

bedrock



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Creative minds
**The art of
learning**

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 alienated 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 – Preschool/Early
childhood centre

“When First Nations children are connected to culture from their earliest years, they develop stronger social and emotional wellbeing.”



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Editorial

It has been a fraught year in the early childhood education and care sector, with ongoing revelations of abuse and mistreatment of young children.

This has prompted state and federal governments to introduce new safety measures. But the number of staff required to supervise children is still an area in desperate need of reform.

We investigate why staffing ratios in early childhood services need to be improved to ensure there are more staff to educate and supervise children (page 8).

We also discuss the importance of a well-trained workforce who have studied specialised teaching degrees designed to develop and support them (page 20).

A new study shows that early connections to Country, language and community are vital to the future success and wellbeing of First Nations children (page 6).

Creative experiences such as dance, drama, drawing and painting are fundamental to early learning. We examine why teachers need greater support to deliver high-quality arts education (page 10).

New research shows adverse childhood experiences do not necessarily lead to negative life outcomes (page 12).

We speak to neuroscientist Dr Mark Williams, whose new book *Screen Smart Children* examines the impact of excessive screen use by young children and their parents (page 14).

We also meet three members recognised with the John Spriggs Award for outstanding activism at the IEU-QNT Member Awards (page 16).

This edition discusses the importance of a gender-diverse workforce and introduces preschool teacher Stephen Gallen, who explains why early childhood teaching is a deeply rewarding career for men (page 18).

Please enjoy reading this edition of Bedrock. Share it with your colleagues, and remember the progress made in the sector is thanks to IEU members like you. We are stronger together.

David Towson

Acting Secretary
IEUA NSW/ACT Branch

Terry Burke

Secretary
IEU-QNT Branch



QNT: Kindy staff endorse landmark agreement

The first Multi-Employer Agreement (MEA) in the Queensland early childhood education sector has been endorsed by IEU members.

IEU-QNT Assistant Secretary Nick Sahlqvist says more than 200 collective agreements currently operate across the sector.

“While these agreements are largely uniform, they contain minor variations and require renegotiation and renewal every three years,” Sahlqvist says.

“This fragmented bargaining framework places a considerable administrative and organisational burden on both employees and kindergarten management committees, often duplicating effort across the sector.

“The introduction of one MEA for the sector represents a significant step towards addressing these challenges.”

The MEA is designed to harmonise wages and working conditions across participating centres, providing greater consistency and certainty for employees while streamlining bargaining processes for future rounds.

After the MEA was endorsed by an initial group of employees, a number of additional employers indicated their support for the conditions contained within it.

The MEA has now been lodged with the Fair Work Commission and, at the time of publication, was awaiting formal approval.



QNT: C&K members win with new agreement

IEU members in more than 140 Queensland C&K Branch Centre kindergartens will now have access to enhanced wages, better parental leave payment access and increased release time for directors.

The enhancements are part of the new collective agreement for C&K Branch Centre employees and have been won by IEU members after employees resoundingly rejected the employer’s initial proposed agreement in a two-to-one no vote.

- The revised offer provided enhancements including:
- increased release time for directors to do their jobs
 - a commitment to pay parity with the public sector
 - parental leave payments to be paid on the commencement of leave, not on return to work.

Disappointingly, the employer failed to agree to improve access to long service leave. This means C&K Branch Centre employees cannot access long service leave until they complete 10 years of service. In comparison, their colleagues in non-government and state education sectors can access long service leave after seven years.

The strength, solidarity and tenacity shown by IEU members in C&K Branch Centres during the negotiations and campaign was commendable.

While this new agreement represents better conditions, our union recognises the need for ongoing advocacy in the sector to ensure the best outcomes for our members.

National: New report shines light on vulnerable children

The wellbeing of Australian children is falling behind comparable countries. That is one of the conclusions of *The State of Australia's Children 2025* report, which found some children are missing out on opportunities to thrive.

“While many children are thriving, too many are being left behind – held back by entrenched disadvantage, systemic racism, poverty and the enduring impacts of intergenerational trauma,” said Professor Fiona Stanley in her foreword to the report.

Health, material basics, learning and being valued, loved and safe were among the six measures used to assess the wellbeing of Australian children.

The report, by UNICEF

Australia and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, highlights the importance of early childhood education in ensuring every child and family can reach their full potential.

While there has been growing enrolment and increased investment in early childhood education, the report says developmental vulnerability remains a persistent challenge, with almost half of Australian children assessed as not developmentally on track.

“Children who start behind often remain behind at school, with long-term impacts on learning, wellbeing, employment and life outcomes,” the report says.

“Vulnerability is not evenly distributed: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children in remote areas and those from low socio-economic backgrounds are significantly less likely to be developmentally on track.”

The report also notes the importance of the environments in which children grow, particularly the support they receive at home, in shaping outcomes.

“To ensure all children can start school ready to learn and grow, we must recognise the early years as a critical window for investment, not only in education, but in the wellbeing of families,” the report says.



NSW/ACT: Preschool teachers rally for fair pay

Hundreds of IEU members turned Sydney's Martin Place into a sea of pink on 6 May as they rallied to call on the NSW government to fund pay rises for community preschool teachers and educators.

IEU members travelled from as far as the Riverina, Hunter Valley, Wollongong and Newcastle to attend the Sydney rally.

Dressed in bright pink Start Strong Pay Fair campaign t-shirts, members sent a strong message to the NSW government to take their demands for fair pay seriously.

Rallies in Lismore and Coffs Harbour also attracted hundreds of IEU members, parents and supporters determined to ramp up pressure on the NSW government in the lead-up to its June budget.

The IEU has been calling on the NSW government for almost two years to fund pay rises that properly value the work of preschool staff.

“There is a systemic, gender-based undervaluation of this highly feminised workforce,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Acting Secretary David Towson.

“To start addressing this, community preschool staff need a 15% pay rise.”

In February this year, the Fair Work Commission recommended that the NSW government review and boost funding for community preschools to lift pay and conditions for teachers and educators.

Donna Worner, an IEU member and teacher at Kapooka Early Childhood Centre near Wagga Wagga, drove five hours to the rally in Martin Place.

Donna told *The Daily Telegraph* that problems with attracting and retaining staff were becoming increasingly difficult in rural and remote areas.

“Early childhood educators are just absolutely fed up with being paid so poorly and they are sick of having to come out and do this,” she said.

“We would much rather be delivering the best quality preschool care that we possibly can, rather than having to fight for every cent that we deserve.”



Cultural strength

What helps First Nations children thrive

Early connections to Country, language and community are vital to the future success and wellbeing of First Nations children, writes Emily Campbell.

Led by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) researchers, *Footprints in time: The longitudinal study of Indigenous children (LSIC) early childhood report* reveals what helps First Nations children thrive as they grow up.

QUT Professor Kristin Laurens says the report draws on 14 years of data from more than 1700 children to provide unique insights.

“The *Footprints in time* study has looked at the experiences of First Nations children starting from early childhood education settings and we are now able to track what this means for them later in life,” she says.

