

# BEDROCK

issue 1 | Vol 28 | 2023



**Award winner  
draws on nature's  
calming qualities**

## 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.

Endorsed by:



# BEDROCK

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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



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# The hard work begins

**In the previous issue of *Bedrock*, we noted that the election of a new federal government brought hope to our sector.**

However, this change won't happen overnight, and it won't happen without high levels of input from those who care the most about early childhood education and care (ECEC), you and your union.

On this page we outline some of the complications around achieving improved pay and conditions in our sector.

It's never been more crucial to be a member of the IEU. To negotiate the complicated world of industrial legislation, you need an expert on your side, and that's the IEU.

Find out how your union has been advocating on your behalf, sending a list of actions to Federal Early Childhood Education Minister Dr Anne Aly. These actions have been assembled by union organisers in direct consultation with members (p6).

Elsewhere we detail a free program to help teachers navigate the difficult world of esafety with young children (p10).

Meet the individual winner of this year's HESTA awards. She has developed an award-winning outdoor play space for her children (p12).

Algorithmic design, it sounds like something strictly for the mathematicians, but actually it's quite easy to incorporate in everyday play. Find out more (p14).

We also explore how to preserve heritage languages in early childhood (p16) and pay tribute to our retiring NSW/ACT Branch Vice President and welcome in the new one (p18-20)

We hope you enjoy this first edition of *Bedrock* for 2023. Let us know what you think via [bedrock@ieu.asn.au](mailto:bedrock@ieu.asn.au)

**Terry Burke**  
IEU-QNT Secretary

**Mark Northam**  
IEUA NSW/ACT Secretary

## BEDROCK UPFRONT

### Pay claim for teachers and educators

Wages and conditions for many early childhood teachers and educators remain below those of corresponding professionals in other sectors.

The top pay step under the *Educational Services (Teachers) Modern Award* (the modern award) for a teacher accredited/registered as Proficient who is not a Director or Educational Leader employed in a preschool/kindergarten is \$82,152 and \$85,438 for a teacher employed in a long day care centre.

This compares to the market rate of over \$100,000 for a teacher employed in a government or non-government school (for example \$113,000 in a NSW government or Catholic systemic school in January 2023). Pay rates for teachers in schools are themselves below those of professionals with similar qualifications in other sectors. A report by Professor John Buchanan of Sydney University in January 2023 entitled *From bad to worse to what? NSW Teachers Pay 2020-2022 and Beyond* found: "The most significant development has been continuation of the 30-year slide in teachers' pay compared to that of all professionals considered as a group. In 1986, female teachers earned 102 per cent of the 'all professional females' average. In the same year, male teachers earned 99 per cent of the 'all professional males' average. In 2021 the situation of 2018 continued: female teachers earned 93.5 per cent and men earned 83.3% per cent of this average".

For teachers in early childhood education and care (ECEC), it is even more difficult to achieve pay rises than for teachers in schools. The small workplaces, the voluntary management model in many not-for-profit services, the dominance of for-profit services in long day care and the commitment of staff to their children and families are all factors that make it hard for staff to raise issues about their own pay and conditions. For employees in the federal industrial relations system, such as teachers and educators in ECEC, the best way to achieve pay rises is by enterprise bargaining, but under current rules this requires negotiations employer by employer.

### New IR legislation step towards a solution

At the end of 2022, the federal Labor Government passed a series of amendments to the main workplace legislation, the *Fair Work Act*, which were described as the Secure Jobs Better Pay amendments.

These changes permit unions to bargain more effectively, including in workplaces where it is difficult to bargain because of a lack of skills, resources, bargaining strength or previous bargaining experience. Under the 'supported bargaining' stream, the Fair Work Commission provides additional assistance to negotiating parties to reach an enterprise agreement. The changes are expected to come into effect from July this year.

Unions (including the IEU) have been in discussions with ECEC employers about how the legislation could apply to our sector. The United Workers Union is seeking pay increases of 25 per cent above the modern award, as part of a supported bargaining enterprise agreement.

Unions have also been in discussion with the federal government about whether there would be an increase in federal funding provided to parents through the Child Care Subsidy to meet the additional cost. As state governments fund preschools/kindergartens, they also need to be part of the conversation.

### Existing enterprise agreements

Many members may be in workplaces where enterprise agreements approved by the Fair Work Commission already apply. Some

of these may have passed the nominal expiry date specified in the agreement, others may have some years to run.

The unions will be reviewing how existing enterprise agreements compare in terms of pay and conditions to what we expect will apply in a supported bargaining enterprise agreement. Although we are seeking pay rates well above the modern award, conditions (such as personal/carer's leave, redundancy pay, non-teaching time and long service leave) in the new supported bargaining enterprise agreement may be like conditions under the modern award and legislation. However, existing IEU agreements may contain conditions well above the modern award.

If you are covered by an enterprise agreement, please make sure you know how your agreement compares to industry standards and the modern award.

Because the unions are seeking increased funding from government as part of supported bargaining, large employers and peak ECEC organisations have been enthusiastic in engaging in these discussions.

#### A note for Queensland members

In Queensland, most community kindergartens have a collective enterprise agreement, and almost all agreements contain teacher rates of pay at (or near) the community standard for teacher rates.

While members in Queensland kindergartens support the wage claims (and claims for additional funding) being pursued by the unions, the benefit for individual employees in Queensland may not be as great as for employees in other states.

#### IEU membership crucial

Please encourage anyone employed in ECEC eligible to join the IEU who has not yet joined the union, to do so. Also speak to colleagues in other centres who have not joined or have let their membership lapse. To get the best possible result in this new process, maximum membership support is essential.

Keep your eyes out for special union events explaining the campaign to members. These discussions are fast-moving – and members are best-placed placed to benefit.

#### Join the NSW/ACT Facebook page

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch runs a Facebook page dedicated to early childhood teachers, where we post important information about how your union represents you as well as the latest news and research in early childhood education. Members are encouraged to join the group and post questions, information and respond to the information on the page. ECEC Organisers (Lisa James, Kate Damo and Tina Smith) respond to your questions about your rights and entitlements in the workplace. To join our ECEC Facebook community, you can use the QR code below or contact your organiser, who will send you an invitation to join the group.

Join here:



#### 2023 ECTA Early Childhood Conference

The 48th annual Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA) Early Childhood Conference is set to take place on Saturday, 24 June 2023.

Registrations are now open for the hybrid event, with participants able to participate via video link or in person at St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly (Brisbane). Christopher Phoenix will deliver a keynote presentation on 'How to think like a philosopher'.

IEU members working in early childhood education are encouraged to join or renew their ECTA membership before registering for the conference to access the discounted conference price.

ECTA conferences provide practical workshops for professionals across all early childhood education sectors. Attendees will have access to recordings of all ECTA Conference sessions, with a total of 28 presentations scheduled.

