school by the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, University of Melbourne.
- The Department provided funding for 30 pilots which developed, trialed or extended a range of transition approaches in a diverse range of Victorian communities over a period of eight months, yielding valuable insights into how children's transition to school can be successfully supported.
- An independent evaluation was conducted of the 30 transition to school pilots by the Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne. This evaluation highlighted a total of 10 'promising practices' – strategies, programs, approaches or techniques – designed to support positive transitions for children by involving families, educators or communities based typically on practitioner-focused wisdom and research. These practices were identified to inform transition planning at a local level.
- The proposed Transition Statement was trialed with early childhood educators, Prep teachers and families to assess the quality and usefulness of the Transition Statement template and guidelines for families to complete the Transition Statement; to inform professional development to support implementation of the Transition Initiative; and to inform the development of guidelines for early childhood educators and Prep teachers on how to write and interpret the Transition Statement.

## 2.4. The Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative

### The Victorian Approach

To support a positive start to school for all children, a common Victorian approach has been developed to guide families, early childhood services and schools. This provides a shared understanding between families, early childhood services and schools about what is important for children and their families during this exciting time.

Table 1 outlines the new approach through which local planning for transition to school can be further developed.

**Table 1: The Victorian Approach**

Key Activity	By*
Reflections on transition programs and activities	Ongoing
School enrolment commences	From May
Transition planning commences	July onwards
Transition Statements written	October
Transition Statements finalised and sent to school	November
Additional on-entry prep assessments of learning commence	March onwards

*\* Many areas commence transition planning prior to the dates provided, particularly for children with additional needs. The timeline has been designed to provide for local flexibility.*

To facilitate the implementation of the Transition Initiative, a number of resources were developed. These include:

- A Transition Guide
- Transition Learning and Development Statement
- Transition Resource Kit
- Professional Development and Support

Each of these elements is described in more detail below.

## A Transition Guide

A guide was developed to provide advice on improving children's experience of starting school. It is relevant for families, all early childhood services providing programs for children in the year prior to school, outside school hours care services, and schools in the government, Catholic and independent sectors.

The guide provides information on the transition to school context and approach, transition to school programs and the Transition Learning and Development Statement.

## Transition Learning and Development Statement

The Transition Initiative introduced a tool for families and educators to share information about a child's learning and development in the form of a Transition Learning and Development Statement. The Transition Statement supports the consistent transfer of information, irrespective of the school a child is going to, and provides an opportunity for children, their families and the professionals working with them to contribute and have their views reflected in it.

The information in the Transition Statement summarises the strengths of a child's learning and development as they enter school, identifies their interests and individual approaches to learning, and indicates how the child can be supported to continue learning.

For the first time, the Transition Statement provided information to families about children's learning and development in early childhood, in a common format. This information also assists Prep teachers to get to know the children entering their classes before they start and helps to plan for each child's learning and development when they start school.

The Transition Statement was intended to be written by early childhood educators and forwarded on to schools and outside school hours care (OSHC) services to be used by Prep teachers and OSHC professionals.

## Transition Resource Kit

The *Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit* (the Transition Resource Kit) was created to help early childhood services, outside school hours care services and schools improve transition to school planning for children, their families and educators. It provides early childhood professionals and those with an interest in the issue of transition, with information and advice to improve the development and planning of local transition to school processes and programs.

The Transition Resource Kit consists of three parts:

- **Transition for Everyone** provides general information about promising practices and factors contributing to high-quality transition programs for all children. It gives guidance on the new Victorian approach to transition and use of the Transition Statement.
- **Providing Additional Support** provides more specific information regarding groups of children and families that may require additional transition support and explains ways that this support can be incorporated into transition programs.
- **Useful Resources** brings together a range of other resources that can be used to further understand transition and program planning at a local community level.

## Professional Development and Support

To support educators to complete the Transition Statement, professional development sessions were held across Victoria from August to October 2009. In addition, a professional development booklet was produced for early childhood educators and Prep teachers who could not attend the face-to-face professional development sessions, and also for those who were seeking further information about writing and interpreting the Transition Statement.

The content of the booklet was adapted from the face-to-face professional development sessions. It was designed to assist early childhood educators and Prep teachers to write and interpret Transition Statements and increase their

knowledge of the Transition Initiative and Victorian Framework. This information has been made available on the Transition Initiative website.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, a Transition Help Line was established to provide advice and support for early childhood educators working with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to complete the Transition Statements. This Transition Help Line was provided by FKA Children's Services.

Information and guidelines for completing the *Transition Learning and Development Statement – Part 1: the family* was translated into 20 languages, and video clips on the Transition Initiative and Transition Statements were made available in a number of languages. These resources were made available through the Transition Initiative website.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Transition: A Positive Start to School* website is located at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/Transitionschool/default.htm>

<sup>7</sup> CALD Resources are available on the *Transition: A Positive Start to School* website at [www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/Transitionschool/profresources/caldresources.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/Transitionschool/profresources/caldresources.htm)

### 3. Methodology

Evaluation of the Transition Initiative began in January 2010 and concluded in July 2010. The evaluation methodology was based on the principle of participation in consultations by the widest possible audience, in order to develop recommendations that are feasible, practical and realistic for implementation.

The scope of the evaluation included assessing the overall look and feel of the resources, the Victorian approach, uptake, effectiveness, systems and processes of the new Transition Initiative, the professional development and additional support provided to educators and families.

#### Evaluation Questions

A list of questions was developed to guide the consultations. The range of questions (listed below) covered implementation, process, resources and materials.

- To what extent are the Transition Statements being completed:
  - By families?
  - By early childhood educators?
- In what way are Transition Statements being used:
  - By parents/guardians and Prep teachers to share information?
  - By Prep teachers to inform educational planning?
  - By Prep teachers and outside school hours care workers to know the children entering school?
- How effective is the Transition Initiative:
  - For identifying the extra support needs of children?
  - For triggering and ensuring supports are provided?
  - For identifying children's strengths?
  - For facilitating a common understanding between early childhood educators and Prep teachers about supporting children's continuity of learning and development during transition to school?
  - For facilitating networking and collaborating?
  - For facilitating improved knowledge about 'what works' in supporting transition to school?
- How are stakeholders reflecting on, evaluating and monitoring the transition to school process?
  - Prep teachers and principals
  - Early childhood educators and managers

- Outside school hours care educators and managers
- To what extent has the Transition Initiative been supported by:
  - Advertising and promotion by the Department?
  - Provision of advice to Prep teachers and early childhood educators?
  - Provision of resources and materials for transition processes?
  - Professional development for early childhood educators and Prep teachers?

## Survey Tools

The development of the universal online survey was based on the evaluation questions above; and informed the line of questioning at site visits and for telephone interviews. Slightly different versions of the survey tool were developed to address the three key audiences from whom feedback was sought – early childhood educators and Prep teachers, early childhood service managers and principals, and families (herein referred to as parents/guardians). In addition, a separate set of questions were developed specifically for the parent/guardian focus groups. The survey tools are attached at Appendix 2.

In summary:

- Online surveys for early childhood educators and managers, Prep teachers and principals, parents/guardians – comprise the **quantitative** component of data collection.
- Early childhood service site visits, primary school site visits, parent/guardian focus groups, telephone interviews – comprise the **qualitative** component of data collection.

Approval from the Department to conduct research in early childhood services and schools was sought. Success Works consulted the services of an early childhood specialist, Maureen Imeson, to assist with drafting the application to conduct research in schools and early childhood services. The application was submitted in March 2010 and subsequently approved by the Department's Research Committee.

## Consultations

In March 2010, the online survey was distributed to all early childhood services and schools via the Department eBulletins, inviting all services and schools to participate in the evaluation and encouraging them to invite parents/guardians to provide their feedback. Key peak stakeholders were also encouraged to promote the online survey.

Site visits were conducted across Victoria and were selected in consultation with the Department. Sites were selected to ensure all types of services and schools were represented in the consultation and included kindergartens, long day care and family day care, primary schools, special development schools, out of

school hours care services and early intervention services. A list of sites consulted is attached at Appendix 3.

Where site visits were not feasible, telephone interviews were conducted with staff from these services.

Success Works sought the support of five primary schools to organise a focus group with interested parents/guardians.

Due to a low participation rate from OSHC services in the online survey and at site visits, their results and comments have been added to those from early childhood educators. For the purpose of data reporting, OSHC services are included as early childhood professionals.

**D1. That further feedback is sought from outside school hours care services in the implementation of the Transition Initiative.**

Tables 2 and 3 below summarise the consultations undertaken in each region.

**Table 2: Consultations with Early Childhood and School Professionals**

Region	Phone Interviews	Site Visits	Early Childhood Professionals*	Prep Teachers and School Principals	Total Participants
Barwon South West	3	3	32 Educators 10 Managers	55 Teachers 46 Principals	<b>143</b>
Gippsland	3	6	60 Educators 9 Managers	33 Teachers 40 Principals	<b>142</b>
Grampians	3	3	21 Educators 3 Managers	34 Teachers 41 Principals	<b>99</b>
Hume	3	3	66 Educators 9 Managers	54 Teachers 47 Principals	<b>176</b>
Loddon Mallee	3	3	23 Educators 8 Managers	40 Teachers 41 Principals	<b>112</b>
Northern Metro	7	7	87 Educators 11 Managers	103 Teachers 68 Principals	<b>269</b>
Southern Metro	7	7	86 Educators 15 Managers	111 Teachers 73 Principals	<b>285</b>
Eastern Metro	7	7	42 Educators 18 Managers	89 Teachers 61 Principals	<b>210</b>
Western Metro	9	9	53 Educators 16 Managers	53 Teachers 40 Principals	<b>162</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>1,029</b>	<b>1,598</b>

\* 'Early Childhood Professionals' includes outside school hours care educators

**Table 3: Consultations with Parents/Guardians**

Region	Online Survey Respondents	Parent/Guardian Focus Group	Total Participants
Barwon South West	68	4	<b>72</b>
Gippsland	44	6	<b>50</b>
Grampians	24	-	<b>24</b>
Hume	31	-	<b>31</b>
Loddon Mallee	63	2	<b>65</b>
Northern Metro	177	3	<b>180</b>
Southern Metro	133	4	<b>137</b>
Eastern Metro	239	-	<b>239</b>
Western Metro	90	-	<b>90</b>
Region unknown or invalid response	34	-	<b>34</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>903*</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>922</b>

\* Of the 903 respondents to the online survey, 28 did not identify their location and six entered an invalid response, leaving 869 with known locations.

## 4. The *Transition: A Positive Start to School* Initiative

The Transition Initiative was developed from a strong evidence base. As noted in the *Literature Review, Transition: A Positive Start to School*:

*"There is consistent research evidence that starting school is a significant moment for children and their families and whilst a majority of children make this transition successfully, it is sometimes associated with anxiety, uncertainty and confusion. There is also strong research support to see transition to school as a process in which key individuals (children, families, professionals in prior to school and school settings) need to work in partnership to ensure a positive outcome for children."*<sup>8</sup>

The Transition Initiative acknowledged this, and aimed to develop an approach that supports the understanding of transition to school as a process and not a point in time. It also acknowledged that, while there are common elements to most children's transition, there are important considerations to be thought about and planned to ensure that each child has a successful start to school.

The Transition Initiative recognised – and aimed to build on – the success of existing transition to school programs and activities between early childhood services and schools.

A central element of the new initiative was the introduction of the Transition Statement; a tool for parents/guardians, early childhood educators and Prep teachers to share information about a child's learning and development.

The Transition Initiative aimed to improve the development and delivery of Transition programs across Victoria. In discussion with the Department, the following specific outcomes for the initiative were identified:

- Identifying a child's strengths
- Facilitating a common understanding between early childhood educators and Prep teachers about supporting children's continuity of learning and development during transition to school
- Facilitating networking and collaboration among early childhood services and schools
- Facilitating improved knowledge about what works in supporting transition to school
- Identifying extra support needs for children
- Children start school feeling confident and ready to learn
- Triggering and ensuring supports are provided for children.

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<sup>8</sup> *Literature Review, Transition: A Positive Start to School*, Centre for Equity & Innovation in Early Childhood, The University of Melbourne, 2009

This section aims to provide an overview of how early childhood educators and managers, Prep teachers and principals, and parents/guardians perceive the effectiveness of the new initiative and how it has impacted on the identified outcomes.

Given the significance of the new Transition Statement process – a key component of this initiative – the impact of this will be discussed in detail in section 5 of this report. Discussion about the implementation process related to the Transition Initiative will be discussed in section 6.

## 4.1. Overall Perceptions of the Initiative

The overall perception of the Transition Initiative in its first year has been positive. Early childhood educators and Prep teachers understand that a positive start to school for children is vital to ongoing learning and development, and that processes across the state – where they existed – have supported transition in the past.

Early childhood educators and managers, Prep teachers and principals, and parents/guardians appreciate that this new initiative has introduced a consistent and common approach to transition for all children. In addition, early childhood educators – whilst frustrated by tight timelines and at times overwhelmed by new information associated with completing the Transition Statements in particular – felt the initiative provided the opportunity to formalise the importance of transition and share information with their educational peers and the parents/guardians of the children they teach.

*“Staff appreciated the opportunity to know that every child they were working with would have [a Transition Statement] and that every child had the opportunity to go through the same process. We had more contact with local primary schools seeking info on children with additional needs.” – Early Childhood Educator*

*“This initiative has led to [our] Cluster conducting transition meetings with all local schools and Pre-schools to improve Transition Statement completion and communication between kinder and school.” – Prep Teacher*

Parents/guardians also found the initiative a valuable process for discussing expectations and needs of their child in the lead up to the transition to school.

*“Great idea – made me and my husband think about the change from kinder to school and what we hoped our child would experience during the whole process.” – Parent*

Most challenging for early childhood educators was the introduction of the Transition Statement and the associated process of collecting, writing and forwarding the information. As previously stated, section 5 of this report is dedicated to discussing the issues raised in more detail.

## 4.2. Effectiveness of the Initiative

To determine perceptions by early childhood educators and managers and Prep teachers and principals of the overall effectiveness of the initiative, the online survey asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative in achieving the identified outcomes.

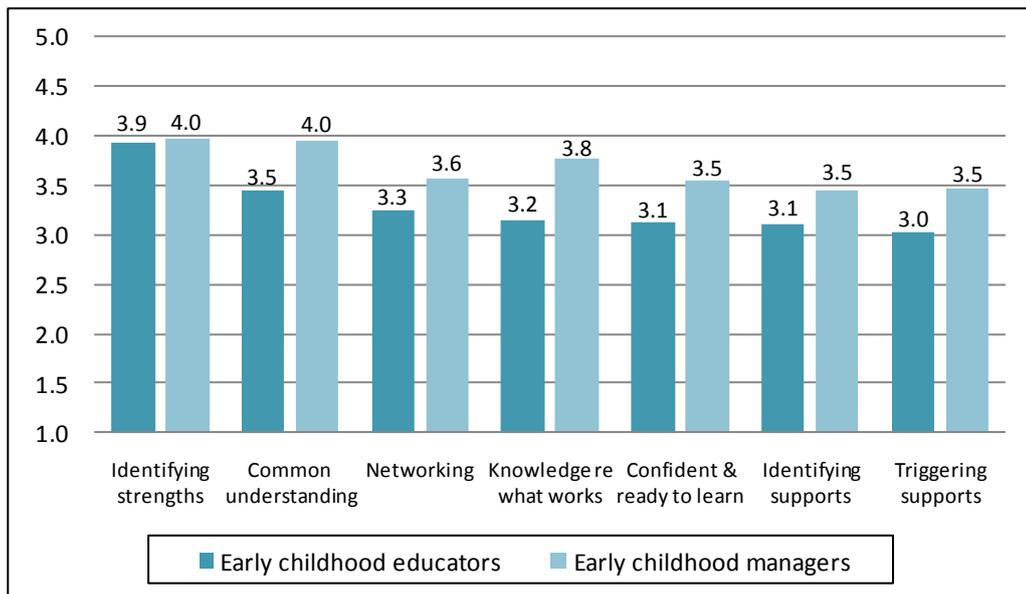
On average, respondents to the survey ranked the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative against each identified outcome as neutral or above on a five point Likert scale.<sup>9</sup>

Detailed data on the responses from early childhood educators and managers and Prep teachers and principals, and a comparison between them, is presented below.

### Perceptions of Effectiveness by Early Childhood Professionals

As shown in Figure 1, early childhood educators consistently ranked the effectiveness of the initiative in achieving the identified outcomes of the Transition Initiative lower than early childhood service managers.

**Figure 1: Early childhood educators and managers: Perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative**



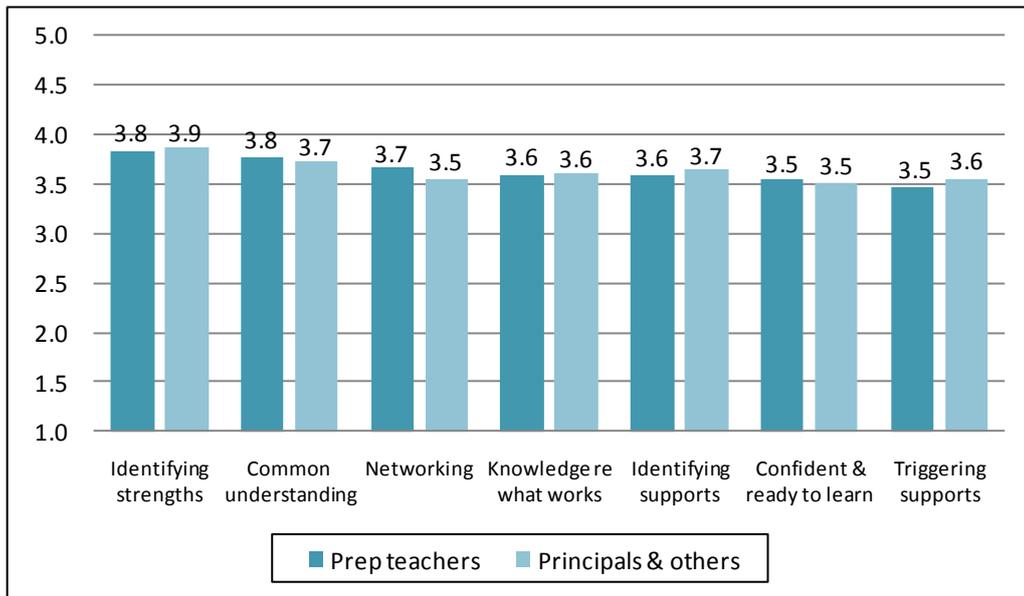
Identifying children's strengths and facilitating a common understanding between early childhood educators and Prep teachers about supporting children's continuity of learning and development during transition to school were ranked highest by both early childhood educators and managers.

<sup>9</sup> Respondents were required to rank each outcome on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = very ineffective, 2 = ineffective, 3 = neither effective nor ineffective, 4 = effective, 5 = very effective

## Perceptions of Effectiveness by School Professionals

Unlike early childhood professionals, there was little variation between Prep teachers' and principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative in achieving each of the identified outcomes.

**Figure 2: Prep teachers and principals: Perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative**

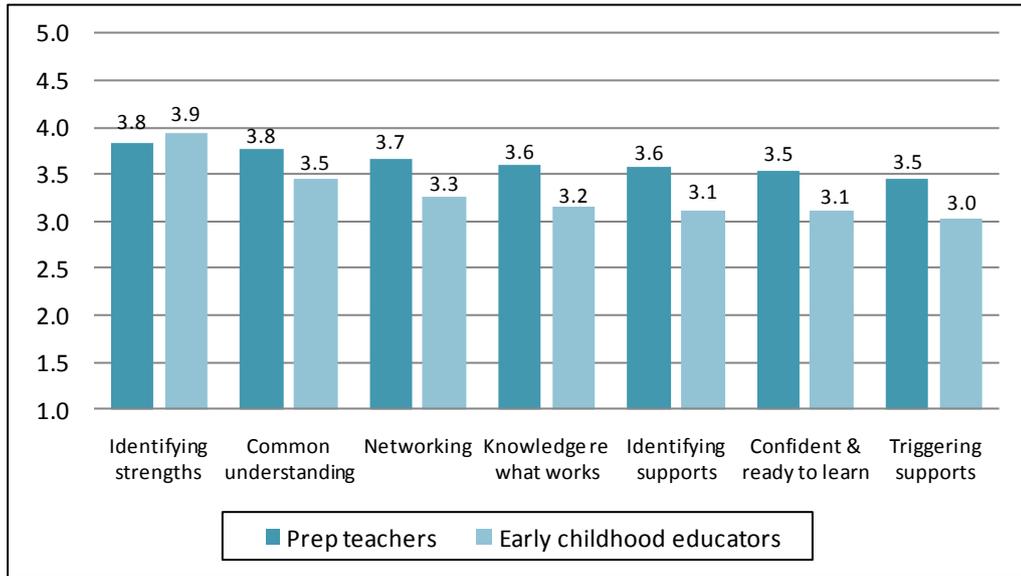


Similarly to early childhood professionals, both Prep teachers and principals ranked identifying children's strengths and facilitating a common understanding between early childhood educators and Prep teachers about supporting children's continuity of learning and development during transition to school the highest.

## Comparison of Perceptions

A comparison of the perceptions of early childhood educators and Prep teachers highlights that Prep teachers generally had a more positive perception of the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative in achieving each of the identified outcomes.

**Figure 3: Prep teachers and early childhood educators: Perceptions of effectiveness of the Transition Initiative**



### 4.3. Identified Outcomes of the Initiative

This section provides further detail against each of the seven identified outcomes of the Transition Initiative.

#### Identifying Children’s Strengths

Both early childhood educators and Prep teachers felt the Transition Initiative was effective for identifying children’s strengths. This can be linked to the Transition Statement process requiring early childhood educators to take a strengths-based approach which emphasises the importance of credit-based (rather than deficit-based) model of assessment. A credit or strength-based model builds on what the child can do and takes a holistic view of learning and development, based on tracking the child’s dispositions, achievements, and progress over time.<sup>10</sup> The Transition Statement process placed a stronger focus on identifying what children can do well and looking at what would be required to provide them with opportunities to further develop their skills. This is seen by Prep teachers and early childhood educators as an advance on previous practice, which often focused on identifying children’s deficits and learning support needs.

In particular, the early intervention services consulted viewed the strengths-based approach as a real ‘breath of fresh air’. This was relevant for some of the

<sup>10</sup> Features of a strength-based model include: its purpose to enhance learning; the outcomes focus on learning dispositions; the focus for intervention is credit-based – what the child has already mastered, disposition-enhancing is prioritised; validity is determined by the focus on the child in context: interpretations of observations, discussions and agreements; progression is identified as increasingly complex participation across a range of contexts; learning stories map progression and achievements over time; the value to practitioners is communicating with four audiences: children, families, other staff and themselves. E Wood & J Attfield, extracted from *Play, learning and the early childhood curriculum*, 1996.

families they worked with who had spent the entire year prior to starting school highlighting their child's deficits in order to make a case for intervention funding.