“With families, children and educators having shared their stories over so many years, we can now see clearly how early childhood education experiences continue to shape learning, wellbeing and identity well into adolescence.”

The report’s co-author, Associate Professor Jessa Rogers, says the findings underscore the role of culture in helping children thrive.

“When First Nations children are connected to culture from their earliest years, they develop stronger social and emotional wellbeing that carries through into their teenage years,” she says.

Cultural connection boosts wellbeing

The *Footprints in Time* study highlights cultural connection as central to children’s wellbeing, with young people who participate in cultural activities consistently experiencing stronger social and emotional wellbeing.

“This included having a positive outlook, healthy body, strong relationships, higher confidence and

greater resilience as they moved through school,” the report said.

Opportunities to speak and learn a First Nations language during early childhood and primary school were also associated with better outcomes.

Children in remote areas were more likely to take part in cultural activities, speak First Nations languages and maintain connections to Country. Children in urban and regional areas were more likely to attend preschool and playgroups.

“Both sets of experiences are said to be key, with cultural identity, family support and positive early learning opportunities all contributing to stronger outcomes later in life,” the report said.

Dealing with the digital divide

The report also found First Nations children face digital inequality, with data from 2011 and 2013 showing only 37 per cent of children were using the internet at home.

Fifty-six per cent of those in major cities reported having internet access but in very remote areas only 8 per cent of children had internet access.

First Nations children with early internet access had stronger reading comprehension, better problem-solving skills, greater confidence with technology in adolescence and safer online habits.

Other key findings show children thrived when their parents felt supported and confident in their roles and positive teacher connections helped build confidence and engagement throughout primary and high school.

Greater investment needed

The researchers made several recommendations based on their findings, which include:

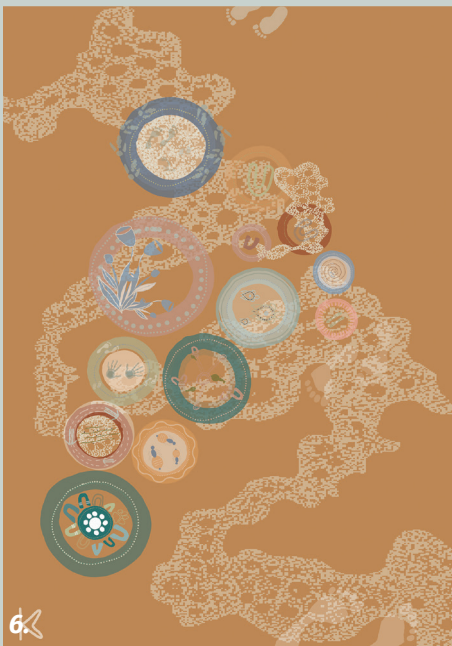
- expanding culturally responsive playgroups and parenting programs
- strengthening opportunities for learning First Languages
- growing the First Nations workforce
- ensuring equitable digital access for families in all regions.

They say the findings show that what happens before children start school has lasting impacts. Governments and education systems must do more to embed culture and language in early learning, tackle racism in schools, support families, resource communities and bridge the digital divide.

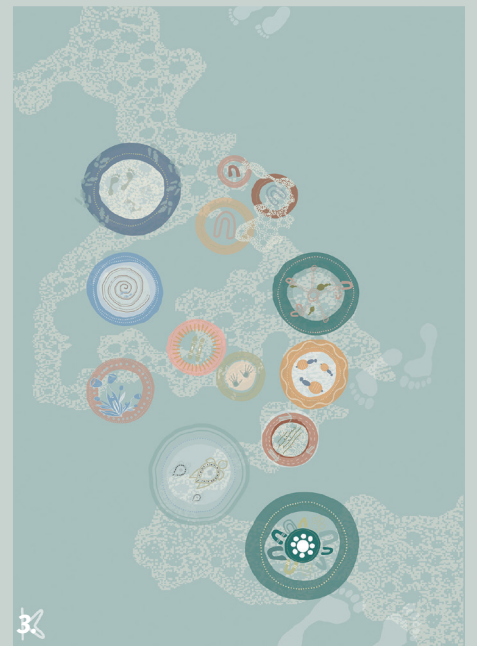
“This research shows that when children are supported to grow up strong in their culture, their families and their learning, they carry that strength into every part of life,” Laurens says.

Read the *Footprints in time* report:
bit.ly/4rKI3Xb

- Images, clockwise from top left*
1. **Children take part in a cultural festival to celebrate Palm Island’s centenary in 2018.**
 2. **Associate Professor Jessa Rogers.**
 - 3 and 6. **Western Arrernte artist Kylie Montealeone was commissioned to create artworks for the *Footprints in time* study.**
 4. **QUT Professor Kristin Laurens.**
 5. **Cultural identity, family support and positive early learning opportunities all contribute to stronger outcomes later in life.**



“When children are supported to grow up strong in their culture, their families and their learning, they carry that strength into every part of life.”





Staffing ratios

Why the numbers don't add up

Staffing ratios in early childhood education and care services need to be improved to ensure there are more staff to educate and supervise children, writes Andrew Taylor.

Reports of child abuse and mistreatment in mainly for-profit early childhood services have rocked the sector, prompting state and federal governments to implement new safety measures.

These reforms include banning personal devices such as phones and smart watches in services, a national trial of closed-circuit television, mandatory child safety training and the introduction of the National Early Childhood Worker Register.

But the number of staff required to supervise children remains an area of desperately needed reform.

Staffing ratios under the National Quality Framework generally require one teacher or educator for every four children under two and one teacher or educator for every five two-to-three-year-olds.

For children aged three to five, the staffing ratio required in NSW, Tasmania and Western Australia is 1:10. In Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, South Australia and Victoria, it is 1:11.

Supervision gaps

University of New England early childhood education lecturer Dr Tammy Williams says staffing ratios need to be improved to ensure there are more staff to educate and supervise children.

Williams interviewed early childhood education and care staff as part of her PhD research.

"Their descriptions of how staffing ratios are enacted in everyday settings explain the complexities in real practice that may influence the consistency of safety and supervision," she says.

"Ratios measure staffing numbers per child, not whether supervision is continuous and responsive. This allows services to comply on paper while supervision gaps sometimes remain."

Regulations require services to maintain minimum ratios to ensure children are adequately supervised, and only staff working directly with children count toward these ratios.

“However, minimum ratios do not account for supervision being disrupted by ongoing demands such as documenting children’s learning, providing behavioural support, cleaning and routine care,” Williams says.

Despite serious child safety breaches, politicians have failed to reform minimum staffing ratios.

“Policy logic in early childhood education and care means that risk is managed through increasing surveillance, regulation and administrative tasks, rather than through increasing human resources,” Williams says.

‘Under the roof’ in the spotlight

The staff Williams interviewed raised concerns about the practice known as ‘under the roof’.

This refers to a method of calculating the staff-to-child ratio by counting the number of staff across the entire centre rather than those working directly with children in specific rooms.

Staff may be counted when they are working in the office or cleaning elsewhere in the service, Williams and University of New England Associate Professor Marg Rogers wrote in *The Conversation*.