For more information about the conference, including workshop and presenter details, conference timetable and to register visit <https://ecta.org.au/event/2023conference/>

#### HELP debt waiver for teachers in very remote areas

Applications have now opened for a federal government scheme to reduce and waive HELP debt for Australian teachers working in very remote areas.

IEU teacher members employed (and those intending to work) in very remote areas are encouraged to apply for the scheme.

The scheme has two parts, the first of which began in 2019 and allows teachers to apply to have the indexation on their accumulated HELP debt waived.

The second, which opened in 2023, allows applicants to apply for a broader reduction of their HELP debt.

Both types of assistance are available to teachers who are/were teaching in very remote areas of Australia, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Remoteness Structure, including at a preschool/kindergarten.

To be eligible, teachers must complete four years of full-time teaching in a very remote location, with the average debt reduction for eligible teachers expected to be around \$35,000.

Teachers must also have completed their initial teacher education qualification for their eligibility to commence and have a HECS-HELP or FEE-HELP debt related to that qualification.

For more information and to apply or check eligibility, visit <https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program/reduction-higher-education-loan-program-help-debts-teachers-very-remote-areas>

# MINISTER

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## PUT ON

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# NOTICE

Your union has called on Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly to consider a list of measures that would decrease the workload and improve the status of early childhood teachers if implemented.

**Dr Aly met with IEU officers and members from NSW, ACT and Queensland at the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Reality Roundtable in November 2022. She listened as early childhood teachers shared heartfelt stories of dedication despite low pay, acute staffing shortages and onerous workloads. The list of actions that the union sent to Minister Aly is as follows:**

### 1. Standardisation of terminology

#### What is the measure?

Standardisation of language used by the Department of Education, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) and the government in general to refer to early childhood teachers, educators, and the sector as a whole.

#### Rationale

Language that underscores the fact that the sector provides education to young children increases the status of education and care in the community which then makes recruitment and retention easier.

#### Description of measure

That the Department, ACECQA and Ministers encode the appropriate language in all written and oral communications:

- Teachers to be recognised as university qualified professionals - early childhood teachers as distinct from educators
- Services to be referred to as early education and care services, not childcare centres

- The early education and care sector to be referred to as such, not as the childcare sector

### 2. Provision of standardised forms and policies

#### What is the measure?

Development of a standard set of regulatory compliant forms and policies that can be adapted by individual services as required or adopted as is.

#### Rationale

Eighty per cent of services in the education and care sector are run by providers who only operate a single service (normally these services have early childhood teachers as directors). This means that the directors of over 5700 services nationally (34 per cent of all services) must individually develop forms and policies, including undertaking the research to ensure they are compliant and reflect best practice.

Provide them with proformas and their workload instantly decreases.

#### Description of measure

ACECQA to develop standardised forms/policies for:

- Enrolment
- Required information display forms (with all required information that centres must display under the Regulations)
- All policies required under Regulation 168 – policies that are fully compliant with the Law and Regulations and are considered best practice under the National Quality Standard rather than the existing “policy guidelines”



*(from left) IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Deputy President Carol Matthews, Secretary Mark Northam, Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education Anne Aly, former IEU Early Childhood Services Vice President Gabrielle Connell, IEU President Tina Ruello, and Early Childhood Education and Care Vice President Michelle Thompson*

- Comprehensive Authorised Officer pre-visit checklists to enable services to have all material organised and on hand
- A red alert newsletter to inform teachers/educators/ services when there is a regulatory change.

### 3. Additional National Quality Framework resource material

#### What is the measure?

Provision of additional resource material including videos and online training courses to assist Approved Providers to understand governance issues under the NQF. Provision of standardised courses for all training required to be held and renewed under the Regulations outside of qualifications.

#### Rationale

Many of the union's members work for not-for-profit services managed by parent management committees. As the governance impost on services has become more complex, our members have found they are having to spend additional time explaining governance to their employers. A range of additional videos and online training events could make this easier. Since the previous government abolished the funded professional development and resourcing program for the sector, accessing professional development for both their staff and for their management committees has rested on teachers/directors. The NQF requires that several micro qualifications be updated on a regular basis such as child protection qualifications, first aid, CPR, anaphylaxis, and asthma training. Recommended training also includes courses such as safe sleep training, food handling and work health and safety training.

Providing training and resources accessible from one location will instantly reduce teacher workloads in sourcing the relevant training and ascertaining if it is compliant.

#### Description of measure

Provision of a range of free training modules via ACECQA's website which would meet regulatory required refresher

training, training recommended under the NQS and governance training for Approved Providers.

### 4. Portability of long service leave

#### What is the measure?

Development of a long service leave portability scheme for the education and care sector.

#### Rationale

The most recent workforce census showed that educators and early childhood teachers had an average of 7.2 years of experience in the education and care sector but the average tenure at their current service was 3.6 years. Few employees have access to long service leave even though they have had many years in the sector. Access to long service leave has been shown to reduce burnout.

#### Description of measure

The government to develop a long service leave portability scheme for the sector.

### 5. Making it easier to become an early childhood teacher

#### What is the measure?

Provision of easily accessible information to those wanting to upskill from Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications.

#### Rationale

Promotion of early childhood teaching as a valuable career choice within the sector and providing easily accessible information about how to do it will make it more attractive for educators to upgrade.

#### Description of measure

ACECQA to be requested to develop a page on their website collating information about the value of early childhood teachers in services, and about institutions offering early childhood teaching degrees and the various pathways for people to upskill to become an early childhood teacher and any scholarships to do this from

both state and territory and Commonwealth governments. Information also to be available about postgraduate courses for early childhood teachers.

## 6. Funding for practicum placements

### What is the measure?

Provision of Commonwealth government funding to enable educators already working in the sector and studying to become an early childhood teacher to undertake practicum placements which are an important and necessary part of becoming an early childhood teacher.

### Rationale

Student members of the IEU report that having to self-fund practicums, while taking leave of absence from their own jobs, is a barrier to becoming an early childhood teacher. Removing this barrier would enable more educators to undertake a teaching degree and would remove a clear disincentive to do so.

### Description of measure

A component of the Community Child Care Fund could be quarantined to provide funding for applications from services for:

- Funding to employers to backfill educators' positions while an employee is on study placement
- Funding to employers to enable students to continue to be paid their usual income whilst undertaking practicums required by their studies.

## 7. Clarification of pedagogical documentation under the NQF

### What is the measure?

ACECQA to develop guidelines for documentation of children's learning requirements under the National Quality Framework.

These would include guidance on the quantity and frequency of observations, assessments, planning, and reflections required.

### Rationale

There is absolute confusion in the sector about what the National Quality Framework requires in terms of documenting children's learning, especially amongst lower quality services. Clarification of this by ACECQA would address the issue reported to the IEU by members of employers demanding additional documentation that is not required under the National Quality Framework, and that which conflates marketing to families with pedagogical documentation and adds to teacher and educator workloads.

