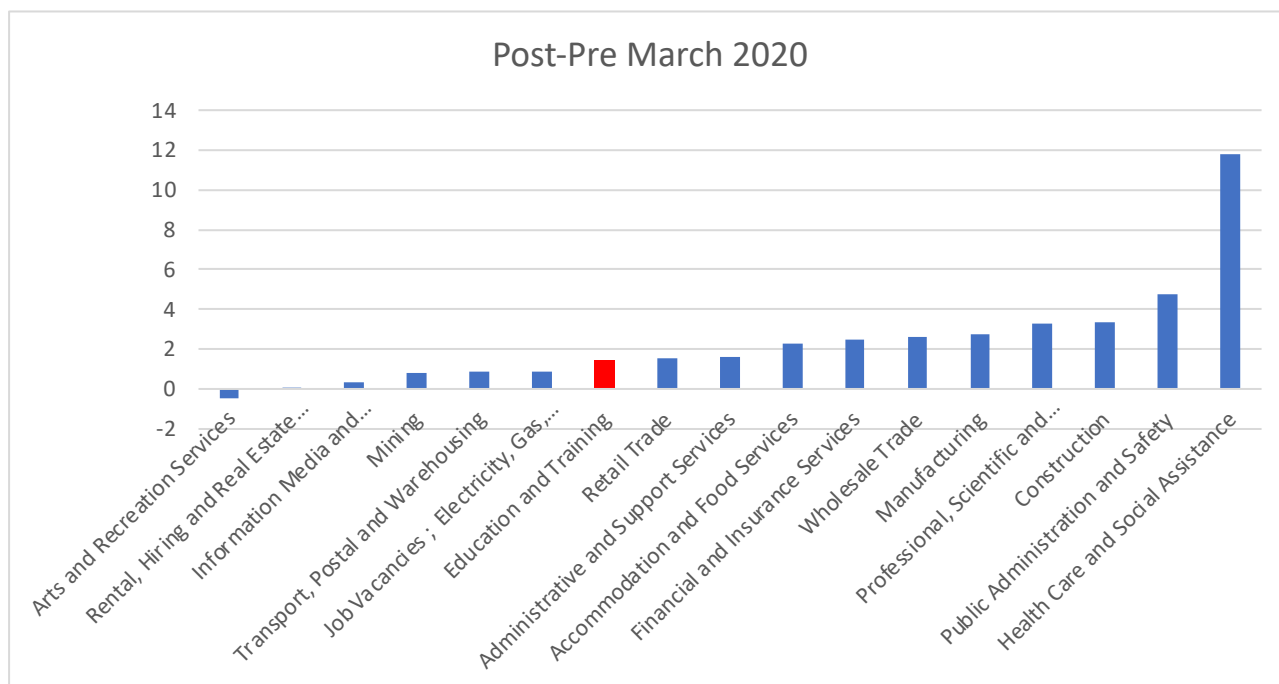


A. What is the nature of the teacher shortage?

While any discussion with a principal will confirm the difficulty of finding staff in many schools, it is hard to find an analysis of the current shortages and how this profile has changed pre and post-COVID. Is it a short-term crisis, a symptom of something more long-term, or only felt in certain areas of the curricula or the country, etc.? Using the Australia Bureau of Statistics data (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/job-vacancies-australia/latest-release#data-downloads>), the job vacancies across all sectors has dramatically increased post-COVID.

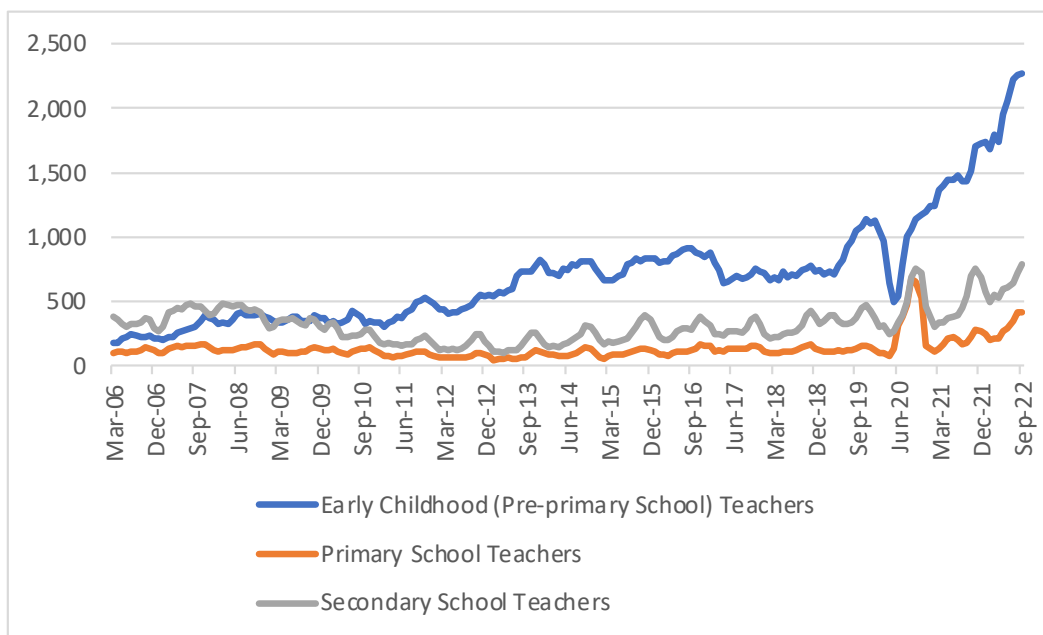


Comparing the vacancy rates pre and post-March 2020 shows the greatest increase in vacancy rates were in Health Care & Social assistance (11.77%), Public administration and safety (4.74%, Construction (3.37%) and Professional, scientific and technical services (3.25%) – and these four contributed over half the vacancy demand. Education had a 1.43% increase post-Covid: a real increase but minor relative to many other occupations.