“Other staff, such as chefs, might also be included in the official count, even though this isn’t permitted.”

IEU members also report that staff and children are moved around rooms within centres to comply with staffing ratios.

Data from the Productivity Commission shows 658 staffing waivers were issued in NSW in 2024, 677 in 2023 and 514 in 2022. In Queensland, 320 staffing waivers were issued in 2024, compared to 448 in 2023 and 441 in 2022.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews says children attending services with staffing waivers are at greater risk of serious harm.

The reduction in the proportion of staff who have qualifications also directly impacts the safety of children.

“When there aren’t enough staff, children aren’t properly supervised, and that’s when safety breaches occur,” Matthews says. “Serious safety incidents are often the result of inadequate supervision and that is a direct consequence of understaffing.”

Unpaid labour

A 2025 study led by University of Sydney education lecturer Erin Harper found early childhood teachers and educators spent less than 30 per cent of their day, or under 2.5 hours, in undistracted and uninterrupted time with children.

“Research has shown, because supervision cannot stop, the required planning, documentation and compliance work shifts into seven-to-nine hours of unpaid labour each week,” Williams says.

“This overload produces chronic stress and burnout. Burnout then drives educators to leave the sector, worsening workforce shortages and further intensifying workload for those who remain.”

Williams says reforming staffing ratios will help to build a sustainable, high-quality workforce in the sector.

“Workforce shortages are not separate from staffing conditions – they are a product of them,” she says. “High workloads, unpaid labour and sustained stress drive attrition.”

More staff needed

Williams says teachers and educators counted in staffing ratios must be available to supervise rather than engage in competing tasks. Otherwise, ratios overstate supervision.

Regulators should assess whether staffing arrangements are effective under real operating conditions such as staff breaks, unplanned staff absences, mixed-age groupings and children requiring one-to-one support.

Yet current funding models assume staff can absorb daily compliance duties alongside supervision, education and care on minimum ratios.

The Productivity Commission report, *A path to universal early childhood education and care*, suggested a 1:3 ratio for babies, a 1:4 ratio for toddlers, and a 1:8 ratio for children aged three to five to better support children’s development, wellbeing and safety.

Williams says there also needs to be a “floater” – a staff member who covers breaks and staff shortages.

However, staffing ratios assume neurotypical development, which Williams says no longer reflects practice, as many services enrol increasingly large numbers of children who are developmentally vulnerable or not toilet-trained.

“This increases the demands on supervision and care well beyond what current ratios allow,” she says.

Williams says improving ratios – for example, from 1:10 to 1:8 for children aged three to five – would better support safe, inclusive care while reducing overload, burnout and attrition among staff.

The IEU has consistently called for staff-to-child ratios to be reviewed; for example, to ensure that one adult is never left alone with a group of children.

Williams says adequate supervision depends on shared visibility and the capacity for immediate response.

“Lone supervision often fails to meet this standard in real-world operating conditions with infants, toddlers and children,” she says.

“Workforce shortages are not separate from staffing conditions – they are a product of them.”





Creative minds

Why arts education matters

Dance, drama, drawing and painting are a vital part of early childhood education, yet they're not always given the attention they deserve, writes Andrew Taylor.

Dr Jennifer Stevens-Ballenger discovered a rich world of art while conducting research at an early learning centre in Melbourne.

An early childhood education lecturer at La Trobe University, Stevens-Ballenger observed teachers spending up to five hours a week carefully creating spaces and preparing art materials for the children to paint, draw and sing.

"In early childhood arts education, the environment matters enormously," she says.

"If children only have access to a few blunt pencils in a plastic tub, that sends a very different message than a thoughtfully prepared space with beautiful paper, charcoal, clay, paint, loose parts, and room to work slowly and revisit ideas."

Arts education vital

The arts are central to the Early Years Learning Framework, especially its focus on play, creativity, culture and encouraging children to be confident, capable learners.

Stevens-Ballenger says arts education supports both learning in and through the arts. Learning in the arts refers to the knowledge and skills children develop within artforms, for example, learning to draw, paint, sing, compose and move.

"Learning through the arts is about how the arts help children understand the world and connect with other areas of learning," she says.

Stevens-Ballenger says children use different artforms to express ideas, make meaning, test theories and communicate experiences they may not be able to articulate in words.

"A drawing can show us what a child understands about family, community, nature, identity or even something as complex as fairness and justice," she says.

Research also shows that the arts can support learning in language and literacy, numeracy, maths and science.

"Children might explore narrative structure through drama and storytelling, mathematical concepts through dance and movement, or scientific thinking through observation, drawing and design," Stevens-Ballenger says.

'Highly intentional'

Stevens-Ballenger co-wrote the 2024 study *Arts integration in an early childhood education setting: The role of the teacher*, which examined how experienced early childhood teachers integrate the arts into their practice.

"The teacher's role in arts education is not simply to provide paint and step back," she says. "It is highly intentional and deeply pedagogical."

Stevens-Ballenger says teachers fulfil different roles when teaching arts, including curating materials and creating environments that invite exploration



Dr Jennifer Stevens-Ballenger.

“Children often communicate important ideas through the arts long before they can explain them verbally.”



as well as acting as a facilitator to help children express their ideas.

“Children often communicate important ideas through the arts long before they can explain them verbally,” she says. “Teachers need to pay attention to those expressions and take them seriously.”

Stevens-Ballenger also says teachers are responsible for protecting time for the arts – children quickly learn what adults value.

“If the arts are treated as filler or reward time, that message is clear,” she says. “If they are treated as central to learning, identity and expression, children understand that too.”

Unique approach to learning

Arts education in early childhood settings differs considerably from what is taught in primary schools.

In early childhood settings, the arts are usually much more integrated in the curriculum rather than treated as a distinct subject taught at a particular time of day.

“Storytelling becomes drama, scientific observation becomes drawing, mathematical thinking happens through movement and dance, and music supports routines, relationships and belonging,” Stevens-Ballenger says.

Early childhood arts teaching is usually led by generalist teachers rather than specialists.

“It is often more responsive, emerging from children’s interests, play, and inquiry rather than being tightly prescribed in advance,” she says.

Stevens-Ballenger says there is also a stronger emphasis on process over product in early childhood arts education.

“The arts are no less rigorous in early childhood education – it is just approached differently,” she says. “They are deeply connected to identity, relationships, belonging and meaning-making, which is exactly where early childhood pedagogy begins.”

Building confidence

Research shows many early childhood teachers lack confidence in teaching the arts.

Stevens-Ballenger says there is also a misconception that teaching the arts requires teachers to be strong singers, trained musicians or highly skilled visual artists.

“What matters most is pedagogical skill: knowing how to choose materials, offering meaningful provocations, asking good questions, documenting learning and responding to children’s ideas,” she says. “That is the work of teaching.”

Yet teacher training programs often allocate limited time to arts subjects, compared to literacy, numeracy and compliance-heavy areas.

“When contact hours shrink, the arts can be treated as something extra rather than something central,” Stevens-Ballenger says.

