Australian Government
Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

Australia's
welfare 2017

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1.5 Welfare workforce

An estimated 478,000 people were employed in the welfare workforce (see Box 1.5.1) in 2015. This workforce has grown by 84% since 2005 (259,000 employed people in 2005). About 2,000 people per 100,000 population were employed in the welfare workforce in 2015 (an increase of 56% since 2005); of the people employed, about 5 in 6 were female. Overall, the welfare workforce represented 4.1% of the total 11.8 million people employed in Australia in 2015.

Box 1.5.1: Defining the welfare workforce

There is no single definition of the welfare workforce. In this article, it is defined as people who are employed both in a community service industry and a community service occupation, such as an early childhood education and care worker in the preschool education industry.

Community service industries were identified using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ABS 2006); community service occupations were identified using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS 2013).

The definition excludes some people in a community service occupation who are not employed in a community service industry, such as nurses employed in the health sector (hospitals) or counsellors in the school education sector. Likewise, it excludes some people employed in a community services industry who are not in a community services occupation; for example, accountants, administration staff and tradespeople.

In this article, community service industries have been grouped into three categories:

• child care services and preschool education, which includes child care services, operation of nurseries, child-minding services and accredited pre-primary school education

• residential care services, which includes aged care residential services and other forms of residential care services

• other social assistance services, which includes a variety of social support services such as adoption services, adult day care centres, and disability assistance services.

The data source used for information on this workforce is the ABS Labour Force Survey (ABS 2016). This Survey collects information on the number of people employed in occupations and industries and not full-time equivalent staff rates. For this article, 'employed people' refers to a head count of workers.
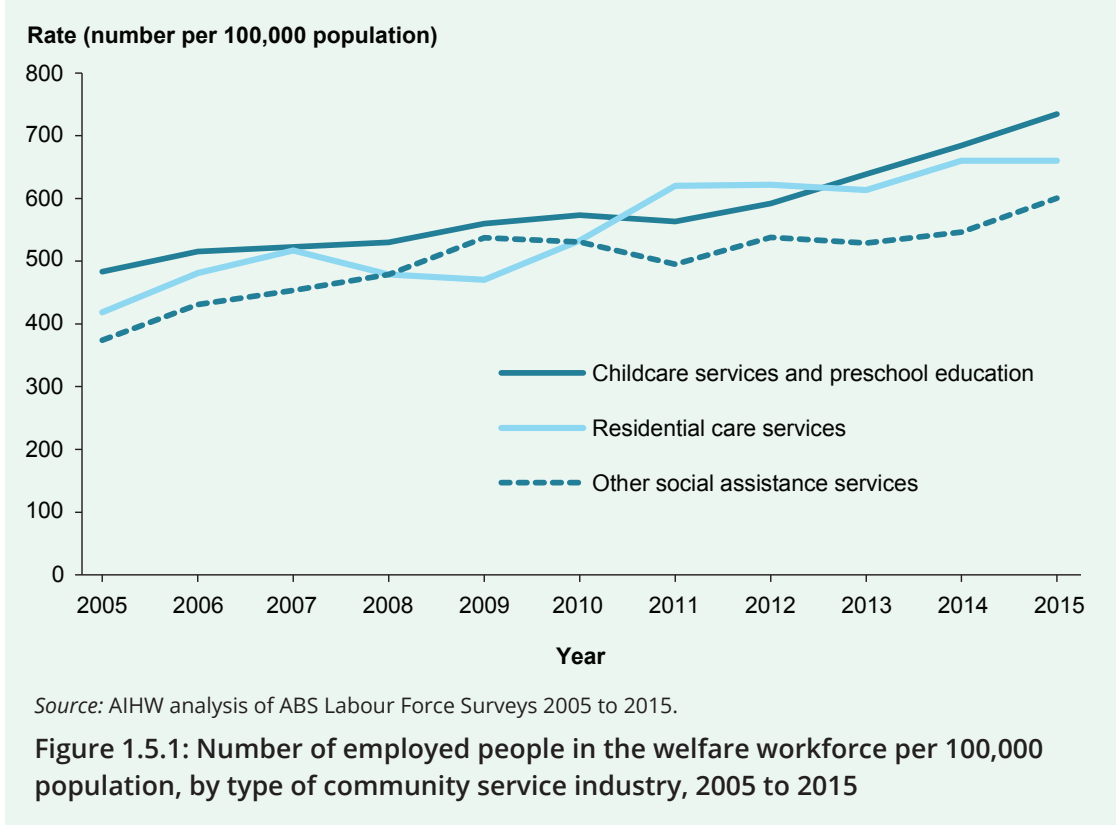

Community service industries

The industry with the largest welfare workforce in both 2005 and 2015 was the *Child care services and preschool education* industry; however, it varied somewhat throughout the period as the workforce numbers fluctuated (Figure 1.5.1).