*"The Transition Statement formalised the process of addressing the extra support needs of children. Previously reports were more focused on deficits; the new Framework allows more focus on strengths and more celebration of these than getting dragged down in what children can't do." – Early Childhood Educator (Early Intervention)*

However, despite positive feedback, some early childhood educators also expressed concern that the strengths-based approach was an impediment to relevant information being included in the Transition Statement. They felt that they had been expected to frame the Transition Statement in a way that did not necessarily allow them to provide a complete picture of the child's learning and development.

*"While it is important for Prep teachers to know about a child's strengths, it is equally important for them to know about weaknesses, and VERY important for them to know about techniques developed by the Kindergarten teacher for helping a particular child. Without this, the Prep teacher wastes valuable time while they re-invent the wheel for some children. The format does not allow us to pass this type of information on to the Prep teacher. We are left with the option of having clandestine meetings to discuss ways to help particular children." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"At times it was difficult to articulate that a child has challenging behaviours and learning styles, all the while keeping it written as a positive." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"The strengths-based nature of the Transition Statements makes it difficult to identify areas [where] support is needed, particularly as parent permission is required so wording must be careful." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"Very strengths-based so can completely miss a child needing extensive support e.g. there was a child with physical difficulty in communicating effectively but this was only mentioned in one sentence and gave the impression that there were no difficulties and no record of ongoing medical or speech pathology involvement." – Prep Teacher*

There appears to be some confusion regarding the meaning of a 'strengths-based' approach amongst early childhood educators, resulting in them couching the information provided in Transition Statements in positive terms.

**D2. That material to explain a 'strengths-based' approach is developed and relevant training to early childhood educators and Prep teachers is provided.**

## **Facilitating a Common Understanding**

Both early childhood educators and Prep teachers felt the Transition Initiative was effective for helping early childhood educators and Prep teachers develop a common understanding about supporting children's continuity of learning and development during transition to school. In particular, the common language

for discussing transition to school has been positive for all involved in the transition to school process.

*"All teachers are now working within the same guidelines and are speaking the same language in terms of goals, outcomes, program planning etc." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"It is great for families to have information about how their child is going. They have the learning stories which we do through the year but this builds on that. The Transition Statements provide another range of documentation to access, and it is great to have that strengths based approach. Information regarding the new curriculum was useful and hopefully will help develop a common language for early childhood educators and Prep teachers to share." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"Transition Statements are a great idea. They just need to be refined. They have established a common language between stakeholders regarding early childhood development." – Prep Teacher*

## Facilitating Networking and Collaboration

Early childhood educators and managers and Prep teachers and principals reported that the Transition Initiative has helped to improve networking and collaboration among early childhood educators and Prep teachers and reaffirmed much of the good work many professionals were already doing. Many acknowledged that being part of an established local network of early childhood and school professionals enabled them to keep transition front-of-mind.

Some particular benefits of networking and collaboration that were highlighted were:

- Members of established networks were able to mobilise around the new task of completing Transition Statements and supported each other through the Transition Statement process. Network members were able to complete the Transition Statements in a less onerous way than those in more isolated early childhood services.
- In some areas, networks were able to provide additional resources to assist early childhood educators to complete the Transition Statements, including providing the early childhood educator with a day to write the Transition Statements.

*"This year, I have organised 3-4 meetings with surrounding schools to discuss the Transition Statements and how we can improve on them in the future, so the Transition Initiative has provided more networking in that regard." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"The Transition Initiative has familiarised me with the transition coordinators in each school, and allowed me to join in networking meetings and cluster groups in support of each other, that operate on a monthly or term basis." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"The check box that asked Primary Schools to contact the kinder teacher was great for networking." – Prep Teacher*

*“It has opened up networking where we need to talk about issues and concerns. It has strengthened co-operative work between centres and schools.” – Prep Teacher*

Conversely, some respondents felt the Transition Initiative did not acknowledge the good work of established networks citing the Department as being unaware of the 'real' situation for services.<sup>11</sup>

Other interviewees saw the Transition Initiative and formal written Transition Statement process impacting negatively on networking and collaboration. Some Prep teachers and early childhood educators believe that Transition Statements have effectively reduced the time for face-to-face interaction that previously occurred. Face-to-face conversations enabled Prep teachers to gain insights into the learning and development needs of children in ways which the written Transition Statements do not provide.

## **Improved Knowledge of ‘What Works’ in Supporting Transition to School**

Responses varied across early childhood educators and managers and Prep teachers and principals as to the extent of the Transition Initiative's impact on improving knowledge about 'what works' in supporting transition to school. Some respondents related this to existing transition programs and activities that were in place prior to the Transition Initiative coming into effect. Most respondents indicated that transition programs and activities were already in place in their communities, and that these were being reviewed and improved over time.

The Transition Initiative was seen as lifting the profile of transition among early childhood educators, Prep teachers and parents/guardians. It was seen as generally helping to improve knowledge about, and understanding of the importance of, preparing children and parents/guardians for transition. However, as with the feedback received on the Transition Initiative's impact on networking and collaboration, in some cases the written Transition Statement process reduced the time available to support the flow of information about planning for effective transition to school.

## **Identifying the Extra Support Needs of Children**

From the perspective of Prep teachers, it was useful to know as early in the year as possible what the support needs of children are, because in some cases it might otherwise be Term 2 or 3 before these needs became apparent. Feedback indicated that extra support was expected to be identified through the Transition Statement. Where this occurred, Prep teachers felt the Transition Statements were particularly valuable.

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<sup>11</sup> In this case, these early childhood educators commented that they could see the Transition Initiative being useful for areas where there were not strong networks or good practice already happening, and that they had 'heard' of examples of where this was the case. "It would be relevant for them, but not for us".

*"We felt that we were better informed in regards to students' individual needs prior to the commencement of the new school year. It also helped us place students with special or particular needs in the appropriate class structure to better foster and cater to their needs." – Prep Teacher*

*"Yes, the Transition Statement was especially helpful for identifying the support requirements of Autistic students and those with special needs. Action plans were already being used and it helped to have these for the beginning of the year." – Prep Teacher*

*"Reviewing the Transition Statements helped particularly in planning for students who had special needs or issues of importance." – Prep Teacher*

The degree to which these needs were identified in the Transition Statement varied depending on what the early childhood educator included on the Transition Statement. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.

For children with an existing diagnosed need, the Transition Initiative had little impact in identifying additional support needs as this process had already been undertaken earlier in the year as part of the *Sharing Our Journey* initiative and other transition/funding application processes.

In some cases where the early childhood educator had identified extra support needs, parents/guardians did not consent to this information being forwarded to the school. This was due to parents/guardians seeing their child's transition to school as a 'fresh start' and they were interested to see how their child would settle into school if the Prep teacher had no particular expectations about the child.

*"I have some concerns that the Transition Statement will give the Prep teachers a preconceived idea about my child rather than them going in with an open mind" – Parent*

## **Confident and Ready to Learn**

Prep teachers and early childhood educators overall felt that the Transition Initiative was neither effective nor ineffective in ensuring that children started school confident and ready to learn, rating it on average 3 out of 5.

That said, both Prep teachers and early childhood educators were more likely to rate the initiative as effective (rather than ineffective) on this element. When given the opportunity to provide more information about why they felt that the initiative ensured that children started school confident and ready to learn, no Prep teacher or early childhood educator provided additional information.

## **Triggering and Ensuring Supports are Provided**

Early childhood educators ranked the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative in triggering and ensuring supports are provided, the lowest of all the identified outcomes (average rank 3.0, see Figure 1). Feedback indicates they felt that providing these supports was the Prep teacher's responsibility.

Early childhood managers and Prep teachers also ranked this the lowest of all the identified outcomes, but were more positive about its effectiveness (average

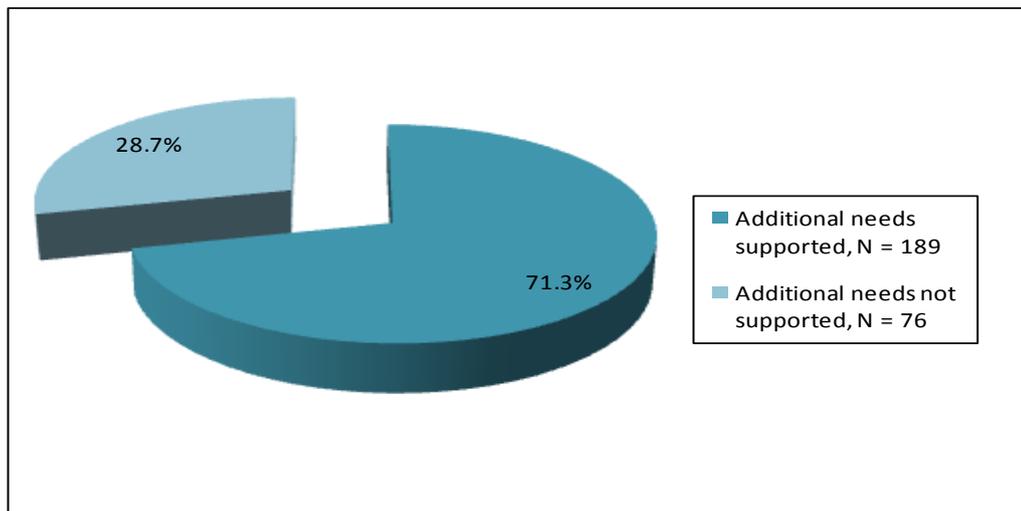
rank for both 3.5, see Figures 1 and 2). Principals ranked the effectiveness of this outcome higher than all other respondents (average rank 3.6, see Figure 2).

Some Prep teachers felt the Transition Statements yielded little information about a child's extra support needs and felt that had this information been provided it would have aided in ensuring appropriate supports were provided.

While parents/guardians were not specifically asked to provide rankings of the initiative against each of the identified outcomes, information was sought on whether they felt their child's additional needs had been supported.

Of the survey respondents, 265 parent/guardians responded to this question (29.3% of total respondents).<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 4: Parent/Guardian: Child's additional needs adequately supported**



As shown in Figure 4, the majority of parents/guardians felt that their child's additional needs had been adequately supported.

*"The teacher has taken a keen interest in extending her and helping her find interesting things to do." – Parent*

Of the parents/guardians who responded 28.7% reported that their child's additional needs had not been adequately supported. Some of the key reasons for this were:

- Their child did not qualify for funding for additional support at school
- Some parents/guardians were reluctant to provide information to the school about their child's additional support needs

*"The information provided by parents was minimal. The parents don't like the kinder teacher to say too much as they feel it will prejudice our opinion of their child. The kinder teachers were quite hamstrung." – Prep Teacher*

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<sup>12</sup> There is an inconsistency in the survey results regarding the proportion of parents/guardians who identified they had a child with additional needs. While only 5.6% of all parents/guardians reported that their child had additional needs, 29.3% of all parents/guardians responded to the question regarding whether their child's additional needs had been met. This inconsistency may be due to reluctance on the part of parents/guardians to identify additional needs, or they may have interpreted the first question as relating to formally diagnosed additional needs only.

- Lack of availability of support services

*"Our school did have a speech therapist last year but she moved on and the school has not been able to find a replacement as yet." – Parent*

- In a few instances, Prep teachers did not identify additional needs until after the child had started school.

*"I mostly learnt about students with additional needs through my own interactions with the child in Term 1, my own discussions with parents, and assistance from the school based speech therapist and psychologist. I have identified students with special needs through working with the children, applying various assessment strategies and writing my own Individual Learning Plans." – Prep Teacher*

**D3. That transition to school arrangements for children with additional learning and development needs, a disability or developmental delay are reviewed with a focus on how this could be improved.**

**D4. That privacy and consent requirements for Transition Learning and Development Statements are clarified and communicated to all early childhood services, schools and families.**

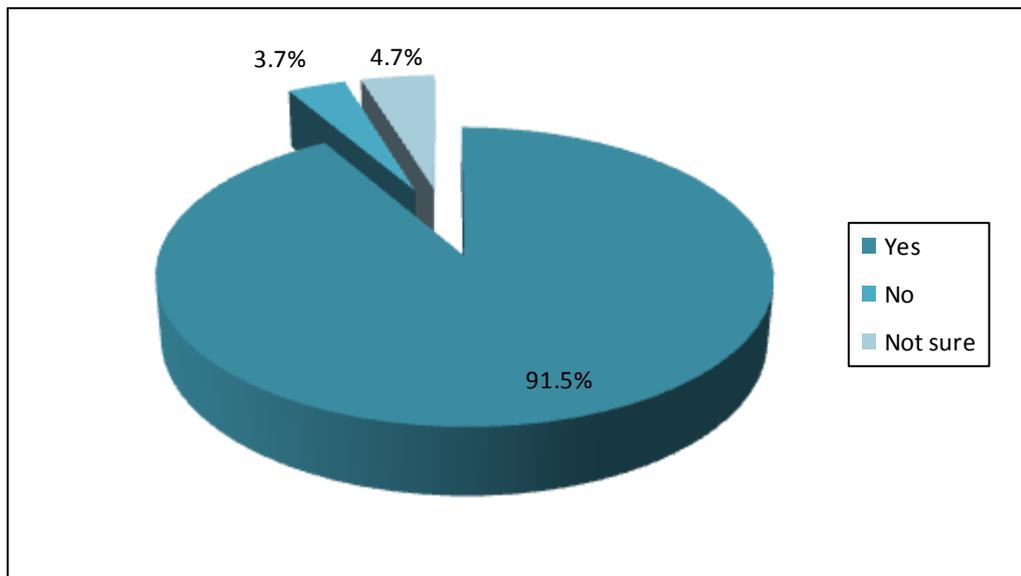
**S1. That early childhood services and schools further familiarise themselves with privacy and consent requirements for Transition Learning and Development Statements and support the development of a greater understanding of these by families.**

## **4.4. Participation in Transition Programs and Activities**

As mentioned earlier, the Transition Initiative aims to improve the development and delivery of transition programs across Victoria. Prior to the introduction of the Transition Initiative, no data was collected about the participation of children, parents/guardians, early childhood educators and Prep teachers in transition to school programs and activities. Through this evaluation, parents/guardians were asked to provide information on these programs. This information will provide a useful base from which future comparisons can be made to further evaluate the impact the initiative is having on the delivery of transition to school programs.

To determine the extent of existing transition programs and activities, parents/guardians were asked whether or not they and/or their child participated in a transition to school activity in 2009/10.

**Figure 5: Parents/Guardians/Children: Participation in a transition activity**



As shown in Figure 5, 91.5% of parents/guardians reported that they or their children had participated in a transition to school program or activity in 2009/10.

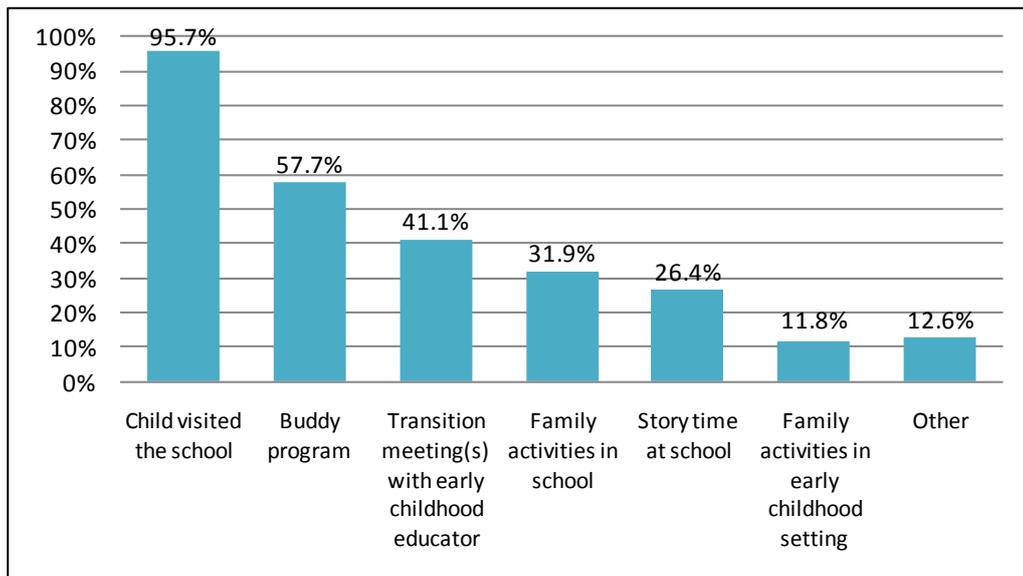
As part of the Transition Initiative, pilots were undertaken to explore a range of transition approaches in a diverse range of Victorian communities. An evaluation of these pilots highlighted 10 promising practices, which were promoted as part of the Transition Initiative.

These 10 promising practices were:

1. Reciprocal visits for children
2. Reciprocal visits for educators
3. Transition statements and meetings
4. Joint professional development
5. Local transition networks
6. Buddy programs
7. Family involvement activities
8. Learning programs responsive to children
9. Social story boards
10. Community-level transition timetables

Figure 6 provides an overview of the activities in which parents/guardians reported being involved.

**Figure 6: Parents/Guardians: Engagement with transition activities**



The most common type of transition to school activity for children was visiting the school (95.7%). Just over half of parents/guardians reported that their children had participated in a buddy program (57.7%), while slightly under half reported attending a transition meeting with their child's early childhood educator (41.1%).

Approximately a third of parents/guardians and/or children took part in family activities in school (31.9%), while a quarter participated in story time at school (26.4%).

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide details of other transition to school activities in which they or their child had participated. Twelve percent (12%) gave examples of other activities which included library sessions, a series of half days at school, attendance at a school fete, school tours and school children visiting their child's early childhood service.

## 5. The Transition Learning and Development Statement

The Transition Initiative introduced a tool for families and educators to share information about a child's learning and development in the form of a Transition Learning and Development Statement.

The Transition Statement was developed by the Department in consultation with parents/guardians, early childhood educators and Prep teachers. Feedback on the draft version of the Transition Statement was sought through regional forums held between March and May in 2009. A trial of the revised draft Transition Statement was undertaken in June 2009, which involved 65 educators from the early childhood and schooling sectors (of these, 26 were Prep teachers) and 72 parents/guardians. Following this, the format of the Transition Statement was finalised and launched as part of the Initiative in August 2009.

In 2009, the Transition Statement consisted of two parts: one for the family (Part 1) and one for the early childhood educator (Part 2). For parents/guardians of children with a disability or developmental delay, an additional page (Part 1A) was provided to record information on the additional services accessed or any other important information the school should know.

Part 2 of the Transition Statement required early childhood educators to provide a summary of the child's learning and development in the context of the five learning outcomes identified for children in the National and the Victorian Frameworks.

### 5.1. Transition Statements Completed and Shared

This section provides information about the extent to which Transition Statements were completed by parents/guardians and early childhood educators, and received and reviewed by schools in 2009/10.

#### Transition Statements Completed: Early Childhood Educators

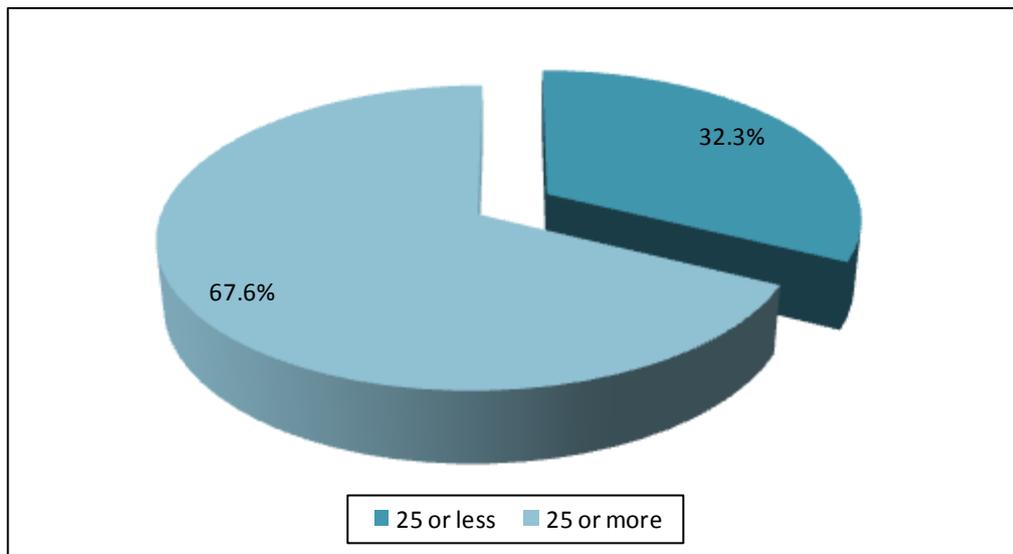
Of the 321 early childhood educators who responded to the survey question about the number of Transition Statements they completed, 90% reported having completed a Transition Statement.

Of the 10% of respondents who reported they did not complete any Transition Statements, the majority did not do so because they were not working in a service that provided a funded kindergarten program. This may be a result of the requirement introduced in 2009 for early childhood educators in funded

kindergarten programs to complete Transition Statements as part of their funding arrangements.

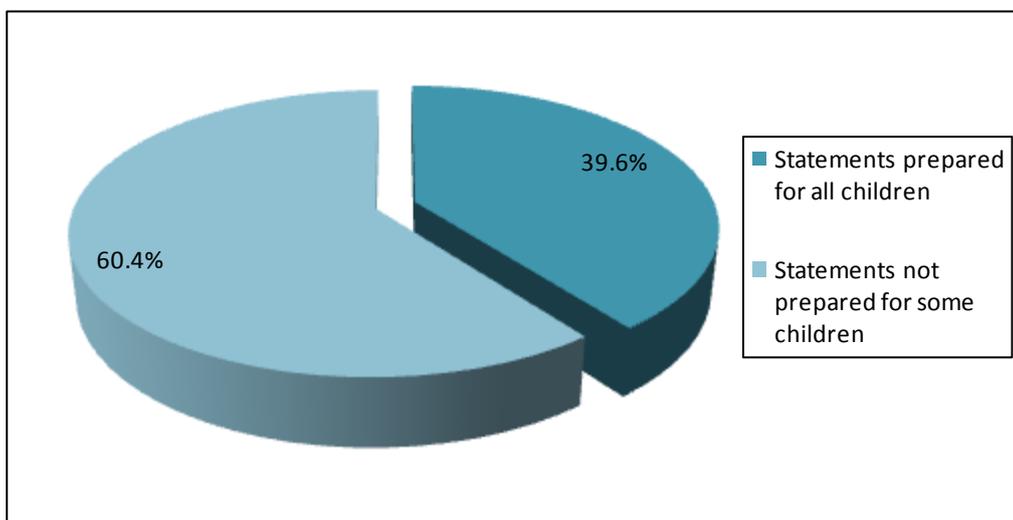
As the Department does not provide funding to other early childhood services (e.g. long day care services without a funded kindergarten program, family day care services), there is no formal requirement for educators working in these services to complete Transition Statements. However, the Department has encouraged these educators to engage with the process and has provided access to professional development and support resources irrespective of funding arrangements.

**Figure 7: Early childhood educators: Number of Transition Statements prepared**



The majority of early childhood educators (67.6%) reported that they prepared 25 or more Transition Statements each, the maximum number they could nominate on the online survey. Feedback from early childhood educators at site visits indicated they completed twice as many or more.