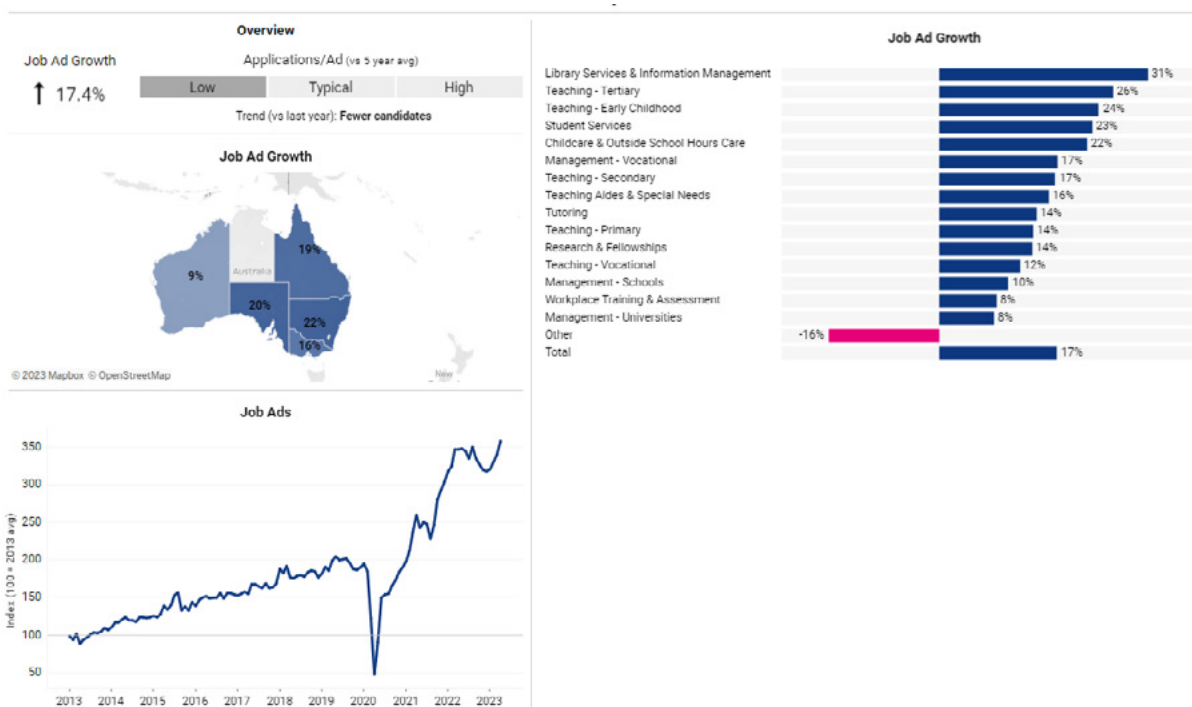


To illustrate the current situation, I analysed the May 2023 SEEK data (and thank the SEEK team) for the number of vacancies in schools across Australia from 2006 – 2022. The greatest vacancy rate is in the Early Childhood sector, exponentially increasing since COVID. There was a spike in late 2020-early 2021, and the longitudinal rate slightly increases since this time – for both primary and secondary teachers. Note in Sept 2022, there were 17,699 vacancies on SEEK, which is about a 4% vacancy rate. This is dramatically less than the overall job vacancies across all sectors (Feb 2023 data from ABS) -- indicating that overall in the Education and Training sector, it is more stable outside than inside schools. There are probably state differences also, as the Latham Report (200x) noted that as of 30 June 2022, there were 1609 permanent vacancies across the NSW public schools (2.7% vacancy).

A. What is the nature of the shortage?



From the SEEK database of job vacancies, the "Job ads" graph shows the growth since 2013 (set to 100). It can be seen that the increase is more than a regression line through 2013-2019 would predict from 2021-2023. The growth is 24% for Early childhood, 17% for secondary and 14% for primary teachers.



The greatest vacancy rates are in digital technology (36%), design technology (34%), languages (30%), mathematics (19%), science (20%), English (17%), and humanities-geography (12%). There are correspondingly more out-of-field teachers in design and technology (36%). Still, care is needed as the definition of out-of-field relates to training in their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and degree program, and many out-of-field teachers undertake further study (especially in design and technology) while still counted as out-of-field. I trained in computer science in my degree and was taught PL1, JCL, and FORTRAN, and would today not be considered 'out-of-field' but this is a woeful background for today's concept of digital technology. Thank goodness many digital technology teachers are out-of-field. More is needed to understand out-of-field better (e.g., an English graduate teaching Physics and a Mathematics graduate teaching Physics are not equivalent in their out-of-fieldness!).

Thus the nature of the shortage is not dire overall – although there are curricula subjects and areas of Australia where the shortage is more acute. The trend should be worrying (it is up, not flat or down), and the ECE sector vacancy trajectory is critical.