

BEDROCK

issue 3 | Vol 28 | 2023



Encounters with place:

Valla Beach

Uluru Statement from the Heart

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. *This is the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle*. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

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TERMINOLOGY
The union acknowledges regional
differences in some terms. Please
bear these in mind as you read:

QNT – Kindergarten
NSW/ACT –
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Editorial

Your union, the IEU, is now involved in a landmark application for supported multi-enterprise bargaining in the early education and care sector (ECEC).

Under new industrial relations legislation introduced this year, it is easier for employers to join together to bargain with unions and have the funding authority involved in the process.

An application lodged in June with the Fair Work Commission by the IEU, United Workers Union and Australian Education Union is now underway (see article at right).

The 64 employers included in the application, along with the unions and members, have a common goal to raise standards in ECEC.

This action is long overdue and we hope to bring you further news about the process on these pages as it continues.

Meanwhile, in this issue we look at a study encouraging more culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) preservice teachers to enter the profession (p6).

What do parents really think about nature play? The University of South Australia asked them in a unique study (p8).

Place is so important in ECEC, and on the mid north coast of NSW, Valla Preschool is exploring the beach as well as the surrounding community with their students (p10).

As we do each year, we bring you the winners of the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Environment Grant and let them tell their story on p12-13.

We discuss the important issues of assertiveness in the workplace and how to recognise bullying on p14-17.

How can you measure a teacher's interactions with a child? In NSW, Macquarie University researchers are examining a model from The Netherlands. We explore it on p18.

How did you become a teacher? There are now numerous routes to qualification, but are they all equal? We examine this issue on p20.

For a child to be healthy, it's about more than just good food and a clean environment. Nurturing care is vital too, and the World Health Organisation has been tracking an issue that needs a lot more focus (p21).

Finally, we have our regular Ask Tina/Monique (p22) column full of industrial advice, and there's a chance for you to win a free book in Giveaways (p23).

Terry Burke
IEU-QNT Secretary

Mark Northam
IEUA NSW/ACT Secretary

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BEDROCK UPFRONT



Supported bargaining

The Fair Work Commission heard its first application for multi-enterprise supported bargaining in the early childhood education and care sector on 16 and 17 August.

Under the new *Secure Work Better Jobs Act* introduced in June, it is easier for unions to bargain for enterprise agreements with groups of employers and require the funding authority to be part of the process (in this case the Federal Government).

The IEU, along with the United Workers Union (UWU), which represents ECEC educators in NSW, and the Australian Education Union (AEU), which represents ECEC teachers in Victoria, have jointly lodged an application.

A group of 64 ECEC employers has agreed to be part of the application. As it is supported bargaining, the funding body, which is the Federal Government in this case, will also be a party to the discussions.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Deputy Secretary Carol Matthews said, "This is a historic step in utilising the new provisions and the IEU is optimistic that it will lead to improved pay outcomes for early childhood teachers."



Free webinars

The NSW Department of Education held a series of online webinars called *ECEC Connect* earlier this year, aimed at supporting and promoting the early childhood education and care sector. To view the recordings, see here: bit.ly/3QDJcja



KU preschool terms

Members working in KU preschools in NSW contacted the IEU recently, concerned that their employer had published term dates for 2024 that did not align with school holidays. The misalignment of dates was six weeks over the year.

The IEU contacted KU and was advised that the term dates would not be revised and that this was not considered to be a significant change, so no consultation with employees was required.

The union wrote to the CEO to raise concerns that members with children would need to pay for their children to attend vacation care for six weeks, a significant expense for these teachers.

In addition, KU teachers would spend six weeks at home while their children were at school.

KU met with the union via Teams and agreed to change the dates but expected teachers to return on 19 January (school does not resume until 1 February), which would mean teachers would work 208 days despite the KU enterprise agreement stating teachers work a maximum of 204 days.

The union insisted KU teachers would not be working any additional days and eventually KU sent out revised preschool term dates that align with school terms, apart from the two child-free days included in the enterprise agreement.



Funding critical for free kindy

IEU-QNT has called for appropriate funding for the early childhood education sector following the Queensland Government's announcement kindergarten will be free for all children from 2024.

Branch Secretary Terry Burke said while the government's plan recognised the importance of early childhood education, it required adequate funding for the sector.

Mr Burke said our union had sought an urgent meeting with the Department of Education regarding members' serious concerns.

"This includes the Department's understanding of the costs associated with the conditions our members operate

under in collective agreements with their employers," he said.

"For example, our members are unclear on how provisions around Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (HALT) will be met under any future kindergarten funding.

"The Department needs to understand the difference of the operation costs between long day care centres and kindergartens."

Mr Burke said ongoing, long-term funding would be needed to allow centres to employ staff on a continuing basis, as well as provide opportunities for professional development and training to upskill staff and increase job security for our members.

"This critical funding not only ensures the viability of the sector, but means employers no longer have excuses to avoid enhancing the wages and working conditions of early childhood education employees.

"Kindergarten teachers and assistants deserve the professional respect, recognition and remuneration afforded to staff in primary and secondary schools," Mr Burke said.



John Spriggs retires after 28 years

IEU-QNT Senior Industrial Officer John Spriggs recently retired after 28 years of making an immeasurable difference to the lives of IEU members.

In July 1995, John began work as a Senior Industrial Officer at our union, coinciding with the greatest industrial change in Australia's history.

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes said IEU members were fortunate to have John

fighting on their behalf during a time of great uncertainty when Australians faced an overhaul of workplace laws.

"John's steady and guiding hand supported our members as the Australian industrial system moved from centralised wages and conditions to deregulation and enterprise-level negotiations," Brad said.

"He has been a central and leading member of the federal IEU Industrial Committee over the last two decades."

John's contribution to the early childhood education sector throughout his career has been particularly remarkable, having been instrumental in achieving pay parity for early childhood teachers with their schoolteacher counterparts in Queensland.

We thank John for his outstanding service to our union and wish him all the best for his retirement.

Encouraging diversity in the ECEC workforce

Australia is an increasingly multicultural nation, with recent Census data indicating almost one third of Australians were born overseas and 22% of people speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021). At the same time, our ECEC workforce is grappling with severe staff shortages, with national demand estimated to increase 17% by 2025, Emily Campbell writes.

Professor Marilyn Campbell, from Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education has looked at the urgent need for greater diversity in Australia's ECEC workforce and why we must increase efforts to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) preservice teachers to thrive in the profession.

CALD families face barriers

Along with her PhD student Yan Qi, Professor Campbell recently wrote a paper exploring how greater diversity among ECEC staff can address the twin problems of sector staff shortages and unmet multicultural family needs.

"It is recognised that early childhood education is critical for the health, education and welfare of all children," Professor Campbell said.

"Research from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) shows that children from CALD families are less likely to attend an ECEC program than children from English-speaking families, which can negatively impact their academic outcomes," she said.