**Figure 8: Early childhood educators: Proportion of children for whom a Transition Statement was not prepared**



Just under two-thirds (60.4%) of early childhood educators indicated that there were some children at their service for whom a Transition Statement was not prepared. The prevailing reason for this was that the child was not entering school the following year.

In some cases, early childhood educators reported that the child attended two early childhood services and the early childhood educator at the second service had prepared the Transition Statement.

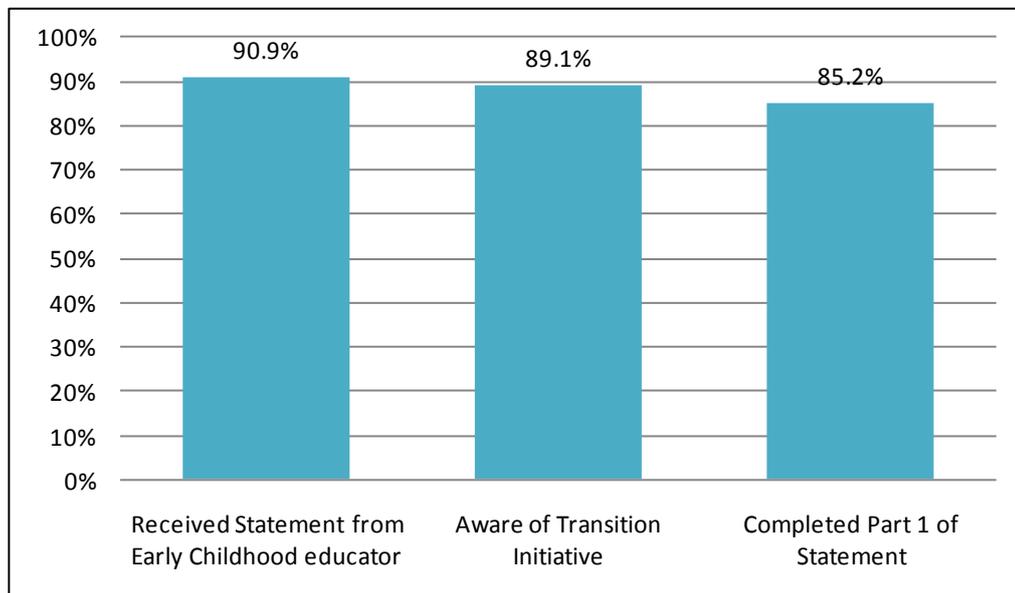
In a small number of cases, early childhood educators did not receive the Transition Statement back from the parent/guardian of the child and therefore felt they were not required to complete Part 2 of the Transition Statement, or the child left the early childhood service before the Transition Statement could be completed.

### Transition Statements Completed: Parents/Guardians

Part 1 of the Transition Statement was designed to be completed by parents/guardians in partnership with their child. In order to assess the overall completion rate of Part 1, parents/guardians were asked about completing the Transition Statements.

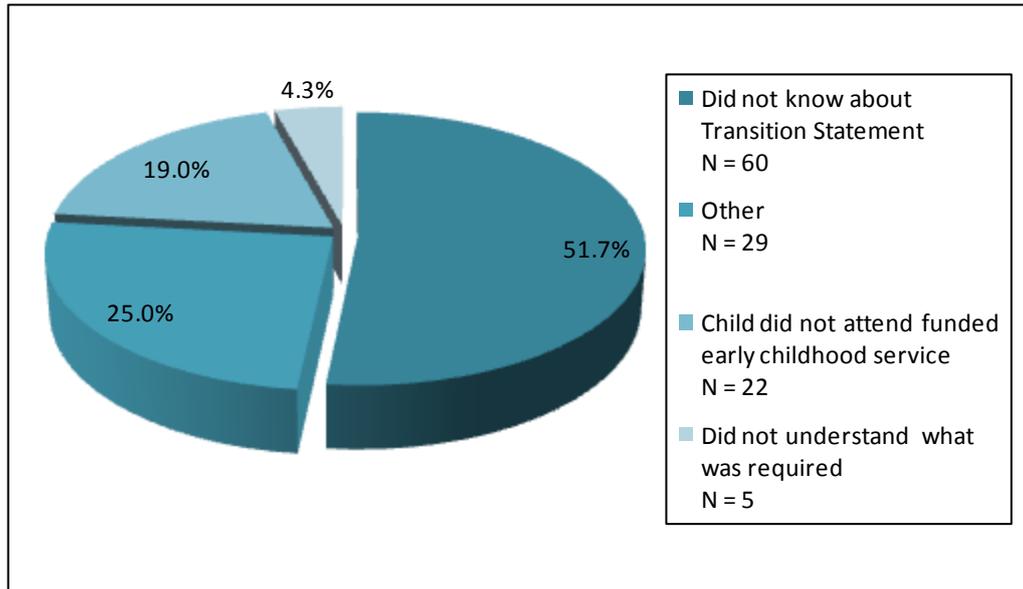
In line with the feedback provided by early childhood educators, 90.9% of parents/guardians responding to the survey received a Transition Statement from their child's early childhood educator.

**Figure 9: Parents/Guardians: Engagement with Transition Statement process**



While the vast majority of parents/guardians indicated that they received a Transition Statement (90.9%) and were aware of the Transition Initiative (89.1%), a slightly lower proportion (85.2%) reported actually completing Part 1 of the Transition Statement.

**Figure 10: Parents/Guardians: Reasons for not completing the Transition Statement**



Of the 128 (14.8%) parents/guardians who reported they did not complete Part 1 of the Transition Statement, 116 (9.4%) provided reasons why they did not complete Part 1 of the Transition Statement, which included:

- Unaware of the Transition Statement (51.7%)
- Child did not attend a funded kindergarten program (19.0%)
- 'Other' (25.0%) included having moved from a different location (state or overseas), or not being sure if they had completed the Transition Statement or not.

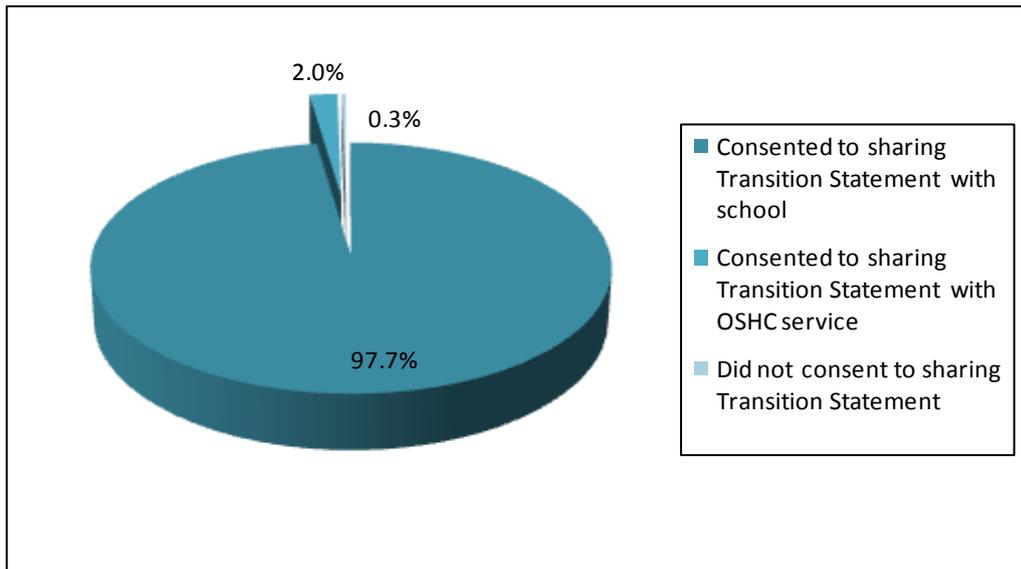
At site visits, early childhood educators confirmed these results. Drawing on their experience with parents/guardians they offered the following opinions as to why Part 1 of the Transition Statement may not have been completed:

- Not knowing about the Transition Statement
- Not understanding the point or the benefit of completing the Transition Statement
- Not getting around to it in time
- Disengagement in general from early childhood education
- Literacy issues or learning difficulties
- Low command of English.

### **Consent to Share Transition Statement: Parents/Guardians**

Of the 704 parents/guardians who responded to the survey, 97.7% reported giving consent to sharing the Transition Statement with their child's school or outside school hours care service.

**Figure 11: Parents/Guardians: Consent to share Transition Statement**



Based on the data presented above, the process of parents/guardians completing Transition Statements and consenting to share them with their child's school or outside school hours care service, worked well.

Reasons given for parents/guardians not consenting to the Transition Statement being shared were:

- Not being asked by the early childhood educator to do this
- Not being aware of the Transition Statement.

Data also highlighted that 7.8% (55 parents/guardians) were not provided a copy of their child's Transition Statement but consented to sharing this information with their child's school or outside school hours care service.

Advice from the Department requires all parents/guardians to see a copy of the Transition Statement prior to consent being provided. **(See Recommendations D4 and S1 on page 29)**

### **Transition Statements Received: Prep Teachers**

Of the 432 Prep teachers that responded to the question about receiving Transition Statements, 88.7% reported receiving at least one Transition Statement.

There were two main reasons given by Prep teachers as to why a Transition Statement might not have been received for a child:

1. The parent/guardian had not completed or did not consent to sharing the Transition Statement with the school.

*"Some parents didn't get around to giving the OK, others didn't see the importance of it, and for some parents this type of activity is not of high importance in their lives." – Principal*

2. The child had not attended an early childhood service or had attended an early childhood service outside the jurisdiction of the Transition Initiative.

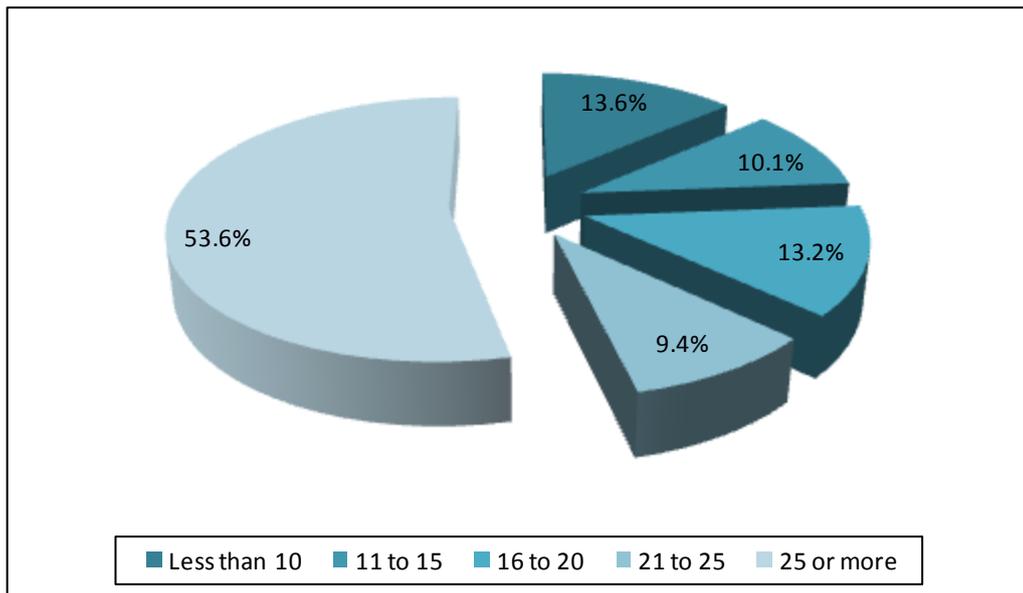
*"We didn't get any because the incoming students didn't go to Kinder." – Prep Teacher*

*"Late enrolments from interstate students/overseas students who recently returned to the country did not have Transition Statements." – Principal*

*"Some of our students did not attend Pre-school or attended a day-care facility. The day-care facilities did not supply a Transition Statement." – Prep Teacher*

Prep teachers did not identify parent/guardian literacy issues or differences in levels of education as an impediment to the process of sharing information via the Transition Statement.

**Figure 12: Prep teachers: Number of Transition Statements reviewed**



Just over half of the Prep teachers reported that they had reviewed 25 or more Transition Statements (53.6%). Approximately two-thirds (61.8%) of Prep teachers reported reviewing 25 or more Transition Statements (in metro areas), compared to just over one-third of Prep teachers (38.2%) in rural areas. This may reflect differences in class and school size between metropolitan and rural areas. In 2009 the average Prep class size was 19.2<sup>13</sup> in government schools.

This data shows that a substantial number of teachers did review the Transition Statements, therefore were able to offer feedback regarding the utility of the Transition Statements. This is discussed in more detail later in the report.

<sup>13</sup> DEECD School Census February 2009 as reported in *Summary Statistics for Victorian Schools*, July 2009, DEECD, [http://www.vpa.org.au/image/aif9/Summary\\_Statistics\\_for\\_Victorian\\_Schools.pdf](http://www.vpa.org.au/image/aif9/Summary_Statistics_for_Victorian_Schools.pdf)

## 5.2. Transition Statement Process

A range of resources were developed to assist families, early childhood professionals and Prep teachers to complete and review the Transition Statement. These included:

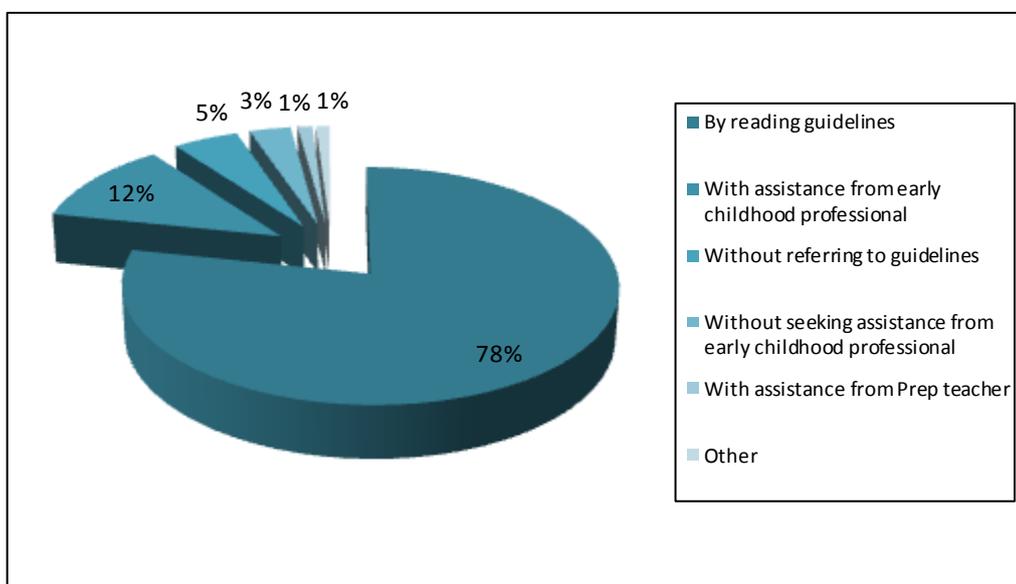
- *Guidelines for families on completing Part 1 of the Transition Learning and Development Statement*
- *Professional Development Booklet: How to write and interpret the Transition Learning and Development Statement* for early childhood educators and Prep teachers
- A visual guide outlining the steps to completing the Transition Statement.

The Department provided 73 full-day professional development sessions – attended by 3178 people – between August and October 2009, on how to write and interpret the Transition Statement.

This section of the report provides information on the resources parents/guardians used to complete the Transition Statement and reflections from early childhood educators and Prep teachers on issues with completing and reviewing the Transition Statements.

### Process of Completing the Transition Statement: Parents/Guardians

Figure 13: Parents/Guardians: How Transition Statements were completed



Over three-quarters of parents/guardians who completed Part 1 of their child's Transition Statement did so by reading the guidelines for families (78.3%). In some cases assistance was sought from either the early childhood educator (11.6%) or the Prep teacher (1.1%) to complete the Transition Statement. Therefore, the guidelines appear to be by far the most important means for communicating

information about the Initiative to parents/guardians in order to help them to complete Transition Statements.

Less than one in ten parents/guardians completed the Transition Statement without referring to the guidelines (4.9%) or seeking assistance from an early childhood educator (3.1%).

When parents/guardians did request assistance from early childhood educators to complete Part 1 of the Transition Statement, feedback indicates it involved a significant time commitment on the part of early childhood educators.

**D5. That further feedback is sought from childhood educators to determine time spent with families to complete Transition Learning and Development Statements, with a focus on how this could be improved.**

Part 1 of the Transition Statement also provided an opportunity for parents/guardians (or if the parent/guardian consented, the early childhood educator) to capture their child's views on their transition to school. The degree to which children were engaged in contributing to the Transition Statement varied. When parents/guardians made comments in relation to discussing transition to school with their child, this was described as a positive experience.

*"It was a positive and thought provoking exercise and an opportunity to discuss transition with my child." – Parent*

## **Process of Completing the Transition Statement: Early Childhood Educators**

Of the 268 survey respondents who identified themselves as an early childhood educator, and responded to the question 'What, if anything, did you gain from completing the Transition Statement?', 65.7% made a positive comment, 11.2% made a neutral comment and 23.1% made a negative comment.

Of the early childhood educators who made a positive comment a range of benefits were specifically identified (both personally and professionally). These included:

- Reflecting on the learning and development of children; confirming what they knew but also highlighting new approaches for some early childhood educators.

*"The Transition Statement process was fantastic and really helpful in assisting us in getting to know the children." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"It was more worthwhile than I anticipated as it provided a very in depth assessment of each child's strengths and weaknesses and while collecting the parent Transition Statements was quite hard work (we did not get all Transition Statements back no matter how hard we tried) the ones that were returned were very insightful." – Early Childhood Educator*

- Sharing information with parents/guardians and seeking their views on their child and transition to school.

*"Great opportunity to reflect on each individual child. Good to see what parents have to say also. Good to demonstrate to parents that we share this information*

*with the school as part of the whole continuum of education.” – Early Childhood Educator*

*“Insight from the parents comments about their feelings/expectations regarding their child entering school.” – Early Childhood Educator*

- Becoming more familiar with the National and Victorian Frameworks, although some did comment that it was difficult to transfer their observations, which were written in the ‘old’ language, to the new format of the Victorian Framework

*“I found it was a great way to help me get my head around the new curriculum frameworks.” – Early Childhood Educator*

- Improved communication between schools and early childhood services about children's learning and development and planning for the children's transition to school

*“It was a very long and time consuming process, however I believe that it helped me to communicate in a professional manner to families and schools about the strengths of each child and strategies that may help that child settle into school to have a very positive beginning to their Prep year.” – Early Childhood Educator*

*“The Transition Statements provided an opportunity to learn more about the local schools and to make invaluable contacts and to extend current networks.” – Early Childhood Educator*

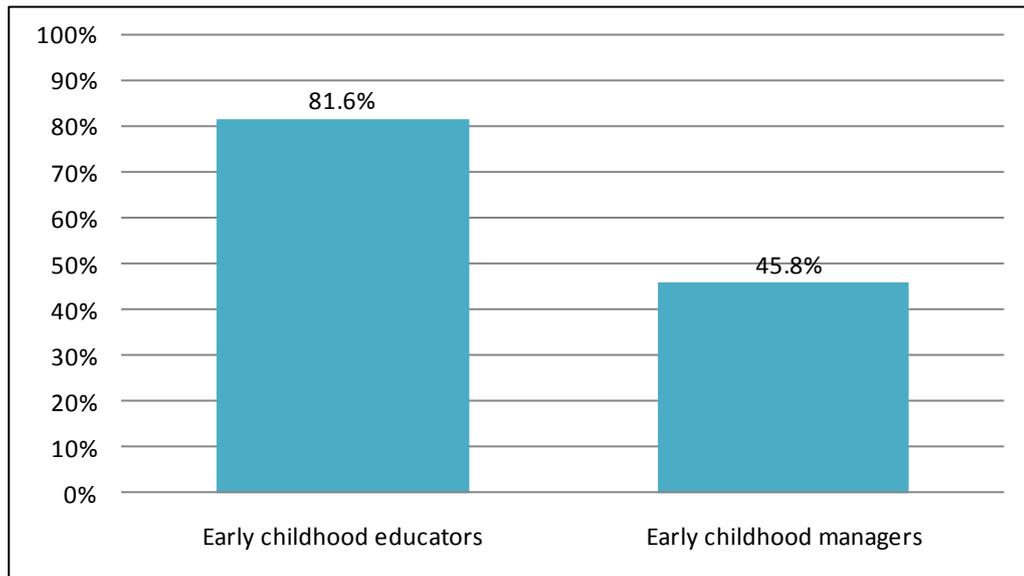
- Having an opportunity to reflect on their professional practice.

*“I did not know my group of children very well and therefore found I knew them better than I thought. It is quite a different way at looking at planning, evaluating and observing the children's development and I feel it will be easier to complete transition forms this year with an idea of what will be expected.” – Early Childhood Educator*

Of the early childhood educators who made a negative comment, the issues identified are incorporated in the information below.

The survey asked early childhood educators and managers to identify if they had issues completing the Transition Statements.

**Figure 14: Early childhood educators and managers: Issues with completing the Transition Statements**



Early childhood educators were approximately twice as likely as their managers to identify issues with completing Transition Statements (81.6% compared with 45.8%). This is most likely due to educators having a more direct experience with preparing Transition Statements than their managers.

The issues identified with completing Transition Statements and responses made by early childhood educators in relation to the survey question 'Have you completed a Transition Statement? If so, how did you find the process?' are outlined below.

The most common issue raised was related to writing the Transition Statement. In the majority of cases this related to the time it took to write Transition Statements. Some early childhood educators indicated that they completed the Transition Statements 'after hours'. This was a particular issue for educators completing 60 Transition Statements or more. Early childhood educators felt that the amount of preparation and administration time allocated was insufficient to cover the 'real time' it took to complete the Transition Statements.

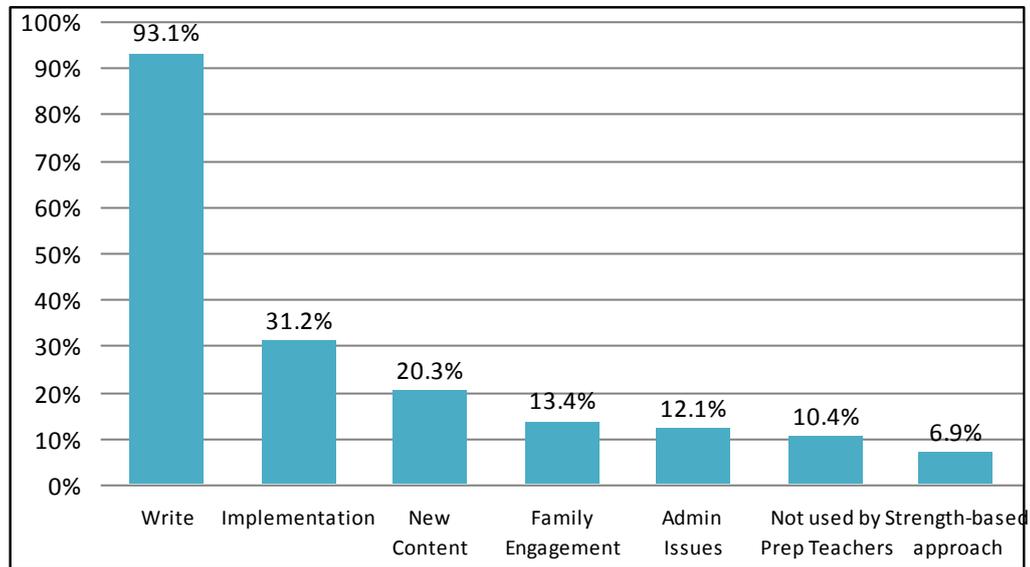
*"I had a lot to complete (44) in a very short time last year. This made it very stressful and I spent a lot of my own time completing them on weekends as we didn't receive time during work hours." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"I found the process very lengthy and time consuming. It was difficult to maintain my usual responsibilities as well as prepare the Transition Statements - there was not a lot of time left in my working day after I had fulfilled my responsibilities. Fourth term is always busy at Kindergarten and apart from the actual writing of the Transition Statements there was photocopying, collating, scanning etc involved to draw the Transition Statements together for emailing or delivering to schools." – Early Childhood Educator*

As shown in Figure 15, this issue was raised notably more often as shown in the analysis of the negative responses by early childhood educators to the question

'Have you completed a Transition Statement? If so, how did you find the process?'<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 15: Early childhood educators and managers: Negative comments about completing the Transition Statement**



However, some early childhood educators felt that the process would be better in 2010.