“That creates a cycle: teachers feel underprepared, so they avoid teaching the arts, which then reinforces the idea that the arts belong to specialists rather than everyday classroom practice.”

Supporting teachers

More opportunities to make art are key to building teachers’ confidence to teach music, visual arts, drama and movement, Stevens-Ballenger says.

“In teacher education, that means

less focus on performance outcomes and more focus on participatory arts-making, experimentation, play and process.”

When pre-service teachers pick up a ukulele, sing together or explore drawing as a way of thinking, Stevens-Ballenger says confidence shifts quite quickly.

“They begin to see that arts teaching is not about being a professional artist – it is about being willing to participate,” she says.

Stevens-Ballenger says teachers also need strong examples of quality arts practice in early childhood settings.

“Seeing how teachers use provocations, environments, materials, documentation, and responsive teaching helps make the work visible and achievable,” she says.

“Working alongside artists or colleagues with different strengths can be incredibly valuable – not because generalist teachers should hand the arts over, but because shared practice builds confidence and expands possibilities.”

Colleagues and leaders who value arts education are also vital. In busy early childhood settings, Stevens-Ballenger says the arts can be pushed aside by “routines, compliance and school-readiness pressures”.

“If the arts are positioned as central to children’s learning and rights, rather than optional extras, teachers are far more likely to invest in them,” she says.

MENTAL WELLBEING

How children with trauma can thrive in adulthood

New research shows adversity in early childhood does not necessarily lead to negative life outcomes, writes Ella Doyle.

Adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, health trauma, bullying and poverty have often been associated with detrimental, long-lasting health and psychosocial outcomes.

University of NSW Adjunct Professor Justine Gatt says much of the existing research on adverse childhood experiences focuses on negative outcomes – particularly mental illness.

“While that is important, it provides only a partial picture,” she says.

“Studying wellbeing allows us to identify positive pathways and potential targets for intervention, rather than focusing only on risk.”

Not a life sentence

The 12-year longitudinal impact of risk and resilience trajectories on adult health following childhood trauma mapped the wellbeing outcomes and resilience of 1668 healthy Australians with and without adverse childhood experiences.

Over 12 years, participants were assessed using the Composure, Own-Worth, Mastery, Positivity, Achievement, Satisfaction – Wellbeing (COMPAS-W) scale to measure their happiness, self-worth and purpose.

Researchers also examined participants’ medical conditions as well as psychological, sociodemographic, social, emotional regulation and lifestyle outcomes.

The study found two-thirds of participants with adverse childhood experiences maintained a moderate-to-high wellbeing trajectory and experienced broad long-term health benefits, including lower risk of psychiatric illness, obesity and sleep or alcohol problems. Participants who fell into this resilient category had higher odds of good social, occupational and lifestyle functioning.

While these positive outcomes occurred at a lower rate (66 per cent) than those of participants who did not have adverse childhood experiences (85 per cent), they reveal individuals exposed to childhood trauma can still achieve and maintain moderate-to-high wellbeing and associated health outcomes.

These results suggest that while adverse childhood experiences have a negative impact, they do not have to condemn a child to poor outcomes in life.

Gatt says the key message from the research is that outcomes following adversity are not uniform.

“Even within a group exposed to similar early challenges, individuals followed very different long-term trajectories,” she says.



“Some experienced persistently lower wellbeing, while others maintained moderate-to-high wellbeing over more than a decade.

“What distinguished these groups was not just exposure to adversity, but differences in factors associated with social functioning, emotion regulation, coping patterns and broader lifestyle behaviours.”

Potential early years patterns

While the study did not measure early childhood skills directly, Gatt says it provides insight into the kinds of capacities associated with maintaining wellbeing over time.

Across the 12 years, individuals who maintained higher wellbeing showed:

- more adaptive emotion regulation (less suppression, more constructive coping)
- higher self-compassion
- stronger social engagement
- higher positive affect and lower distress.

“These patterns reflect underlying capabilities that begin developing early in life,” she says.

From a developmental perspective, Gatt says the first five years are critical for building:

- emotion regulation: the ability to manage and recover from stress
- social connection: forming relationships and feeling safe with others
- sense of self: developing early self-worth and confidence
- agency and mastery: the foundations of motivation and persistence
- positive engagement: the capacity to experience enjoyment and interest.

“What our findings suggest is that these kinds of capacities are closely linked to long-term wellbeing trajectories, and that differences in these systems are associated with very different outcomes over time,” Gatt says.

Trusting relationships

IEU members recognise their responsibility under the National Quality Framework to facilitate responsive and meaningful interactions that build trusting relationships

which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

These types of relationships provide children with a secure base for exploration and relationship-building as well as assist with developing emotion regulation.

Gatt says what happens in early learning

“Even after early adversity, positive developmental pathways remain possible.”

environments contributes to how children learn to relate to others – and those patterns can extend well beyond childhood.

“While our study does not test early educator relationships directly, it does highlight something important: children who go on to maintain higher wellbeing in adulthood also tend to show stronger relational functioning later in life,” she says.

“This suggests that early environments that support consistent, responsive interactions, emotional attunement and a sense of safety are likely to be important in setting those pathways in motion.

“For teachers and educators, this reframes their role slightly.

“It’s not about assuming a single relationship will ‘offset’ adversity, but recognising that even after early adversity, positive developmental pathways remain possible – and relationships are a key part of that.”

Promoting mental wellbeing

The study discusses the promotion of mental wellbeing as a potentially important complementary pathway to mitigate the long-term impacts of early adversity.

Although the study did not examine specific early childhood interventions, Gatt outlined several practical implications.

These were drawn from the patterns seen in individuals who sustain higher wellbeing over time and closely align with the core developmental capacities formed in the early years.

1. Support emotion regulation

- naming emotions in real time (for example, “It looks like you’re feeling frustrated”)
- modelling calm responses during challenging moments (for example, using a steady voice, slowing down reactions)

2. Foster social connection

- guided peer play (for example, helping children take turns or join group activities)
- modelling respectful communication (for example, “Let’s ask if we can play together”).

3. Build a sense of self (self-worth and confidence)

- responding to mistakes with support rather than correction alone
- ensuring each child feels seen and valued within the group.

4. Encourage agency and mastery

- framing challenges as opportunities to learn (for example, “Let’s try a different way”)
- allowing children to make small choices (for example, selecting activities or materials).

5. Promote positive engagement and enjoyment

- creating moments of shared enjoyment (for example, play, music, storytelling)
- encouraging curiosity and exploration.

Gatt says that what matters most is not any single strategy, but the pattern of experiences over time.

“These everyday interactions help build the systems that underpin wellbeing – how children regulate themselves, relate to others, and engage with the world,” she says.

More information

- Read *The 12-year longitudinal impact of risk and resilience trajectories on adult health following childhood trauma* report: bit.ly/4e6Da6y
- ACECQA Quality Support Program Resource: bit.ly/48eSo5S



Frozen faces

How screens impact young children's learning

Preschoolers are struggling to understand social cues, make friends and regulate their emotions because of excessive screen use, writes Andrew Taylor.

