



**Best Start  
Best Life**

# Careers in Early Childhood Education

Information guide for Victorian career practitioners



This guide is designed to support conversations with secondary school students who are exploring study and career options. It provides up-to-date information about the pathways into early childhood education — a growing sector with strong demand and a range of rewarding careers across Victoria.

## What does this information guide cover?



Reasons why early childhood education is a meaningful and in-demand career



Study pathways that are available during school and afterwards



Roles and career progression opportunities across the early childhood sector



Financial supports like Free TAFE and scholarships to help with study

See the last page of the guide for an overview of links to resources and supports.



## Why choose a career in early childhood education?

### Make an impact and give children the best start in life

Early childhood education is a values-driven career path that's suited to students who are passionate about making a difference in their community. They will get to be creative while supporting children's learning and growth through play.

### Did you know?

Around  
**90%** 

of a child's brain develops before the age of five, making early childhood education a critical foundation for life.

### Join an in-demand and growing sector with job security and opportunities for career progression

The Victorian Government's investment in the Best Start, Best Life reforms means the early childhood education sector is growing. Thousands of jobs are being created across the state. The reforms include:

- expanding Three-and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, which will significantly increase the hours of play-based learning in the years before school
- establishing 50 government-owned and operated early learning and childcare centres in areas of high demand.

## There are financial and study supports available to help get started

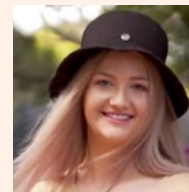
There has never been a better time to study early childhood education, with a range of financial supports and flexible study pathways available. Depending on their chosen career path, students can access:

### Free TAFE

This covers tuition for eligible students undertaking a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. This includes students who have started their training through school and want to continue studying afterwards.

### Early Childhood Scholarships Program

Up to \$25,000 in financial support to study a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. All students can apply once they have proof of enrolment, and this financial support can be used for course fees, living costs, or other education expenses such as a laptop.



Listen to scholarship recipient **Molly's journey** from school to early childhood teaching

### Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships Program

A range of different courses are available through the Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships (ECTP) program including school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and university degrees. Each course has been designed to provide benefits and supports (e.g. mentoring) that students might need while they study.

### Other supports

There are also supports while studying, including a new Australian Government subsidy to help eligible students manage costs during early childhood teaching placements.

Support continues in the workforce with mentoring, networks, professional development, financial incentives, and relocation assistance to take up roles at priority services.

### Find out more

[vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood](https://vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood)



## What roles are available in early childhood education?

The early childhood workforce has a strong culture of professional development, and there are opportunities to upskill, specialise, or step into leadership roles over time.

There are 2 main roles students can start their career in. They can start as an:

### Early Childhood Teacher

- Early childhood teachers have expertise in children's learning and development, and use this knowledge to design and lead engaging play-based kindergarten programs for children aged 3 to 5.
- Teachers shape programs that encourage learning and growth, observe and document children's progress, support and mentor other staff, and build relationships with families and other professionals to support children.
- Students can start their career as an early childhood teacher by completing a Bachelor degree at university.