*"Being that it was the first cycle, it was daunting and overwhelming, but I expect it to get a little easier each year." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"I found the process extremely challenging and time-consuming, although I acknowledge the benefits for the children, their families and Prep teachers. The lead into the process and time line was far too short. I am hopeful that the process this year will be much easier and I can streamline my work." – Early Childhood Educator*

**S2. That the issue of time release to complete the Transition Learning and Development Statement be discussed with relevant employer and employee representatives, and the Department.**

Additional issues related to:

- Implementation timeframes being too short; insufficient training and lack of opportunities to discuss the Victorian Framework and the new outcomes. It conflicted with other pre-arranged tasks, such as spending time with children in the classroom during the last few weeks of the year in order to put them at ease about starting school, or preparing end of year celebrations.

<sup>14</sup> Of the 282 online survey respondents that responded to this question 82.3% made a negative comment.

*"Last year I completed 25 Transition Statements, and they were very time consuming and impossible to complete in my paid work hours. They were also done at a very busy time of year when teachers were preparing for AGM's and orientation days etc."* – Early Childhood Educator

*"After the 'Frameworks' were released, only a couple of months prior to the Transition Statements [were] due in, there was insufficient time to familiarise ourselves with the new headings or learning outcomes. After many years working on reports using the developmental domains, it was a very big shift in categories and language."* – Early Childhood Educator

*"The timeframe was extremely unrealistic, very last minute."* – Early Childhood Educator

- Document was lengthy, repetitive and unfamiliar (new content).
- Difficulties engaging parents/guardians in the process. With regard to the usefulness of Transition Statements for sharing information with families, most early childhood educators suggested that when this was limited, it was due to an overestimation of parent/guardian literacy levels and ability to understand the language used in the Transition Statement. This was particularly the case in low socio-economic areas or for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

*"I was concerned that the wording that was required may have been too difficult for some of our parents to understand, due to the area I work in having some young and low educated parents."* – Early Childhood Educator

*"Time consuming; especially as I work with many families from non-English speaking backgrounds, it took extra time to complete the family sections with them."* – Early Childhood Educator

*"I found that a number of these Transition Statements did not get returned by parents and therefore were not passed onto the schools, and these are the children the schools really require the information about!"* – Early Childhood Educator

*"Handing out the parent part and actually getting this bit back was a nightmare that took me weeks of constant asking of parents to please fill in and return."* – Early Childhood Educator

- Administrative issues such as problems with the online Transition Statement and costs of printing, collation and posting to schools. Costs associated with printing, photocopying and forwarding the Transition Statements, and providing replacement staff while others were focused on preparing the Transition Statements, was problematic for services and committees of management. During site visits, many early childhood educators and managers commented on the insufficient resource base they were starting from in completing the Transition Statements, for example, only one shared computer per office, an old barely-working photocopier (where there is one), no printer, and minimal supplies of paper or ink. There was a sense that the Department made 'false assumptions' about the physical capacity of some early childhood

services to undertake a large-scale administrative task such as compiling and printing the Transition Statements.

*"The online process wasn't all that user friendly and with a lack of resources such as no spell check available made the process inefficient." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"I found the process very time consuming (not just the writing, but the distribution and explaining, and collating and delivering etc.) but the concept worthwhile." – Early Childhood Educator*

**D6. That the Transition Learning and Development Statement is refined to make it easier to print and collate.**

- Relevance of the Transition Statement to Prep teachers. Some early childhood educators reported that schools had advised them that Transition Statements would be more valuable in a checklist format that can be interpreted at a glance. Early childhood educators also reported hearing Prep teachers say that they did not have time to read them.

*"As this was the first time in completing them, it was difficult to know if the information I was providing was information the Prep teachers needed and/or wanted." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"I question whether the Prep teachers were going to take the time to read each report. I think they'd be scanned seeing if there were any issues only." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"I would like to know if it benefited the Prep teachers and if so then it was all worthwhile." – Early Childhood Educator*

The Department advised that a checklist approach was not adopted based on current research. While checklists are perceived as fast to complete, they do have a number of drawbacks. Checklists limit individualised descriptions of children's learning and development and can be misinterpreted by both the writer and the reader. They can give an impression of 'good' or 'bad' (oversimplifying things) without actually highlighting a child's unique strengths and abilities. Checklists may have an unfortunate habit of becoming a compulsory, exclusive and exhaustive list of what is required and what is important. It is also likely that a checklist of indicators would be interpreted such that behaviours and skills that are not included would be regarded as unimportant.

Other important pieces of information that Prep teachers should know about a child cannot be captured by a checklist style of recording, such as children's interests and views, or the context/philosophy of an early years service.

**D7. That research on checklists is communicated to early childhood services and schools.**

- Writing to parents/guardians and Prep teachers presented some challenges. Some early childhood educators felt the way they communicated issues to parents/guardians needed to be different from the communication required by Prep teachers. They felt that obtaining

parent/guardian consent to share the information meant they were not able to communicate all the information about a child's learning and development. In cases where the parent/guardian did not provide consent, early childhood educators felt the Transition Statement only reached half its audience – the child's parent/guardian – and this was viewed as an issue.

- Linked to the issue above, early childhood educators felt the strength-based approach 'just didn't allow for' early childhood educators to include information about additional needs of children. Where there was an existing relationship with the Prep teachers this information was occasionally conveyed verbally. **(See Recommendation D2 on page 24)**

*"The information I was able to provide was extremely limited and often did not give a clear message about the child, as everything had to be positive. This is not a reflection of real life." – Early Childhood Educator*

- Transition Statements duplicated existing processes such as preparing portfolios or formal reports.

*"I found it was only re-wording information that over the year has been documented in another format in the children's individual portfolios." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"The Kindergarten and Prep teacher at the school already have reports that were being done and an effective transition process in place which we have been operating for the past 12 or so years." – Early Childhood Educator*

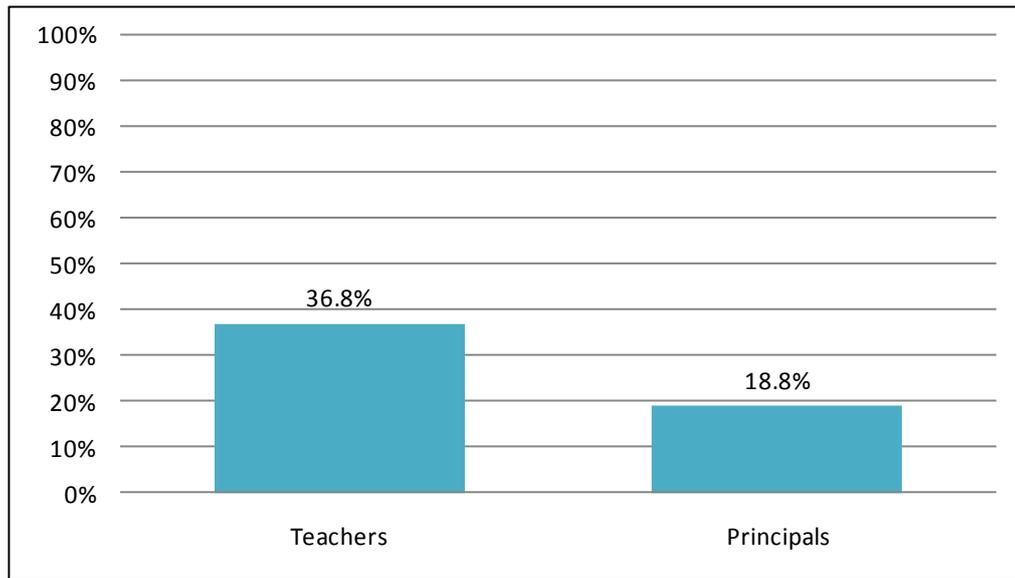
Early childhood educators also provided feedback on what helped to overcome some of these issues. This included:

- Early childhood services with existing relationships with schools reported having greater confidence in the new Transition Statement process and felt they better understood what would be useful to Prep teachers.
- When asked how their existing process dealt with privacy issues, they noted that parents/guardians signed over permission at the beginning of the year for information to be passed on to schools that were part of the network. **(See Recommendations D4 and S1 on page 29)**

## **Issues Reviewing Transition Statements: Prep Teachers**

The majority of Prep teachers reported a relatively positive experience of reviewing the Transition Statements.

**Figure 16: Prep teachers and principals: Issues with reviewing the Transition Statements**



Approx one-third of Prep teachers (36.8%) identified issues with reviewing Transition Statements; significantly lower than the proportion of early childhood educators who reported issues in completing the Transition Statements.

To supplement quantitative data, Prep teachers were asked how they reviewed Transition Statements and their level of engagement with Statements. In summary:

- Many skimmed them
- Some read each one
- Some said they did not use them at all or refused to accept them because they had their own existing process
- Some referred to them for information only after issues started to present for a particular child.

There were several recurring themes Prep teachers reported having with reviewing Transition Statements. The first related to the content of the Transition Statements. Many Prep teachers said that the Transition Statements were too long and/or wordy and did not convey enough useful information with some stating that a checklist format would have been preferable.

*“Too lengthy, information provided was not specific enough, definitely prefer the checklist style Transition Forms that our Transition Group have used very effectively in the past - they provided a thorough overview of students strengths and weaknesses, highlighted areas requiring intervention and reflected the skill levels that children were entering Preps with.” – Prep Teacher*

*“Too lengthy for the Kinder teachers to fill out with very little usable information ultimately being provided. A check list of things they have achieved and next steps of learning would have been better.” – Prep Teacher*

**D8. That advice is provided to early childhood educators on the recommended length of their comments in the Transition Learning and Development Statements, in order to provide information that is relevant for Prep teachers.**

A further issue regarding content was that important but potentially sensitive information about the child was omitted from the Transition Statement (for example, learning difficulties, behavioural issues, additional needs). This was often attributed to the strengths-based nature of the document and/or the fact that parents/guardians were required to sign off on the content of the Transition Statement.

*"The information provided was very vague and all very similar. There was little specific information and as the kinder teachers need to have parental sign-off, all Transition Statements were framed and worded in an extremely positive light. This negated any real usefulness as obvious issues that would impact on a child's success, enjoyment and experience of school were not raised in these Transition Statements. In effect, they were not very helpful." – Prep Teacher*

*"Due to the fact that both parents and early childhood professionals have access to the Transition Statements, many preschool educators were reluctant to disclose a fully factual assessment of the child." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"The fact the reports can only detail positive aspects of the students and what they can do does not paint an overall picture of the child. We gained no information about learning difficulties, speech or oral language or if there were family/welfare issues of intervention." – Prep Teacher*

Another issue reported was that information was too generic or appeared to have been a 'cut and paste', with the same sentences replicated for different children.

*"Often the teacher comments were lengthy and cut and paste from student to student. It would be easier if the teachers did a tick list with relevant areas addressed." – Prep Teacher*

*"I found the comments from the early childhood educators to be rather repetitive both in regards to the different questions and between students. I felt that it did not give me a great indication of what the child's capabilities were." – Prep Teacher*

A further issue for Prep teachers reviewing Transition Statements related to timing the delivery of Transition Statements to the school. Prep teachers reported that Transition Statements did not arrive in time to be useful for their curriculum planning, or did not arrive at all.

*"Not all were received in a timely manner - would prefer them to arrive by early December, to assist with the placement of students into classes." – Prep Teacher*

*"The timing of receiving the Transition Statements...it would be more useful to receive them in October, before making up the grades." – Prep Teacher*

*"A couple were received very late and this limited the possibility of Prep teachers having discussions with pre-school teachers." – Prep Teacher*

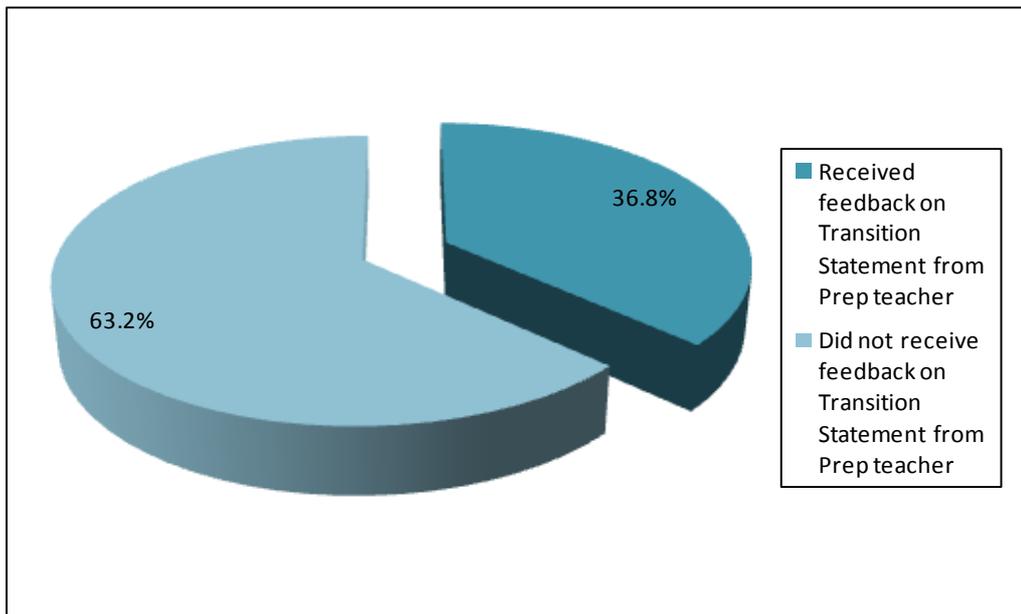
### 5.3. Feedback on the Transition Statement

Feedback from Prep teachers to parents/guardians and early childhood educators was viewed as an important part of the Transition Statement process.

#### Feedback to Parents/Guardians

As Figure 17 shows, only 36.8% of parents/guardians who responded to the online survey reported receiving feedback from their child's Prep teacher regarding the Transition Statement.

**Figure 17: Parents/Guardians: Feedback on Transition Statement from Prep teacher**



Discussions with early childhood educators and parents/guardians at site visits confirmed that where parents/guardians completed their section in consultation with their children and returned it within required timeframes, the process was a positive experience. Similarly, parents/guardians consistently stated that they had found the experience positive and could not recall – eight months after the exercise – any difficulties they may have had.

The most liked aspects of writing the Transition Statement, as reported by parents/guardians during focus group sessions, included:

- Writing the Transition Statement gave them an opportunity to spend a dedicated amount of time thinking about their child.
- The Transition Statement format was very thorough and helped parents/guardians to capture the personality of their children.

*“It was easy to understand and I felt that the questions that were asked were relevant and easy to answer. It was good being able to give the school a heads up on where my child was at and what they could expect of her.” – Parent*

Parents/guardians also offered suggested improvements to the Transition Statement, including:

- Tighten up the length. Some felt the Transition Statement was too lengthy.
- Avoid repetition and complex language. This view was shared by parents/guardians involved in focus groups and respondents to the online survey.

*“My views on the process of completing the Transition Statement are that it should be in plain and simple English – a more simplified process.” – Parent*

## Feedback to Early Childhood Educators

One of the issues raised throughout the evaluation related to feedback provided by Prep teachers to early childhood educators. Where the Transition Statement prompted a discussion between the early childhood educator and the Prep teacher, this was seen to be a valuable way of supporting a child's transition to school.

*“I think this is a great step forward and sets up a process whereby the move from preschool to school can be smooth and positive. The links between preschool teachers and Prep teachers can continue to be strengthened.” – Early Childhood Educator*

Early childhood educators were keen to receive feedback from Prep teachers about the quality and content of the Transition Statements, particularly its usefulness for getting to know children as they started school and for curriculum planning.

However, in many cases, early childhood educators reported that feedback had not been provided by Prep teachers, even where there had been a specific request for further discussions. This was cause for some frustration among early childhood educators who were keen to know whether the Transition Statements had been useful and wanted to discuss the information in more detail with the Prep teacher.

*“There were a whole lot of boxes where I ticked that I wanted conversations and no one has rung me, which is a concern. It took away from the conversations we had in the past. Teachers said I won't talk to you now; I will wait for the Transition Statement. It became the be all and end all of Transition at a loss of other things that used to happen.” – Early Childhood Educator*

*“We have had no feedback from school so have no idea as to whether Transition Statements have been read or valued” – Early Childhood Educator*

*“The Initiative could be very effective but its success is very dependent on whether the Primary School teachers read the document. Also, there is no feedback from [Primary School] teachers Early Childhood Centres are unsure whether they were read. Funding agreement requires kindergarten teachers to prepare the Transition Statements but there is no compulsion for the [Primary School] to read the document, there should be.” – Early Childhood Educator*

**S3. That early childhood services and schools work together to agree on an acceptable time frame, at the local level, for writing and forwarding Transition Learning and Development Statements to schools and a process for providing feedback on content of Statements.**

## 5.4. Impact of Transition Statements

The Transition Statement was implemented to support the consistent transfer of information, irrespective of the school a child is going to. It aimed to provide an opportunity for children, their families and the professionals working with them to contribute and have their views reflected in it.

The information in the Transition Statement:

- summarises the strengths of a child's learning and development as they enter school
- identifies their individual approaches to learning and interests
- indicates how the child can be supported to continue learning.

The information in the Transition Statement was intended to help Prep teachers to get to know the children entering their classes before they start; and to plan for each child's learning and development when they start school.

In discussion with the Department, the following specific outcomes for the Transition Statement were identified:

- Children settle smoothly into school
- Better knowledge of children starting school by Prep teachers
- Better knowledge of children's additional needs by Prep teachers
- Improved curriculum planning in schools.

### Settling into School

Figure 18: Parents/Guardians: Child's adjustment to school

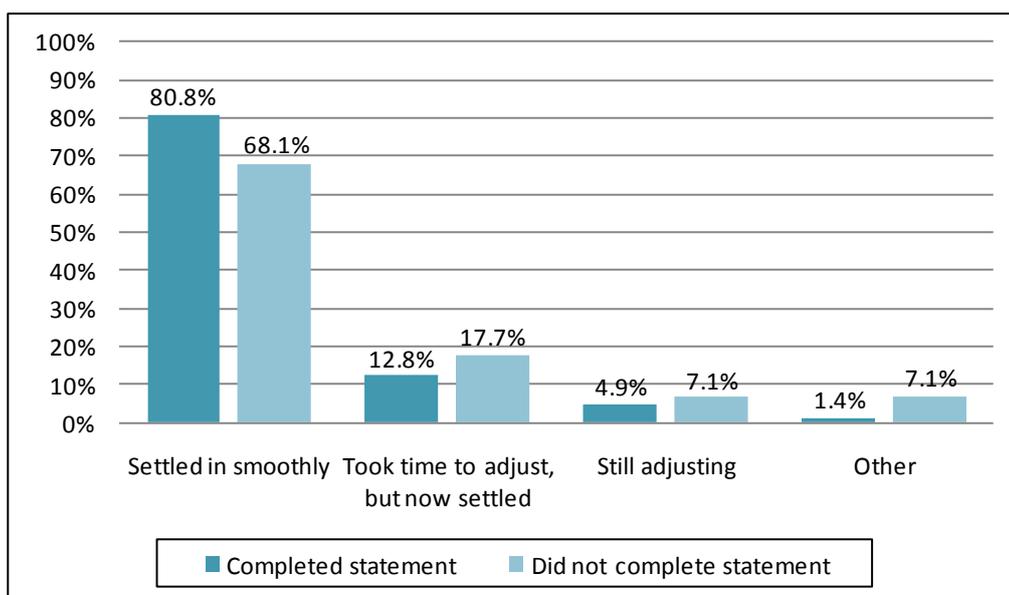


Figure 18 shows a comparison between parents/guardians who had completed a Transition Statement and those who had not, against how well the child settled into school.

Of the respondents who completed a Transition Statement, 80.8% reported that their child had settled into school smoothly compared to 68.1% of those who did not complete a Transition Statement indicating that engaging in the Transition Statement process may have some correlation with this measure.

Children of parents/guardians who had not completed a Transition Statement were more likely to have taken time to adjust to school (17.7%) or were still adjusting (7.1%) compared with those whose parent/guardian had completed a Transition Statement (12.8% and 4.9% respectively).

It is important to interpret these data with caution due to the lack of availability of benchmark data from previous years.

## **Better Knowledge of Children Starting School**

Prep teachers were largely in agreement that the Transition Statements helped them get to know the children entering their classes better – both children with and without additional needs. Transition Statements supplemented the knowledge they already had or were in the process of gathering.

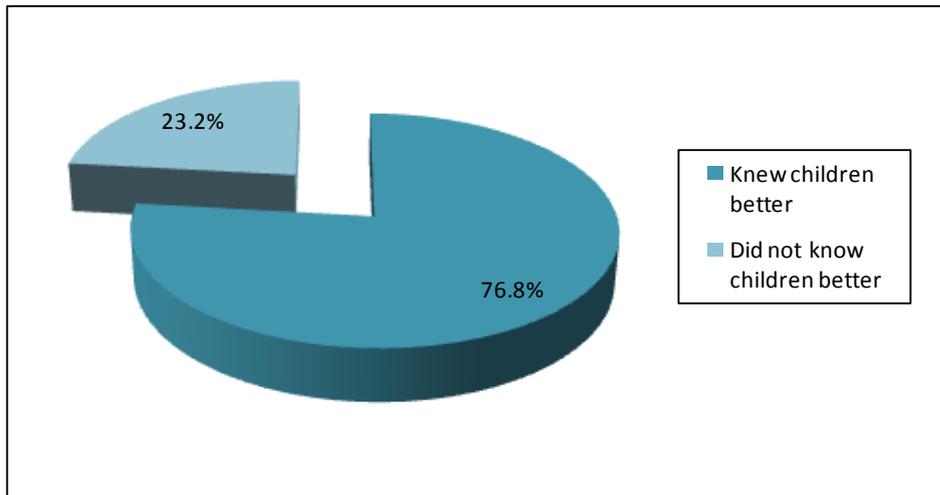
*“Great, very helpful to have extra information about the new Preps.” – Prep Teacher*

*“Yes. They were very helpful in grouping students coming into Prep. We were able to look at age, abilities, additional needs etc and take all that information into consideration when making grades.” – Prep Teacher*

Of particular use for knowing the children better was the background information about the child and their family. Prep teachers noted that they most valued the information about children's families in the Transition Statement and generally found this interesting and useful for providing an understanding of the child's family context. However, they noted that this information could be obtained by talking with parents/guardians, especially where the in-coming child had an older sibling already attending the school.