### Description of measure

Sample documentation, deciphering in clear English as to what the planning cycle is and what the NQF expects in terms of quantum and quality of documentation to be developed by ACECQA, published on their website, and distributed widely.

## 8. Making early childhood teaching degrees more attractive

### What is the measure?

Reduction of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts for early childhood teaching degrees and reduction of accumulated HELP debt.

### Rationale

Ongoing attraction and retention of students studying early childhood education is a major concern for universities and ultimately for services, even more so than attraction and retention of students studying teaching degrees per se. There is declining higher education commencements, declining completion of degrees and increasing workforce demand. Current estimates according to ACECQA is that we will need an additional 7000 early childhood teachers by 2024.

### Description of measure

This measure would involve extending the Reduction of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts for teachers in very remote areas program to all early childhood teachers, regardless of location.

## 9. Assisting the IEU to run another equal remuneration case

### What is the measure?

Provision of funding to enable the IEU to run a second equal remuneration case for early childhood teachers under the government's changes to the *Fair Work Act*.

### Rationale

Remuneration of early childhood teachers is a crucial factor affecting attraction and retention of early childhood teachers in some states and territories. The proposed changes to the *Fair Work Act* will ensure that the IEU can argue a case for equal remuneration, but because the union has already run (and lost) a case under the existing legislation, financial assistance would enable it to run a second case, and to test the changes.

### Description of measure

Direct funding from the Federal Government to offset costs in running a test case in the Fair Work Commission under the altered legislation.

## 10. Provision of funded professional development

### What is the measure?

Provision of funded professional development that would allow early childhood teachers to meet the accreditation requirements in their state or territory.

### Rationale

To maintain accreditation, early childhood teachers must participate in ongoing recognised professional development. IEU members report that sourcing recognised professional development is complex and takes time and professional development is a significant cost. Provision of funded professional development that is easily accessible would remove both issues.

### Description of measure

Provision of easily accessible funded professional development that meets the requirements for Accreditation as an early childhood teacher in each state and territory via the ACECQA website.

At the roundtable, Dr Aly spent almost a full day listening to everyone from students to seasoned directors, preschools and long day care staff and for-profit and not-for-profit employees as they explained how workload, wages and workplace issues were affecting their lives.

The room was fraught with emotion as some teachers explained they were resigning from the profession they love because they could no longer cope.





During the roundtable one teacher, a single mum, said she would never be able to pay off her HECS debt, and relies on welfare to top up her income.

“I shouldn’t be in that position. I have five years of uni behind me. I’m a professional teacher.”

Another said she had worked as a nanny on Saturdays for many years “just to pay the rent”.

“I’m an absolute professional, yet I feel the shame of living in poverty. It’s a big challenge to my mental health.”

Another said: “You need a good partner with a good job to survive as an early childhood teacher. It shouldn’t be that way.”

Directors talked about the stress of having to negotiate their wages over and over with a parent committee; the difficulties in finding casuals due to the current worker shortage and having to cover for Cert III educators when no one else was available.

“People are losing their passion. Love does not pay the bills.”

IEU Early Childhood Sector Vice President Michelle Thompson said collective bargaining would give her sector a stronger voice, but right now it was “chronically haemorrhaging dedicating, qualified staff” and urgent action was needed.

Dr Aly said she had never encountered a room of such passionate, professional and dedicated people in all her years as a policy maker, a professor and a politician.

“I have seen the love for what you do and more importantly, the love for the children and the education you provide. It’s abundantly clear right here in this room and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share that passion with you. It is truly a privilege to meet you all.

“We’ve had a lot of tears, but I know where those tears are coming from. That’s a positive because it comes from such passion, experience and dedication.”

Dr Aly said the government’s Early Learning Strategy would reflect that early learning was part of the education journey. The government would focus closely on the 0-5 years, with Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth and Education Minister Jason Clare part of the process.

“We know what you do is not childcare. No child born into disadvantage should have to carry that disadvantage through life. The work that you do is fundamental to that, and that’s phenomenal.

“If you have spoken today about losing your passion because of the conditions under which you work, I ask you reflect on the difference you make each and every day to a child’s life.

“Give yourself a moment to look in the rear-view mirror and think about how important your work is.

“This is just a start. In five months, we can’t fix 10 years of neglect. We’ve hit the ground running but there’s more to do.

“We can’t do this alone; we need union support, and our state government counterparts must help.

“We recognise you are highly trained experts who want significant career pathways. Let’s keep talking.”

#### References

<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-package/resources/2021-early-childhood-education-and-care-national-workforce-census-report>

<https://snapshots.acecqa.gov.au/workforcedata/index.html>

# Playing IT Safe

# An essential toolkit for early childhood education

**In an increasingly connected and digital world, experts agree it is never too early to begin teaching children about cyber safety and respectful online interactions, Emily Campbell writes.**

It's why every early childhood education professional should be aware of Playing IT Safe, a freely available program jointly developed by the Australian Federal Police, eSafety Commissioner, Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation.

Launched in 2020, the Playing IT Safe website contains a variety of comprehensive resources for early childhood education teachers and assistants to use when teaching infants, toddlers and preschool aged children about online safety.

The variety of play-based games, activities and lessons have been designed to engage with children in a fun, interactive and age-appropriate way to help them understand technology and develop the foundation for good online safety skills.

## **Start the esafety conversation early**

According to a spokesperson from Australia's Office of the eSafety Commissioner, young children become active technology users as they grow, through playing with technology and being connected online.

"Research shows that 81 per cent of parents with children aged 2-5 years report that their child is using the internet," the eSafety spokesperson said.

"However, only 57 per cent of parents directly monitor usage by viewing what is on their child's screen and 37 per cent of parents think their preschool aged child spends too much time online," they said.

"Technology is now a part of children's lives from birth: they witness adults using it, see themselves captured in photos and video and are surrounded by digital content.

"In response to the clear need for information and resources, eSafety is constantly expanding its offering in the area.

"Playing IT Safe provides a suite of advice and free resources to help encourage young children to have positive experiences with technology and build their understanding of online safety.

"Our program is built around four key online safety messages for young children: be safe, be kind, make good choices, and ask for help.

"eSafety resources are designed to be practical, relevant and engaging, created in collaboration with experts and based on evidence from the eSafety research and focus groups," they said.

Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) Professor Michael

Dezuanni, an investigator with the Australian Research Council's (ARC) Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child said it was important to instill good habits in children from as soon as they have access to technology, so they can learn to become responsible digital citizens.

"The internet, in its various ways, is just becoming part of childhood and even very young children now use digital devices daily, so it's crucial we teach children about good digital citizenship from the early years of their education," Professor Dezuanni said.