The reasons for this are varied and complex, ranging from financial disadvantage experienced by refugee and CALD families to language barriers like non-acceptance of bilingualism and a lack of interpreters to assist CALD parents with minimal or no English.

Professor Campbell said in addition to language barriers, cultural barriers presented challenges to children from CALD families transitioning smoothly to ECEC settings.

"Unfamiliarity with the English language, cultural practices of eating and sleeping, differences in play with peers and divergent expectations from adults can all exacerbate the transition," she explained.

"CALD parents can have difficulty too, and there have been studies which show sometimes they will struggle with sending their children to an ECEC centre," Professor Campbell said.

Logistical tasks and knowledge that English-speaking parents might take for granted can prove challenging for CALD parents unfamiliar with how ECEC centres operate.

"These parents may need assistance with administrative tasks like enrolling their children and might be unfamiliar with what needs to be packed in a child's bag to attend kindergarten, pick up and drop off times," Professor Campbell said.

"Additionally, CALD parents may have different expectations or values which might not align with what is being taught.

"For example, in some cultures, parents place higher importance on their children learning to conform, whereas many English-speaking Australian ECEC teachers value children's creativity, individuality and celebrate difference.

"The cultural difference in child-rearing and education can be complicated for parents to grasp, and if they do not speak or understand English, this can be difficult to explain to them.

"It may even lead CALD parents to withdraw their children from ECEC programs," she said.

Diversity benefits everyone

Professor Campbell said the logical solution to this problem is to train and employ more ECEC professionals from CALD communities.

"Not only would it help create culturally safe places for CALD families to confidently bring their children, but it could provide relief to staffing pressures," she said.

"A culturally diverse workforce would be beneficial by allowing CALD children who attend to identify with staff and develop their own identity.

"Not only for CALD children but also children from English-speaking homes, who also must be brought up in and exposed to the multicultural society they'll be living in.

"It is important for children to observe people of all cultures working together.

"If children don't see people of their own ethnicity or speaking their language in positions of trust, love, protection, and power in society, what are they going to think?" she said.

Professor Campbell said some of the existing ECEC staff from CALD backgrounds chose to work in the sector because their higher qualifications in another field, such as engineering or medicine, were obtained overseas and are not recognised in Australia.

This is problematic, as a lack of formal qualifications and career paths for staff in the field can compromise the provision of high-quality ECEC.

“It would seem prudent to train and employ more CALD ECEC staff to alleviate some of these problems and bolster the qualified staff available to work in the sector, given the quality of teachers is widely considered to be the single most important educational variable influencing student achievement,” Professor Campbell said.

“The increasingly demanding nature of their work coupled with the fact that ECEC workers are the 13th lowest paid workers in Australia, has largely contributed to the sector’s staff shortage crisis,” she said.

Professor Campbell said to effect change, there needs to be a cultural shift in how ECEC workers and their contributions are perceived and valued.

“Our culture seems to value university and tertiary level academics by paying them substantially more money and recognition than early childhood teachers.

“While university lecturers are guiding people who already know how to learn, ECEC staff are doing the heavy lifting and have the most effect on shaping children’s development,” Professor Campbell said.

Supporting CALD preservice teachers

While extra funding to increase wages and more staff to alleviate the heavy burden could help overcome some of the staffing issues, the training problems are more complicated to address.

Professor Campbell said the growth of CALD domestic student enrolments in Australia has increased, and this cohort of students faces additional barriers to successfully completing their initial teacher education (ITE) programs.

“Unfortunately, these students tend to fail the practicum components of their ECEC teaching degrees more frequently than their Anglo-Australian peers,” she said.

“Educational practices are often very different from the country of origin, so they can have difficulty navigating tertiary study.

“Many of them experience concerns related to their English language proficiency and how to speak to the parents and carers of children they are teaching.

“The English language is so nuanced and difficult, and not just the grammar – native speakers pick up on nuances, but missed nuances, particularly during practicums, can lead to huge misunderstandings.

“In some cultures which value conformity, students may not be seen to take initiative because they were not given explicit permission or instructed by the supervising teacher to do something, like getting paint supplies from the cupboard ahead of an art lesson.

Steps to support

To better support CALD preservice ECEC teachers and help them thrive in the classroom, Professor Campbell and Yan Qi’s paper suggests the following ways to enhance ITE:

- pre-practicum programs for CALD students
- training for practicum supervisors
- cultural competence teaching for all, and
- inclusive education experienced by CALD students at university.

“Cultural competence training, for both university staff and practicum supervising teachers, would allow diversity to be embraced and viewed as a strength, rather than a setback,” Professor Campbell said.

“Although existing pre-practicum programs to assist CALD students have reportedly been beneficial, many of them, paradoxically, try to have students change to fit in, as though they are a problem to be fixed.

“To be culturally competent, one must be aware and respectful of cultural differences and skills shown through behaviour and attitude to teaching students from different cultural backgrounds,” she said.

Professor Campbell said more research is needed into the experiences of and barriers faced by CALD workers in the ECEC sector.

“As acknowledged by the Productivity Commission, we need to promote and support a diverse and educated ECEC workforce,” she said.

“In such a multicultural society like Australia, it has to be a given,” Professor Campbell said.

Read the full research paper at:
journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/18369391221104353

Reference

Qi, Y. and Campbell, M. (2022). Encouraging diversity in the early childhood education and care workforce. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 47(3), 233–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18369391221104353>





Connecting with nature at bush kindy **key considerations for educators**

Nature-based play and learning have grown significantly in popularity over recent years, with nature-based Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs capturing the attention of families and educators across Australia, Katie Fotheringham writes.

University of South Australia researcher and PhD candidate Kylie Dankiw recently explored parent and early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals' perspectives of unstructured nature play by interviewing ECEC staff and parents.

Dankiw said the concept is simple – nature play is fundamentally about playing with, and, in nature.

“Broadly speaking, nature play is about getting dirty, making mud pies, cubby houses from sticks, exploring a creek bed or climbing trees – or whatever a child chooses to do,” Dankiw said.

“One interesting finding from our research highlighted that for staff, nature play spaces can be mixed play spaces, with aspects of artificial features balanced with natural features.

“ECEC staff described how nature

play can be used to offset technology use, such as TV and screens, resulting in children forming a connection to the natural world where they can learn about sustainable practices,” she said.

Boosting children's outcomes

With many early childhood settings transforming play environments to incorporate natural elements, the rise in popularity may be attributed to growing research that nature play provides children with numerous health and developmental benefits.

A recent study from Deakin University found preschool aged children who participate in “bush kinder” programs could have better education outcomes than those who stay indoors – with children who attended those programs building a deeper understanding of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

Deakin School of Education research fellow Chris Speldewinde said girls in particular benefitted from engaging in non-gendered outdoor play because it allowed greater freedom to play

creatively with unstructured natural features.

“Unstructured, outdoor play allows girls and boys to put away their dolls and stuffed toys and interact creatively with the environment around them to learn crucial STEM fundamentals,” Speldewinde said.