Advice from early childhood educators about ways to settle them into school, fore-knowledge of the child's additional needs and what support services have been engaged with the child, were also highly valued.

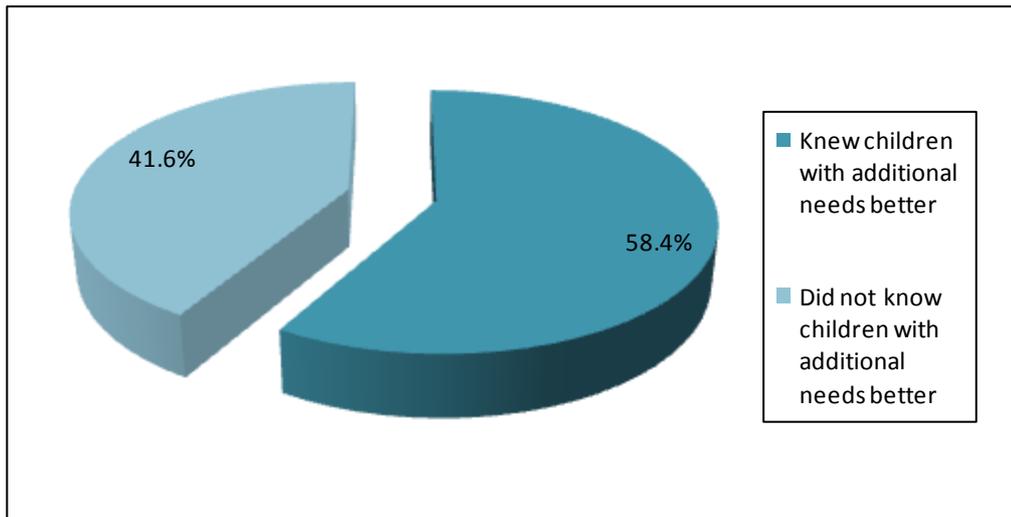
**Figure 19: Prep Teachers: Better knowledge of children starting school**



Overall, three-quarters of Prep teachers indicated that they knew the children starting school better as a result of the Transition Statement process (76.8%).

### Better Knowledge of Children with Additional Needs

**Figure 20: Prep Teachers: Better knowledge of children with additional needs**



Over half of Prep teachers indicated that they had better knowledge of children with additional needs entering school as a result of the Transition Statement process (58.4%).

To some extent, the Transition Statements are seen as supplementing existing Transition arrangements for getting to know children entering school. While these existing processes are viewed as having worked well in the past, the Transition Statement process is seen as a means of formalising the collection of Transition information using a consistent format across early childhood services.

Most Prep teachers valued the way that the Transition Statements helped them gain important insights into each child's family circumstances, birth order, and number of siblings as well as attitudes towards school. Prep teachers frequently

remarked that this sort of information is less readily available from personal conversations with parents/guardians.

Prep teachers were largely in agreement that the information they wanted to see on the Transition Statement that would contribute most to their knowledge of the children entering their classrooms, included:

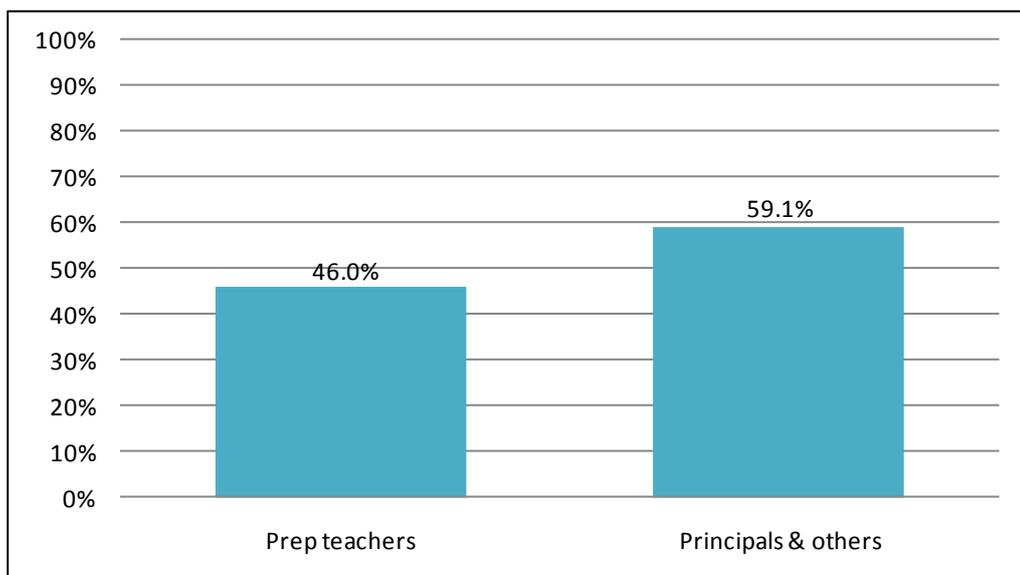
- Ways to settle the child in to school, that is 'will this child separate easily?' and forewarning about ways to manage this
- Behavioural/discipline issues that may present once the child is in the school setting
- Family background or context that is likely to impact on how the child behaves at school
- Additional supports that may be required to support the child.

However, Prep teachers see the Transition Statement as only one piece of the Transition jigsaw. Prep teachers rely on:

- Transition Statements (partly)
- Literacy and numeracy testing in the early weeks of school
- Dialogue with early childhood educators and parents/guardians (particularly where parents/guardians already have another child at the school)
- Their own observations of the child during Transition activities.

## Curriculum Planning

**Figure 21: Prep teachers and principals: Helped with curriculum planning**



Just under half of Prep teachers who responded to the survey reported that the Transition Statements had helped them with their curriculum planning compared with 59% of principals.

*"We use a play-based curriculum in the Prep classrooms, so an indication of children's interests is helpful for the early days." – Prep teacher*

*"The Transition Statement highlighted the high ability of one student. The accompanying documentation and conversation with the Kindergarten teacher made it clear how high the student was achieving, in which areas of the curriculum and his social/emotional needs." – Prep Teacher*

*"It has helped us plan more individual programs for the child. Assisted with applying for integration assistance for some children as we already had the documentation for that child. There is a short time frame for this and it was helpful to already have this information. Programs can be tailor made to suit children's interests and strengths. Individual learning plans can be created immediately for children as we have been given this information before school even begins." – Prep Teacher*

*"To a degree the Transition Statements have had a bearing on curriculum planning in that I was made aware of some children who were coming to school already reading and some requiring extra support to be ready for school. The curriculum could then be differentiated for those students I was made aware of." – Prep Teacher*

This is a different result to the site visits where the proportion of Prep teachers who reported any adjustments to their curriculum planning was much lower, with most stating that their curriculum was decided on and set before the Transition Statements arrived.

*"It has given me an insight into the child but important to remember that school can be very different to kinder so time to find their feet is important and daily observation and evaluation are what drives curriculum planning." – Prep Teacher*

*"The curriculum is based on VELs and well established, while also being continually reviewed and refined in response to the specific needs of the children. Having a sense of children who may be 'at risk' as early as possible was useful in establishing support groups as soon as possible." – Prep Teacher*

In some cases, the Transition Statements were useful in helping Prep teachers to make decisions about class groupings, on the basis of children's strengths and learning interests.

*"They helped me to establish some of the initial groupings." – Prep Teachers*

Where Prep teachers received the Transition Statements late, it was not possible to use them for planning particular education and learning strategies in advance of the child's arrival. However, some Prep teachers reported noting a behavioural issue with a particular child and then referring back to that child's Transition Statement to see if the early childhood educator had noted this issue and suggested possible strategies for dealing with it. In this way, the Transition Statement served as a useful planning tool in the context of ongoing reflective practice and assisting with identifying appropriate support measures for children in the Prep teacher's classes once an issue had arisen.

It appears Transition Statements are being used largely for the purpose of classroom groupings and behaviour management, not to contribute to or inform an individual learning plan for a child or to influence class-level curriculum planning.

Further professional development may be required so the Department can work with Prep teachers and principals to demonstrate ways the Transition Statements could be useful for curriculum planning.

## 6. Implementation

This section relates to the implementation of the Initiative. Specifically, this section will address:

- Timing of implementing the Transition Initiative
- Support provided by the Department including:
  - advertising and promotion
  - advice to educators
  - resources and materials, and
  - professional development
- Additional support needed for services, schools and families to engage with the Initiative.

### 6.1. Timing of the Initiative

The introduction of the Victorian Framework and the Transition Initiative in close proximity, proved challenging for early childhood services. The necessity of becoming familiar with the Victorian Framework was at times met with frustration and a sense of 'pressure' given the close timing of their implementation.

Online data and feedback from site visits revealed three other key issues in relation to the implementation time frame of the Initiative:

- Timeliness of resources, materials and training being delivered
- Availability of time to complete the Transition Statements
- Time pressures of the Transition Initiative conflicting with other (pre-existing) end-of-year activities.

Evidence for the first two of these three issues has already been discussed at section 5.2 with regard to completing the Transition Statement.

Regarding timeliness of resource provision, materials and training, many early childhood educators felt that resources and training were not delivered in a timely way.

*"As mentioned above the training was not appropriate - the presenters were limited to a set guideline and didn't explain in further detail when early childhood practitioners sought further clarification." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"Provision of materials was too late. Had it been available earlier it would have reduced stress on staff. More training this year would be useful. If they could streamline the process it would be good." – Early Childhood Educator*

*"Presenters at the training course were not well prepared to answer simple questions. The timing of info sessions was poor; many of us were in shock and*

needed time to take it all in. Should have been rolled out earlier or implementation delayed" – Early Childhood Educator

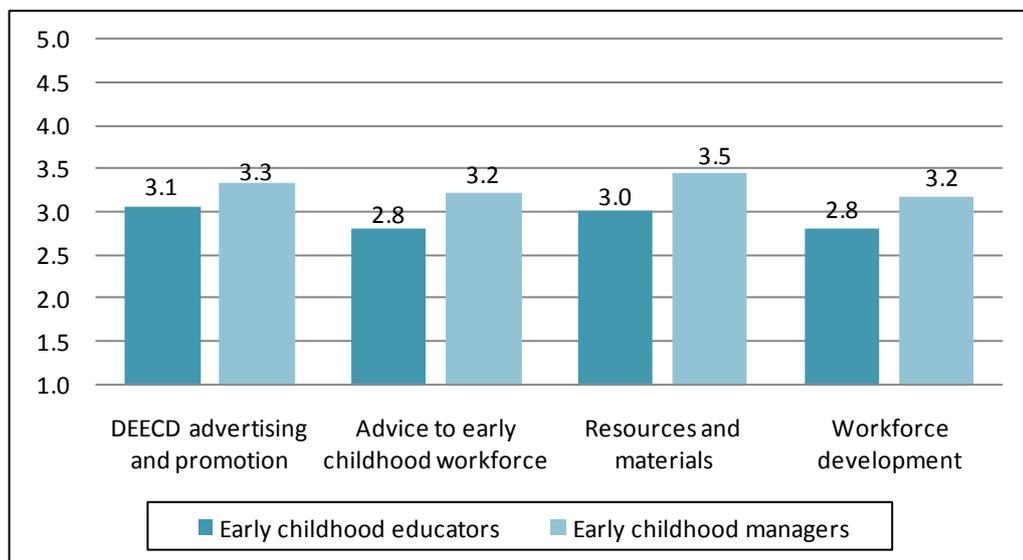
## 6.2. Support Provided by the Department

The survey asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent) the extent to which the Transition Initiative was supported by a range of measures provided by the Department, including:

- Advertising and promotion
- Provision of advice to educators
- Provision of resources and materials
- Professional development.

Responses regarding these selected supports are presented here.

**Figure 22: Early childhood educators and managers: Perception of the Department support measures**

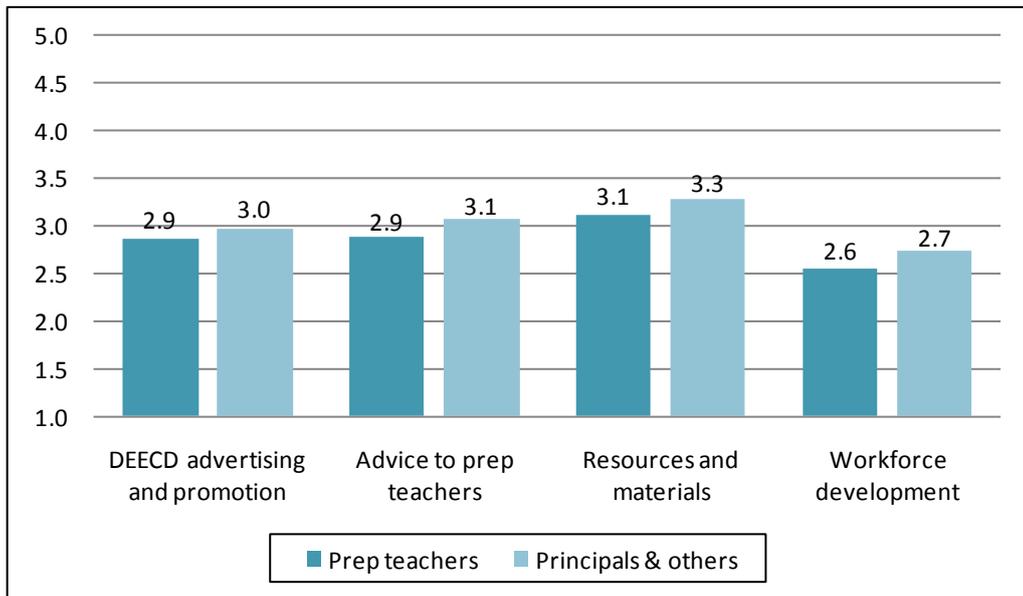


Across all four support types, average scores ranged from 2.8 (somewhat supported) to 3.5 (moderately supported). Early childhood managers rated the supports higher than early childhood educators. This was particularly true for the provision of resources and materials supporting the Transition Initiative (rated 3.5 out of 5 by managers compared with 3.0 by educators).

Early childhood educators felt that the Transition Initiative had been most supported by the Department's advertising and promotion (3.1), and resources and materials (3.0), and least supported by advice (2.8) and professional development (2.8).

Early childhood managers felt that the Transition Initiative had been most supported through the provision of resources and materials and the Department advertising and promotion (3.5 and 3.3 respectively) and least by advice and professional development (both 3.2).

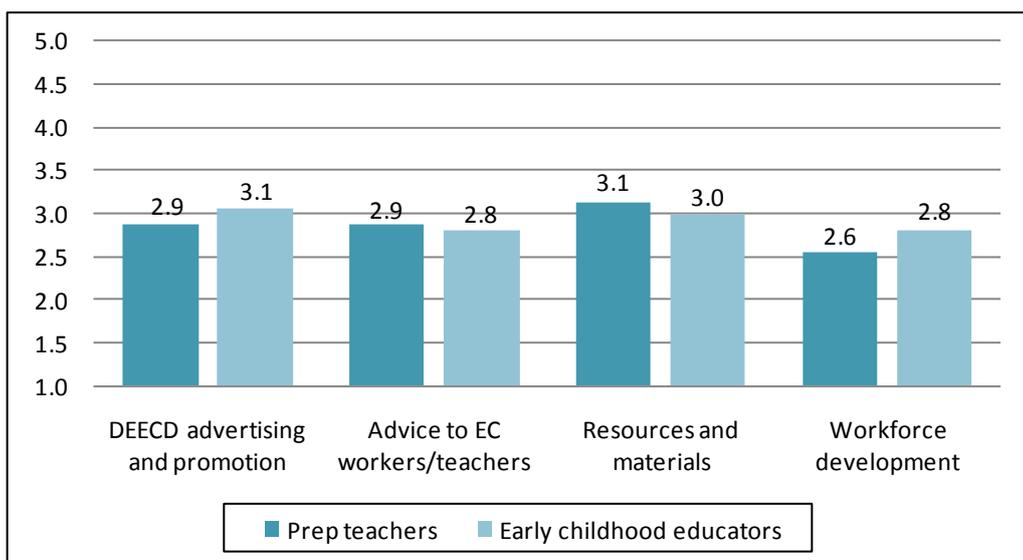
**Figure 23: Prep teachers and principals: Perception of the Department support measures**



Prep teachers rated the extent to which the Transition Initiative was supported by the Department slightly, but consistently, lower than principals. The scores ranged from 2.6 (somewhat supported) to 3.3 (moderately supported).

Prep teachers felt that the Transition Initiative had been most supported by resources and materials (3.1) and least supported by professional development (2.6). Principals felt that the Initiative had been most supported by resources and materials and advice (3.3 and 3.1 respectively) and least supported by the Department advertising and promotion (3.0) and professional development (2.7).

**Figure 24: Early childhood educators and Prep teachers: Comparison of perception of the Department support measures**



There was no variation of note in the results regarding the extent to which Prep teachers and early childhood educators felt that the Transition Initiative had been supported by the range of measures provided by the Department.

The extent to which the Transition Initiative was supported by professional development was rated lowest by early childhood educators and equal lowest (alongside advice) by Prep teachers.

Each of these sources of support is now explored in more detail below.

## Resources and Materials

Many participants in the evaluation commented favourably on the Victorian Framework and how the Framework's language is reflected in the transition materials. For the most part, the evaluation reflected a widely-held view that, despite their potential usefulness, the Transition Resource Kits and other support materials had not been delivered to early childhood services and schools in a timely manner.

*"Many resources arrived too late i.e. the Resource Kit arrived in December, well after the Transition Statements had been completed and sent to schools" – Early Childhood Educator*

*"The timeframe that the Initiative was implemented in didn't give people a lot of opportunities to get advice - it wasn't available throughout the process. The folders were received quite late in the process, after I had completed all my Transition Statements." – Early Childhood Educator*

## Advice Provided by the Department

Most respondents did not receive any advice in addition to the printed materials and the professional development they attended, therefore did not rate this source of support highly.

In other cases where advice had been sought, some frustrations were expressed such as:

*"There didn't seem to be one phone number you could call" – Early Childhood Educator*

*"It took ages to get through to the right person" – Early Childhood Educator*

**D9. That a central phone number be provided on all resources, materials and website for services seeking support or further information about the Transition Initiative in general.**

## Advertising and Promotion

The most common view of early childhood educators was that there was plenty of advertising and promotion by the Department surrounding the Transition Initiative, which would have been more welcomed had it arrived earlier.

Prep teachers commented that they were largely unaware of the Transition Initiative because they felt the advertising was directed at early childhood

services, not schools, whose role in the process was seen as more of a passive recipient.

Discussion with early childhood educators revealed that the main way in which parents/guardians engaged with the Transition Initiative was through concerted campaigns by the early childhood services, including through:

- Newsletters
- Information nights
- Early childhood educators meeting directly with parents/guardians to inform them about the process, draft the Transition Statement collaboratively, and/or discuss the content.

Some early childhood educators commented that they thought the Transition Initiative ought to have been better promoted to parents/guardians by the Department, because the general degree of knowledge about what was required of them in enrolling children in school, for example, was poor. They commented that it was largely left up to early childhood services to provide this link between the Department and families.

**D10. That materials for families are refined to clarify the Transition Learning and Development Statement and transition to school processes more generally.**

A recurring suggestion made regarding how the Transition Initiative could be better promoted to parents/guardians was the use of television advertisements as well as newspaper advertisements. Early childhood educators and Prep teachers remarked that some parents/guardians do not read newspapers but regularly watch television; this is particularly relevant for parents/guardians from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. Targeted promotion in languages other than English, via ethnic radio and newspapers, was suggested as a way of engaging parents/guardians with the Initiative. Use of this communication medium could therefore enhance the promotion of the Transition Initiative.

**D11. That a multimedia and multilingual communications campaign to promote the Transition: A Positive Start to School initiative is developed to reach a wider audience of families.**

## **Professional Development**

Comments about the professional development provided by the Department varied considerably. More early childhood educators than Prep teachers attended because it was geared towards providing advice on writing the Transition Statements.

Many felt that the professional development was 'fine' but of limited use, because there was insufficient time to absorb the information and get the Transition Statements written.

In addition, the trainers were perceived as having had no experience with completing the Transition Statements, so their sessions lacked practical value

and did not provide pointers and tips for completing the Transition Statements efficiently.

Some Prep teachers commented that they received inconsistent advice from the Department regarding whether they should have attended the training, and that in hindsight, further opportunities for joint training would have been appreciated and would help facilitate greater communication between early childhood services and schools.

**D12. That tailored professional development opportunities that encourage engagement with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, support the effective use of the Transition Learning and Development Statement in the school environment and foster local networks, continue to be provided.**

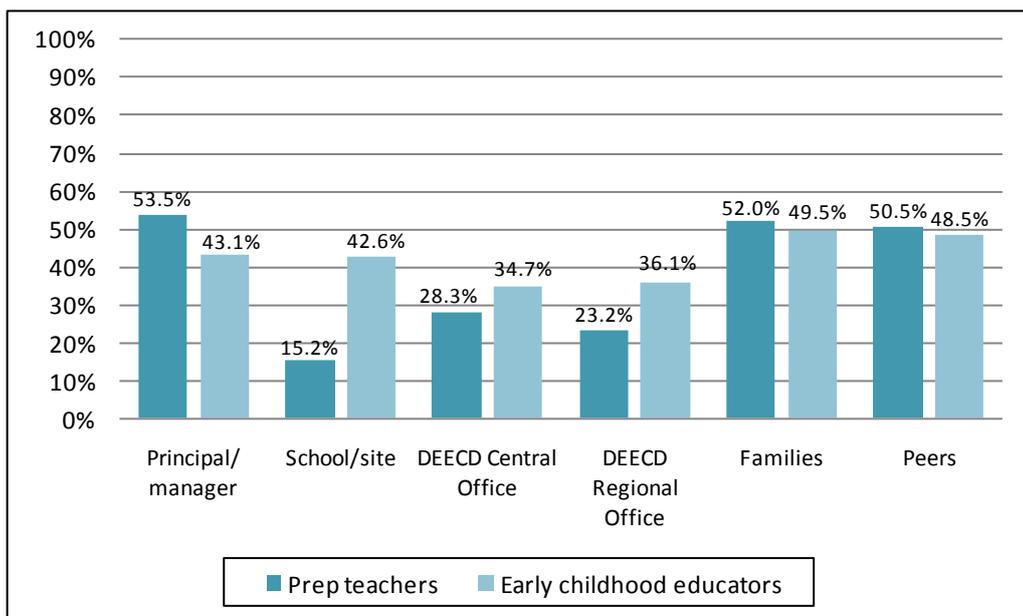
### 6.3. Additional Support Required

Respondents to the online survey were asked to select from a list the supports that they needed which would have allowed them to engage more effectively with the Transition Initiative. The lists were slightly different for Prep teachers and early childhood educators from the lists for principals and managers.