Children are starting preschool with frozen faces and are unable to express their emotions because of the amount of time both they and their parents spend looking at screens.

This is one of the findings of neuroscientist Dr Mark Williams who says the overuse of devices has left some toddlers with the "still face effect" – an inability to receive social cues, make social connections or learn to self-regulate.

"We used to see this mostly in children who had experienced severe trauma, like physical or sexual abuse," he says.

"But now we're seeing it far more widely in the general population.

"It means you lose the ability to use your face to express emotion."

Williams says the facial expressions of parents and carers are crucial to young children's learning and development.

Yet when a baby or toddler is met with a blank face staring at a screen rather than a smile directed at them, they do not learn to associate various reactions with different emotions.

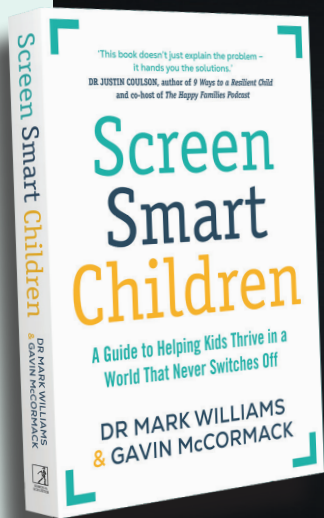
"When they get to preschool they use this neutral face to try to make friends

but when the other toddler sees a neutral face, he's like, 'oh that's weird' and walks away – so these kids have a lot of trouble making friends," Williams told *The Daily Telegraph*.

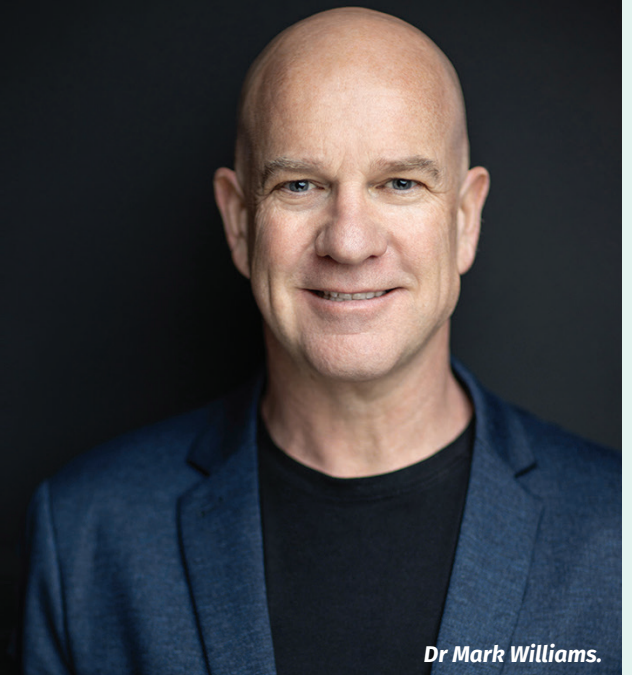
Serious harm to learning

The "still face effect" is one of the consequences of excessive screen use that Williams documents in *Screen Smart Children*, co-written with teacher Gavin McCormack.

An honorary professor at Macquarie University's School of Psychological Sciences, Williams says the book shows the serious harm to children's learning and development caused by overuse of



“It’s plausible that the new devices are the culprit when it comes to our decline in intelligence.”



Dr Mark Williams.

devices as well as providing practical tips to combat them.

The book draws on research and examples from the classroom to show how excessive screen use by young children and parents leads to anxiety, inattention, behavioural issues, speech problems, poor memory and learning difficulties.

Williams also highlights the reversal of the Flynn effect – an improvement in intelligence from one generation to another – in the past decade.

Williams says the fall in IQ has occurred in specific areas: verbal comprehension; perceptual reasoning; and perceptual organisation.

“It’s plausible that the new devices are the culprit when it comes to our decline in intelligence,” he writes in the chapter *Getting dumber*. “Especially when you factor in the number of hours our kids are on their devices at school as well.”

Renowned neuroscientist Baroness Susan Greenfield in her 2014 book *Mind Change* explored how digital technologies affected our brains, prompting controversy over her suggestion that the impact was comparable to climate change.

Subsequent research has vindicated Greenfield’s arguments about technology rewiring us in ways that Williams says are concerning.

“This generation is going to be the first generation that is less intelligent than their parents, which is really scary,” he says.

Williams says excessive screen use is more harmful for younger children because their brains are still developing.

Impact on teachers

Williams says staff in early childhood education bear the brunt of “still face effect” and other consequences of excessive screen use.

“You’re going to have more behavioural issues because children will be used to being positively reinforced constantly, which doesn’t happen in real life,” he says.

“You’re going to get kids who are less able to regulate their emotions and less likely to sit down and play with blocks or whatever.”

Williams says children are increasingly exhibiting speech delays because they are given devices rather than learning how to communicate properly by chatting to their parents. Research even shows young children are speaking less than previous generations.

“They’re not playing with siblings or friends regularly, so they’re not learning to communicate or interact, which causes problems at preschool,” he says.

Attention issues are also more likely to arise in young children due to overuse of screens.

“If your attention mechanisms aren’t working, you’re going to have trouble with memory storage,” Williams says.

“They’re not going to be able to retain as much information as children used to be able to.”

Williams says a lack of attention means teachers must change the way they give instructions to students.

“Instructions will have to be broken down because the working memory and attention mechanisms aren’t as good,” he says.

“So therefore, you have to give constant reminders because they’re not going to remember as much information.”

Addictive by design

Despite his concerns about excessive screen use, Williams is adamant he is not a technophobe.

“The problem at the moment is a lot of technology is designed to capture and hold our attention so that a few

multinational companies can make huge amounts of money,” he says.

In March, a California jury found social media platforms Instagram and YouTube were designed to be addictive. The court awarded millions of dollars in damages to the plaintiff, a young woman who said her social media addiction as a child exacerbated her mental health issues.

Williams is also critical of edtech, or educational technology such as software, online platforms and digital content used in teaching.

He says edtech often relies on gamifying learning to prolong engagement by offering intermittent rewards: “Most people don’t know that gamified actually means using reinforcement schedules to get someone addicted.”

Williams is not alone in warning about the potential harms of technology.

Safe, ethical use

The IEU advocated for the safe, ethical and pedagogically sound use of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and edtech in its submission to the Productivity Commission’s 2025 interim report *Building a skilled and adaptable workforce*.

The submission said good faith consultation and agreement with employees and their unions “is vital if AI and edtech are to deliver workload relief and improvements in learning outcomes”.

The federal Department of Health warns sedentary screen time during early childhood can have long-term impacts on a child’s development. This includes shorter attention spans, delays in developing language skills and leaves children less ready for school.

It recommends no screen time for children under two years, and no more than one hour a day for children aged two to five.

MEMBER POWER

Union celebrates outstanding activists

Emily Campbell meets three early childhood teachers recognised with the John Spriggs Award for outstanding activism in the sector at the IEU-QNT Member Awards.

Natalie Dwyer, Julie Jones and Kelly Madden represented their colleagues employed in C&K Branch Centres across 140 sites in Queensland at the bargaining table during negotiations for a new collective agreement.