Employee perspectives on nature play

While there is growing research about the benefits of nature play to children's health and development, Dankiw's research aims to address the knowledge gap in how staff experience and are supported to foster nature play at work.

Dankiw said staff act as important gatekeepers when it comes to nature play, and while they can see the benefits firsthand, they may be presented with challenges when encouraging unstructured nature play.

“During the interviews, they consistently described how engaging in nature play activities is beneficial for children's overall health and development – specifically, learning outcomes, developing a sense of self,

physical, emotional, and cognitive development such as imagination and creativity,” she said.

“These staff also described several barriers that influence their engagement with nature play, such as weather (cold, rain, extreme heat in summer), institutional challenges relating to following safety regulations, having to clean and maintain the play space, and having enough time in the day to do so.

“The findings suggest that parents and staff may need additional resources and guidance on how to engage with nature play and overcome barriers within early childhood settings and the home environment,” Dankiw said.

Balancing risks and benefits

For workers in the sector who are already faced with growing workloads and increased bureaucratisation within their roles, the unstructured, risky and messy nature of this kind of play may be off-putting without access to adequate support or training.

“Our research found that often staff feel conflicted – they want to provide these experiences but feel they need to listen to what the parent wants whilst adhering to the safety regulations of the institution,” Dankiw said.

“Staff highlighted that it is important to educate parents and institutions about the real versus perceived risks and to communicate the benefits on how they alleviate real risks instead of removing them completely.

“During our interviews, we also found that scheduling nature play experiences can be challenging when other important tasks compete for staff’s time, such as cleaning, supervising and admin work,” Dankiw said.

Strategies for embracing nature play

Dankiw said staff who participated in her research outlined strategies that may help parents and institutions embrace nature play.

“Some strategies include making sure children have appropriate wet weather gear (rain jackets, gum boots), play space upgrades, having resources available in inclement weather such as spare clothes and communicating the sensory benefits of mud and water play for children’s development,” Dankiw said.

“Parents and ECE staff alike highlighted that nature play can be indoors as well, and being able to deliver nature play indoors might be a great option when faced with weather challenges.



“To address time constraints, it may be useful for educational leaders to revise their scheduling structures to create dedicated time for nature play,” she said.

Dankiw said involving parents in conversations about nature play could also help mitigate the perception of nature play as a risky activity, with fears of child injuries and liability found to be the main deterrents to engaging.

“Enhancing communication between staff, parents and within institutions can be achieved by engaging in open discussions or forums regarding nature play programming, risk assessments, and play space upgrades within their centres or schools,” Dankiw said.

“By involving parents, educational leaders and institutions in this process and seeking their support, we can foster community involvement and collaboration in promoting nature play for the wellbeing of children,” she said.

Importance of relevant PD

Dankiw said undertaking nature play-related personal development (PD) may also enhance the practice and minimise risks for staff.

“Educational leaders may be able to enhance training and resourcing efforts by building partnerships with local nature play organisations, thereby leveraging their expertise and resources to support their professional development,” Dankiw said.

“These partnerships can help provide support in terms of facilitating nature play experiences, training staff on the safe delivery of nature play and building educator knowledge,” she said.

“Nature Play Australia has some great online resources for staff to help guide nature play delivery, such as guidance documents for creating nature play spaces and professional learning opportunities in the form of workshops and seminars.

“The PD aims to build staff knowledge and confidence to deliver an outdoor learning curriculum and explore important topics like risk, wellbeing and belonging,” Dankiw said.

Read Dankiw’s study at: journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0286468

New Bluey nature play resources

ABC Kids have just released a suite of resources for early education based around everyone’s favourite cartoon dog, *Bluey*.

The resources include creative ideas for incorporating *Bluey* episodes into ECEC nature play planning and practice.

The resources can be accessed at: www.abc.net.au/abckids/early-education/bluey-early-education-resources/nature-play

“We can see that going beyond the fenceline of the preschool offers so much richness for everyone.”



Encounters with place: **Valla Beach**

Valla Community Preschool is situated in a beachside village on Gumbaynggirr country, on the mid north coast of NSW. Director Phillippa Maher writes about their experiences taking the children outside the preschool gates.

I have been teaching at the preschool since 2005 and during that time it has always had a strong sense of wanting to be ‘in with’ the community.

Way back in 2005, we would take the children on regular walks, visiting the local café, watching the trains go by, posting letters in the local red post box, meeting residents working or relaxing in their gardens, watching building construction happening, exploring the parks, and bird watching in the local nature reserve. This engagement with our community opened up many ways for the children to connect with and be active citizens.

Over time we saw the many benefits of being out and about – for the children and for our community. The local Community Association invited the children to help deliver the *Valla Views* to several streets. The children happily accepted the offer to be ‘posties’.

Community initiatives

Since those early days there have been several community initiatives that the children have taken up: the café, pharmacy and community market use our Boomerang Bags sewn at the preschool.

The children regularly collect the ground coffee from the café for our compost bins and gardens (and now many community members share this task because they see the benefits of re-using this resource) and the children sell ‘worm wee’ to the community and use the profits to purchase chicken food for their beloved chicken family.

We have noticed how children weave together everything that happens in their lives – within their family, within preschool, within the community. We can see that going beyond the fenceline of the preschool offers so much richness for everyone.

‘Place-based education’ is a term used by Sobel (2004) to describe the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts across the entire curriculum. At Valla Community Preschool, walks



are an important part of curriculum. When children are ‘in with’ their community, they extend their earth-knowledge and love of place.

Sobel believes that this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps children develop stronger ties to their community, enhances their appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.

The team at Valla Preschool felt that children’s (and their own) idea of place should be nourished and should be meaningful. However, there was one place that they had never explored as a preschool – the beach.

In 2015, we took the step of starting regular beach preschool days and have never looked back! It was such a success, beach preschool is now a regular part of the curriculum. Families drop their children at the beach to start their preschool day.

We have had many opportunities of connecting with our community through Gaagal Guul (meaning ‘Beach School’ in the Gumbaynggirr language). A dear friend from the UNKYA Land Council, Aunty Belinda Donovan, would spend time with us there regularly, and she supported us to rename this part of our program.

The children added a line to their daily Acknowledgement: “We promise to look after the gaagal”.

Attention to nature

Gaagal Guul creates opportunities for friendship, connection and a growing ecological identity. We know that children’s ecological identity is nurtured when we instil an attitude of attention to what exists in the natural world in their neighbourhood.

We have also had local Gumbaynggirr member, Bernard Kelly-Edwards (BKE), who is our Artist in Residence, join

us, including for fishing off the bridge, and we have had Landcare join us to look at erosion and consider ways we can help look after the gaagal.

Regular Gaagal Guul provides a wonderful opportunity for children, families and educators to connect to the beautiful Gumbaynggirr land as well as each other. The team also notice how much more connected the group are to each other when in nature. We see them follow interests together, create play and games of pretend, share ideas and plans, and help each other to notice things.