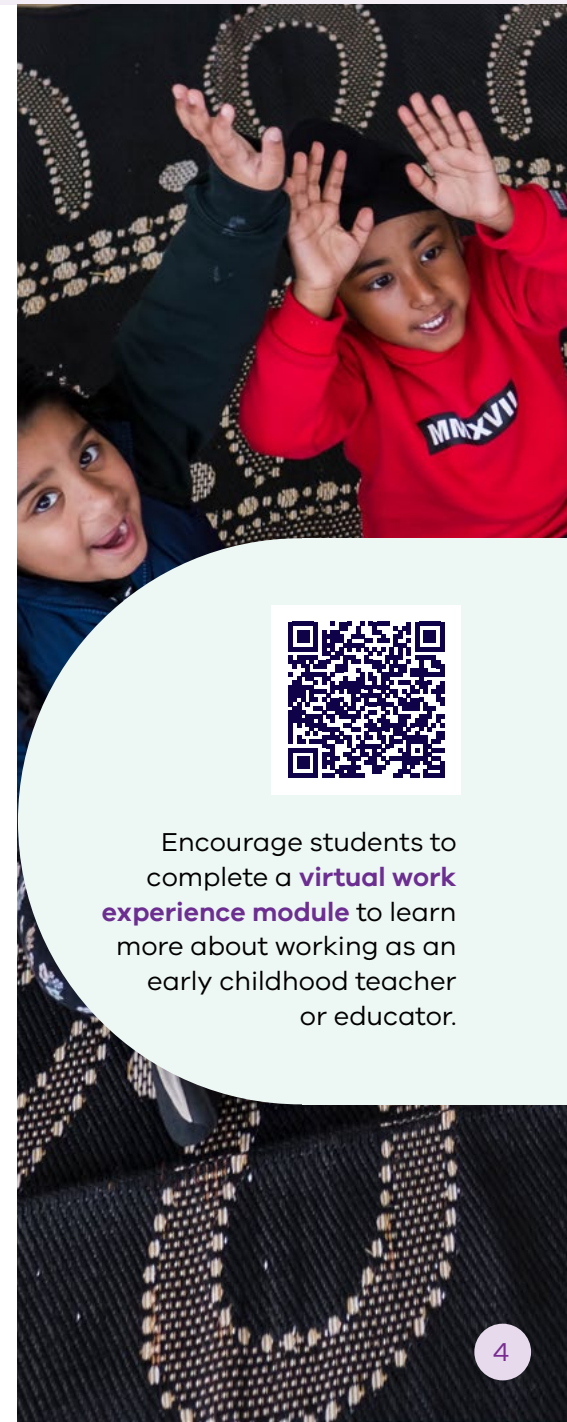
### Early Childhood Educator

- Early childhood educators prepare and deliver play-based learning activities for children from birth to 5.
- Educators work with early childhood teachers to deliver kindergarten programs, observe and record children's learning and development, and support relationship building with families.
- Students can start their career as an educator by completing a vocational qualification at a Registered Training Organisation (e.g. TAFE). There are options to start work while they complete their training.

Both early childhood teachers and educators play a critical role in supporting the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and wellbeing of young children.



Encourage students to complete a **virtual work experience module** to learn more about working as an early childhood teacher or educator.



## Where do early childhood teachers and educators work?

Early childhood teachers and educators work in a variety of settings from small sessional kindergartens in a local community, to large organisations operating over 100 services nation-wide. The 2 main settings teachers and educators work in are:



### Sessional kindergartens

— a service that operates a kindergarten program for 3 to 5-year-olds on specific days and times.

As professionals develop their knowledge, skills and experience, they may decide to upskill from a role as an educator to a teacher by undertaking further study.

They might also look for opportunities across the early childhood sector, for instance, in broader support or leadership roles, in larger organisations or local government, or at tertiary institutions training the future workforce.



### Long day care centres

— a service that offers full days of education and care for children from birth to 5, with an integrated teacher-led kindergarten program for 3 to 5-year-olds.