While the implementation process was supported by, among other things, printed materials, advertising and promotion and workforce development, there was a sense that there is scope for improving the support made available.

Detailed responses regarding these additional supports are presented below.

**Figure 25: Early childhood educators and managers: Additional support to engage with Transition Initiative**



The above graph displays a comparison of the results for additional supports Prep teachers and early childhood educators felt they needed in order to engage more effectively with the Transition Initiative.

In terms of in-house support, approximately half of Prep teachers and early childhood educators felt that they needed more support from their peers (50.5% and 48.5% respectively). Approximately half of the Prep teachers needed additional support from their principal (53.5%), somewhat higher than the proportion of early childhood educators who felt they needed more support from their manager (43.1%). Conversely, 42.6% of early childhood educators needed more support from their services generally, significantly greater than the 15.2% of Prep teachers who needed more support from their school.

Feedback from site visits offered a possible explanation for this. In early childhood services, educators wanted their service to be able to provide time release to complete the Transition Statements, but understood that in most cases this was not feasible.

More than a third of early childhood educators required greater support from the Department regional (36.1%) and central (34.7%) offices, compared to only about one-quarter of Prep teachers (23.2% and 28.3% respectively).

Half of Prep teachers and early childhood educators reported that they needed more support/engagement from parents/guardians and children to engage more effectively with the Transition Initiative (52.0% and 49.5% respectively), a view consistently expressed during site visit consultations.

The additional support from families that Prep teachers and early childhood educators required to engage more effectively, related to parents completing and passing on the Transition Statements to early childhood services.

**D13. That clear advice through regional offices to early childhood service managers and principals about the importance of their staff engaging with the transition process is provided.**

With regard to support from Department central and regional offices, some Prep teachers and early childhood educators said they required additional training and professional development. Several Prep teachers and early childhood educators suggested that holding joint training sessions would facilitate improved communication and networking between them. These results are consistent with feedback received during the site visits.

A large number of comments from early childhood educators about additional support were focused on time release to complete the Transition Statements. This is consistent with feedback obtained during the site visits where many early childhood educators said that the time it took to complete the Transition Statements was an issue for them. Some Prep teachers also requested casual replacement teacher (CRT) support to meet with early childhood educators.

**Figure 26: Prep teachers and principals: Additional support to engage with Transition Initiative**

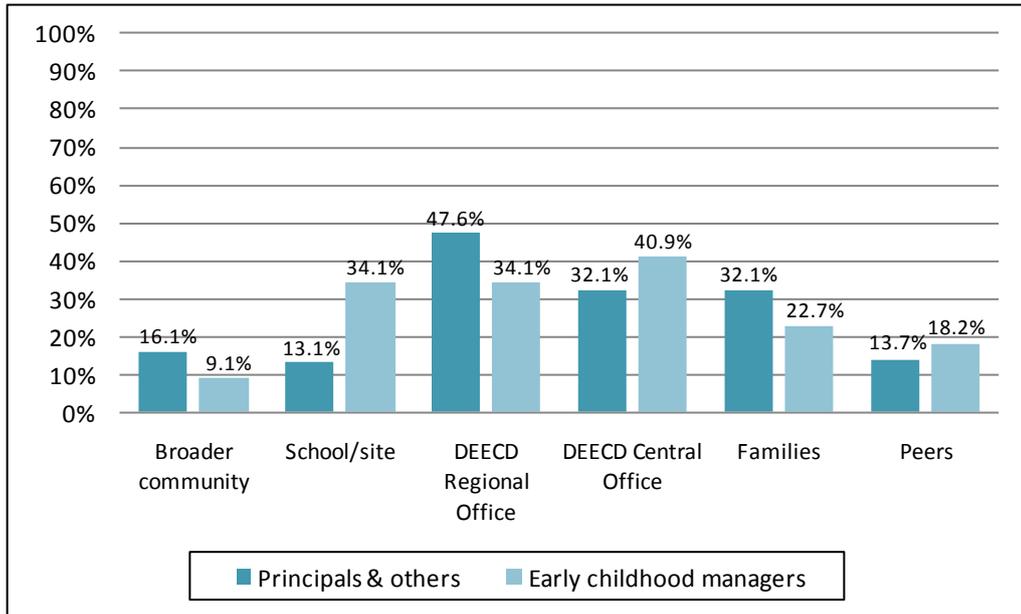


Figure 26 shows a comparison of principals and early childhood managers needing additional support, and the types of support needed, to engage more effectively with the Transition Initiative.

Principals reported needing more support from the Department regional offices (47.6% compared with 34.1% for early childhood managers) and early childhood managers reported needing more support from Department central office (40.9% compared with 32.1% of Prep teachers).

One-third of early childhood managers indicated that they needed additional support from their centre (34.1%), with approximately one-fifth requiring more support from their peers (18.2%).

Principals on the other hand were more likely than early childhood managers to report requiring more support from families (32.1% compared with 22.7%), and the broader community (16.1% compared with 9.1%).

As the data shows, the main forms of additional support required were support from the Department, both centrally and regionally.

Early childhood managers also said that parents/guardians needed to be more involved in the Transition Initiative and several suggested that greater communication directly from the Department would improve this.

A large number of early childhood managers highlighted the time taken to prepare the Transition Statements and suggested that additional funded time was required to reduce the impact of the process on early childhood educators.

Many principals said that they needed additional funding for CRT so that they, or the Prep teachers, could attend professional development and training sessions and undertake reciprocal visits with early childhood educators. A number of principals said that it was the early childhood educators who were in particular

need of additional support (additional time/funding to complete the Transition Statements).

Early childhood managers also said that greater communication and networking between early childhood services and schools was necessary. Some principals also commented that there needed to be greater networking and connections between schools and early childhood services.

Several principals reported that the level of detail in the Transition Statements had varied greatly depending on the early childhood service and suggested more guidelines and assistance for early childhood educators in this regard.

## 7. Conclusion

This evaluation has examined the first year of full implementation of the Transition Initiative to assess the extent to which what has been designed is both effective and sustainable. The findings are intended to inform the refinement, improvement and further development of the Initiative for subsequent years.

The overall response to the Transition Initiative in its first year has been positive. It has been welcomed as a means for creating stronger links between early childhood services and schools. Educators and families appreciate that this initiative has introduced a consistent and common approach to transition for all children.

The Transition Statement prepared by early childhood educators and parents/guardians drew the most attention.

The Transition Statement has proved to be an effective mechanism for helping parents/guardians to share valuable family information with teachers. There were, however, some complications around parent/guardian completion of the Transition Statements which are likely to have had an impact on how much and how often this information was shared.

The process of completing the Transition Statement seems to have been very time consuming for early childhood educators in the first year of its use, but there is a sense that this should be less burdensome as they become familiar with it. Recommendations have been made to improve the usability of the document for parents/guardians and early childhood professionals.

The timing of the introduction of the Victorian Framework and subsequent implementation of the Transition Initiative created significant change for the early childhood sector. A lot of new information had to be absorbed quite quickly by early childhood and school professionals. But there is a sense of growing familiarity with these changes, and an expectation that transition planning and processes will be more efficient into the future.

The key recommendations which early childhood services and schools identified as likely to enhance the future implementation of the Transition Initiative from this report can be characterised in two themes. Firstly, broader effort to develop a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of families, early childhood educators and Prep teachers in the transition to school process is required. Secondly, implementation of improved support measures for families, early childhood educators and Prep teachers around the Transition Statement process is also required.

Attention to these two factors should help to ensure the future effectiveness and sustainability of the Transition Initiative.

## 8. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Early Childhood Services

#### Maternal and Child Health Services

Maternal and Child Health Services deliver a universal health service free of charge for all Victorian families with children from birth to six years. The service supports families and their children in the areas of parenting, child health and development, child behaviour, maternal health and wellbeing, child safety, immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition and family planning.

The Universal Maternal and Child Health Service consists of the Key Ages and Stages consultations and a flexible service component. It also includes an enhanced service which provides a more intensive level of support for children, mothers and families at risk of poor health and wellbeing outcomes, in particular where multiple risk factors for poor outcomes are present.

#### Parenting Services

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provides funding for parenting information, education and support services throughout Victoria. All parents and carers of children birth to eighteen years can contact the services.

In the first instance, parents can contact Parentline, a state-wide telephone information, education and counselling service, for the cost of a local call. Parentline's professional counsellors provide advice on a variety of issues affecting parenting and relationships.

#### Playgroups

Playgroups are an excellent way for babies, toddlers, preschoolers and their parents to socialise. They are informal, low cost and run by the parents. Parents stay with their children at playgroup. This gives them the chance to meet other people going through similar experiences and break down the isolation that can come with caring for young children.

The Supported Playgroups and Parent Groups Initiative is a Victorian Government program that aims to engage disadvantaged and vulnerable families and provide quality play opportunities for children at a critical time in their development.

#### Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Occasional Care and Outside School Hours Care

These services provide active, play-based education and care programs. Long day care services, outside school hours care services and family day care services are typically used by working parents and the hours of operation are

structured to meet these families' requirements. The Commonwealth Government provides funding for eligible families to assist them in meeting the costs of these services.

Occasional care is generally provided for short periods of time in a variety of settings, including neighbourhood houses and sports and leisure services.

Long day care, occasional care and family day care services predominantly cater for children aged birth to five years, while outside school hours care services provide care for primary school-aged children.

#### [Funded Kindergarten Programs](#)

The Victorian Government provides funding to external organisations for all eligible children to access a kindergarten program in the year before formal school entry. Funded kindergarten programs are provided by a range of organisations, including local government, community based organisations, private and community based providers, and schools.

Funded kindergarten programs can be delivered through a variety of settings, including sessional kindergartens, long day care centres, community centres and schools. Funded kindergartens in all settings are planned and delivered by a degree-qualified early childhood teacher.

#### [Early Childhood Intervention Services](#)

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) support children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry and their families. ECIS provide special education, therapy, counselling, service planning and coordination, assistance and support to access services such as kindergarten and child care.

Services are tailored to meet the individual needs of children and focus on supporting children in their natural environments and in their everyday experiences.

These services are funded through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and provided by specialist children's services teams and early childhood intervention agencies.

In addition to the broader early childhood intervention services, children with disability or developmental delay may access the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services (KISS) program. This provides supplementary assistance to support the inclusion of children with severe disabilities in their local kindergarten programs.

This program is funded by the Victorian Government, through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Commonwealth Government.

The following table provides an overview of the funding arrangements related to the delivery of these services.

<b>Service type</b>	<b>Service providers</b>	<b>Funding arrangements</b>
Maternal and child health	Local government with community service organisations	Jointly funded by local government and the Victorian Government
Long day care, family day care, occasional care and outside school hours care services	Local government, community organisations and for-profit private providers	Paid for by parents with Commonwealth Government subsidies. Victorian Government partly funds kindergarten programs in long day care settings
Kindergarten programs	Local government, community organisations and for-profit private providers	Currently part funded by the Victorian Government, with parent contributions and fundraising meeting unfunded costs. The Commonwealth is also beginning to provide funding through the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education for increased service delivery
Early childhood intervention services	Victorian Government and community organisations	Funded by the Victorian Government, with ad hoc supplementary parent contributions
Parenting programs	Victorian Government, local government and community organisations	Funding contributed by all levels of government and community organisations
Early years of school	Victorian Government and non- government organisations	Funding contributed by Victorian Government, Commonwealth and parent contributions

## Appendix 2 – Surveys

### Prep teachers, Early Childhood Educators and OSHC Workers Survey

#### 1. Introduction

Success Works has been commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to evaluate the 'Transitions: A Positive Start to School' Initiative. Via this survey we are seeking your views on the Initiative to date and would be grateful if you would answer the following questions for us.

All responses to the survey are confidential and will only be reported back to the DEECD in de-identified form.

If you have any questions about the evaluation or this survey, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Gentle Ford or Dr Scott Phillips on (03) 9946 6800.

#### 2. About you

**1. Please tell us what school / site you work at:**

**2. What is your gender?**

Male, Female

**3. What is your age range?**

20 – 30, 31 – 40, 41 – 50, 51 – 60, 60+

**4. In what region are you currently employed?**

Barwon South West, Gippsland, Grampians, Hume, Loddon Mallee, Northern Metro, Southern Metro, Eastern Metro, Western Metro

**5. What is your current job role?**

Early childhood educator, Other Early childhood professional, Prep teacher, Out-of-school-hours care provider

#### 3. Statement completion

**1. Have you completed a Transition statement? If so, how did you find the process?**

**2. How many Transition Statements did your centre prepare?**

<10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, >25

**Approximately what proportion of outgoing preschool children who were set to enter prep the following year did your centre prepare transition statements for (%)?**

(For example, a response of 90% would indicate that 18 out of the 20 children who completed your preschool program and were set for prep the following year had a Transition Statement prepared.)

**3. What, if anything, did you gain from completing the Statement?**

**4. Have there been any issues with completing the Statements?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**5. Has completing the statement helped you with educational planning?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**6. Were Statements not prepared for some children, and if not, can you explain why?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**7. Was the process different for children with additional needs?\***

**\*Additional needs in the context of this question may include Indigenous children, children from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, children with a disability, children experiencing developmental delay, children known to child protection and other children experiencing significant disadvantage.**

#### **4. Using Transition statements**

**1. Have you received a Transition statement? If so, how did you find the process?**

**2. Have you reviewed a Transition Statement? If so, what if anything, did you gain from reviewing the Statement?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**3. Have there been any issues with reviewing the Statements?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**4. Has reviewing the Statements helped you with curriculum planning?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**5. As a result of the Transition process, do you feel that you know the children better who are entering your school/OSHC program this year?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**6. As a result of the Statements process, did you have improved knowledge of children with additional needs\* entering prep/OSHC?**

**\*Additional needs in the context of this question may include Indigenous children, children from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, children with a disability, children experiencing developmental delay, children known to child protection and other children experiencing significant disadvantage.**

Yes, No

Please explain

**7. What, if any, difference did that make to your preparations for the school year/teaching strategy for children with additional needs\*?**

**\*Additional needs in the context of this question may include Indigenous children, children from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, children with a disability, children experiencing developmental delay, children known to child protection and other children experiencing significant disadvantage.**

**8. How many Transition Statements did your school receive?**

<10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, >25

**Approximately what proportion of incoming prep students at your school did you receive Transition Statements for (%)?**

**9. Was there a difference between the type of child/family for whom the Statement was received and those for whom the Statement was not received?**

Yes, No

Please explain

## **5. About the Initiative**

**1. Has the Initiative had any other significant impacts on your school/centre aside from the Transition Statements?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**2. On a scale of 1 – 5, from your perspective, how effective has the Transition Initiative been for?**

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Effective	Very effective	Unable to answer
a. For identifying the extra support needs of children?						
b. For triggering and ensuring supports are provided?						
c. For identifying children's strengths?						
d. For ensuring that children start school feeling confident and ready to learn?						
e. For facilitating a common understanding between Early Childhood Educators and Teachers about supporting children's continuity of learning and development during transition to school.						
f. For facilitating networking and collaborating?						
g. For facilitating improved knowledge about 'what works' in supporting transition to school						

**Additional Comments**

**3. What processes are in place in your workplace for monitoring the experience of children and families and their participation in the Transitions Initiative?**

**4. Do you have any thoughts as yet about the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative?**

**5. On a scale of 1 – 5, to what extent has the Transition Initiative been supported by:**

	Not at all	Somewhat	Moderately	Substantially	To a great extent	N/A
a. Advertising and promotion by DEECD						
b. Provision of advice to teachers and early childhood educators						
c. Provision of resources and materials for Transition: A Positive Start to School processes						
d. Workforce development/PD for teachers and early childhood educators						

**Additional Comments**

**6. What are your thoughts on the usefulness of the Professional Development provided by the Department with regards to the Transition Initiative?**

**7. How has the Transition Initiative helped with providing networking opportunities for you?**

**8. What would you consider to be the best indicators of success of an Initiative like this one?**

**9. What Transition programs/activities/processes did your school/site offer, and how effective were they?**

**10. Were there particular types/sources of support you needed in order to engage more effectively with the Initiative? Please select all that apply then explain your response.**

Support from Principal/Manager, Support from your service more generally, Support from DEECD Central office, Support from DEECD Regional office, Support from peers, Support from parents and children

**11. Overall, what has worked well with regards to the Transition Initiative?**

**12. How could the Transition Initiative be improved?**

**13. Do you have any other comments to make regarding the Transition Initiative or the Statement process?**

## Principals and Early Childhood Managers Survey

### 1. Introduction

Success Works has been commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to evaluate the 'Transitions: A Positive Start to School' Initiative. Via this survey we are seeking your views on the Initiative to date and would be grateful if you would answer the following questions for us.

All responses to the survey are confidential and will only be reported back to the DEECD in de-identified form.

If you have any questions about the evaluation or this survey, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Gentle Ford or Dr Scott Phillips on (03) 9946 6800.

Thank you for your time.

### 2. About you

**1. Please tell us the name of the agency/organisation/school that you work for.**

**2. What is your gender?**

Male, Female

**3. What is your age range?**

20 – 30, 31 – 40, 41 – 50, 51 – 60, 60+

**4. In what region are you currently employed?**

Barwon South West, Gippsland, Grampians, Hume, Loddon Mallee, Northern Metro, Southern Metro, Eastern Metro, Western Metro

**\*5. What is your current role?**

Primary school Principal, OSHC Manager, Early Childhood Facility Manager, Other role, in a School context, Other role, Early childhood context, Other role (not in a school or early childhood context)

### 3. Statement completion within the early childhood setting

**1. How many Transition Statements did your centre prepare?**

<10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, >25

**Approximately what proportion of outgoing preschool children who were set to enter prep the following your centre prepare transition statements (%)?**

(For example, a response of 90% would indicate that 18 out of the 20 children who completed your program and were set for prep the following year had a Transition Statement prepared.)

**2. To your knowledge, what has the process of completing Transition Statements been like for your workers?**

**3. What kinds of support have they required from you for this process?**

**4. Have there been any issues with completing the Statements?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**5. Has completing the Transitions Statements setting's educational planning?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**6. Were there any children for whom a Statement was not prepared, and if so, can you tell us why?**

Yes, No, N/A

Please explain

**7. Was the process different for children with additional needs?**

**\*Additional needs in the context of this question may include Indigenous children, children from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, children with a disability, children experiencing developmental delay, children known to child protection and other children experiencing significant disadvantage.**

#### **4. Using Transition statements**

<10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, >25

**Approximately what proportion of incoming prep students at your school did you receive Transition Statements for (%)?**

**2. To your knowledge, what has the process of reviewing Transition Statements been like for your teachers/staff?**

**3. What kinds of support have they required from you for this process?**

**4. Have there been any issues with reviewing the Statements?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**5. Have the Transitions Statements helped your school's/site's curriculum planning?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**6. As a result of the Transition Initiative, do you feel your teachers/staff know the children better who are entering your school/OSHC program this year?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**7. As a result of the Statements process, did you or your teachers/staff have improved knowledge of children with additional needs entering prep?**

**\*Additional needs in the context of this question may include Indigenous children, children from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, children with a disability, children experiencing developmental delay, children known to child protection and other children experiencing significant disadvantage.**

Yes, No

Please explain

**8. What, if any, difference has this improved knowledge made to your preparations for the school year/ teaching strategy for children with additional needs?**

**\*Additional needs in the context of this question may include Indigenous children, children from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, children with a disability, children experiencing developmental delay, children known to child protection and other children experiencing significant disadvantage.**

**9. Were there some children for whom a Statement was not received and why do you think this might have been the case?**

Yes, No

Please explain

## **5. About the overall Initiative**

**1. Has the overall Transitions Initiative had any other direct impacts on you and your staff not covered by the Transition Statements?**

Yes, No

Please explain

**2. On a scale of 1 – 5, from your perspective, how effective has the Transition Initiative been for?**

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Effective	Very effective	Unable to answer
a. For identifying the extra support needs of children?						
b. For triggering and ensuring supports are provided						
c. For identifying children's strengths						
d. For ensuring that children start school feeling confident and ready to learn?						
e. For facilitating a common understanding between Early Childhood Educators and Teachers about supporting children's continuity of learning and development during transition to school.						
f. For facilitating networking and collaborating?						
g. For facilitating improved knowledge about 'what works' in supporting transition to school						

**Additional Comments**

**3. What processes are in place in your workplace for monitoring the experience of children and families and their participation in the Transitions Initiative?**

**4. Do you have any thoughts as yet about the effectiveness of the Transition Initiative?**

**5. On a scale of 1 – 5, to what extent has the Transition Initiative been supported by:**

	Not at all	Somewhat	Moderately	Substantially	To a great extent	N/A
a. Advertising and promotion by DEECD						
b. Provision of advice to teachers and early childhood educators						
c. Provision of resources and materials for Transition: A Positive Start to School processes						
d. Workforce development/PD for teachers and early childhood educators						

**Additional Comments**

**6. What are your thoughts about the Professional Development provided by the Department with regards to the Transition Initiative?**

**7. Has the Transition Initiative provided networking opportunities for you and your staff?**

**8. What sources of your support would have helped your school/site to engage more fully with the Transition Initiative? Please select all that apply and then explain your response.**

Support from rest of school/site leadership/management, Support from peers, Support from DEECD Central Office, Support from DEECD Regional Office, Support from families, Support from the broader community, Other

Please explain

**9. What would you consider to be the best indicators of success of an Initiative like this one?**

**10. Overall, what has worked well with regards to the Transition Initiative so far?**

**11. What areas could use improvement?**

**12. Is there anything else you want to comment on with regards to the Initiative as a whole or the Statement process?**

## Parents and Guardians Survey

### 1. Introduction

Success Works has been commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to evaluate the 'Transitions: A Positive Start to School' Initiative. Via this survey we are seeking your views on the Initiative to date and would be grateful if you would answer the following questions for us.

All responses to the survey are confidential and will only be reported back to the DEECD in de-identified form.

If you have any questions about the evaluation or this survey, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Gentle Ford or Dr Scott Phillips on (03) 9946 6800.

Thank you for your time.

### 2. About you

#### **1. What is your gender?**

Male, Female

#### **2. What is your age range?**

20 – 30, 31 – 40, 41 – 50, 51 – 60, 60+

#### **3. What is your relationship to the child?**

(Please note that from now on the child will be referred to as 'your child' although we are aware you may not be the child's biological parent).

Parent, Grandparent, Guardian, Other (Please specify)

Other (please specify)

#### **4. Please tell us the postcode or suburb you currently live in.**

#### **5. Please tell us the postcode or suburb where your child's school is located.**

#### **6. What type of school does your child attend?**

Government, Independent, Catholic, Other (please specify)

Other (please specify)

#### **7. Can you tell us your current employment status?**

Home duties, Employed full-time, Employed part-time, Employed casually, Currently unemployed and looking for work, Other (please specify)

Other (please specify)

#### **8. Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?**

Yes, No

#### **10. Do you speak a language other than English?**

Yes, No

If yes, please specify

**11. Does your child have additional needs?**

Yes, No

If yes, please specify

**3. About the Transition Statements**

**1. Are you aware of the Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative?**

Yes, No

**2. Did you complete Part 1: The Family of the Transition Statement for your child?**

Yes, No

**4. Completing the Transition Statement - Part 1**

1. Did you get a completed Transition Statement from your child's early childhood educator?

Yes, No

**2. Consent to sharing the Transition Statement (please select the answer that applies).**

Yes - I consented to the Transition Statement being shared with the school my child is enrolled in.