The walk back to preschool connects us even more to our community. One of the regular tasks that children do on their return walk is to collect rubbish that they see along their walk.

They have special tools and a rubbish bag (re-purposed from an old chicken grain bag). We have created signs for the community about rubbish, and even have council authorisation to create stencils for the kerb and gutter drains, with messages to their community about protecting waterways.

Regular encounters build children’s heart connection with Valla Beach. We know that unless we have a relationship with the land, it is hard to protect it.

Establishing a relationship with the beach has offered an opportunity for being, appreciating, and meaningfully learning about history and culture. It offers opportunities for discovering and wanting to learn more about coastal bush tucker, shore birds, ocean animals, and sustainability issues.

Reference

Sobel David, 2004, *Play Based Education*, Orion, www.davidsobelauthor.com/place-based-education

Seed to table kitchen garden



Hamilton Child Care Centre was a winner of the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Environment Grant, sponsored by Teachers Mutual Bank, in 2022. Director Kylie Kirrage and teacher Alexander Sutherland write about what the grant means to their centre.

Hamilton Child Care Centre (HCCC) is a not-for-profit, community-led early childhood education and care service. Situated in the heart of Newcastle NSW on Awabakal land. Our service caters for children from birth to five years.

Uniquely, we have a family grouped model of 36 children enjoying many wonderful spaces within our federation house and beautiful garden surrounds.

When we discovered this grant, we thought it would be a great way to transform our garden space into a more welcoming and teachable area, an opportunity to reduce our water usage as well as supply more produce to our onsite kitchen. Better still, it could help embed the Awabakal way of being and knowing, 'stop, look and listen'.

When we won the grant, we decided to revitalise the existing vegetable/fruit garden. The mission was to create a more useable, intentional learning and teaching space while also improving the quality of fresh

food for our onsite kitchen. We wanted a child-friendly work and mindfulness space in our existing garden and to reduce water usage by adding a drip irrigation system.

The revitalisation of the existing garden has created a dynamic and sustainable learning environment, engaging children in nature, care for and connection to Country, food production, environmental stewardship, and healthy living. The garden fosters a sense of connection to the natural world and empowers children to make informed decisions that positively impact their wellbeing for the planet.

Caring for Country

Caring for, and a connecting to Country happens on a daily basis as our garden requires consistent care and maintenance. Our daily hands-on work teaches children valuable lessons about responsibility and nurturing. We water our seedlings and plants, we pull out weeds, we protect against pests, and we observe changes in everything growing in our garden. The garden instils a sense of ownership, empathy, and patience. Our children learn about the interdependence of plants and animals, the importance of biodiversity,

and the role each organism plays in maintaining ecological harmony. We know our children clearly understand the importance of the relationship humans have with the natural environment beyond the physical form, especially when the garden can be used as a rest and relaxation space.

The children's knowledge and experiences and the service's goals in relation to our sustainability strategy are being envisaged through hands-on learning as we actively participate in planting, nurturing, and harvesting our food. All of this happens in a relaxed and welcoming space and our children gain practical knowledge about plant life cycles, nutrition, and the importance of sustainable food production.

Our upgraded garden promotes healthy eating for our children as they witness the growth and transformation of vegetables from seed to table, encouraging them to try fresh produce and develop a preference for nutritious foods. The children quite literally take pride in eating the 'fruits (and vegetables) of their labour'.

The garden also serves as a platform to deepen children's understanding of sustainable practices and environmental awareness as they learn about waste reduction and recycling practices. Composting, recycling, and reducing waste by observing how organic waste can be transformed into compost to enrich the soil. We work together to instil responsible waste management habits in our children.

Cultivating our own food provides nutritious ingredients for delicious and healthy meals, ensuring the children have access to fresh, locally sourced, and nutritious food. This helps reduce the service's reliance on external food supplies and supports a more sustainable and self-efficient approach.

The children are able to relax in the garden, tend to their seedlings, ensure our kitchen is always supplied with an abundance of fresh herbs, salad greens and vegetables and talk with friends and educators about their work.

There's nothing better than taste testing on the way from garden to plate, a healthy and delicious treat. Thanks to the IEU Environment Grant, our vision of creating a more welcoming and user friendly space in the garden has become a reality.

Aboriginal Connections Bush Tucker Education



Thurgoona Preschool (in an outer suburb of Albury NSW) was awarded an IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Environment Grant in 2022, sponsored by Teachers Mutual Bank.

Thurgoona Preschool's Aboriginal Connections/Bush Tucker Education project creates a space for Aboriginal connections to occur in the natural environment. It educates children, families and staff on the benefits and values of a bush tucker garden and how it can be used to connect to the land within the preschool.

Educational Leader/Teacher Mel Symington said the project had brought community connection, learning and excitement for the children, teachers and families.

The Aboriginal Connections/Bush Tucker Education project involved planting a bush tucker garden with the help of some First Nations families attending the centre.

Children, teachers and educators have been involved in the creation of the garden, caring for the plants and the picking and cooking of the food.

The project also strengthened the preschool's connection with James Fallon High School.

Students from the Wiradjuri Dance Troupe came to the Thurgoona Twilight Preschool and performed some traditional dances at the garden's opening.

"It is a great opportunity to connect with our local community and build relationships. This will be an ongoing relationship with the preschool and high school," Mel said.

"At Thurgoona Preschool we have a yarning circle and chose to place the bush tucker garden alongside this to bring connections and more understanding and meaning.

"The Bush Tucker Garden was a space that we could embed within our programs to educate all the children. They can learn how to cook, prepare meals and learn about history and connect it back to the land," she said.

"The children have been very much a part of the Bush Tucker Garden from the beginning. They helped prepare the space when we began bringing in all the garden beds and the children were planting and learning about each plant, sharing discussions with the teachers.

"The children have become responsible, learning that we need to water the plants to enable the plants to grow. Many of the children went up to the gardens each day or each week when they arrived at preschool and would check to see how much they are growing."

Mel said the bush tucker garden is part of the preschool's Quality Improvement Plan and Reconciliation Action Plan. A gardener researched

the types of food that could be planted, including:

- sea celery
- yam daisy
- chocolate lily
- tetragonia tetragonoides (Warrigal spinach)
- bush basil
- enchylaena (ruby saltbush), and
- rare fruit tree.

More traditional herbs, fruits and vegetables were grown alongside the bush tucker garden.

"Our vision was for a space for children, teachers and families to explore and walk through and take time to reflect, make connections and learn about the biodiversity of the land.

"Enabling children to eat the foods they have grown, become active members within the preschool community in caring for the environment and taking responsibilities in maintaining the environment is important in learning new skills of how to care for the plants and working together with their peers and educators.

"We wanted to keep a space that was sustainable but also practical, so it will be an ongoing project that we can refresh for many years to come," Mel said.