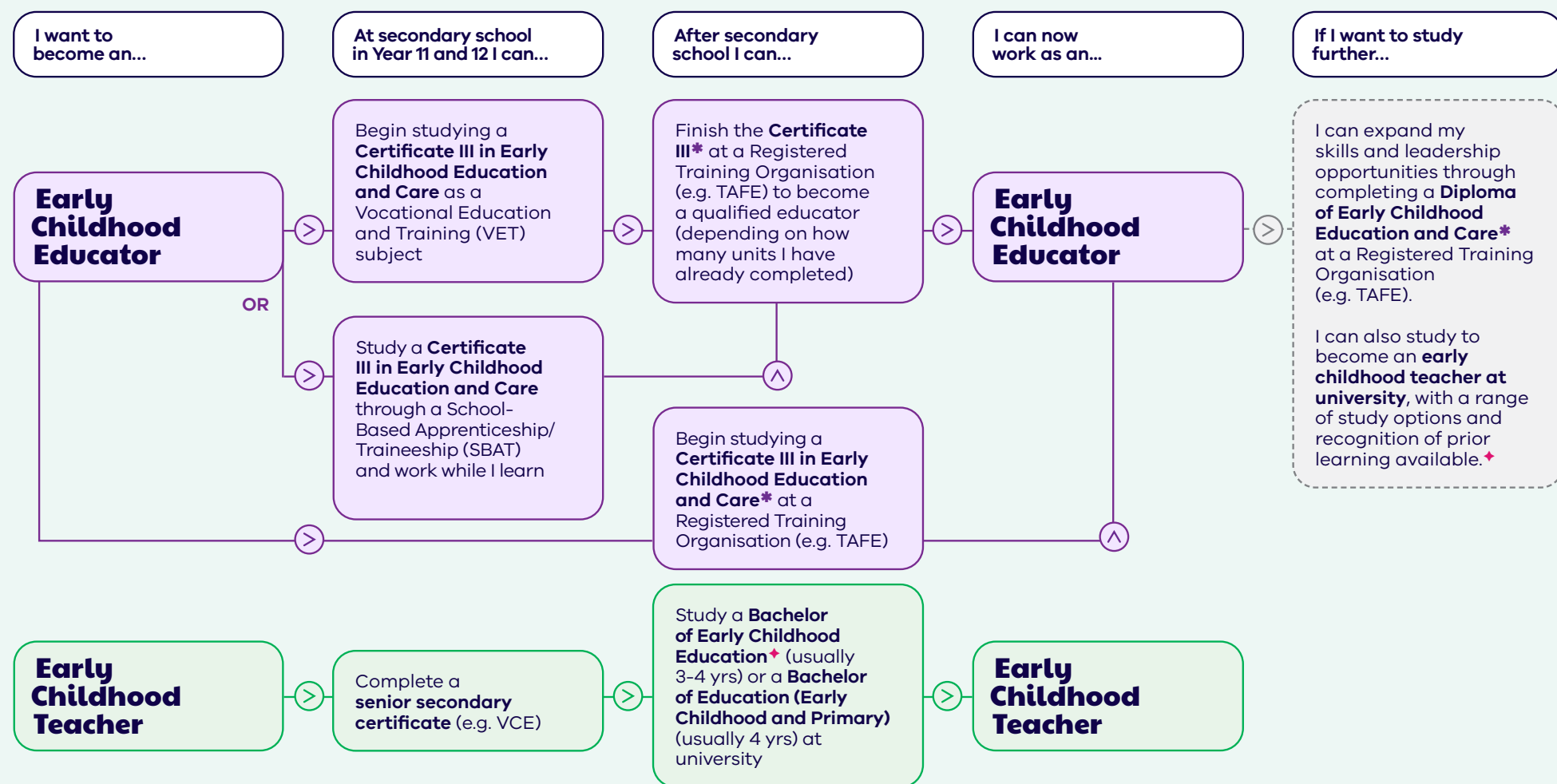


Undertaking **work experience in Years 9 or 10** at either of these settings is a great way for students to learn more about early childhood education careers.

Consider reaching out to local early childhood services or training providers to organise opportunities for students to hear directly from early childhood professionals, current students or alumni.

## Study map for secondary school students

There are a variety of study pathways — at school or once students have completed school — so that students can choose a pathway that best suits them.



\* Free TAFE available

♦ Financial support through the Early Childhood Scholarships program is available

## What study pathways are available to students?

Students can start studying to become an early childhood educator while at school.



### VET Delivered to School Students

Students can start a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and complete it after school at a Registered Training Organisation.

Students aren't locked into one career path. After completing a Certificate III, they can upskill to a Diploma (this usually takes one year) to deepen skills and knowledge and increase leadership opportunities. Students can then pursue further study to become a degree-qualified early childhood teacher by studying a Bachelor degree (approximately 2 years with recognition of prior learning).



### School-Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (e.g. HeadStart)

Students can gain practical, hands-on experience as they combine study and paid, part-time employment at an early childhood service.

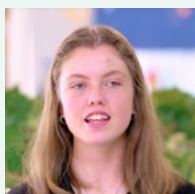
## There are a range of study pathways to become an early childhood teacher after school

Students who complete VCE (or equivalent) can apply to study a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at university, which typically takes 3 to 4 years.

- The minimum ATAR generally ranges from 50-70, depending on the university.
- Most courses do not have prerequisite subjects though many subjects are useful in preparing students, including English, Mathematics, Art, Health, and Psychology.

To find early childhood education courses, visit:

[vic.gov.au/find-kinder-courses](https://vic.gov.au/find-kinder-courses)



Listen to **Tiana's experience** undertaking a School-Based Traineeship

## What does career progression look like?

The diversity of roles in the sector allows people to continue learning and developing skills in areas that interest them most. Early childhood teachers and educators can also move into a range of leadership roles in small or large organisations, local government or tertiary institutions.