"Whether its parents handing a tablet or mobile phone to their child to watch television or keep them distracted for a few minutes, or a young child interacting with a smart device like Alexa in the home, the internet is becoming increasingly available to very young children.

"The Playing IT Safe resources developed by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation with the Australian Federal Police are excellent, so I'd certainly recommend those," he said.

Given the increasingly digital landscape children are growing up in, experts agree it's important to expose children to some technology so they develop digital literacy skills, but to also balance that with online and cyber safety considerations.

The Playing IT Safe resources aim to actively engage with young children to





“Technology is now a part of children’s lives from birth: they witness adults using it, see themselves captured in photos and video and are surrounded by digital content.”

teach them about these topics while using technology, rather than simply having a conversation.

### Keeping it age-appropriate

The Playing IT Safe preschool resources are suitable for preschool aged children who have completed the infants and toddlers’ activities and have a basic understanding of digital technology and online safety.

A major benefit of the activities is that they are play-based and can be adapted and scaffolded to suit the different learning needs of young children.

Activities include games and songs revolving around topics like how to deal with pop-up content, taking photos, getting consent for taking photos and understanding image manipulation.

In addition, other activities teach children about concepts including passwords, GPS, Wi-Fi, the internet and who to contact for help if they get into negative situations both online and offline.

Content is categorised into age-appropriate activities which outline all relevant information like clear learning objectives, instructions, required resources and prompts.

The website has an educator guidance section with resources to guide early childhood education staff on how best to use the play-based

activities and includes conversation prompts and questions to ask of children to help progress their understanding.

The parents and carers section includes an explanation about Playing IT Safe and links to curated resources about using technology and the internet in safe and appropriate ways, which can be supported by the family at home.

### Positive feedback

IEU-QNT member and former Director at Vera Lacaze Memorial Kindergarten in Toowoomba Bridget Kings was an early childhood education teacher for 40 years up until her recent retirement.

Bridget said she and her colleagues have seen enormous change in children’s lives with regards to technology use.

“As technology is all around us in the world, we want children to value its use within the proper contexts and develop understanding that as with everything in life, there is a need for balance,” Bridget said.

“Children learn from the world around them and from observing their own experiences, so very young children quickly learn how to utilise and access content on devices by swiping across screens.

“Although it can be a powerful tool for education, technology and the

internet cannot meet the human needs to adequately stimulate children’s brain development and understandings of language like human interactions can,” she said.

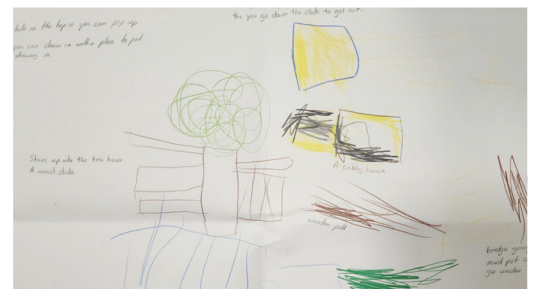
### Essential resources

Bridget says she and her colleagues were impressed by the Playing IT Safe website, which contains lots of informative content and professional development for early childhood education teachers and assistants.

“Playing IT Safe also has learning experiences which can link into the conversations and discussions you have every day with children at the kindergarten as you take photos of their artwork, their creations and of each other as they play and learn together,” Bridget said.

“You can also share the resources that support our families as they engage in conversations about screen time and appropriateness of content with their children at home,” she said.

Members can access the Playing IT Safe website and resources free of charge by visiting <https://playingitsafe.org.au/>



# Award winner draws on nature's calming qualities

**Elizabeth Price was thrilled to be named Individual Leadership Winner at the 2022 HESTA awards for her commitment to “challenge and inspire children through natural learning environments,” Sue Osborne writes.**

The experienced director and long-time IEU member at Gloucester Preschool and Early Years Learning Centre in NSW, said she only nominated because a colleague encouraged her, and never expected to win.

At the awards ceremony in October, HESTA CEO Debby Blakey said the winners and finalists had a significant impact on young Australians.

“Our early childhood educators and carers are critical members of our communities. It all starts with them; they’re laying the foundations of education for our future generations. Congratulations to all our winners and finalists for their incredible contributions.”

Elizabeth has been a director for 30 years, initially working in services on Sydney’s north shore, eventually becoming a regional consultant for KU, covering 15 services.

She appreciates the more intimate relationship she gained with her community when she returned to



## Need for expansion

Elizabeth is passionate about maintaining a traditional preschool service in Gloucester, but she said parents were “crying out” for long day care service.

“In light of the National Quality Framework [NQF], which demands that we listen to the needs of the community and respond, a decision was made to expand our long day care services.”

The service purchased a house adjacent to the preschool, and Elizabeth saw an opportunity to create a natural outdoor learning environment with the extra land.

She encouraged the children to talk about what they liked in their current playground, how they liked to play at the park, or when they were out in nature.

Staff and parents also contributed ideas and they observed how the children played in their previous playground.

Elizabeth hand drew plans for the playground, which she shared with all stakeholders, including the children, for further feedback.

“Not hiring a professional designer allowed us to have more ownership. My hand drawings made it a more intimate process.”

They also used a builder who had never constructed a playground before.

## Keeping the essence

“This gave me more control, we didn’t lose the essence of our concept during the building process.”

Elizabeth said she avoided too many large open spaces, rather creating areas where children could climb, swing and balance in a supported risky play environment. The children can continually redesign the space to provide new creative spatial leaning opportunities. No plastics or single use play equipment were used in the construction.

“We found large open spaces to be disruptive to the quieter children in our previous playground. I wanted to create some small learning areas where they could explore with nature with long periods of uninterrupted play.”

“This is only anecdotal, but we feel we have less aggressive and disruptive behaviour since the natural outdoor learning environment has been opened. The children engage in more social play and use up their energy climbing or swinging.”

“Being in touch with nature calms children down and they are more engaged, with less disruptive tendencies.”

Gloucester Preschool was also awarded the 2018 Kidsafe National Playspace Design Award for its playground.

Elizabeth said as well as the connection with nature, the HESTA Award acknowledged the intrinsic link the preschool has with its community.

“When the NQF came in and it said we needed to work on connection more with community, many of us said ‘aren’t we doing enough already?’. But now I understand what it really means to be part of the community.”

“It’s an everyday thing, not tokenistic add-on.”

The future looks just as busy as the past for Elizabeth. The service has bought another neighbouring property to expand even further.

“I have many ideas about what will happen with that new space. I’m thinking about sustainability and growing our own food, but also intergenerational activities. We will see.”

Since 2010, the national HESTA Awards have recognised frontline educators and carers. The three winners each received \$10,000, courtesy of ME Bank, for professional development or to improve services or processes in the workplace.