How assertiveness in the workplace can protect your mental health

To feel empowered in the workplace, it is important to know when you have the right to say 'no', without apology or reservation and assert your rights, Katie Fotheringham writes.

Many members who work in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector are drawn to the profession because they love working with children and are caring and compassionate people who want to make a difference every day at work.

ECEC is a highly feminised profession, and a recent study from the University of Waterloo in Canada found women tend to apologise more often because they have a lower threshold than men for what they consider offensive.

While apologising when necessary is undoubtedly a strength, according to psychologists, needless apologies can minimise accomplishments, make us feel small and

diminish what we are trying to express, which in turn can impact wellbeing at work and lead to burnout.

How often are you apologising?

How often are you saying 'I'm sorry' while at work every day? For example, 'I'm sorry I couldn't finish this task in time, I'm sorry to ask but I need some extra help to supervise this activity, I'm sorry I've been caught up with a child and am running late to our meeting'.

Monique Roosen, IEU-QNT Industrial Services Officer, said the first step to reducing needless apologies is practising self-awareness.

"It may be beneficial for members to consider what kind of situations in which they find themselves apologising," she said.

"By identifying certain situations or individuals that cause over-apologising, members can start to understand areas



of their work that are causing them stress, where they may need extra support or advice from our union,” Monique said.

Changing your vocabulary in these situations from “I’m sorry” to phrases like “I appreciate your patience” or “I need your support with”, can be an important first step in ensuring you are not frequently minimising yourselves or taking the blame for things you can’t control.

When is it okay to say ‘no’

Monique said while members are required to follow any legal direction of their employers, it is important to be vigilant about workplace rights and entitlements.

“Employees have a legal right to refuse to undertake work where they are working in an unsafe working environment, whether it’s physical or psychosocial,” she said.

“If something doesn’t feel right, or you are unsure about your legal rights at work, we always encourage members to contact our union and speak with one of our officers to discuss your rights to refuse work,” Monique said.

Psychosocial Code of Practice

In recent times, it has become more apparent that workplace hazards are not always physical, and hazards that may present a risk to our psychosocial health and safety are equally as significant for employees.

Monique said that Safe Work Australia recently published a model code of practice, *Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work*, which puts the onus on employers to manage hazards which may present a risk to employees’ psychosocial health.

“All states and territories except Victoria have implemented ‘model’ work health and safety laws aimed at harmonising different jurisdictions, with some states implementing the Code as law,” she said.

“A Queensland employer is legally obliged under the section 26A of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011 (QLD) (WHS Act)* to comply with codes of practice, like the *Managing the risk of Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace Code of Practice*.

“The employer must either have complying workplace policies or use the *Managing the risk of Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace* code of practice when managing psychosocial hazards.

“Other jurisdictions do not provide the legal obligation in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* to comply with codes of practice and are seen as contemporary best practice, but not essential for the employer to comply with.

“Employers across the country are increasingly legally required to mitigate psychosocial hazards within workplaces, and recent developments signal a future in which all Australian employers could face criminal prosecution if they fail to adequately protect employees’ mental health.

“Some examples of psychosocial hazards include low job control, high job demands, poor support, poor organisational change management and low recognition and reward,” Monique said.

Unsurprisingly, many aspects of a teacher’s work life and environment could constitute a psychosocial hazard: unmanageable workloads; exposure to challenging behaviour; and inadequate support.

Preventing burnout

Monique said the model code of practice can serve as a valuable tool for members in ensuring they are not repeatedly being subjected to situations at work that risk damaging their mental health or lead to burnout.

“The code means employees have a tool they can use to manage psychosocial hazards, like burnout and bullying in the workplace,” she said.

“There is a strong emphasis in the code that psychosocial hazards must be managed at the workplace between the employer and employee, but the overarching responsibility rests with the employer regarding work health and safety matters identified in WHS legislation.

“Where such a policy does not exist in a workplace and employees are willing to develop a psychosocial hazards policy, we would encourage employees to seek industrial advice from our union in the development of any policies,” Monique said.

Wellbeing provisions for ECEC workers

Monique said while some wellbeing provisions are in place, initiatives are not commonplace across the sector.

“Certain collective agreements in Queensland (like Creche and Kindergarten Association and Lady Gowrie Inc) have one wellbeing day paid per annum and also reference to an employee assistance program (EAP) that employees may access for their

wellbeing,” Monique said.

“However, those working for smaller employers like affiliate kindergarten services may not have an EAP they can access for their wellbeing.

“Wellbeing initiatives for the sector are sorely lacking – further work in this space is needed with the assistance of government, particularly for small workplaces.

“Our union will continue to work with, and listen to members to ensure workers are provided with the wellbeing support those working in such a demanding industry deserve,” she said.

Advice for members

Monique said members should always contact our union for advice relevant to wellbeing provisions or psychosocial hazards.

“If workload is an issue, members can say ‘no’ to their employer,” she said.

“However, if burnout is seriously affecting your health, we advise members to seek medical advice from your general medical practitioner.

“...recent developments signal a future in which all Australian employers could face criminal prosecution if they fail to adequately protect employees’ mental health”

What to do if you are being bullied

If you work in ECEC, you're at high risk of being bullied. Research by Macquarie University last year found workplace bullying in the ECEC sector is a "pervasive and significant issue in Australia and globally".

A study conducted by Roy Morgan, the *State of Work 2018*, revealed those working in the ECEC sector were the second most likely of all employment sectors surveyed to report bullying, with 40.6% claiming to have experienced bullying.

ECEC came second only to those working in farming, where 52.6% of respondents experienced bullying behaviour in the workplace.

What is bullying?

The *Fair Work Act* says that a worker is bullied if an individual or group of individuals repeatedly behave unreasonably towards a worker and that behaviour creates a risk to their health and safety. It is irrelevant whether the person bullying another intended to do so. The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch has produced a checklist of bullying behaviours:

What to do if you're being bullied

1. Provide details of the perpetrator/s of the alleged bullying and harassment.
2. Document times, dates, places that the alleged bullying and harassment behaviour occurred and names of any witnesses that may be able to corroborate the alleged behaviour.
3. Provide specific details of the alleged bullying and harassment in line with the following types of behaviour:
 - abusive/insulting/offensive language or comments
 - making derogatory comments or taunts about someone's race
 - asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life, including his or her sex life
 - aggressive and intimidating conduct
 - belittling or humiliating comments
 - victimisation
 - practical jokes
 - unjustified criticism/complaints

- deliberate exclusion from work-related activities
- withholding of information that is vital for effective work performance
- setting unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level
- denial of access to information/supervision/consultation/resources to the detriment of the employee
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours, and
- changing work arrangements/rosters/leave to deliberately inconvenience an employee.

4. Document the effect on you of the alleged bullying and harassment behaviours, for example:
 - distress, anxiety, panic attacks, depression
 - physical illness, for example headaches, fatigue, muscular tension, insomnia, high blood pressure
 - loss of self-esteem or self-confidence, and
 - feelings of isolation.

