

# Early Years Great Careers

Grow. Lead. Succeed.

The Essential Guide



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This document is also available on the internet at  
[www.education.vic.gov.au/earlyyears-careers](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlyyears-careers)





# Your roadmap to an early childhood career

**Grow. Lead.  
Succeed.**

Early childhood is a growing, dynamic sector with opportunities to enter and expand your career in all sorts of stimulating and professionally rewarding directions.

This booklet is a roadmap to help you navigate the options.

Whether you are a career adviser, a secondary or tertiary student, in the sector already and looking for progression opportunities or perhaps a mature “career changer” looking to chart a new life course, this booklet is your go-to resource.

On the pages that follow you will meet some inspiring early childhood professionals and get the lowdown on things like courses, entry requirements and opportunities for career advancement.

The companion to this booklet is a set of profession fact sheets that give a comprehensive rundown of a range of rewarding and exciting early childhood careers. Maybe one of them is for you.

These publications are part of the *Early Years Great Careers* initiative, a project of the Victorian Government’s Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Department regulates the sector and funds some early childhood services.

The *Early Years Great Careers* initiative aims to showcase the professional opportunities available in the early childhood sector.







# Start your early childhood career here!

## Help to train and study

Can't do it alone? Support is available to help you train and study to be an early childhood professional. This includes Victorian Government scholarships and incentives for educators and maternal and child health nurses.

Some eligibility criteria apply. For more information visit the websites listed in the "sources and resources" section at the end of this booklet.

If you want to work with children, there has never been a better time to start your career in early childhood.

Victoria's baby boom and a nationwide drive to support the highest standards in the sector mean that demand for early childhood professionals such as educators, teachers and health and allied health practitioners is strong and growing.

And the new qualification requirements for education and care services ensure recognition for your professionalism and expertise.

Research increasingly shows that the early years are the most important for children's growth and development. Make a difference in a child's early years and you make a difference for life.

A wide range of professionals help children learn, grow and succeed in their early years.

Right now there are plenty of rewarding opportunities for early childhood professionals in education, health and management.

As well as educators and teachers, the sector needs maternal and child health nurses, allied health professionals like speech pathologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists and also offers a wide range of management roles with individual services, community organisations and state or local government.

Early childhood is a career for life, with opportunities for progression into leadership positions for those who want to take the next step.

Many early childhood professions are skills shortage areas, so there are great employment prospects in the public, private and community sectors in metropolitan Melbourne, rural and regional Victoria and even overseas.

If you are ready to take the first step to a rewarding career in early childhood please go to [education.vic.gov.au/earlyyearscareers](http://education.vic.gov.au/earlyyearscareers) or see your career adviser.



# Grow, lead and succeed in early childhood

There are many early childhood professions and they have one thing in common – the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of children.

Whether it is a hands-on role in an early childhood education and care service such as kindergarten, long day care, outside school hours care or family day care; a health role such as a maternal and child health or school nurse; or a managerial role running a service or working in state or local government, you'll go home each day knowing that your work is supporting and enriching the lives of children and their families.

The other thing that early childhood roles have in common is that qualified, committed professionals are in hot demand. Early childhood is a growth sector. This means that your investment in training and education will be rewarded with a satisfying position.

And while many roles are hands-on with children and families, you are just as likely to wear a suit as sneakers in early childhood. So many roles offer opportunities to advance and take on leadership positions for those who are driven to take the next step.

## Take your pick!

Early childhood professions can be loosely grouped into five major fields:

**Early childhood education and care** – educators and teachers who work in early childhood settings like long day care, family day care, occasional care, kindergarten and outside school hours care helping children discover learning.

**Health** – nursing professionals who look after babies to young children, parents and school communities.

**Allied health** – professionals who provide specialist health and early childhood intervention support services such as speech pathology and physiotherapy.

**Specialist support** – professionals who help protect children and ensure families receive the support they need.

**Management and leadership** – professionals at the helm of early childhood and education, who run or support services, advocate for children and families and provide policy advice.

Early childhood professionals don't just work in the places you would expect. There are diverse and challenging roles in state or local government, tertiary education institutions and in the community sector.



### Opportunities aplenty

Early childhood professionals in fields like education and care, health and allied health are in hot demand. There is virtually zero unemployment in these fields, and that's not expected to change any time soon.

In fact, Federal Government labour market forecasting shows that in the coming years more than 26 per cent of new jobs will be in the health care and social assistance sector, making it the largest employer.

For a profession with a real future, early childhood cannot be beaten.

### Grow your career

Early childhood is a multi-faceted and diverse sector, with opportunities to advance and grow professionally within individual employment settings and across the sector. For instance, you may start as an early childhood educator in long day care or kindergarten, add qualifications and experience to become a service manager, move to a policy or management position with government and end up as a university lecturer inspiring the next generation. This is just one example. There are so many paths to travel and places to go in early childhood.