For more information, visit [hestaawards.com.au](https://hestaawards.com.au)



Far left: Elizabeth in the playground  
 Left: Some of the children’s drawings that were taken into consideration for the design of the outdoor playground  
 Right: Elizabeth (centre) at the HESTA awards

directorship 10 years ago at Gloucester Preschool, which serves a low socio-economic area.

“I understand this community and the staff who work here well. When I go to regional meetings, I try to inspire other directors and work with them collaboratively,” she said.

Competitiveness between early childhood centres in a for-profit environment was not beneficial to children’s education, she said.

Elizabeth has always been passionate about the environment and feels it’s an important part of a teachers’ role to advocate for children to have opportunities to connect with nature. Many new centres are being built in small spaces, with no connection to nature, to maximise the number of children that can be served, she said.

A “serious conversation” needs to be undertaken by government and society about the future of early childhood education.

While business and CEOs were reaping large profits from the sector, despite rising fees for parents and stubbornly low pay for educators and teachers, the needs of children were being put on the backburner, she said.

# How to incorporate algorithm design into your service

**Algorithm is a term we tend to associate with the complex work of computer software programmers or a concept only understood by information technology (IT) professionals but algorithm design is also a skill which can be taught to help young children develop critical thinking and logical problem-solving abilities, Emily Campbell writes.**

Algorithms are defined simply as “the essence of computational thinking, which is a set of critical thinking processes that help students become effective and creative problem solvers” (International Society for Technology in Education and Computer Science Teachers Association, 2011).

At their core, algorithms involve creating and following step-by-step procedures to achieve a desired outcome.

The authors of a recent study into algorithm design for young children argue it is important for early childhood education teachers to create and implement algorithm design tasks that involve repeated step-by-step procedures to build

strong foundational computational thinking skills in the young children they teach.

## **Plugged vs unplugged activities**

Computational thinking is described as having four major thinking skills – algorithm design, decomposition, pattern recognition and abstraction and, although these skills are intertwined, algorithm design is the most critical computational thinking component (International Society, 2011).

The researchers say fostering young children’s aptitude for algorithm-specific thinking-and-doing processes creates a foundation for logical thinking and can be done through either ‘plugged’ or ‘unplugged’ activities.

Examples of ‘plugged’ activities involve computers to help build children’s understanding of algorithms in association with coding materials through games and toys and using coding tools to find correct paths.

On the other hand, ‘unplugged’ activities are those which don’t involve a computer but connect to the children’s daily lives, meaning

algorithm design skills are used to understand and follow rules, find routes, and analyse and correct sequences.

The research paper contains ‘unplugged’ activity suggestions and practical guidance for early childhood education teachers to use in their classrooms.

## **Unplugged activity ideas**

A major benefit of unplugged activities is they are cost-effective and can be easily implemented in a variety of different settings and classrooms to help children develop algorithm design skills.

Teachers might already be implementing unplugged algorithm tasks in their early childhood education practice without even realising they are doing so.

The researchers stress it is important, when conducting algorithm activities, to use intentional language and explicit instructions to help the children they teach build the necessary algorithm thinking skills.

In the paper, they detail the following activity ideas for early

childhood teachers to embed in their classes which help develop algorithmic skills.

### Following a recipe

Hosting an activity such as helping children follow a simple recipe to make food such as an ice cream sundae or sandwich, can promote algorithm design skills.

“There is a clear algorithmic order to be followed: leave out the bowl and you will end up with a mess; forget to include the spoon and enjoying the sundae will not be easy,” the authors wrote.

Recipes involve a step-by-step procedure that matches the goal of an algorithm and it’s crucial to model the instructions using ordinal words, such as first, second, third, with each step.

After the children have completed making the ice cream sundae, teachers should ask them to list the steps they followed using ordinal words: “First get a bowl and spoon”, “Second, scoop ice cream into the bowl” and so forth.

Performing this recap process helps reinforce remembering each step in a sequence whilst developing new language skills and expanding vocabulary.

“Teachers must make explicit links between the order of the steps in a task and the idea of an algorithm to help students develop the ability to follow and design their own algorithms for solving complex problems,” they wrote.

### Creating a treasure map

Another example of an activity to help children think about repeated step-by-step procedures is asking them to hide some treasure and create their own treasure map.

The process means children can find a place to hide some treasure

and to describe where the treasure is located using ordinal and directional words, including forward, backward, left, right, up, down, under, over etc.

When the children create a treasure map, they are in fact designing an entire algorithm to find the treasure and when they locate treasure, they are following the algorithm.

Teachers can assist the children with scaffolding their algorithm design skills when asking them to follow and create treasure maps that include the number of steps with directional words or arrows.

Engaging in conversation with the children about how the algorithm helps to complete the task successfully helps build language skills by describing the process and reinforces knowledge of algorithm design.

### Daily routine

According to the authors, language-mediated daily routines are vital for helping children understand how procedures contribute to predictable routines.

Something as simple as a daily routine involves algorithms about what children will do in a sequence.

“A teacher may share a daily routine during whole-group circle time in the morning to introduce what the children will do during the day, such as free play time, snack time, outdoor play time and so on,” they wrote.

Like the recipe and treasure map activities, teachers should use ordinal and directional words to help children build algorithmic thinking skills when describing daily routines.

For example, a teacher might model use of this language by saying, “First, we will have free play time. Second, we will have a snack break time,” and so on.

Another useful way to share and outline routines with preschool age children is to co-create posters to help visually reinforce the sequence of a routine.

It can be helpful to refer to the poster and discuss the daily routine in a sequence using ordinal numbers and create opportunity for children to practice talking with their peers about upcoming events and routines using ordinal language.

### Raising a generation of problem-solvers

Practising algorithm design activities during early childhood education programs help children become logical thinkers and build computational skills in an increasingly digital world.

The unplugged activities mentioned above are just a few fun and age-appropriate examples in which early education teachers can equip the next generation to become effective and creative problem solvers.

Members who want to learn more or read the full study can access the research paper online at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14639491211033663>

### References:

Lee, J., Joswick, C., Pole, K., & Jocius, R. (2022). Algorithm design for young children. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 23(2), 198–202. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14639491211033663>  
International Society for Technology in Education and Computer Science Teachers Association (2011) Operational definition of computational thinking for K–12 education. Available at: <https://cdn.iste.org/www-root/ct-documents/computational-thinking-operational-definition-flyer.pdf>

“We aim to strengthen children’s self-esteem and self-identify through developing their heritage language in meaningful social activities.”



# Changing Australia’s monolingual mindset

Recent Census data shows more than 23 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home, yet many young children who enter school speaking a language other than English will lose it by the time they graduate Year 12.

**Professor Paola Escudero, an expert in Linguistics and Language Learning at the MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development at Western Sydney University is dedicating her life’s work to challenging this, Emily Campbell writes.**

## Little Multilingual Minds

In addition to being a Chief Investigator at the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Dynamics of Learning, Professor Escudero is the brains behind the Little Multilingual Minds (LMM) program, a newly developed heritage and second language extension program for young children.