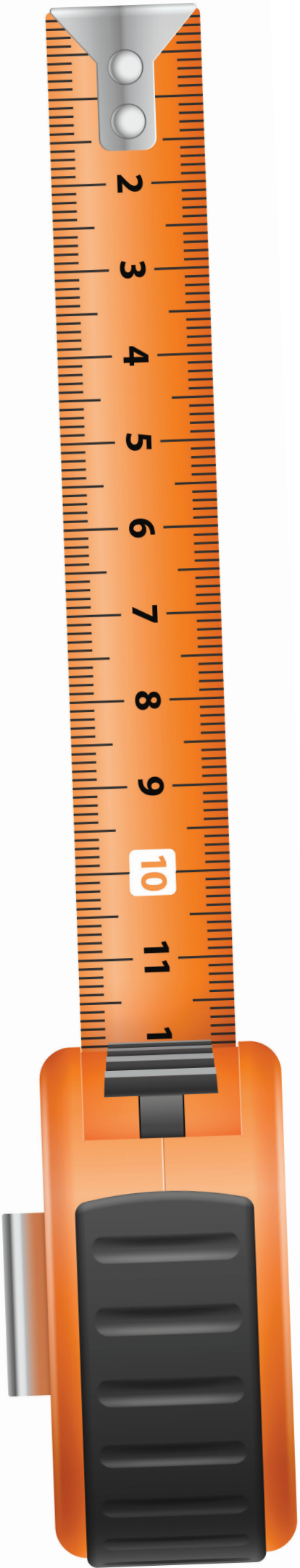
5. Provide details of your desired result from the employer relating to the alleged bullying and harassment behaviour. What outcome are you seeking?

If you think you are being bullied, contact our IEU organiser for advice.

References

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	Actions	Requirement
Direct bullying	Behaviour/Language	Frightens, humiliates, belittles, degrades Yelling or screaming Abusive, insulting or offensive
	Inappropriate comments	Comments about appearance, lifestyle or family
	Teasing	Pranks or practical jokes
	Interference	Interfering with personal property or work equipment
	Spreading rumours	Misinformation or malicious spreading of rumours
	Initiation Displays	Harmful or offensive initiation practices Display offensive material
Indirect bullying	Work arrangements	Deliberately changing rosters, lunchbreaks or leave to inconvenience worker
	Unfair treatment	Not being able to access workplace entitlements eg leave, training
	Exclusion	Deliberate exclusion, isolation of person from normal work activities
	Deadlines	Setting timelines that are difficult to achieve, constantly changing timelines
	Criticism	Constant unjustified criticism or complaints
	Threats	Constant threats to sack or demote
	Rule enforcement	Inconsistent and arbitrary enforcement of rules
	Workload	Overloading person
	Task setting	Setting tasks unreasonably below or beyond person's skill level
	Denial of access	Deliberately denying access to information, consultation or resources
	Withholding Information	Withholding information vital for effective work
	Credit	Taking credit for an employee's work and failing to acknowledge the employee
Impact of bullying	Work Performance	Excessive scrutiny of work performance (micro-management)
	Physical illness	Muscular tension, headaches, digestive problems
	Deteriorating relationships	With colleagues, family and friends
	Pain or suffering	Distress, anxiety, panic attacks and sleep disturbance
What is not bullying	Self opinion	Loss of self esteem, feeling isolated
	Mood	Depression, risk of suicide
	Work performance	Reduced work performance
	Performance management	Setting performance goals, standards and deadlines Informing employee about unsatisfactory work performance Performance management processes Giving constructive feedback Allocating work to an employee Rostering and allocating working hours
	Transfer	Transferring an employee
	Promotion	Non-selection of employee for promotion
	Organisational change	Implementing organisational change Downsizing of personnel
	Inappropriate behaviour notification	Informing an employee about inappropriate behaviour



How can we measure child/teacher interactions?

Connections between educators, teachers and children are crucial in ECEC, but how can they be quantified? Sue Osborne looks at a formal method to analyse these interactions, devised in the Netherlands and currently being explored in Australia by a team at Macquarie University.

Dutch researchers developed the Caregivers Interaction Profile Scale (CIPS) as an efficient way of assessing a caregiver's skills while interacting with a group of children.

In their research paper *Measuring the Interactive Skills of Caregivers in Child Care Centers: Development and Validation of the Caregiver Interaction Profile Scales 2014*, the Dutch researchers said their aim was to develop an instrument to meet certain requirements without disrupting the work of the service too much.

Firstly, the measure should be relatively time efficient so that it can be completed by a single researcher during a single centre visit. Secondly, the measure should assess individual teachers' skills in interacting with a group of children, considering the teacher's ability to divide their attention and react consistently across the group.

Thirdly, the same measure should be applicable to teachers' interactions with children across the whole age range of 0-4 years.

Fourth and finally, the measure should be theory based and supported by empirical evidence, underscoring the fact that relevant aspects of caregiver-child interaction contribute to the wellbeing and development of children. CIPS uses six measures to assess the nature of the interaction:

1. Sensitive responsiveness refers to the extent to which a teacher recognises children's individual emotional and physical needs and responds appropriately and promptly to their cues and signals.
2. Respect for autonomy refers to the extent to which a teacher is non-intrusive but instead recognises and respects the validity of children's intentions and perspectives.
3. Structuring and limit setting refers to the ability of a teacher to clearly communicate expectations toward children and structure the situation accordingly, and to set clear and consistent limits on the children's behaviour.
4. Verbal communication refers to the frequency and quality of verbal



interactions between teacher and children.

5. Developmental stimulation concerns the degree to which a teacher deliberately attempts to foster children's development (eg motor skills, cognitive development and creativity).
6. Fostering positive peer interactions refers to a teacher's guidance of interactions between children in the centre.

Each of the six skills are rated on a seven-point scale based on observations of videos of teacher/child interactions.

An interaction profile is drawn up for individual teachers that may be used for education and training purposes to improve the quality of educator/child interactions.

Given the positive relationship that has been shown between ECEC quality and the developmental outcomes of children, higher scores on the CIP scales should predict higher levels of competence and fewer social-emotional problems in the children.

The Dutch researchers assessed 145 teachers from 75 groups in 47 services. In total, 698 children from 0-4-year-olds participated in this study. A total of 55 teachers worked in infant

groups (0-2-year-olds; 30 groups), 56 teachers worked in preschool groups (2-4-year-olds; 29 groups), and 34 teachers worked in mixed-age groups (0-4-year-olds; 16 groups). All teachers from a selected classroom were invited to participate in the study using an active consent procedure.

Each group was visited by two trained researchers. The visit lasted from about 8am until after lunch. The interactions were recorded on video.

Three months later, the groups participating in the repeat measurement were visited by one researcher, who filmed the teachers following the same procedure that was used during the first visit. The retest visits were planned on the same day of the week as the first visit for optimal comparison. After the retest visit, the teachers also completed a questionnaire to collect individual background information.