The welfare workforce per person rates of all three community service industries (see Box 1.5.1) grew between 50% and 60% over 2005–2015: 52% for the *Child care services and preschool education* industry (from 484 to 734 employed people per 100,000 population), 58% for the *Residential care services* (from 419 to 660) and 60% for the *Other social assistance services* industry (from 374 to 600).

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Rate (number per 100,000 population)

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS Labour Force Surveys 2005 to 2015.

Figure 1.5.1: Number of employed people in the welfare workforce per 100,000 population, by type of community service industry, 2005 to 2015

Community service occupations

Early childhood education and care workers was the largest community services occupation group in the welfare workforce in 2015, at 711 employed people per 100,000 population (Table 1.5.1). *Early childhood education and care workers* were almost exclusively employed in the *Child care services and preschool education* industry in 2015.

The *Aged and disabled carers* occupation group was the second largest group, growing from 196 to 515 employed people per 100,000 population between 2005 and 2015. This group is expected to grow substantially with the rollout of the NDIS, with the Productivity Commission estimating that 1 in 5 new jobs created in Australia over the next few years will need to be in the disability care sector (Productivity Commission 2017).

The number of *Nursing support and personal care workers* also grew, from 132 to 239 employed people per 100,000 population between 2005 and 2015. Of the remaining occupations, Table 1.5.1 shows that half of them experienced growth over the period, while the other half were in decline.

Some occupations were distributed across multiple industries. *Aged and disabled carers*, for example, were distributed mostly between *Residential care services* and *Other social assistance services*. Around 70,000 workers, or 15% of the total welfare workforce, were *Aged and disabled carers* working in the *Other social assistance services* industry (Figure 1.5.2).

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Table 1.5.1: Number of employed people in the welfare workforce per 100,000 population, by type of community service occupation, 2005 and 2015

Occupation	2005	2015	Growth (%)
Early childhood education and care workers	453	711	57
Aged and disabled carers	196	515	163
Nursing support and personal care workers	132	239	82
Registered nurses	231	173	−25
Welfare support workers	87	132	51
Social workers	24	60	152
Welfare, recreation and community arts workers	25	49	96
Enrolled and mothercraft nurses	46	27	−41
Counsellors	26	32	24
Psychologists	14	6	−60
Special care workers	6	3	−43

Notes

1. Early childhood education and care workers include child carers, child care centre managers and early childhood (pre-primary school) teachers.

2. Diversional therapists, education aides, special education teachers and Indigenous health workers are included as community service occupations in totals; however, the number of workers in these occupations within community service industries is small and not reported separately.

3. Data shown are the annual average of quarterly data for 2005 and 2015.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS Labour Force Survey 2005 and 2015.

What is missing from the picture?

While some information is available from the ABS Labour Force Survey, routine monitoring of details of the welfare workforce, and from the perspective of the whole sector, is limited. In the health sector, there is a mandatory national registration system for certain health professionals, with a range of workforce information updated at the time of annual registration renewal. This type of information is not consistently collected for the welfare workforce but could usefully inform workforce planning.

Where do I go for more information?

More information about the Australian workforce is available from the ABS Labour Force Survey.

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Occupation

Legend:
- Childcare services and preschool education
- Residential care services
- Other social assistance services

Occupations (top to bottom):
- Special care workers
- Psychologists
- Counsellors
- Enrolled and mothercraft nurses
- Welfare, recreation and community arts workers
- Social workers
- Welfare support workers
- Registered nurses
- Nursing support and personal care workers
- Aged and disabled carers
- Early childhood education and care workers

X-axis: **Employed people ('000)** — 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, 120, 140, 160, 180

Notes

1. Early childhood education and care workers include child carers, child care centre managers and early childhood (pre-primary school) teachers.

2. Diversional therapists, education aides, special education teachers and Indigenous health workers are included as community service occupations in totals; however, the number of workers in these occupations within community service industries is small and not reported separately.

3. Data shown are the annual average of quarterly data for 2015.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS Labour Force Survey 2015.