### Enter through any door

With such an array of professional opportunities there are numerous ways to get into early childhood. You can start with a Vocational Education and Training certificate from TAFE or another Registered Training Organisation, add on a university qualification if you choose or use your base training in one early childhood sphere as a springboard to a whole range of other professional opportunities in another. Ask your career adviser about the many pathways into, and through, early childhood professions.

### Take it on the road

Early childhood qualifications and skills are for life, and not just in Australia. All over the world professionals like nurses and teachers are in demand. If you want to combine travel and work, early childhood makes it easy.

### Dedication rewarded

While no one gets into early childhood for the money, it's nice to know that increasing professionalisation of the sector means pay and conditions are improving all the time. And for non-monetary rewards, the payoffs of an early childhood career are immense. Make a difference in a child's early years and you make a difference for life. Imagine being part of that.





# Health



## Fiona Ryan, maternal and child health nurse

“Working with small children and their families is very rewarding. I feel privileged that families allow me to work with them.

I really enjoy getting to know the family and travelling with them on their journey, watching their confidence grow and develop. It is also lovely when they go on and have more children.

I also enjoy working with families from different cultural backgrounds. I learn a lot from them as they have experiences, beliefs and values that sometimes challenge me. I have learned to respect and support them while imparting the information and guidance required of my role.”

### Indicative starting salary

\$79,870\* a year and will increase with experience depending on role and responsibilities.

\*Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development School and Maternal and Child Health Line Salary Scale, Nurse Category 4b

### Future employment rating

★★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR



## Helen O'Shea, visiting primary school nurse

“My particular inspiration is in trying to make a positive change for young children, no matter how subtle, to help them achieve at school, at home and with their friends.

Often the challenging times are the most inspiring, when a child is in desperate need of intervention to ensure their safety, wellbeing or health.

A career in early childhood is one of the most rewarding experiences.”

### Indicative starting salary

\$72,165\* a year and will increase with experience depending on role and responsibilities.

\*Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development School and Maternal and Child Health Line Salary Scale, Nurse Category 3b

### Future employment rating

★★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR

## Meet the professionals



# Allied Health



## Ruth Sacks, physiotherapist (early childhood intervention)

"I enjoy spending my days with children and trying to think of fun ways to help them learn and develop. It is a great feeling when you see these children learn a new skill and celebrate each achievement, however small, with their families. The special relationships I develop with them and their families are also a key part of what makes my job fulfilling.

Early childhood is an incredibly rewarding area in which to work. A job in early childhood lets you share in, and make a difference to, the lives of children and their families."

### Indicative starting salary

\$56,770\* a year, increasing depending on responsibilities and training

\*Source: [http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS\\_Salary\\_Rates.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS_Salary_Rates.pdf), Allied Health 2.2.1.

### Future employment rating

★★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR



## Zara Karagiannis, speech pathologist (early childhood intervention)

"I have a very mixed case load that keeps me on my toes. I'm forever learning how other professional disciplines intertwine with mine.

Without communication life can be extremely challenging. I love knowing that I'm supporting someone to access life and expand their horizons; every change, no matter what magnitude, is a huge victory that I get to share with those children and their families.

Early childhood intervention helps provide the foundations for lifelong development. Solid foundations give a child the best springboard into their future. There's no greater feeling knowing that your support in the present is for an optimal future."

### Indicative starting salary

\$56,770\* a year, increasing depending on responsibilities and training

\*Source: [http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS\\_Salary\\_Rates.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS_Salary_Rates.pdf), Allied Health 2.2.1.

### Future employment rating

★★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR



## Zanne Kawalsky, occupational therapist (early childhood intervention)

"The wonderful aspect about working in early childhood intervention is that there is no typical day. No day is the same and no day is ever boring.

I find working with children challenging and immensely satisfying. Intervention during the early years is when families can best begin to learn how to support and nurture their child. I work in a wonderful team and feel that the service we provide makes a significant difference in giving the child the best start to life.

It is a great career that is mentally stimulating and also fun. It is a great team environment and there are many career opportunities."

### Indicative starting salary

\$56,770\* a year, increasing depending on responsibilities and training

\*Source: [http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS\\_Salary\\_Rates.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS_Salary_Rates.pdf), Allied Health 2.2.1.

### Future employment rating

★★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR

# Management and leadership



## Wendy Morris-Smith, kindergarten cluster program manager

“Every day is different. I can make lasting and real changes in the lives of children and families and therefore make a difference in the community.