Yes - I consented to the Transition Statement being shared with the Out of School Hours Care service that my child is enrolled in.

No - I did not consent to the Transition Statement being shared.

If you answered no, please provide details

**3. I completed the Transition Statement, Part 1: The Family (please select the answer that applies):**

By reading the guidelines on how to complete the statement, By seeking assistance from an early years professional (e.g. kindergarten teacher), Without referring to the guidelines, Without seeking assistance from an early years professional, With assistance from my child's prep teacher, Other (please describe)

Other (please describe)

**4. Did you receive feedback about the Transition Statement from your child's prep teacher?**

Yes, No

**5. Is this the first time you've had a child start school?**

Yes, No

**6. If no, how does this child's transition to school compare with that of your other children?**

**7. What are you overall views on the process of completing the Transition Statement?**

**5. Completing the Transition Learning and Development Statement - Part 2**

**1. I did not complete the Transition Statement because (select the option that best applies):**

My child did not attend a funded four year old kindergarten program, I did not know about the statement, I did not understand what I needed to do, I did not get support in my language to complete the statement, Other

Please specify other

**6. About the Transition to School Programs and Activities**

This section relates to Transition to School programs and activities that you and your child participated in.

**1. Did you or your child participate in a Transition to School program or activity?**

Yes, No, Not sure

**2. If yes, what was the program or activity? (Tick all that apply).**

My child visited the school, Transition meeting(s) with my child's early childhood educator, Buddy program, Family activities in an early childhood setting, Family activities in a school, Story time at the school, Other

Please specify other

**7. About the Transition to school**

**1. How is your child settling into school?**

My child settled into school smoothly, My child took some time to adjust, but has now settled well, My child is still adjusting to school, Other (please provide details)

Please specify other

**2. Were there any particular difficulties for you or your child making the transition to school?**

**3. If your family or child has additional needs do you feel these have been adequately supported?**

Yes, No, Please provide details

**4. In your community, what additional supports could be provided to make transition to school smoother for children and families?**

## Focus Group Questions for Parents/Guardians

- Are you aware of the Transition: A Positive Start to School initiative?
- In what way have you been involved in it?
- Have you completed a Transition Statement? If so, how did you find the process?
- Describe how you completed the section about your child.
- Describe how (or if) you involved your child in writing the Transition Statement.
- What, if anything, did you gain from completing the Statement?
- If relevant, what feedback did you receive from the early childhood educator about their section of the Transition Statement?
- How is your child settling into school? Were there any particular difficulties for you or your child at the beginning?
- Is this the first time you've had a child start school; and if not, are there any comparisons you can make between this transition process and that of your other children starting school?
- If your family or child has additional needs do you feel these have been adequately supported? If not, what needs to change?
- What impact did the Transition Statement/other transition activities have on your child's adjustment to school?
- Overall, what has worked well in regards to the support offered for your family during the transition to school phase?
- What can we improve to make transition to school smoother for children and families?

## Appendix 3 – List of Interviews & Site Visits

Region	Telephone Interviews	Site Visits
Barwon South West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Colac Specialist School</li> <li>○ Bond Street Kindergarten, Newtown</li> <li>○ Warrnambool Primary School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ William Hovell Preschool</li> <li>○ Fyans Park Primary School</li> <li>○ Millville Childcare centre</li> </ul>
Gippsland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bung Yarnda Childcare Centre</li> <li>○ Latrobe LAECG</li> <li>○ Leongatha Children's Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SCOPE – Warragul</li> <li>○ Korrumburra Primary School</li> <li>○ Traralgon Family Day Care</li> <li>○ Sara Court Preschool</li> <li>○ Kay St Preschool</li> <li>○ Parklane Preschool</li> </ul>
Grampians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brown Hill Kindergarten</li> <li>○ CAFS – Ballarat</li> <li>○ Rowan View Preschool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bakery Hill Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Darley Primary School OSHC</li> <li>○ Yuille Park Community College P-8</li> </ul>
Hume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Highlands Primary School</li> <li>○ Rutherglen Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Yarunga Primary School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Benalla Primary School</li> <li>○ SCOPE – Shepparton</li> <li>○ Lulla's Children and Family Centre</li> </ul>
Loddon Mallee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Golden Square Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Mallee Minors Childcare, Ouyen</li> <li>○ Spring Gully Kindergarten</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Echuca South Primary School</li> <li>○ Echuca West Primary School</li> <li>○ Bendigo Special Development School</li> </ul>
Northern Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Audrey Brooks Memorial Preschool</li> <li>○ Dallas Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Dallas Primary School</li> <li>○ Lady Gowrie Child Centre</li> <li>○ Lalor Primary School</li> <li>○ St Brendan's Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Yappera Children's Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Boroondara Kindergarten</li> <li>○ City of Darebin</li> <li>○ Early Childhood Management Services – Monmia Preschool</li> <li>○ Mill Park Heights Primary School</li> <li>○ Mill Park Lakes Preschool</li> <li>○ Pelican Childcare</li> <li>○ Kode Preschool</li> <li>○ Brunswick East Primary School</li> </ul>

<b>Region</b>	<b>Telephone Interviews</b>	<b>Site Visits</b>
Southern Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Athol Road Primary School</li> <li>○ Biala Peninsula ECIS</li> <li>○ Elwyn Morey Specialist Service, Monash University</li> <li>○ Fenwick St Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Hallam Gardens Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Inner South Community Health Service Child Development</li> <li>○ Yarrabah Specialist School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Balnarring Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Kunyung Primary School</li> <li>○ Monash (Caulfield) Child Care Centre</li> <li>○ Wesley College Early Learning Centre</li> </ul>
Eastern Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aurora School</li> <li>○ Box Hill North Primary Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Essex Heights Primary School</li> <li>○ Kalinda Primary School</li> <li>○ Knox Gardens Pre-School</li> <li>○ St Gregory the Great Primary School</li> <li>○ St Thomas Moore Primary School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Merrell Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Kinder Haven</li> <li>○ Knox City Council</li> <li>○ Knoxfield Preschool</li> <li>○ Kew Kids Early Learning Centre</li> <li>○ Monash City Council Preschool/school network</li> <li>○ Ruyton Early Learning Centre</li> </ul>
Western Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cairnlea Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Footscray Primary School</li> <li>○ Jigsaw Childcare</li> <li>○ Kealba Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Keilor Gatehouse</li> <li>○ Lady Huntingfield Children's Centre</li> <li>○ Noah's Ark Inc</li> <li>○ Seaholme Kindergarten</li> <li>○ St Alban's West Preschool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Altona Kindergarten</li> <li>○ Altona North Yooralla</li> <li>○ Caroline Springs College</li> <li>○ Moonee Valley City Council</li> <li>○ Warringa Park Primary School</li> <li>○ Westbourne Grammar School</li> <li>○ Western Autistic School</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>

## Appendix 4 – Demographics

### Overall responses

Participants	Total
Early childhood/OSHC service educators	470 persons
Early childhood/OSHC service managers	99 persons
<b>Total early childhood</b>	<b>569 persons</b>
Prep teachers	572 persons
Principals and Assistant Principals	457 persons
<b>Total school</b>	<b>1,029 persons</b>
Parents/guardians	903 persons
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>2,501 persons</b>

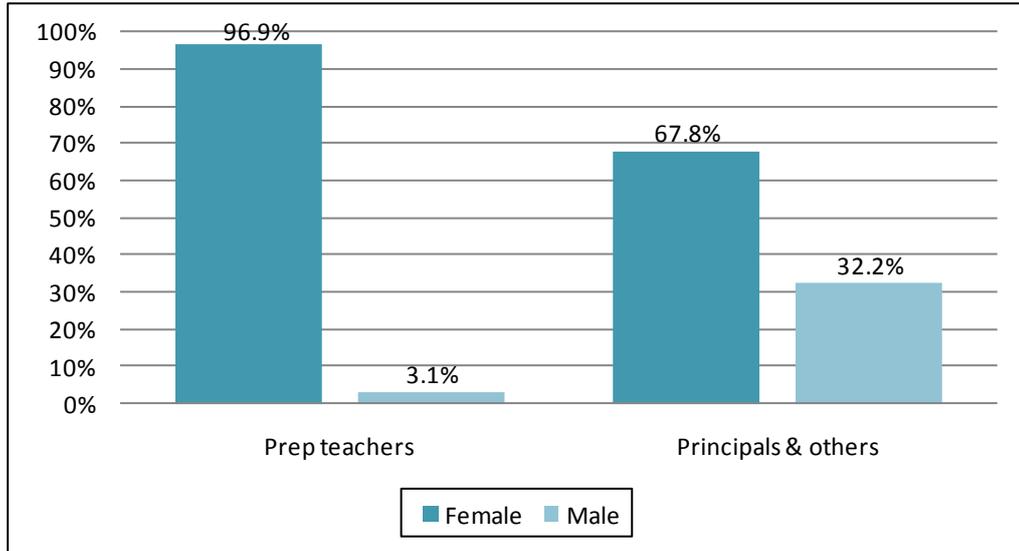
There were fewer responses from early childhood managers (103) compared with early childhood educators (470). This is, in part, due to the fact that in some early childhood services surveyed during the site visits, the manager was also the person who wrote the Transition Statements. These individuals were therefore given the early childhood educator questions, as these were more appropriate to their experiences.

### Demographic characteristics: education and early childhood sector

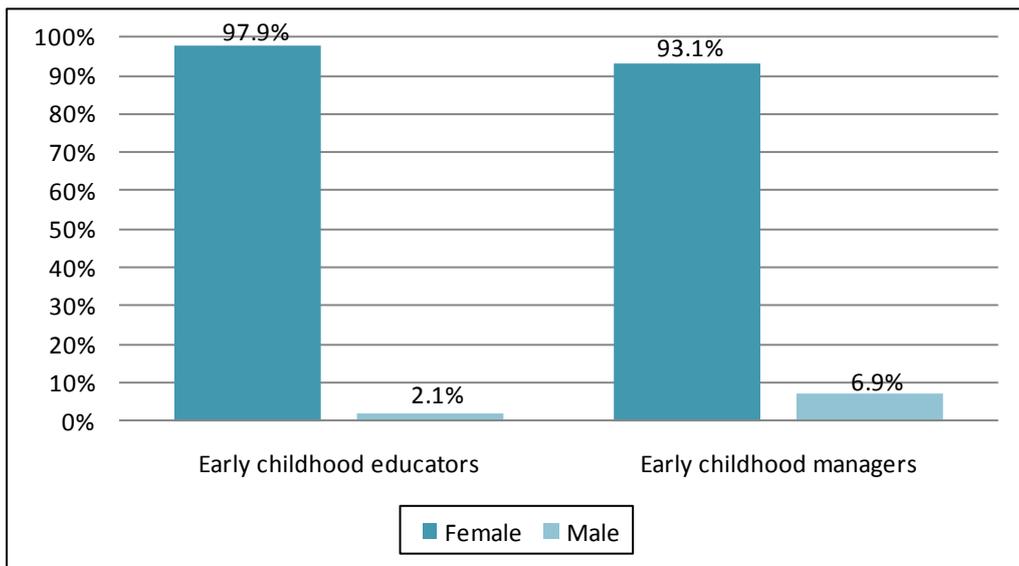
The following section provides a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the Prep teachers and principals and early childhood educators and service managers who provided feedback for the evaluation.

## Gender

### Prep teachers and principals: Gender



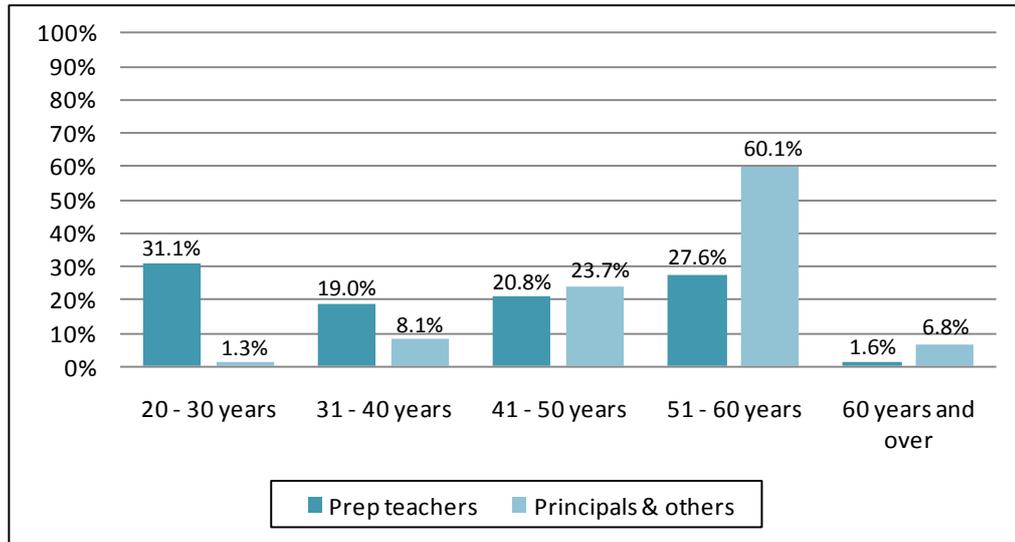
### Early childhood educators and managers: Gender



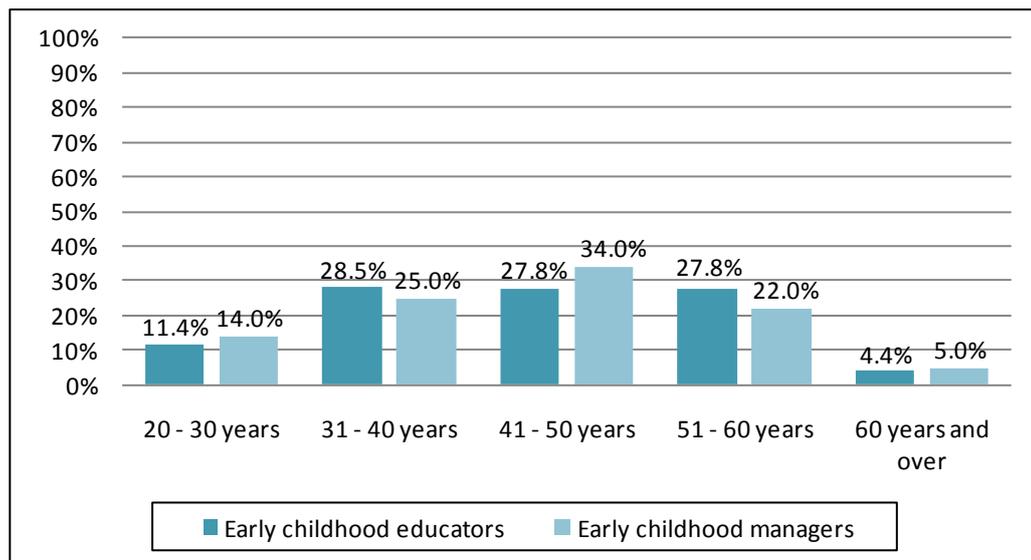
Education is a largely feminised sector, particularly in the early childhood area. Of the four main professional roles covered here, women make up over 90% of the respondents for each one, except for Principals, 32% of whom were men.

## Age ranges

### Prep teachers and principals: Age ranges



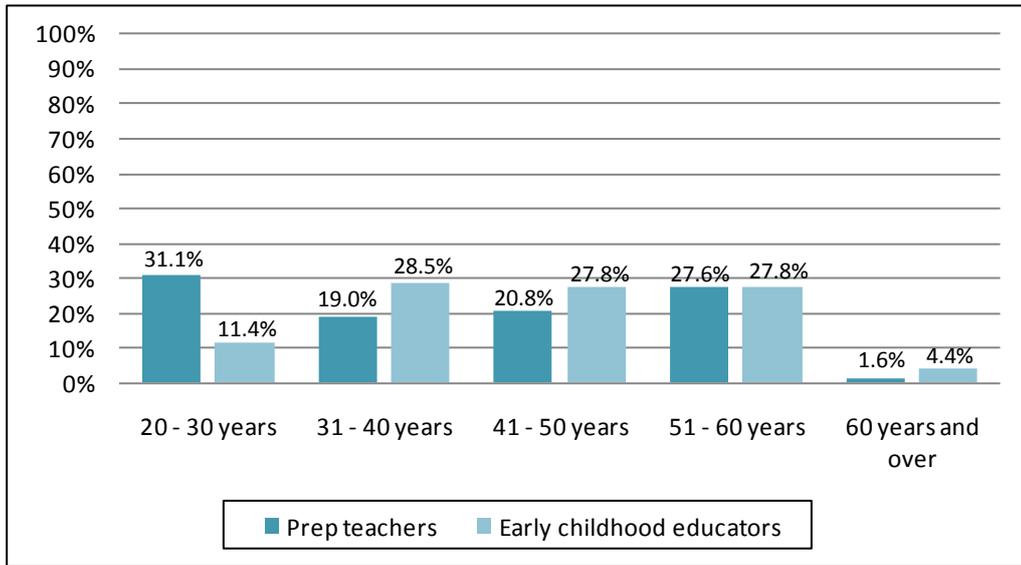
### Age ranges of early childhood educators and managers



The largest proportion of respondents (34%) of managers in early childhood services were aged over 40, with the early childhood educators mostly aged between 30 and 60. Only 11% of early childhood educators and 14% of their managers were aged under 30.

In contrast, over 30% of Prep teachers were aged under 30 and 60% of principals aged over 50. There was a much greater age difference between Prep teachers and principals involved in the consultations compared with early childhood educators and managers.

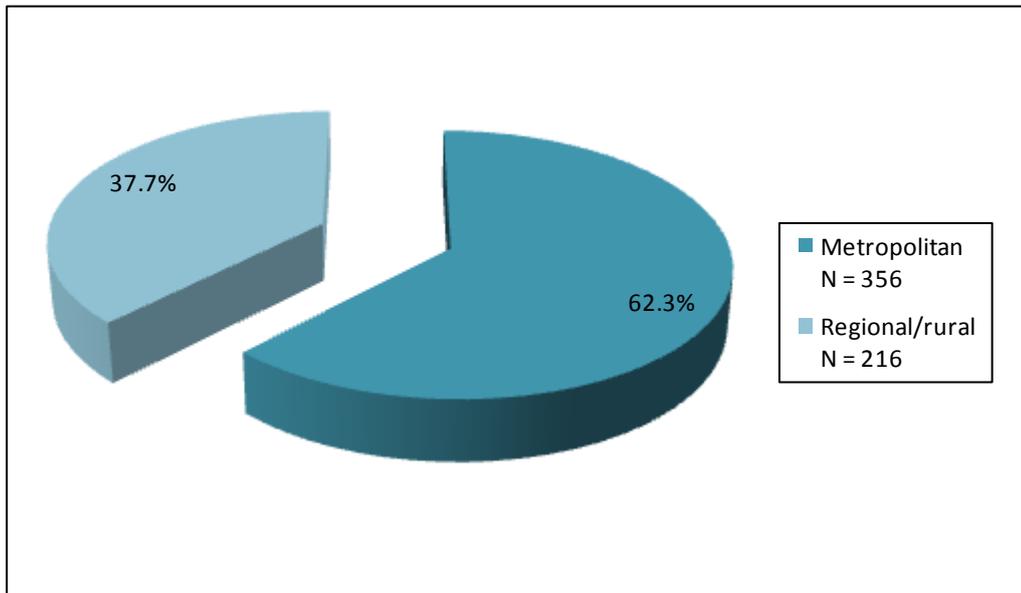
**Age ranges of Prep teachers compared with early childhood educators**



Comparing Prep teachers and early childhood educators directly, these results confirm observations made during the site visits that Prep teachers have a younger age profile overall compared with early childhood educators.

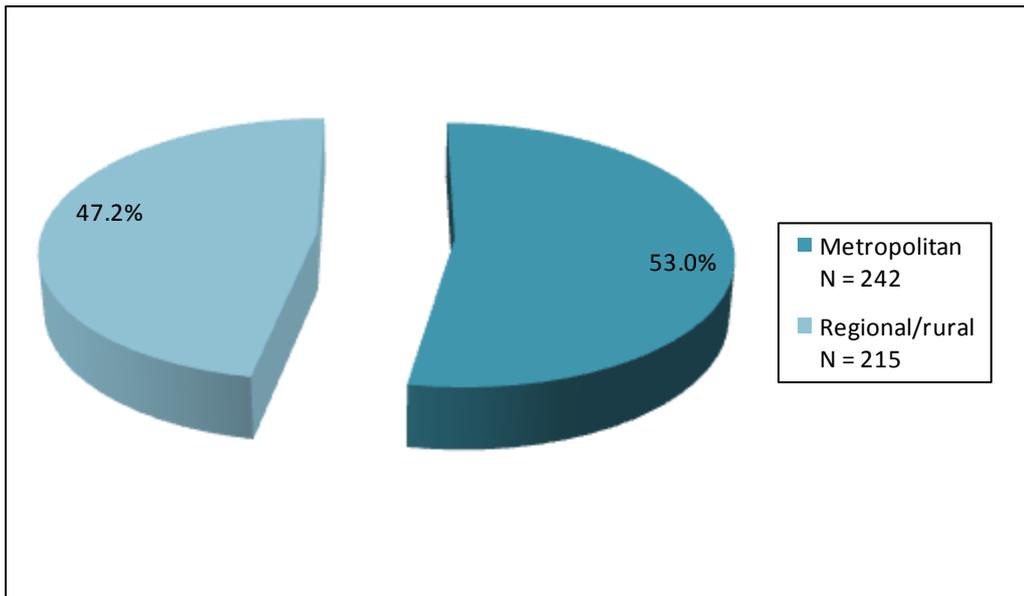
There are, however, comparable numbers of Prep teachers and early childhood educators (about 28% across both professional groups) who are in later career stages (51 to 60 years).