“LMM was created in response to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families to boost children’s heritage language skills, promote second language learning and education opportunities during early childhood,” Professor Escudero said.

“The project enhances and extends children’s heritage language input during early childhood and primary school years and supports families with children learning a second language other than English.

“The LMM philosophy centres around developing children learning and language(s) best through play and enriching social activities.

“We aim to strengthen children’s self-esteem and self-identify through developing their heritage language in meaningful social activities.

“I have done a lot of work researching how to connect and compare adult second-language learning to how babies learn a language from the beginning.

“With LMM, the goal was to combine my interest in children’s development and play-based learning with the expertise I have gained after 20 years of studying and working in language learning and education,” she said.

“The ultimate goal is to empower Australians to embrace this country’s rich linguistic diversity to change the monolingual mindset to a multilingual and multicultural view, which supports greater empathy, social awareness and a better ability to understand and know about the world,” Professor Escudero said.



## Pilot program success

Professor Escudero and the research team at Western Sydney University were recently awarded a prestigious ARC Linkage Project grant of more than \$350,000 over the next three years to continue research-driven heritage language learning programs for early childhood education centres around Australia.

A successful pilot Spanish LMM program was launched at Amigoss Spanish Bilingual Childcare, Glebe in 2021 and a Vietnamese program trial was recently completed at Goodstart Early Learning, Braybrook, in conjunction with an advocacy group VietSpeak.

Professor Escudero is thrilled with the outcomes of the pilot Spanish and Vietnamese LMM programs which she said have surpassed her greatest expectations.

“Towards the end of the Vietnamese pilot, the facilitator sent us emails saying she’d be so sad when the program finished, and the children were already speaking full sentences after only having two half-hour sessions per week,” she said.

“The facilitator explained they can already introduce themselves, talk about colours and talk about the very hungry caterpillar in Vietnamese.

“Our facilitators are all native and fluent speakers trained in the LMM method to deliver completely implicit learning and intentional learning, but intentional teaching of the subject and the content, not just the language.

“Content and language integrated learning has been done for adults, but we’re the first program that uses it overtly and explicitly for children, apart from total immersion programs.

“The method involves lots of positiveness and repetition, which works wonders,” she said.

Another positive outcome of the pilot programs Professor Escudero mentioned was the huge confidence boost to many heritage language speaking children who participated in the LMM pilot.

“In some cases, the facilitators have been able to easily ascertain that the heritage language children undertaking an LMM program in their heritage language are as proficient as native speakers of the same age,” Professor Escudero said

“We would have assumed that because they’re born in Australia, they’re not at the same level of proficiency because they haven’t had the opportunity to practice and show that.”

## Representation and repetition key

Professor Escudero explained there are numerous benefits for children under five associated with bilingualism and multilingualism and plenty of ways adults can support children to learn and maintain a second language.

“For multilingualism to continue through the lifespan, children need to use their languages in as many contexts as possible outside of their homes, and they also need to see their languages represented in written form,” she said.

“Young families are often busy and lack community support to transmit and maintain their heritage language to their young children,” she said.

“The best way for early childhood education professionals to promote and support bilingualism and multilingualism in young children is to facilitate home language or foreign language exposure at early learning centres.

“However, using effective child-directed speech to teach a second language requires a naturalness and confidence which can only be achieved if the adult is fluent in the second language.

“It’s challenging to express positive emotion, repeat words, sing, rhyme and read using child-directed speech if we are not fluent in a language.

“That’s why LMM has been carefully created to help early childhood education staff and centres unravel their potential to celebrate and fulfil high-quality bilingual and multilingual early learning.

“In 2021 when we did the first Spanish pilot of six months, we had a couple of children who were shy and didn’t want to attend readiness for school, but through LMM we did readiness for school in Spanish, and they loved it.

“They were heritage language speakers of Spanish and just didn’t relate to the topics in English,” she said.

## Get involved with LMM

Professor Escudero said LMM is keen to expand and is looking to partner with early childhood education centres around Australia to establish LMM programs in more preschools, kindergartens and playgroups.

“I encourage IEU members interested in having a second language program in their centre to reach out and contact me for more information,” she said.

“LMM is designed to be highly flexible and adaptable using the Australian Early Years framework, so we can organise facilitators and a suitable program that best suits the needs of a centre and the community.

“We are not a language teaching institution or a business; we are just a group of researchers interested in helping change Australia’s monolingual mindset.

“Multilingualism gives you different perspectives, and that’s what I’d love to give to every child in Australia.”

For more information about LMM, visit [https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/marcs/impact/case\\_studies/little\\_multilingual\\_minds](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/marcs/impact/case_studies/little_multilingual_minds) or contact Professor Paola Escudero via email to [Paola.Escudero@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:Paola.Escudero@westernsydney.edu.au)

## Multilingual = Multi-benefits

**Socio-cultural benefits:** A young child’s first language or ‘mother tongue’ allows them to socialise, learn, communicate and understand the world. However, when children speak another language, they gain access to the views and perspectives associated with it, which teaches them different ways of thinking, expressing feelings and experiencing the world.

**Interpersonal benefits:** Multilingualism links children with family, friends and the wider community, which is vital for youngsters’ wellbeing, socialising and development.

**Cognitive benefits:** Research demonstrates that multilingualism improves children’s attention control, problem-solving and executive functioning. It promotes cognitive flexibility, creative thinking and has been linked to better mathematics ability and heightened logic.

**Future benefits:** Being fluent in more than one language makes travelling easier, encourages international friendships and can improve a person’s career prospects. Research also suggests it may delay the onset of dementia later in life.

## References

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Cultural diversity: Census, ABS, viewed 30 January 2023, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/cultural-diversity-census/latest-release>>.

# New advocate putting children and teachers first

**New IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Vice President Michelle Thompson has hit the ground running, fronting the mainstream media and meeting a minister in her first few weeks in the role, Sue Osborne writes.**

Thompson has taken over from dedicated and long serving Vice President Gabe Connell (see p20).

“Very big boots to fill,” Thompson said.

Change and spontaneity has been a hallmark of Thompson’s career. In her 20 years in the early childhood sector, she has worked in numerous roles and settings, experiencing everything from Cert III educator, diploma and teacher roles in community-run centres, preschools at independent schools such as Cranbrook and Kambala and council-run centres.

She has been involved in developing two new centres from the ground up, and said she relishes getting into the nighty-gritty of building a centre.

She is currently Director at north Sydney’s Shore School Early Learning Centre, part of the P-2 preparatory program for 50 boys and girls. The Shore School becomes all boys after Year 2.

“Working in so many different roles has given me a real understanding and perspective on what it’s like to work at all levels in an early

childhood centre. I have empathy with all staff as I have walked in their shoes,” Thompson said.