Multilevel analysis showed that the largest part of the variance in teacher skills resided at the teacher level. This suggests that teacher behaviour is for the most part determined by individual teacher characteristics, with less influence of group and centre characteristics.

The variation between teachers was quite large, especially regarding

sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, and verbal communication. This implies that children may experience large differences in the quality of interactions with different teachers in one and the same group, which makes it worthwhile to measure teacher behaviour at an individual level and consider the behaviour of different teachers when rating the quality of care experienced by children in a group.

The researchers concluded that variation in quality between caregivers is important in children's wellbeing and development.

The researchers developed a six-week video feedback training program for teachers to improve their interactive skills based on the six CIPS scales.

The researchers suggested the training could be developed so teachers could send their recording to an online forum and receive feedback on their interactions that way.

Reference

www.researchgate.net/publication/262008201_Measuring_the_Interactive_Skills_of_Caregivers_in_Child_Care_Centers_Development_and_Validation_of_the_Caregiver_Interaction_Profile_Scales

Changing pathways to becoming a teacher

There is a significant shortage of early childhood teachers in Australia, so removing barriers to obtaining the degree are welcome, Sue Osborne writes.

At the end of 2022, the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch held a Reality Roundtable, attended by Federal Early Childhood Education Minister Dr Anne Aly.

During the workshop, teachers talked about the difficulties they faced obtaining their degree, having to do unpaid practicums, and ending up with HELP debts they struggle to repay.

Pathways to teacher qualification range from a four-year full-time degree at Macquarie University in Sydney to a one-year online course at Swinburne University in Melbourne. Some courses focus on the 0–6 years age group, while others cover 0–12 years.

At face value, a one-year course sounds like a good option, bearing in mind the financial burden a degree places on a teacher. However, the IEU opposes anything that undermines the professional standing of early education teachers and threatens the quality of the education they provide.

Associate Professor Marianne Fenech, Program Director of Early Childhood Education at the University of Sydney, said, “In the absence of an evidence base about which approaches to initial teacher education (ITE) courses best prepare teachers, the impact of the introduction of fast-tracked courses as a solution to the crisis is unclear. It may prove effective for the pipeline, but how will it affect the quality of the pipeline?”

“In an Australian study that investigated employer perspectives of how well prepared graduates are to teach in early years’ settings, participants indicated a preference to employ graduates of 0–5 rather than 0–12 programs. Participants also noted the value of these graduates having vocational training, yet what is not clear is whether upskilling from a diploma to a teacher qualification in one year is enough to ensure quality graduates,” Associate Professor Fenech said.

“The recent *Exemplary Educators in ECEC* study highlighted key differences in what informs the practice of diploma educators and degree-qualified teachers. While

their dispositions and skills informed the practice of participants from both groups, teachers notably also drew on knowledge and theory.

Diploma v degree

“The Australian Qualifications Framework stipulates requirements for each qualification level, including diploma (level 5) and degree (level 7) qualifications. Importantly, the Framework sets a pathway for progression, not duplication. In other words, degrees are to support greater cognitive and more well-developed graduate attributes than diploma qualifications.

“It is unclear whether experience in the sector as a diploma-qualified educator translates to the achieving of intended higher-order outcomes for degree-qualified teachers. Given high attrition rates, and variability of quality across services, to suggest that experience as a diploma educator can be translated to teacher-equivalent knowledge and skills, requires investigation.

“Without a clear evidence base, there is a real danger that fast-tracking will diminish the profession; the need for rigorous and specialist teacher preparation; and potentially in the minds of politicians and the public more broadly, the need for teachers in early years contexts,” Associate Professor Fenech said.

“Research that addresses these knowledge gaps is urgently needed. Currently there is a paucity of research to inform ACECQA’s decision making about which programs should be accredited, and what features initial teacher education programs need to have to be accredited.

“There are also calls to water down ECEC teacher requirements in NSW, due to a perception that they are not making a difference. These findings beg the question of whether the diverse approaches to initial teacher education programs all support quality graduates, and if not, which ones do and which ones don’t.

“The ECT workforce crisis requires multiple, creative, and innovative approaches to not only building the supply of the workforce in Australia but building the supply of a quality workforce. And we need an evidence base to inform this critical work,” Associate Professor Fenech said.

“Without a clear evidence base, there is a real danger that fast-tracking will diminish the profession; the need for rigorous and specialist teacher preparation; and potentially in the minds of politicians and the public more broadly, the need for teachers in early years contexts,”

New report highlights need to invest in nurturing care

A new World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report reinforces the need to increase investment in nurturing care for young children, particularly those in disadvantaged and developing nations, Emily Campbell writes.

Members will be aware that the early experiences in a child's life shape their health, growth, learning, behaviour and relationships later in life, with 80 per cent of neural development occurring between pregnancy to three years of age.

The report tracks progress against the global Nurturing Care Framework, launched in 2018 by WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank Group, along with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) and the Early Childhood Development Action Network.

Nurturing Care Framework

The report reflects on the last five years since the Framework was established, documenting achievement and presenting areas for future action.

The framework was designed to help practitioners and policymakers support nurturing care and education and improve early childhood development at scale and is complemented by a handbook, practice guide, thematic briefs, country profile and a website which members will find of interest.

It promotes an integrated approach to early childhood development

covering health, safety, security, early learning and responsive caregiving as essential areas for interventions.

Head of Child Health and Development at WHO, Dr Bernadette Daelmans, said nurturing care and education lays the foundations for healthy brain development, which has lifelong benefits for learning, health and wellbeing.

"To improve children's health, we must not only focus on meeting their immediate physical needs but also ensure they can learn effectively and develop positive, emotionally rewarding relations with people around them," she said.

The framework provides guidance for supporting the healthy physical, intellectual and emotional development of young children and outlines five strategic actions:

- lead and invest
- focus on families and their communities
- strengthen services
- monitor progress, and
- scale up and innovate.

Positive progress but greater investment needed

Director of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing at WHO, Dr Anshu Banerjee, said while the latest report shows encouraging

progress, greater investment is needed in these foundational early years so children everywhere have the best possible start for a healthy life.

"Early childhood development provides a critical window to improve health and well-being across life – with impacts that resonate even into the next generation," he said.

The report says in the past five years, political commitment to early childhood development has increased, with almost 50 per cent more countries having developed related policies or plans and expanding services.

More than 80 per cent of responding countries have reported training frontline workers to support families in providing responsive caregiving and early learning activities.

However, increased investments are needed to scale up services and demonstrate impact, particularly in vulnerable populations.

Providing support for children with developmental delays and addressing caregiver psychosocial wellbeing are part of this agenda.

Cohesive effort is required to enable environments for early childhood development across various sectors.

The report notes family-friendly policies supporting equitable access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education and care is crucial, something our union has long campaigned for.