**Prep teachers: Location**



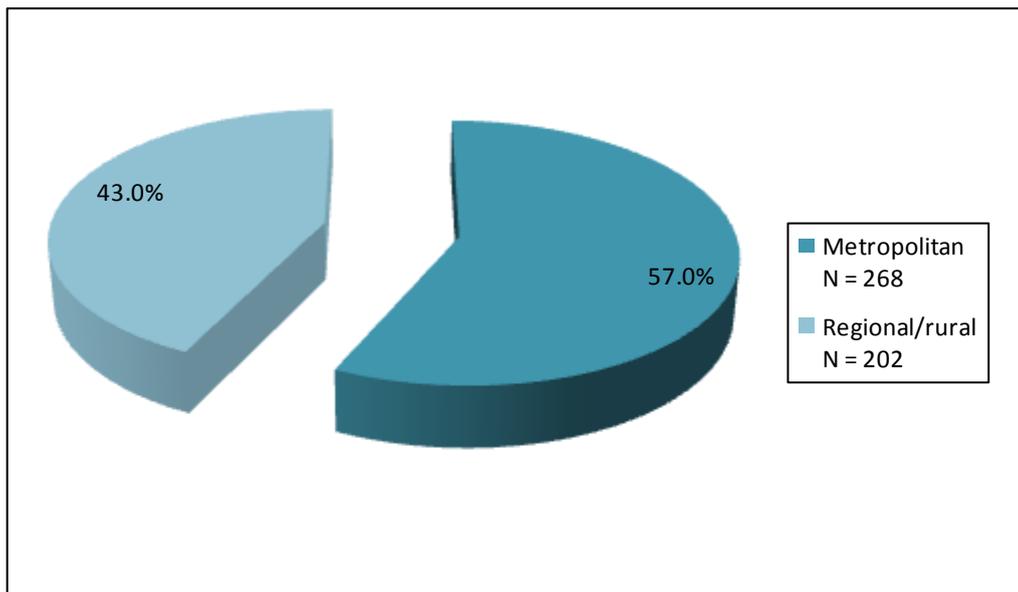
Approximately two-thirds of Prep teachers surveyed were located in metropolitan regions (62.3%).

### Principals: Location



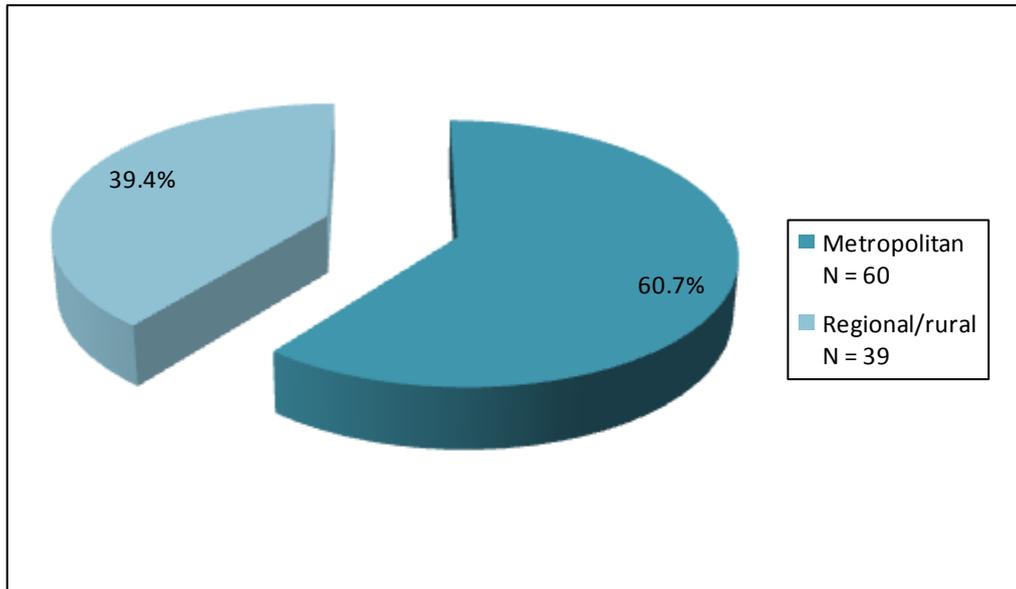
The evaluation achieved an approximate 50/50 split between Principals located in metropolitan regions and those in regional/rural regions.

### Early childhood educators: Location



Slightly over half of early childhood educators (57.0%) were located in metropolitan regions.

### Early childhood managers: Location



Slightly under two-thirds of early childhood service managers (60.7%) were located in metropolitan regions.

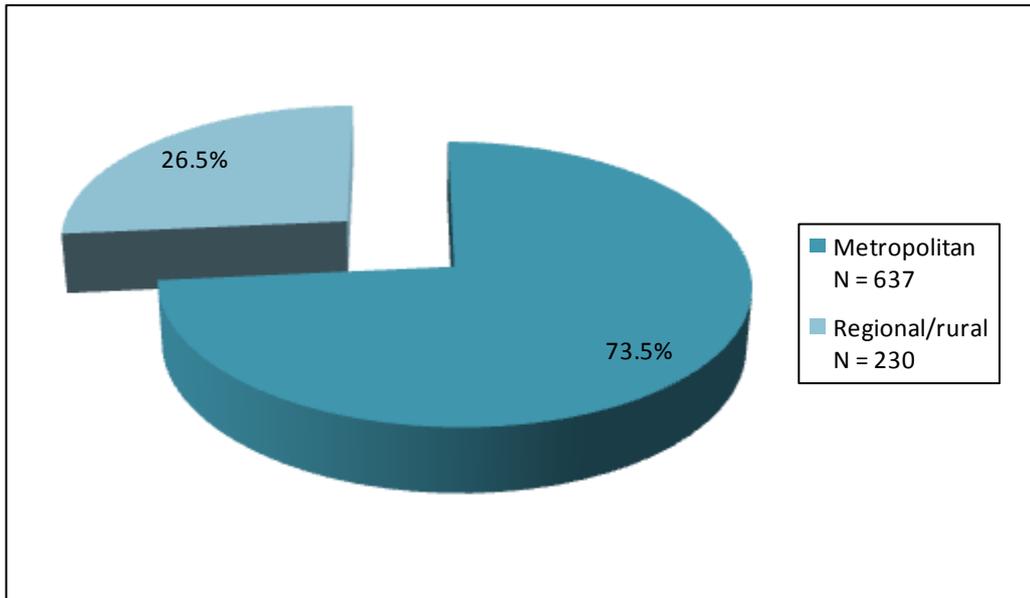
### Demographic characteristics: parents/guardians and children

The following section describes the demographic characteristics of the parents/guardians (and their children) who provided feedback for the evaluation, through the online survey only (demographic data was not collected during the site visits).

Feedback on the Transition Initiative was received from 903 parents/guardians of children who answered a range of questions regarding their background, their child, their knowledge of and experience with the Transition Initiative and their child's transition process more generally.

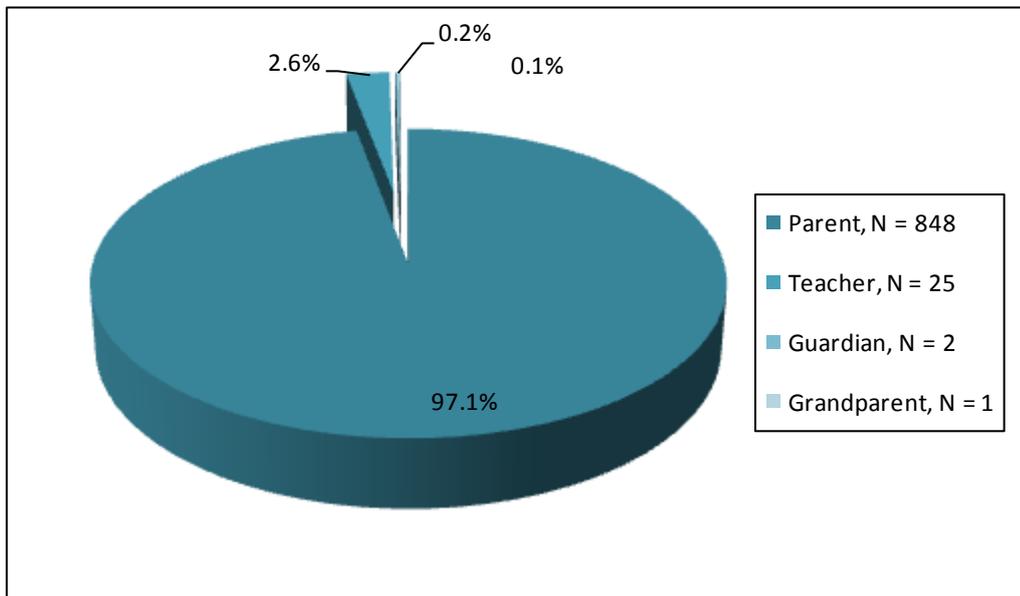
Not all parents/guardians responded to each survey question and therefore the totals listed may not always add up to 903.

### Parent/guardian: Location



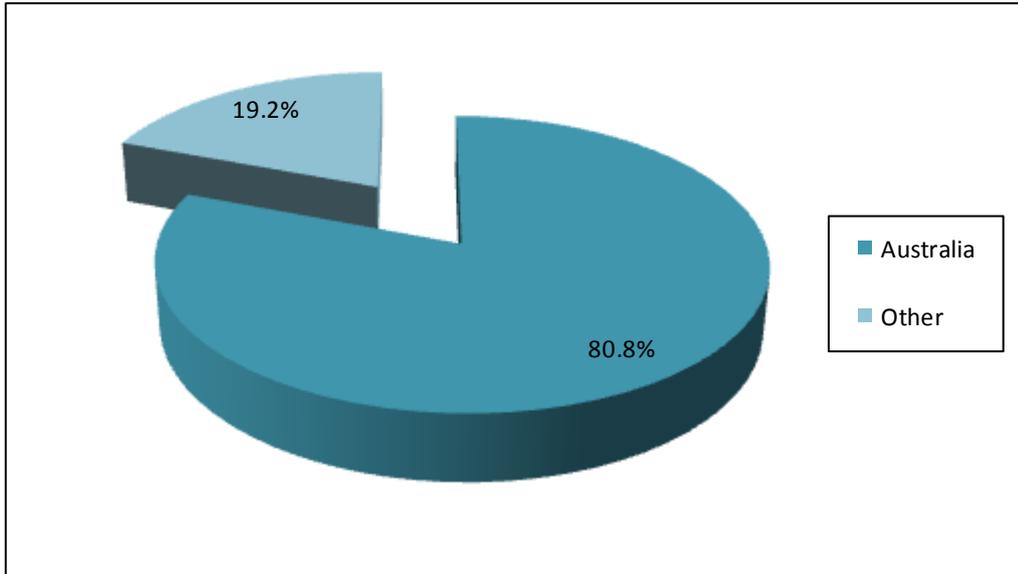
Approximately three-quarters of parents/guardians surveyed were located in metropolitan regions (73.5%).

### Parent/guardian: Relationship to the child



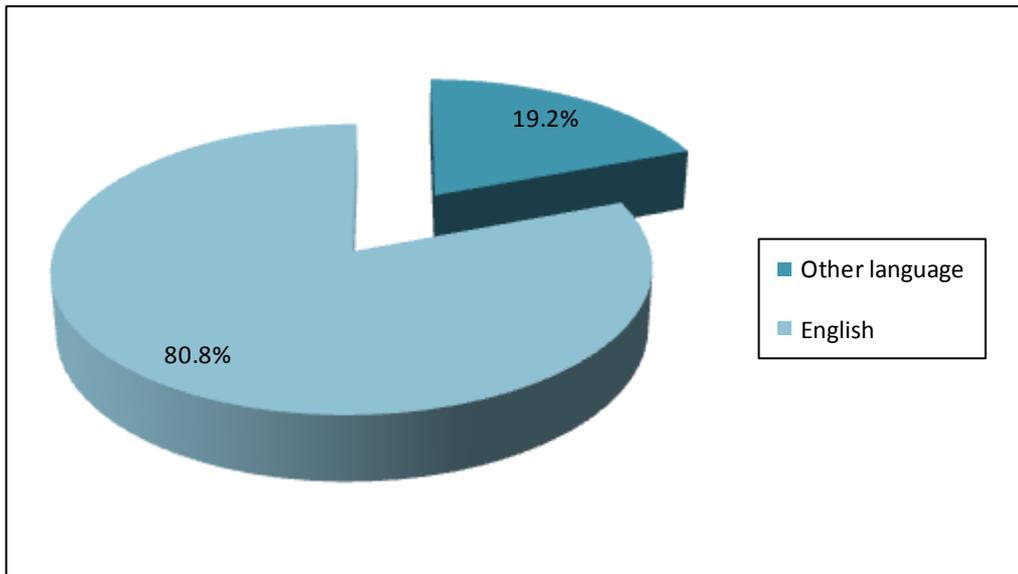
Virtually all parents/guardians who completed an online survey indicated that they were the parents/guardians of the child (97.1%). In a small number of cases (2.6%), the online survey was completed by the child's Prep teacher, with supporting comments (for example "I don't know - I am the child's teacher") showing that this was the case.

### Country of birth of parent/ guardian



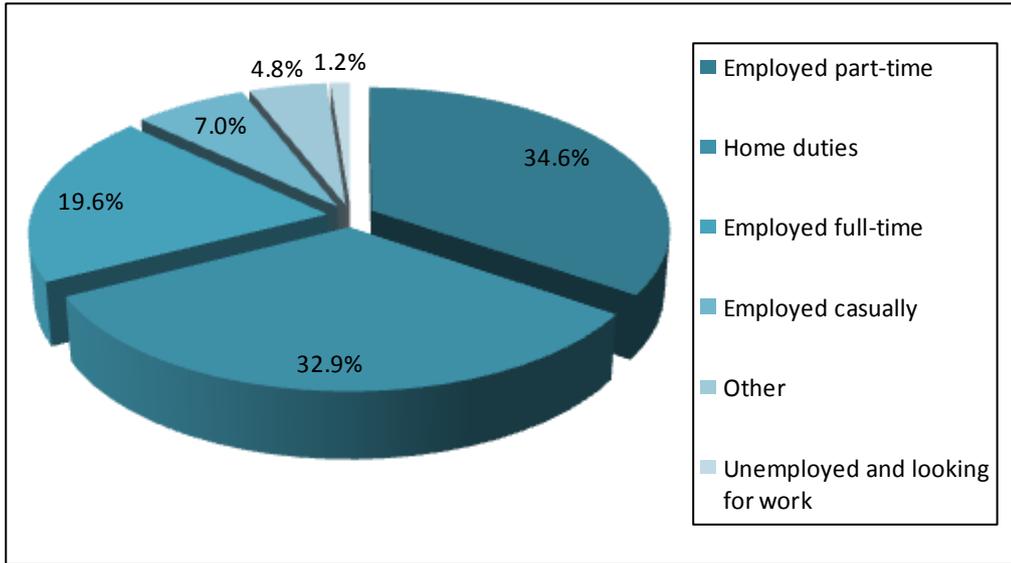
Approximately one-in-five parents/guardians (19.2%) indicated that they were born in a country other than Australia. Top countries of birth other than Australia were the United Kingdom, India, New Zealand and Malaysia.

### Language spoken by parent/guardian



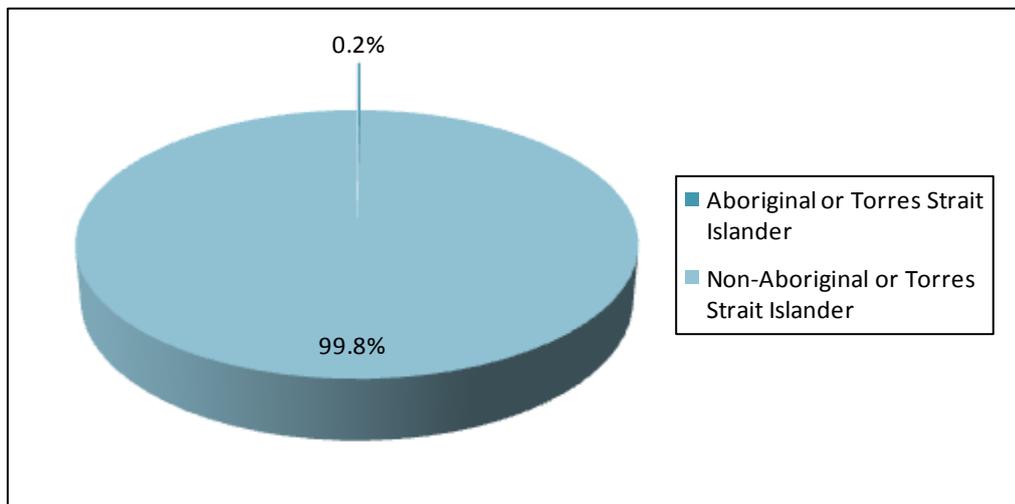
One-fifth of parents/guardians reported speaking a language other than English (19.2%), with the most common being Greek and Italian.

### Employment status of parent/guardian



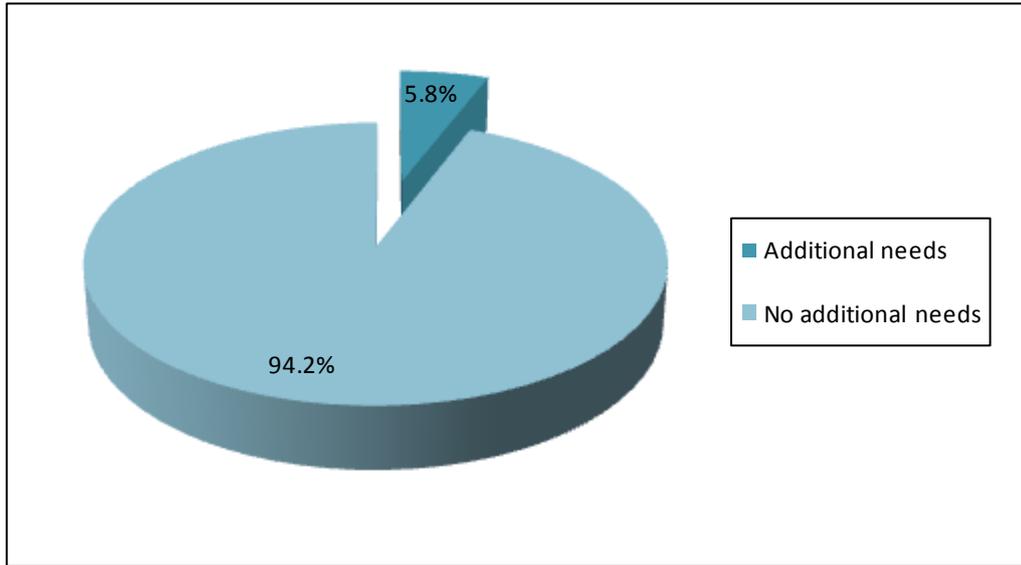
Approximately two-thirds (61.2%) of those completing the parents/guardians survey indicated that they were employed, either full time (34.6%), part time (19.6%), or casual (7.0%). One-third of parents/guardians performed home duties only (32.9%), while 1.2% reported that they were unemployed and looking for work.

### Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status of parent/guardian



Only 0.2% of parents/guardians reported that they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

### Proportion of parents/guardians with children with additional needs

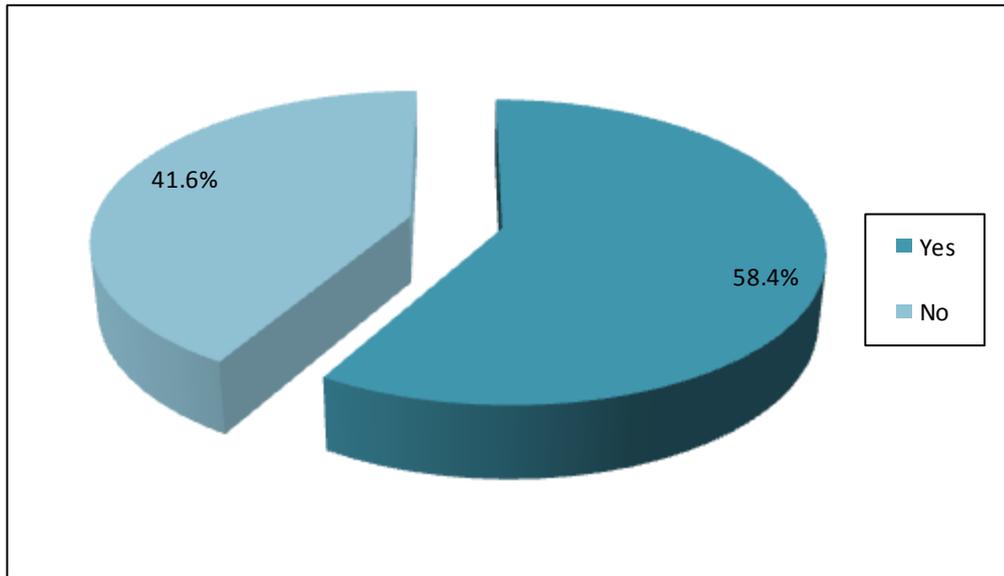


A total of 5.8% of parents/guardians indicated that their child had additional needs.

There is a significant inconsistency in the survey results regarding the proportion of parents/guardians who have children with additional needs. Only 51 (5.3%) of parents/guardians directly reported that their child had additional needs. However, in a subsequent question where they were asked if their child had additional needs, whether those needs had been adequately supported, a total of 76 parents/guardians (8.1% of the total sample) reported that their child's additional needs had not been adequately supported. It may be that parents/guardians have interpreted the first question as relating only to diagnosed additional needs, and have interpreted 'additional needs' far more broadly for the second question.

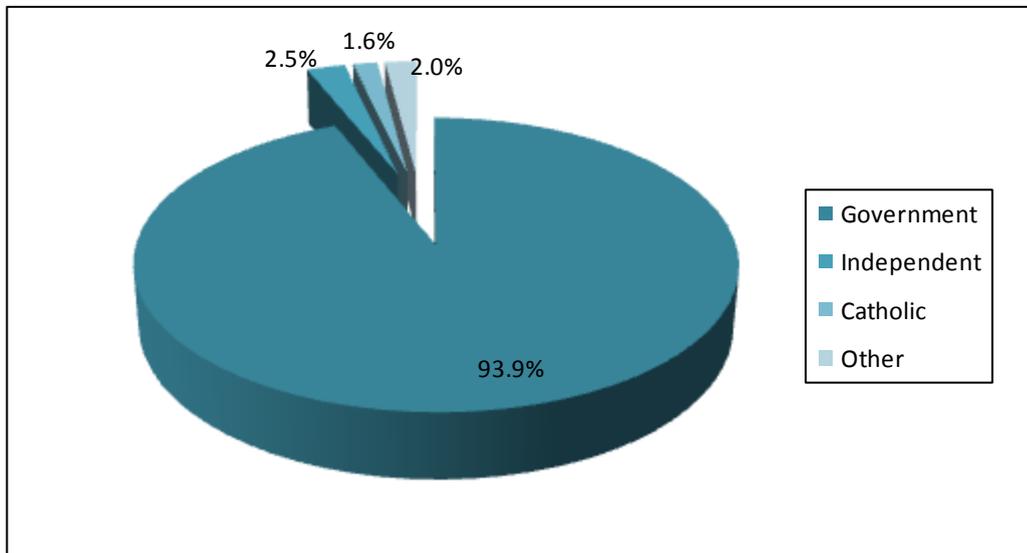
Another possible explanation for the different responses could be that parents/guardians thought their child's needs were not identified prior to school and therefore felt they were not adequately addressed now that their child was in school and needing support. Yet another possibility is that this difference in responses may be an artefact of the question itself – that is, parents/guardians may be more likely to report that their child has additional needs when asked to respond to a question about support options.

### Proportion of parents/guardians with first child starting school



Slightly over half of parents/guardians reported that 2010 was the first time they had a child starting school (58.4%), meaning that just over 40% of children have an older sibling who may or not be at the same school as them.

### Type of school attended by child



The vast majority of parents/guardians reported that their child was attending a government school (93.9%).