This is the kind of work that looks deceptively easy when it is done well. People may think that a career in working with young children is simply that but it is much, much more. I feel sure the skills you develop hold you in good stead in life; in part I am the parent and person I am because of my knowledge and skills as an educator.”

### Indicative salary

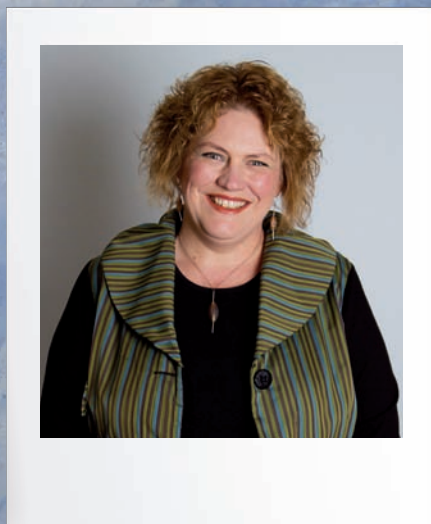
\$88,000 – \$105,000\* a year depending on cluster size, sector and responsibilities.

\*Source: Industry employers.

### Future employment rating

★★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR



## Janine Brown, local government manager, family and children's services

“As a senior manager in a council with a \$16 million budget, I manage 300 staff servicing 4500 families across 48 purpose-built facilities each week. I also strategically plan for the whole community's health, wellbeing, and economic and environmental needs. My work requires creativity, complex problem solving and decision-making and monitoring against the strategic vision for our community.

[Working in early childhood] I have had the privilege to be part of the village that raises the child, supports the family and contributes to the future of our community and nation.”

### Indicative salary

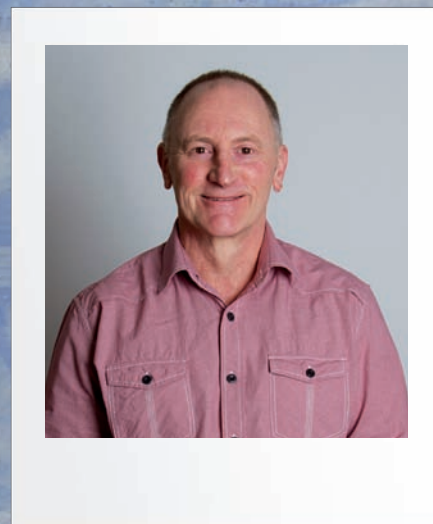
From \$59,220 – \$98,780\* a year in local government services. Salaries vary depending on the employer, service and role.

\*Source: MAV Jobs in Local Government in Victoria, May 2012

### Future employment rating

★★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR



## John McCartin, lecturer in early childhood education

“It is an exciting, challenging time to work in early childhood. The early childhood team I work with is knowledgeable, skilled and committed and I continue to learn and grow as an educator, practitioner and researcher. Working with children, parents, students, teachers and other professionals keeps me fresh and motivated.

There are a myriad of opportunities to make a difference to the lives of children and families every day – through supporting student teachers; hands-on work with children and families; liaising with other professionals for children with additional needs and more.”

### Indicative starting salary

Starting salaries for VET and university lecturers range from \$50,856 – \$87,334\* a year and increase depending on level of responsibility.

\*Source: Published salary bands from major tertiary institutions.

### Future employment rating

★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth → 8.5 to 11% PA . Source: DEEWR



# Early childhood education and care



**Petrina Boles,**  
early childhood teacher

“Every day I go to work wondering what adventures we will have today. I love that the children are as excited to see me each day as I am to see them. I really get a kick from the sheer, unbridled excitement they show when they have learned something new or made a discovery for themselves that they can’t wait to share. The children blow my mind daily grasping high-level concepts and understandings. I have ‘goosebump’ moments every day.

No two days are the same and my role involves changing ‘hats’ quickly, seamlessly, and at times, repeatedly: educator, carer, singer, observer, meal provider, storyteller, medic, hug distributor, umpire, counsellor, environmental scientist, pirate, missing sock detective, dance teacher, photographer.”

#### **Indicative salary**

From \$53,948 – \$84,517\* a year in local government services. Salaries vary according to employer, sector, responsibilities and role.

\*Source: LGECEEA and VECTAA

#### **Future employment rating**

★★★\*

\*Future employment growth → 8.5 to 11% PA. Source: DEEWR



**Robert Nguyen,**  
early childhood educator

“I still view working with children as a privilege. There’s nothing more satisfying than knowing that by engaging with them and teaching them you can influence who they are and what they’ll become. It’s a great feeling to know that I’ve been a part of children’s lives, even for a short time, and that I’ve been able to build strong connections with them.

Early childhood may not always be easy but it’s most definitely a rewarding career. Early childhood educators have the opportunity to shape a child’s growth and development in a very positive way. It can be challenging at times but you’ll have lots of fun too.”