Their strong advocacy during the difficult and lengthy negotiations ensured the interests of C&K Branch Centre employees were well represented.

Dedicated professionals

Like many in their profession, Natalie and Julie knew from a young age that they wanted to be teachers.

"I credit this passion to the incredible teachers I had growing up, including my sessional kindergarten teacher Miss Debbie – who, 23 years later, became my colleague at C&K," Natalie says.

"Kindy was such a joyful and meaningful time in my life, and one of my closest friendships today began there."

Natalie says a highlight of the job is witnessing the growth and development of children across the kindergarten year.

"Being able to celebrate their strengths and achievements and share those moments with their families is incredibly rewarding," she says.

Julie says she was inspired to teach by the opportunity to shape children's learning and make a positive difference in their lives.

"I've always valued play, reading and books, which remain central to high-quality education," she says.

"I love that I am still learning in my job, that every child is unique and every day is different."

Kelly, who is a co-director alongside Julie at C&K The Gap, has a deep connection to the kindergarten and the local community. She attended the inner west Brisbane centre as a child with her siblings and later returned as a parent when her own children enrolled.

"What I love most is the relationships – building

trust with children, partnering with families and working alongside dedicated colleagues," she says.

"Supporting children as they develop confidence, resilience and a love of learning is incredibly rewarding."

High workload

Even though Natalie, Julie and Kelly are devoted to their jobs, they believe the sector's workforce is still facing significant challenges and professional issues.

Julie says early childhood staff are navigating complex and ever-changing regulatory requirements, which have increased substantially in the past decade.

"The excessive workload, particularly for directors, means that we work many extra unpaid hours to complete administrative responsibilities," she says.

Kelly says there is a lack of professional respect for early years teachers and educators.

"One of the biggest challenges is the ongoing undervaluation of the profession, particularly in terms of teacher/director workloads," she says.

Enhancing the emotional wellbeing of early childhood staff is another issue, which Natalie believes needs greater focus, given the emotional labour demands of the job.

"While recent child safety reforms are both necessary and important, they have introduced increased administrative demands, additional compliance checks and heightened levels of stress for staff," Natalie says.

"Supporting staff mental health is essential, not only for their own sustainability in the profession, but for maintaining high-quality outcomes for children."

“Supporting children as they develop confidence, resilience and a love of learning is incredibly rewarding.”

'Vote no' campaign

These professional issues are part of what motivated Natalie, Julie, and Kelly to step forward and represent their colleagues in the recent negotiations for a new collective agreement.

Negotiations for the new agreement for C&K Branch Centre employees began in April 2025.

Several meetings were held before negotiations abruptly ended in September 2025, when the employer walked away from the bargaining table and rushed to put an unsatisfactory proposed agreement out to ballot, against our union's advice.





From left: Natalie Dwyer, Kelly Madden and Julie Jones represented IEU members in complex collective bargaining negotiations. They ultimately secured key improvements for members across 140 centres and found the process both challenging and empowering.

After a resounding 2-to-1 no vote, the employer was forced back to the bargaining table to negotiate an improved offer that addressed employee claims.

Kelly says being part of the 'no' vote was a powerful moment.

"It reflected a shared understanding that the proposed agreement did not meet the standards and expectations of C&K staff," she says.

"It showed collective strength and reinforced the importance of having a voice and using it."

The support of colleagues during the "Vote no" campaign was incredibly affirming, Natalie says.

"While it's never ideal to take that step, it sent a clear and unified message about what C&K employees need to perform their roles effectively and sustainably."

Positive outcome for members

C&K employees recently voted at a second ballot to endorse a revised agreement which addressed three of the four major outcomes sought by members.

The revised offer included:

- increased release time for directors to do their jobs
- a commitment for pay parity with the public sector
- parental leave payments to be paid on the commencement of leave, not on return to work.

Disappointingly, the employer failed to agree to improve access to long service leave.

This means C&K Branch Centre employees cannot access long service leave until they complete 10 years of service.

In comparison, their colleagues in the non-government and state education sectors can access long service leave after seven years.

This outstanding claim remains unfinished business and our union will pursue it during the next round of negotiations.

Inviting member involvement

Natalie, Julie and Kelly encourage other IEU members to get more involved in their own collective bargaining negotiations.

"Over the years, colleagues have often shared frustrations around workload and conditions," says Julie, who has been an employee bargaining rep for four rounds now.

"My response to them is to join the IEU and get involved, because providing input during negotiations is always a worthwhile experience and leads to positive change for all."

Kelly says it was challenging and empowering to be a part of the negotiating process.

"It gave me the opportunity to represent our sector and advocate for meaningful change, so I strongly recommend others join because change does not occur without our voices," she says.

"Early childhood staff are passionate, skilled professionals who deserve recognition, respect, and fair conditions."

Natalie says being part of the bargaining team was a valuable and rewarding experience.

"Ensuring the scope and complexity of our roles are acknowledged is an important step in strengthening both educator wellbeing and sector sustainability," she says.





GENDER DIVERSITY

How to attract men to early childhood education

Men make up only a fraction of the early childhood education workforce but they can have a positive impact on the children they educate, writes Emily Campbell.

Men comprise less than 4 per cent of total employees in Australia's early childhood education (ECE) and care sector, yet the value of young children having access to warm, nurturing male role models is crucial.

As the sector grapples with chronic workforce shortages, male early childhood teachers and educators are few and far between.

Positive male role models

Dr Martyn Mills-Bayne is a senior lecturer in early childhood education at Adelaide University and previously worked as an early childhood education teacher.

He is an enthusiastic advocate for a gender diverse workforce and promotes the push for more men in the sector through Adelaide University's MENTor Program for Males in ECE. He is also

involved with the Minderoo Foundation Dads' Alliance.

Mills-Bayne says an engaged, responsible male role model can make a profound difference in a child's life, improving their mental health and confidence as well as cognitive and social development.

"For too long, gender stereotypes have undermined ECE with entrenched perceptions of men not being built for, or good at, educating young children," he says.

"Children, particularly boys, need to see positive male role models in early learning environments, because if there's a lack of men, this will shape the next generation's gender attitudes."

Why men avoid the sector

Unfortunately, deterrents and barriers such as social stigma prevent many men from pursuing a career in early childhood education.

"Although there have been some improvements, wages are still low

compared to other careers that do not require the qualifications and ongoing commitment to professional learning," Mills-Bayne says.

"This coupled with the persistent sense that holistic education and care roles are not suitable for men present a significant barrier to men entering the sector."

With horrific high-profile allegations and instances of child abuse in the sector widely reported in the media over the past couple of years, scrutiny of male staff is more rigorous than ever.

"We know many men avoid early childhood education careers because of fears and stereotypes about being judged in child-safety contexts," he says.

"A more gender diverse workforce will strengthen safety because diverse perspectives improve workplace culture, vigilance and accountability."

Mills-Bayne says when male and female staff work cooperatively, they model respectful, safe interactions for children and reinforce best practice.