WHO has rolled out two new measures for improving data on progress – the *Early Childhood Development Index 2030* and the *Global Scales for Early Development* – which can now be used to assess early childhood development starting soon after birth.

Members can access the full report and learn more about the Nurturing Care Framework online at www.nurturing-care.org



Monique Roosen is an Industrial Officer for IEU-QNT. Tina Smith is an Organiser for the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch. They answer your industrial and legal questions as they relate to state laws and regulations.

Dear Monique

I have been employed with the same employer for 10 years. My personal circumstances have changed, and I am caring for my elderly parents. I need to ask for a flexible working arrangement from my employer. What do I do?

Michelle



Monique Roosen

Dear Michelle

Under Section 65 of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, you may request to work a flexible working arrangement because of: pregnancy; caring responsibilities of a school-aged

child or younger; you are a carer; you have a disability; you are aged 55 or older; are experiencing family or domestic violence; or returning to work from a period of parental leave.

The request must be made in writing to your employer, outlining:

- the circumstances for your request
- that you are seeking a change in your employment because of those circumstances
- the details of the change, and/or
- the date of return to your current position.

Your union can assist you with drafting a letter to your employer requesting a flexible working arrangement. Once you are satisfied with the letter, it would then be forwarded to your employer.

After receiving your request, your employer must hold a discussion with you regarding your request for a flexible working arrangement. If after that discussion, the employer must confirm in writing, within 21 days, either their acceptance or refusal of the request.

If the details of the change differ from your request, and the employer agrees, then the details of the flexible working arrangement must be confirmed in writing.

If the employer refuses your request for a flexible working arrangement, it must be on 'reasonable business grounds'. Employers might argue that it is too costly for the employer or there is no capacity to change the working arrangements of other employees to accommodate the new working arrangements requested.

If you disagree with the employer's refusal, then a dispute may be raised with the Fair Work Commission regarding your request for a flexible working arrangement.

We recommend that you contact your union about your request for a flexible working arrangement.

Monique

Dear Tina

I am a four-year trained teacher currently paid at Level 2. I attained proficiency late 2021. I have been working casually for the past two years with a small number of long day centres. I feel I should soon be eligible to move to Level 3 but am not sure what I should do.

Kelly



Tina Smith

Dear Kelly

In the case of a casual employee, the equivalent of a full-time year of teaching service is 200 full casual days or 1520 hours (7.6 hours x 200). For you to progress to a Level 3 you must accumulate a total of 600 full

casual days. You must keep accurate records of the hours you work from each of the centres.

Once you have reached the 600 full casual days you will need to provide the evidence in writing to your employers.

It is a teacher's responsibility to keep accurate records of the hours they work when they are progressing through the salary levels. Always request a Statement of Service when you leave a service. A Statement of Service is a document confirming you were employed by the centre and provides brief details regarding your employment. These details include your position, period of service and a summary of the duties performed and can be used as evidence when applying for other teaching positions to establish your level of pay or for any underpayments of salary.

For further information see bit.ly/3qP0qjc.

Tina

BEDROCK **GIVEAWAYS**

The Ultimate Collection of Brilliant Bedtime Stories

Author: RA Spratt

Publisher: Puffin Books

From the bestselling author and host of the hugely popular *Bedtime Stories with RA Spratt* podcast comes this bumper collection of the show's most popular stories.

Just as the Grimm brothers collected fairytales and Scheherazade told tales of the Arabian nights, now RA Spratt has assembled the most comprehensive collection of silly stories ever bound together in one book.

Stories so good no human mind could come up with them, they were often dictated to RA by the world's most glamorous storytelling pig, Nanny Piggins. There's a never-before-seen Friday Barnes mystery, and tall tales from RA's own domestic life.

You'd better brace yourself – these are tales so tall you will get altitude sickness.



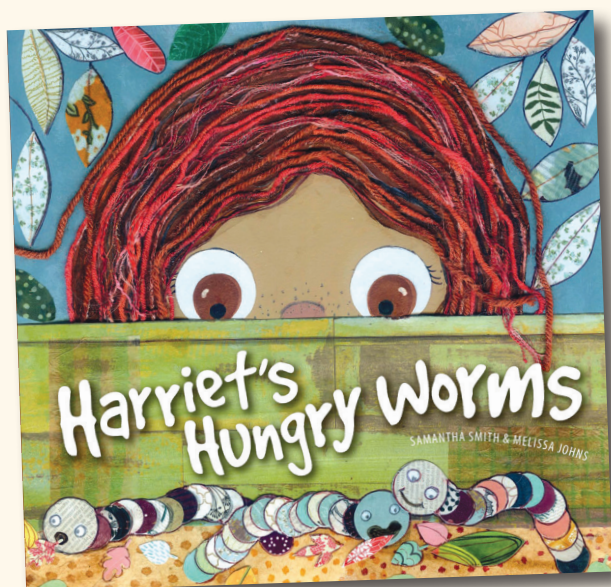
Harriet's Hungry Worms

Author: Samantha Smith

Illustrator: Melissa Johns

Publisher: EK Books

This funny, engaging eco story invites young readers to follow the adventures of Harriet's ravenous compost worms as they munch their way through their wide and wonderful weekly menu. Packed with worm facts, *Harriet's Hungry Worms* is the ideal companion for worm warriors and curious composters keen to roll their sleeves up and put their kitchen food scraps to good use.



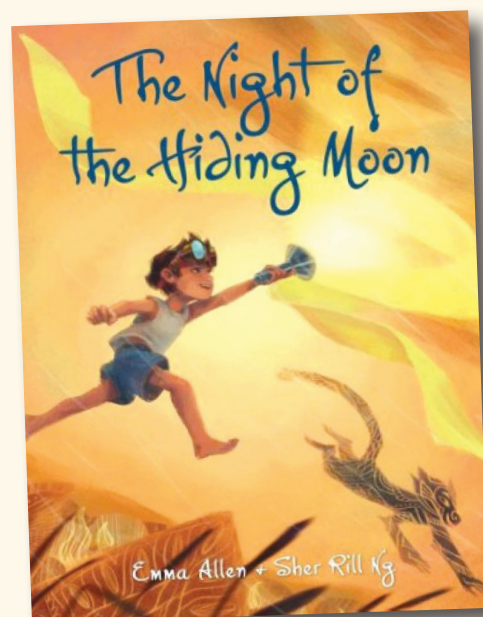
The Night of the Hiding Moon

Author: Emma Allen

Illustrator: Sher Rill Ng

Publisher: NLA Publishing

A story of adventure, imagination and bravery inspired by traditional shadow puppetry. Alone in his room, Felix is frightened. A wild storm is raging outside, and the silver moon has disappeared. But, with the help of his trusty torch and some new friends, Felix finds the courage to frolic with shadows and discover incredible new worlds.



Email entries to giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the title of the book you would like to receive in the subject line. Write your name, membership number and postal address in the body of your email. All entries must be received by 1 January 2024.



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