She loves being in early childhood because every day is different. “Children are so full of fun and beautiful energy and innocence. You just never know what they’re going to come up with next.

“I love meeting the families as they come and go and hearing the stories and the funny comments from the children.

“The other day they were asking why we like being teachers. That sparked a great conversation among the staff about why they wanted to be a teacher.

“My philosophy is always about putting children first and I like to unpack what we’re doing and see if doing things differently would benefit the children.

“We have tried various initiatives over time like resting outdoors. The children just didn’t want to be lying down inside, so we worked with them and the parents to try it.

“Thinking ‘let’s do it the way we’ve always done it’ might not align with the best way to do something.”

## **Recruited by publications**

Thompson found the IEU through its publications. “For many years I’ve been reading the IEU’s monthly

[*Newsmonth*] and the magazines. My husband is also a teacher, so I’ve been reading the publications for a very long time.

“I’m always interested in the articles. I love the point of view. They’ve always been an advocate for change and working conditions and really promoting the children, the families and staff conditions.

“Something came up on ECEC Council and the only way to get change is by doing, so I went from reader to joining ECEC Council.

## **A voice for the sector**

“On council I have learnt more about how the union could offer a voice for the sector and that’s where the vice-president’s role comes in.

“It also offers me a chance to grow my skills and participate in a bigger arena.”

ECEC Council consists of a group of early childhood teachers from around NSW and the ACT who meet regularly to set the union’s agenda. They recently gathered to welcome Federal Early Childhood Education Minister Dr Anne Aly to the union’s Sydney office (see p6).

During that meeting Thompson gave an interview to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. She told the journalist that collective bargaining would give her sector a stronger voice, but right now



“We are constantly torn, wanting to do critical reflection and meet the needs of all children and families, not fill in for the chef or do a lot of paperwork.”

it was “chronically haemorrhaging dedicating, qualified staff” and urgent action was needed.

“It’s wonderful collaborating with everyone and highlighting areas of need in our sector. It’s important to have an early learning voice at the table.

“I’d like to see action now. Early learning is at the forefront and it’s great to see politicians discussing it, but there’s a crisis and we need immediate concrete action.

#### **Workload pressures**

“The teacher shortage is creating workload pressures at all levels. I’m talking to teachers from all different areas and it’s the same story – burnout.

“The increased demands of admin and compliance on directors has

become a problem. The NSW Education Department is very stringent on applying regulations. But it’s crazy sacrificing time with the children or our programs because we can’t meet ratios or qualifications on the premises.”

Thompson illustrates her point with the example of having to waste time over an expired box of band aids in the First Aid cupboard, when a perfectly good box of new band aids was sitting right next to it.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff were really struggling yet there was no let up from the Education Department, she said

“They still did ratings and assessments, still checked ratios. It was very hard to put all our time and energy into the children when were being dragged away to this stuff.”

The Department’s recent announcement that fines would be increased for non-compliant centres was “very disappointing” during the present crisis in staffing, Thompson said.

“We are constantly torn, wanting to do critical reflection and meet the needs of all children and families, not fill in for the chef or do a lot of paperwork.

“The biggest concern is that we’re losing more and more of our experienced leaders due to burnout. Lots are resigning right now and there’s no one coming through the universities to replace them.

“It’s hard to know what the future holds.”

# The accidental early childhood teacher

Recently retired IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Services Vice President Gabrielle Connell reflects on her decades of experience in the early childhood sector.

**Yes accidental! Early childhood teaching was never a first choice for me. Educated back in the days when women had fewer choices and women's careers were not as important as men's careers, my parents decided I should do teaching, nursing, or join the public service.**

However, my father did believe that I should have a university degree and encouraged me to choose teaching. Archaeology or science was my first love but that was never an option - there was to be no digging up mummies for me.

I followed the path laid out for me by my parents and embarked on an early childhood degree at Canberra College of Advanced Education – now University of Canberra – and everyone knows how easy teaching is – all those holidays and only working from 9-3, but here I am 35 years later retiring from the sector after having had the best of times despite the hard work, bad pay and general stress. I have loved every minute of it – and if that's how you look back on a career then I did take the right journey after all.

I know I finished my degree with confusion and the sense I didn't have a clue what I was doing or what a teacher was – but good mentoring and support saw me learn huge amounts in my first year and so I stayed and grew and hoped I didn't damage those first few classes of children too much!

I worked in Canberra for several years and then here in Albury as a classroom teacher.

I was happy being a teacher and had no aspirations for leadership roles but family circumstances changed that.

In 1999, I became Director of Albury Preschool. I felt very underprepared and out of my depth but once again I received great mentoring and support from other directors. In fact, the other directors thought the new girl on the block should take on some roles within the group as well – and so my other journey began. I became an accidental leader and advocate for children and families.

## Advocate for the profession

I have always been a strong advocate for children and families but also for the profession and in particular early childhood teachers. I have always believed that the only way to attract and retain qualified teachers in the sector is through recognition of the work they do and their value, as well as through better conditions and pay.

Because of this I joined the union in 1994 and have been a long-term union member. The best move I ever made. In 2004 I was asked to become a member of the IEU Early Childhood Services Council.

In 2006 I was elected to be the NSW Early Childhood Services representative on the IEU Executive. I have just retired from this position this year after 16 years.

Over the years of my union membership I became more involved in advocacy – for children, families and teachers.

As part of the union, I continued to fight for better wages and conditions for teachers as well as better funding for early childhood services. I was a part of many campaigns, one of which was the Teachers are Teachers campaign which aimed for pay parity for early childhood teachers in NSW, and I was a witness in two wage cases for early childhood teachers.

Through my role as a classroom teacher, Special Educator and Director/Nominated Supervisor, I also advocated very strongly for better funding, pay parity and for teachers in early childhood to be recognised as professionals and accredited and valued appropriately.

## Grassroots work

I helped to establish a grass roots advocacy group called 'Children's Choice' which eventually won \$88 million in funding for NSW preschools. We managed to mobilise the whole state and staged rallies locally and outside NSW Parliament House as well as outside the *Sunrise* windows. There were many uplifting moments as we all joined together with the support of the peak bodies – IEU, Community Connections Solutions Australia (CCSA), Community Early Learning Australia (CELA), Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and others. From this the NSW preschool campaign group was established and it continues to support preschools today.

Between 2009 and 2012, I worked for three years as a Project Officer for Riverina/Murray in the Preschool Growth Program with CELA. They were given the task of rejuvenating preschools across the state and increasing access and equity for children with this \$88 million.

I was a founding member of the Albury Partnering Group – a combined early childhood services group dedicated to providing better funding, services and outcomes for children and families in the area and supporting each other through difficult times. These groups have since spread across the state.



*Gabe with husband Scoby and grandson Rafael*

“We need to encourage, mentor and support new teachers if we want to retain them.”