This diagram provides a **snapshot of the range of roles available** in a career in early childhood education.



Early childhood education is more than a job, it's a career. Early childhood careers have great diversity of experiences and endpoints — including pedagogical, research, and organisational leadership — and fantastic flexibility.

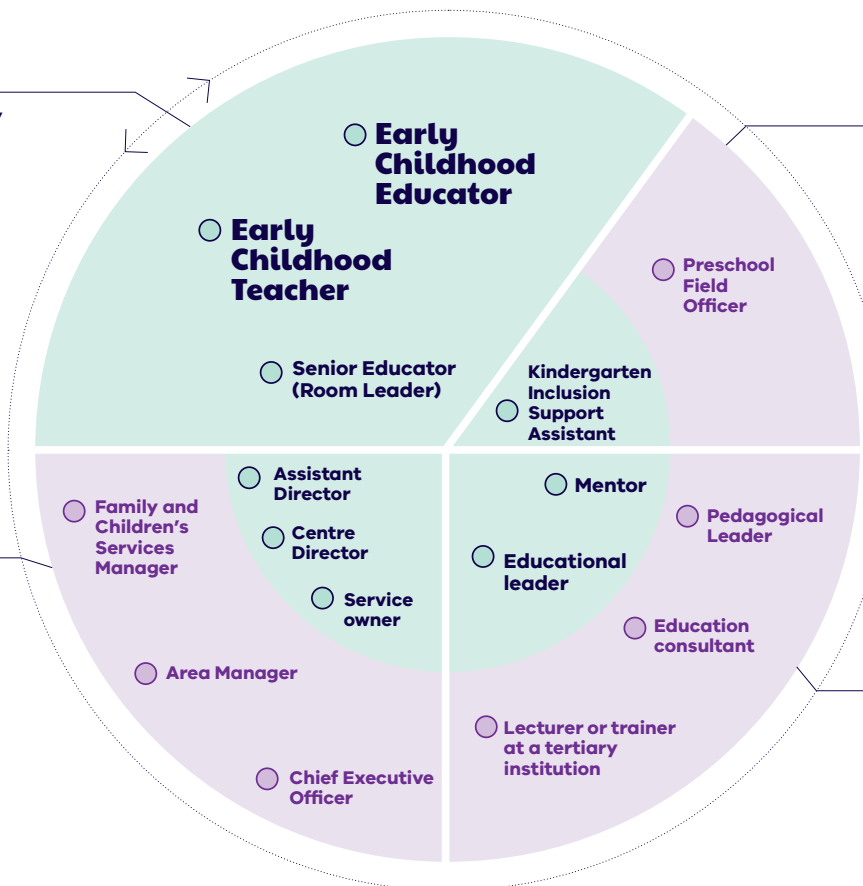


### Start your career journey

engaging with children and supporting their learning and development during a critical life stage as a...

### Be a leader of teams and organisations

Once you've developed expertise in the sector, you might consider leadership roles that develop your experience in leading teams or organisations, or you might even decide to run your own service.



### Support inclusion in early childhood settings

If you have a passion for supporting children with disabilities and additional needs, there are roles that are dedicated to ensuring all children can equally participate and learn.

### Inspire quality practice

After developing valuable experience working with children and families, you might consider inspiring and mentoring others or applying your practice expertise in early childhood services or training.

● Roles in kindergarten and long day care services

● Roles across the early childhood sector



## Overview of resources and supports

Bring this information guide to life with case studies to share with your students:



Virtual early childhood education work experience module



Early childhood scholarship recipient Molly's journey to early childhood teaching



Traineeships in action at Chisholm TAFE



Tiana's experience completing a School Based Traineeship at Wodonga TAFE

Learn more about a career in early childhood education:



Become an early childhood teacher or educator



Find an early childhood course



Career opportunities and support in the early childhood education sector



About the Best Start, Best Life reforms

Find out more about the financial and study supports available:



Financial support to study and work in early childhood



Australian Government support for teaching placements

If you have any questions, email the department at [early.childhood.jobs@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:early.childhood.jobs@education.vic.gov.au)