Member perspective

IEU member Stephen Gallen is employed part-time as a director and teacher at Cawongla Playhouse, a community preschool in northern NSW.

He is also an education consultant and has worked in the early childhood sector for 35 years across preschools, primary schools and long day care.

Stephen comes from a family of teachers going back multiple generations.

He was inspired to pursue a career in early childhood education after a community service placement during high school at a childcare centre.

“It was somewhere I could see the value of having more men in the sector,” Stephen says.

As one of only a few men working in a highly feminised sector, Stephen says there are benefits and drawbacks.

“Male privilege combined with the rarity of men in the sector means I have often been ‘fast-tracked’ or gained more credit for the same work than my female colleagues and peers,” he says.

However, Stephen says it has been isolating and challenging at times.

“The culture and ways of working, relating and networking are highly gendered and feminised, which has been difficult to navigate,” he says.

“Related to this but a distinct challenge is the disrespect that early childhood staff and young children face from sector leaders and government.”

Despite these challenges, Stephen loves his job, particularly the intellectually stimulating blend of play and pedagogy.

“Spending time with young children is really grounding and brings me back to what really matters – knowing without a doubt that at the end of each day I have made a real, material difference in the lives of those children,” he says.

Better pay essential

Young children seeing men working in early childhood education is a gender equity issue, Stephen says.

“The more men we have in the sector, the more perceptions of the profession in the wider community might broaden and change.

“We live in a world of stereotypical gender norms where men are not really ‘supposed’ to be caring, nurturing and tender – qualities which are seen as weaknesses rather than strengths.

“I think these ideas need to be challenged and disrupted wherever possible.”

Stephen says improving the pay and conditions of early childhood education and care staff is essential to attracting more men to the sector.

“Better pay and career pathways that reward staff for staying in the classroom rather than moving into management or academia are sorely needed,” he says.

It is why Stephen is an active IEU member, which he says has made a



“Better pay and career pathways that reward staff for staying in the classroom rather than moving into management or academia are sorely needed.”

IEU member Stephen Gallen says improving pay and conditions in the early childhood education and care sector is essential to attracting and retaining staff.

positive difference to both his career and the sector.

“IEU membership has also granted me many opportunities for professional learning and networking,” he says.

Urgent action needed

Achieving sustainable, long-lasting gender diversity requires clear focus, substantial investment and ongoing care.

Dr Mills-Bayne says Norway, Scotland and Germany have had some success following targeted campaigns and increased funding to attract male staff.


“Radical change is needed to realise any significant increase in the number of men in the early childhood education workforce,” he says.

“To attract more men, we need a targeted and funded national campaign that speaks to young men and older career change men who might not have

considered early childhood education careers.

“Ultimately, having more great male teachers and educators in the early years may encourage more young boys to see that working in early childhood education is possible.

“Strong female allies in leadership and as colleagues will also go a long way to promoting the importance of gender diverse teaching teams.”



“Early childhood teachers need broad and specialised skills, which I don’t believe can be adequately developed in short one-year programs.”

Teacher training

**Why quality
must not be
compromised**

To improve children’s safety, we need a well-trained workforce with specialist courses designed to develop and support them, writes Andrew Taylor.

Highly qualified and experienced teachers and educators are critical not just for children’s learning and development, but also their safety.

Yet substandard teacher training risks the safety of young children in early childhood education and care, says University of Sydney early childhood governance professor Marianne Fenech.

“Across Australia, the diversity and inconsistency of teacher-preparation programs means that not all graduates are equipped to provide high-quality education and care,” she told the Early Childhood Education Summit held at the University of Sydney earlier this year.

Fenech says serious safety breaches in the sector prompted state and federal governments to implement reforms focused on staff and providers.

“I would like to see this spotlight extended to tertiary institutions that deliver early childhood degree programs in ways that compromise quality standards and thereby contribute to the safety issues the sector is experiencing,” she says.

Questionable programs

Media reports last year raised alarms about thousands of students enrolling in accelerated early childhood programs, with some purchasing fake credentials and others using the sector as a route to permanent residency.

An ABC investigation found Southern Cross University offered graduate diplomas that take as little as 10 months to complete, with no prior teaching or childcare experience required, to international students seeking pathways to residency.

“A large number of these students are not genuine in their desire to work in the childcare sector,” immigration expert Mark Glazbrook told the ABC.

Fenech blames the poor quality of some teacher training on a lack of rigorous oversight and an undervaluing of the work of early childhood teachers.

“The shortage of, and demand for, early childhood teachers and educators provides a lucrative opportunity for training providers to target international students through fast-tracked degree pathways,” she says.

Fenech says urgent reforms are needed to ensure a high-quality system of initial teacher and educator preparation: “One that does not compromise children’s safety, and one that equips graduates to offer the high-quality education and care that every child deserves.”

Serious red flags

Australia’s national regulators for higher education and vocational training raised serious concerns about early childhood teacher and educator training programs in a joint alert issued in November 2025.

“The alert outlined 10 concerns linked to substandard preparation of early childhood teachers and educators,” Fenech says. “Its release was alarming and a serious red flag that quality standards are being compromised.”

The regulators’ concerns included:

- students being admitted without meeting entry requirements
- poor-quality placements and inadequate oversight of students
- pre-placement mandatory checks not being undertaken compromised assessment integrity.

Quality placements crucial

Fenech says placements with rigorous standards and appropriate supervision are integral to the development of quality early childhood teachers.

“Poor quality placements can lead to students not receiving the support and mentoring required to develop their practice,” she says.

“It can also lead to students being passed irrespective of whether they have met placement standards.

“Both outcomes compromise children’s safety and development, as they don’t have access to competent early childhood teachers.”

Courses under scrutiny

Graduate teaching diplomas in early childhood education and care are a key workforce strategy to address staffing shortages by attracting career changers and international graduates.

The Productivity Commission in 2024 suggested accelerated degree programs for qualified educators to become early childhood teachers in its report, *A path to universal early childhood education and care*.

The IEU in response welcomed discussion of accelerated qualification pathways to help address staff shortages but cautioned against compromising on quality.

“We need to ensure quality is maintained in training, and that universities are not pressured to cut corners,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

“Rushing through training will not solve staff shortages if teachers end up leaving the sector over pay and workloads. More still needs to be done to ensure teachers receive pay comparable to teachers in schools.”

The 2023 *Strong Beginnings* report, which focused on strategies to support better-prepared, classroom-ready teachers, rejected the notion that teaching can be learned in a single year.

A one-year graduate diploma is “not academically and professionally proportionate with the complexity and status of teaching”, the report found.

A 2025 study of accelerated programs by University of New England lecturer Lauren Brocki questioned whether graduates were properly equipped to meet legal and ethical child safety responsibilities.

“The current design of many of these programs does not guarantee that child protection is taught as a foundational professional competency,” she wrote in *Child safety in early childhood teacher education: Gaps in Australia’s accelerated Graduate Diploma programs*.

Assessing teacher quality

Fenech leads the Teachers in Early Education (TEE) research project, which aims to tackle staff shortages by tracking the careers of early childhood teachers and developing a tool to assess early childhood teacher quality.