While I have retired from teaching, I still have my toes in the early childhood waters and will continue to make ripples.

I am currently contracted by NESAs as a Teacher Accreditation Supervisor supporting and mentoring new teachers through the accreditation process and find this a very rewarding way to give back to the sector I love. We need to encourage, mentor and support new teachers if we want to retain them.

The friendships I have formed over the years are long and enduring. I have been privileged to have met very passionate, intelligent and caring people who have fought not only for children and families but for teachers and educators.

But now for children, grandchildren and travel!



Monique Roosen is an Industrial Officer for IEU-QNT. Lisa James 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 Lisa

I am soon to graduate as an early childhood teacher and I am wondering if you can tell me what kinds of questions I should ask when I am looking for a job as a teacher?

#### Natalie



Lisa James

#### Dear Natalie

I suggest that you ask prospective employers:

- Does the centre have an enterprise agreement in place to cover the teachers at the centre?
- How much non-contact time is provided to teachers per week?
- What qualification does the current educational leader hold?
- Is there an expectation that you will take on the role of educational leader in future?
- What support does the centre provide for provisionally accredited teachers?
- Can you provide me with a copy of the centre philosophy? (Does their philosophy align with your own?)

- How is the wellbeing of teachers and educators prioritised and facilitated at the centre?
- What process should an employee follow if they have a concern about something at the workplace?
- On average, how long have existing staff been employed at the centre?

These questions will assist you to understand whether the organisation really values the teachers and educators that work for them. Low staff turnover, good pay and working conditions and support (such as mentoring and additional non-contact time) provided to new graduates are all important indicators.

#### Lisa

#### Dear Monique

I've been employed as an early childhood education teacher at the same kindergarten for 15 years and am considering taking long service leave, which I have never accessed before. I'm a bit confused by the process. How do I notify my employer and how much notice do I need to give them? I also took two years of unpaid leave due to illness, so I wonder how that will impact my long service leave.

#### Alison



Monique Roosen

#### Dear Alison

Long service leave is accessible for most employees after 10 years of continuous service with their employer, although LSL differs from state to state, so be sure to check with your IEU organiser

Over the years, some IEU chapters have fought for and won access to long service leave after just seven years, so be sure to check your industrial instrument, whether it's a union-negotiated collective agreement or the modern award and familiarise yourself with your working conditions relating to long service leave.

In Queensland, it is typically (because most centres are on a collective agreement, but a couple are still on the modern award) accrued at 1.3 weeks of long service leave per year, meaning an employee will have 13 weeks of paid long service leave after 10 years. However, taking any period of unpaid leave will impact your accrual, as employees do not accrue long service leave during

periods of unpaid leave.

It sounds like you will have access to 16.9 weeks of long service leave. Most industrial instruments, whether the modern award or a collective agreement, require an employee to provide written notice of intent to take long service leave, usually six months' notice before commencing that leave. You are entitled to take all or part of your entitlement.

The final decision regarding accessing your entitlement to long service leave rests with your employer, who will consider the operational requirements of your centre before notifying you of their decision.

Our union can assist with drafting a letter to your employer notifying them of your request and support you if any problems arise. We can also perform calculations to work out how much long service leave you are entitled to and when you can access it.

#### Monique

# GIVEAWAYS

BEDROCK

## Billie and the Blue Bike

Author and Illustrator: Ambelin Kwaymullina  
Publisher: Magabala Books



Billie wants the blue bike and she asks her Mum to buy it for her – but her Mum has no money to spend on a bike. She asks Uncle Jack and he won't give her the money either, but he will help her save up to buy the bike herself. She can work for him for \$10 per week for 10 weeks to save the \$100 for the bike. But Billie is impatient, and she tries washing cars and even enters her dog Spike in a dog contest – neither of which works out. She eventually she goes back to Uncle Jack and saves the money in 10 weeks – and she is able to purchase the bike!

*Billie and the Blue Bike* is a fun and engaging way to introduce young children to financial literacy knowledge, and is written for Indigenous children in particular.

*Billie and the Blue Bike* references the National Consumer Financial Literacy Framework, which sets out three dimensions of learning that underpin consumer and financial education: knowledge and understanding; competence; and responsibility and enterprise.

## Sticker World: Farm

Illustrator: Aviel Basil  
Author: Kait Eaton  
Publisher: Lonely Planet Kids

Get ready to create the best farm ever!

From growing crops and building barns to rounding up herds of sheep and milking cows, this is your chance to create the ultimate farm. Keep bees and make delicious honey, fill your shop with tasty food and drink, and drive a tractor everywhere!

- Just add stickers, doodles, and lots of colour to bring it all to life.
- As the farmer, you'll have loads of fun activities to do, including:
- Creating a map so visitors can find their way around
- Planting and tending to crops in your fields
- Looking after ducks, geese and chickens
- Milking cows and making delicious ice cream
- Building a climbing frame for goats to play on
- Keeping bird away with a watchful scarecrow
- Raising lambs, piglets and calves.

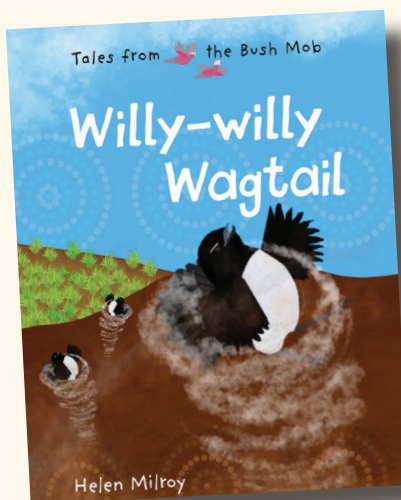


## Tales from the Bush Mob Willy-Willy Wagtail

Author and Illustrator: Helen Milroy  
Publisher: Magabala Books

*Tales from the Bush Mob* is a series of books about the Bush Mob, a group of animals that works together to solve problems. A rich landscape of characters and places populate this series and include Platypus, Koala, Emu, Wombat, Kookaburra, Echidna, Kangaroo and Gusto, the wind. Places include Willy Wagtail's Tree, Dingo's Den, Old Billabong, Bird Meeting Place, Cockatoo's Nesting Trees, Top Camp and Emu Race Track.

*Willy-willy Wagtail* is the first book in the series and goes back to before Bush Mob get together and nobody understands each other and there are lots of fights. One day there is a terrible bush fire and Willy Wagtail, Gusto (the wind) and Crow get all the Bush Mob to work together to save the community. For the first time, everyone understands each other and Dingo takes charge and leads all the animals to safety. Dingo is now Boss Dog and is head of the Bush Council, with Willy Wagtail and Crow the Bush Mob is formed. The next two titles are *The Emu Who Ran through the Sky* and *The Sweetest Egg of All*.



Email entries to [giveaways@ieu.asn.au](mailto: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 May 2023.

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