#### **Indicative salary**

From \$35,766 – \$46,199\* a year in local government services. Salaries vary according to employer, sector, responsibilities and role.

\*Indicative salary taken from Local Government Early Childhood Education Employees Agreement (LGECEEA) and Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants Agreement (VECTAA).

#### **Future employment rating**

★★★★\*

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR



**Lori Farchione-zappia,**  
early childhood teacher  
and educational leader

“I was always drawn to children as I truly wanted to make a difference in their lives. I wanted to be a different kind of educator where I could support children’s agency in learning and create a physical environment where learning captures children’s interest, comes alive, stimulates and invites children to wonder and create.

You need to be very passionate, dedicated and energetic about working with young children as the first years of a child’s life is the critical time for their development. It can be very challenging and demanding but very rewarding.”

#### **Future employment rating**

Not available as this is a new role created under the National Quality Framework.

# Early childhood careers let you go places

## Start Here

### Education

#### Early childhood teacher

(previously known as kindergarten teacher)

*Bachelor degree in education or related area and/or postgraduate qualification*

#### Early childhood educator

(previously known as kindergarten assistant, room leader, child care worker or child care assistant)

*Diploma or certificate courses, depending on role*

### Health

#### Maternal and child health nurse, School nurse

*Bachelor of Nursing and/or Midwifery, postgraduate nursing qualification or certificate/diploma qualification, depending on role*

## Get Here

#### Management and leadership options

- Children's services centre manager
- Director (children's services)
- Children's services coordinator
- Outside school hours care program coordinator
- Family day care coordinator
- Kindergarten cluster program manager
- Policy and management positions in government
- Academic roles
- Educational leader

#### Other career options

With further training qualified early childhood educators could become primary school teachers

#### Management and leadership options

- Maternal and child health team leader
- Maternal and child health coordinator
- Children, youth and families services manager

#### Other career options

Roles in health promotion, mental health, community health, adolescent health, child health, registered nurse and practice nurse, early childhood educator, family day care educator or, with further study, early childhood teacher





There are so many permutations and combinations that it's impossible to list them all here! For more information about where you can start in early childhood and where you can go, please visit the Early Years Great Careers website.

### Allied health

**Occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech pathologist, audiologist, paediatrician, psychologist**  
*Bachelor degree in relevant discipline or postgraduate qualification*

### Specialist support

**Family support worker (child protection), Aboriginal in-home support, family support worker, Koorie engagement officer, preschool field support officer, inclusion support officer**  
*Certificate, diploma and bachelor degrees, depending on the role*

### Academic

**Vocational Education and Training trainer or lecturer, university lecturer, tutor, researcher**  
*Range of graduate and/or postgraduate qualifications depending on role*

#### Management and leadership options

- Consulting or government roles
- Practice management roles

#### Other career options

Options for related careers include massage therapist, medical practitioner, osteopath, sports scientist, rehabilitation counsellor, music therapist, registered nurse, counsellor, occupational health and safety officer and social worker

#### Management and leadership options

- Case manager

#### Other career options

Options could include community worker, counsellor, parole and probation officer, social worker, welfare officer, advocate for disadvantaged people or sociologist

#### Management and leadership options

- Tertiary education management roles within institutions, faculties or departments such as dean of a faculty or a head of school
- Government advisory roles

#### Other career options

Options could include primary or secondary teacher, trainer, educational researcher or author







## Sources and resources

### Further information:

[education.vic.gov.au/earlyyears-careers](http://education.vic.gov.au/earlyyears-careers)

[myfuture.edu.au](http://myfuture.edu.au)

[joboutlook.gov.au](http://joboutlook.gov.au)

[deewr.gov.au](http://deewr.gov.au)

[education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au)

[careersthatmatter.com.au](http://careersthatmatter.com.au)

[deewr.gov.au/australian-jobs-publication](http://deewr.gov.au/australian-jobs-publication)

[education.vic.gov.au/about/careers/pages/scholarships.aspx](http://education.vic.gov.au/about/careers/pages/scholarships.aspx)

[education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/mchscholarshipsresearch.aspx](http://education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/mchscholarshipsresearch.aspx)

[deewr.gov.au/early-childhood-workforce-initiatives](http://deewr.gov.au/early-childhood-workforce-initiatives)

[vtac.edu.au/scholarships.html](http://vtac.edu.au/scholarships.html)

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available for download.

All indicative salaries are gross (before tax) a year for full-time employees. Sources for indicative salaries are provided throughout this resource. Salaries will vary depending on employer, role, responsibilities, sector and award. Please consult a career practitioner and/or check with individual institutions to confirm specific course requirements.