Unpublished findings from the TEE project show students in birth-to-12 programs (teaching degrees for early childhood and primary school) were less confident about their capacity to work effectively with young children than students in specialist early childhood teaching degrees.

“Early childhood teachers need broad and specialised skills, which I don’t believe can be adequately developed in short one-year programs or courses designed mainly for primary teaching,” Fenech says.

The 2020 study, *Employers’ perspectives of how well-prepared early childhood teacher graduates are to work in early childhood education and care services*, found more than half of employers were concerned about the quality and commitment of students in birth-to-12 programs.

“Employers see patterns in the calibre of students who undertake professional experience from varying institutions,” Fenech says. “Some have already signaled that they will only employ graduates from certain programs.”



Professor Marianne Fenech.



Lisa James is an Organiser for the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch. Melanie Stellmacher is an Industrial Officer for IEU-QNT. They answer your industrial and legal questions as they relate to state laws and regulations.

NSW/ACT Will our pay drop after the WRP scheme ends?

Hi Lisa
What happens to our pay when the Worker Retention Payment scheme finishes?
I have heard our pay will go backwards in December.
If that happens, while the financial aspect is important, working in a stable team also makes a big difference.
I know that some of our team won't stay if their pay is less than it is now.
Grace



Lisa James

Dear Grace

Union advocacy in 2024 delivered federal government support for much-needed pay rises in the long day care sector.

The federal government's Worker Retention Payment (WRP) was introduced after the first ever multi-employer agreement (MEA) secured by the IEU, Australian Education Union and United Workers Union. It delivered long overdue pay rises of 15% funded by the federal government.

But this funding for higher wages expires on 30 November 2026. These improved wage rates will not be sustained without continued government support. Any reduction in wages will drive experienced teachers out of the sector, worsening the workforce shortage and undermining the quality of early learning.

The IEU has raised these concerns directly with Early Childhood Education Minister Senator Jess Walsh and Education Minister Jason Clare, and both have indicated that the government is actively considering the scheme's future.

Permanent funding of fair wage increases in long day care services is essential to ensuring workforce stability and safeguarding the future of a high-quality sector.

While the May federal budget failed to confirm the funding needed to continue the WRP scheme, the government has repeatedly promoted and celebrated its success.

It is now an urgent priority for the government to confirm extension of the scheme as soon as possible to provide certainty for members and their early childhood services.

We encourage you to write to your federal MP and tell them about the impact on you, your colleagues and the sector if the WRP comes to an end. The union will keep members updated.

The MEA that applies in many long day care centres, and that includes the WRP pay rises, expires in late November this year. The IEU will soon begin consultations with members about what they would like included in the next MEA.

Lisa

QNT High workload

Dear Mel

Our workplace has experienced significant staff shortages. As a result, my already high workload has increased massively, and I am finding it difficult to keep up with the additional responsibilities. I'm starting to feel burnt out. This is affecting my energy, focus and overall wellbeing at work.

What can I do to manage this situation?

Rosie



Melanie Stellmacher

Dear Rosie

Burnout can develop when employees are required to sustain high workload in the absence of appropriate support mechanisms.

High job demands, poor organisational change management and a lack of support pose psychosocial risks that can have significant adverse health and wellbeing impacts.

Employers owe a statutory obligation to manage hazards arising from any work carried out as part of the business or undertaking.

There are several steps you can take to help manage burnout arising from psychosocial hazards:

1. Raise your concerns with your employer.
Explain how staffing shortages and the emotional demands of your role are affecting your wellbeing. Employers have a duty to identify and control psychosocial risks, and your feedback is essential in highlighting existing hazards.
2. Request a review of workload and role expectations.
Ask for clarity around priorities, essential tasks, and what can be adjusted or redistributed until staffing levels stabilise.
3. Set boundaries around work hours and emotional availability.
Avoid consistently working beyond your rostered hours or absorbing emotional burdens that exceed your role. Managing your own capacity is an important part of practising self-care when combating burnout.
4. Seek support for the emotional aspects of your work.
Ask whether additional supervision, debriefing opportunities or wellbeing supports can be provided to help manage emotional strain.
5. Monitor your wellbeing and seek professional support if needed.
If symptoms of burnout persist, consider speaking with a healthcare professional for further guidance.

If you believe your workload or the emotional demands of your role are unsafe, contact your IEU branch for advice and support.

Mel

BEDROCK GIVEAWAYS

To go in the draw, 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 Monday 13 July.

Valerie: Australia's bravest sausage dog

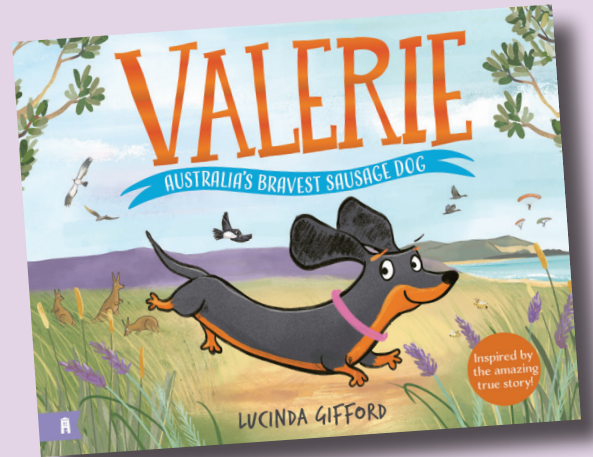
Author and illustrator: Lucinda Gifford

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

Inspired by an amazing true story, join Valerie on her unforgettable journey and discover just how far a brave little dog can go.

Around the world, people fell in love with the bold-hearted dachshund who escaped a campground on Kangaroo Island and roamed the wilderness for over 500 days before being reunited with her owners.

In this warm-hearted picture book, Lucinda Gifford imagines Valerie's adventures as she befriends dolphins, eats her fill and explores the wilds before finding her way safely home again.



Storm

Author: Claire Saxby, **illustrated by** Jess Racklyeft

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

This beautiful non-fiction picture book offers a deeply researched exploration of the effects of wind and weather.

A storm is brewing. It begins with a puff. Then another. A flutter, a ripple, a shiver show where the breeze blows. Tiny water drops join and grow until they are too heavy to stay aloft. Lightning cracks and thunder bellows. The storm is here.

An evocative story of the birth of a thunderstorm and the effects of wind and weather on the natural environment.

Combining scientific research, lyrical language and stunning illustrations, *Storm* is an exploration of the natural world by Children's Book Council of Australia award-winning duo Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft.



Saving shark pup

Author: Sharon Dalglish, **illustrated by** Amandine Thomas

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

The true story of a great white shark pup that appeared on a beach and was rescued by the local community.

When a great white shark pup washed up on Manly Beach in NSW, the local community rushed to the shark's rescue, eventually releasing it back into the ocean.

Great white sharks are vital for the ocean ecosystem, yet their beauty and mystery are rarely celebrated.

This picture book is a lyrical and emotive account of the shark pup's journey back to the ocean, interspersed with fascinating facts about great white sharks.