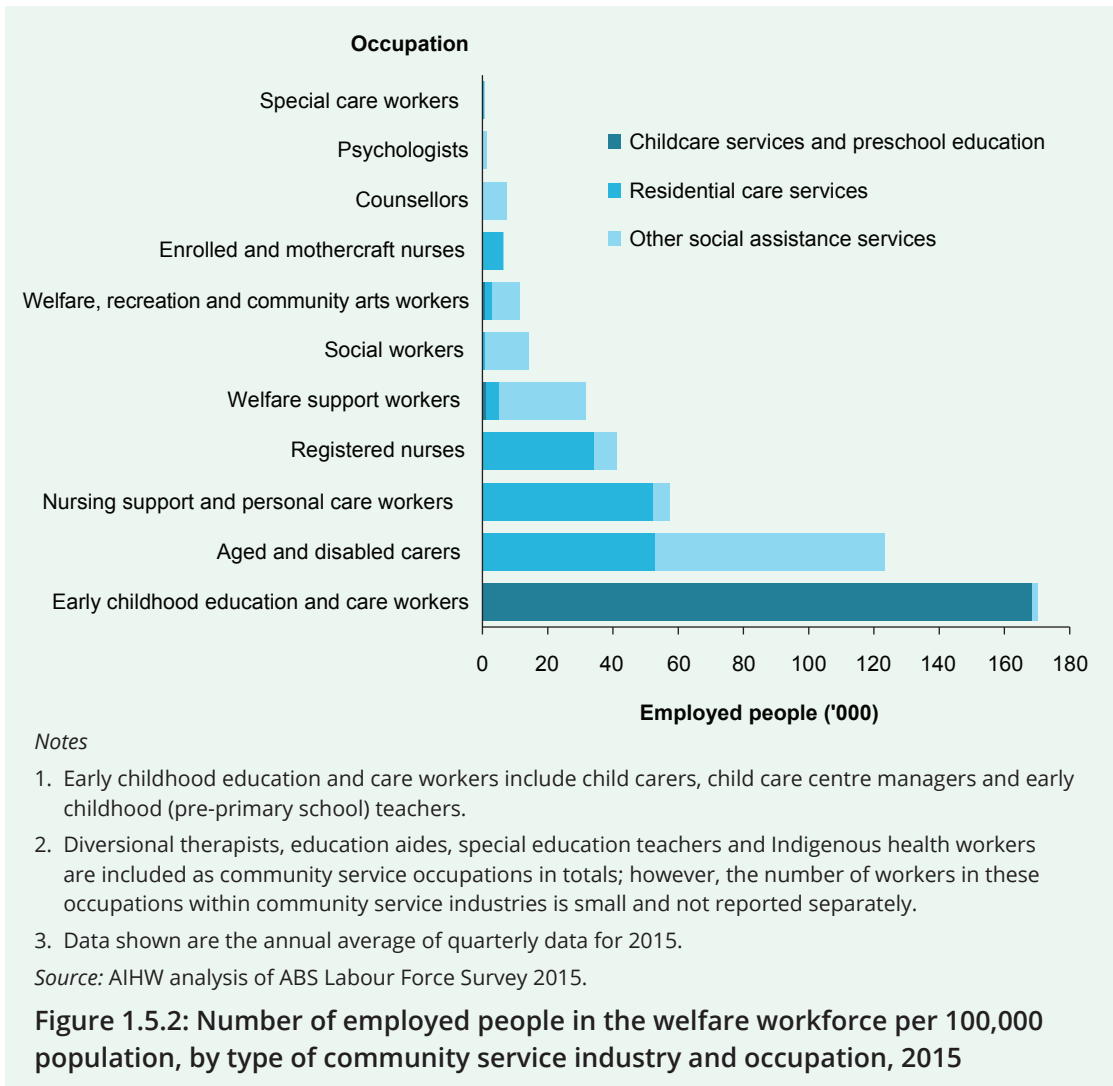**Figure 1.5.2: Number of employed people in the welfare workforce per 100,000 population, by type of community service industry and occupation, 2015**

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2006. Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)—Codes and Titles, 2006. ABS cat. no. 1292.0.55.002. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2013. Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, Version 1.2, 2013. ABS cat. no. 1220.0. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2016. Labour Force, Australia, Dec 2015, 2016. ABS cat. no. 6202.0. Canberra: ABS.

Productivity Commission 2017. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Costs, 2017. Canberra: Productivity Commission.