

See inside for our four-page liftout on tips to reduce documentation

bedrock

issue 3 | Vol 29 | 2024

**Risky play
empowering
children**

Uluru Statement from the Heart

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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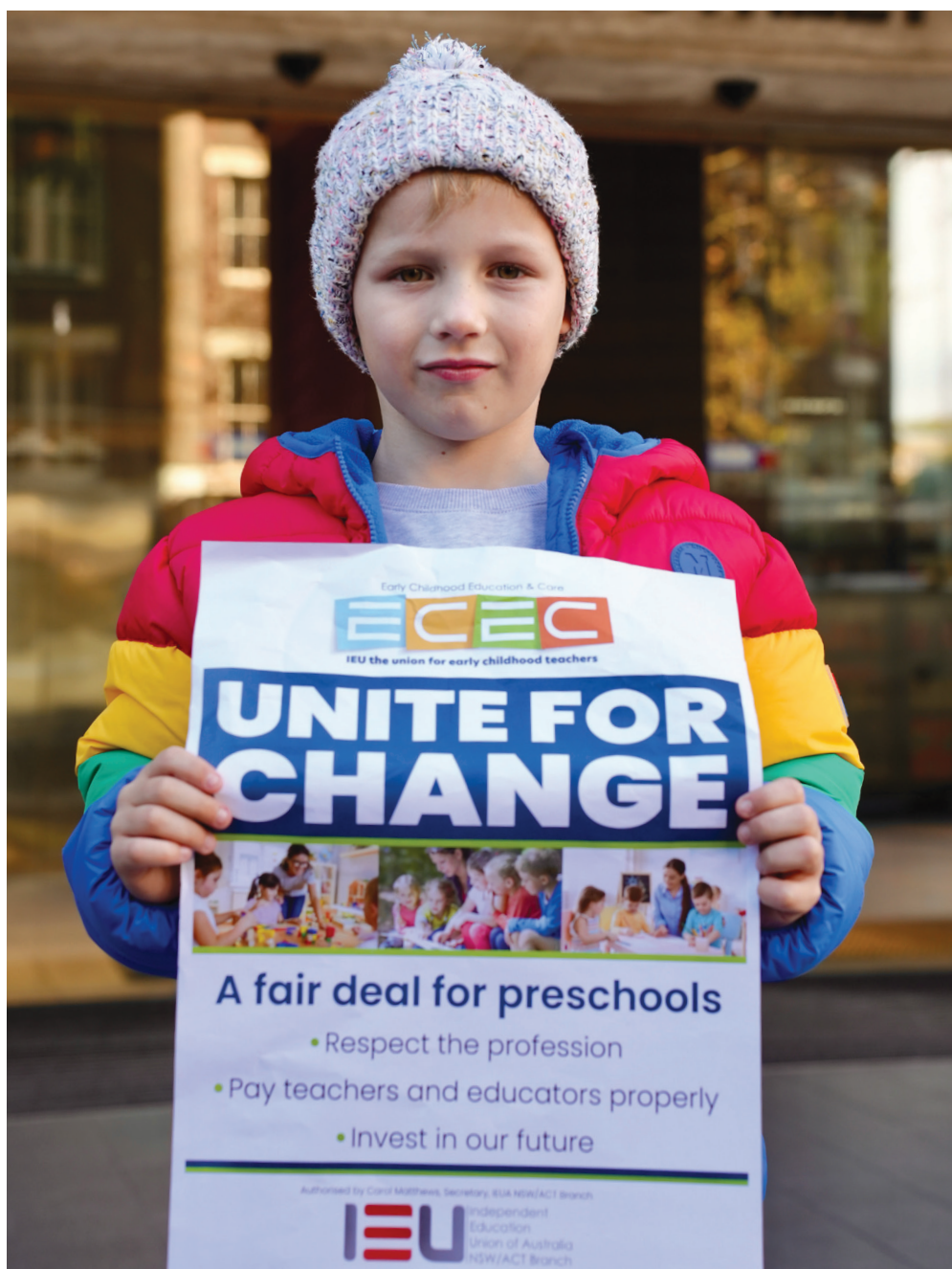
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TERMINOLOGY

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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Editorial

Our union has a long history of support for employees in early childhood education settings.

Recent improvements to the wages of early childhood education professionals employed in long day care centres, which our union was instrumental in achieving, are a perfect example of the positive difference IEU membership makes.

Our union has welcomed the news that teachers in long day care centres across Australia will receive a substantial pay rise of 15%: 10% due in December 2024 and another 5% in December 2025 (page 6).

This historic outcome was achieved through the combination of a \$3.6 billion funding injection from the federal Labor government and significant recent reforms to our country's industrial relations landscape, which now allows for multi-employer collective bargaining and other beneficial changes that will see low-paid workers in feminised sectors financially better off.

Hear from early childhood teacher Alex Sutherland, who was recently awarded the NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship, about his overseas trip to study play and pedagogy on page 8.

In the centre of this publication is a four-page liftout featuring extracts from the information sheets written by ACECQA in close consultation with our union (pages 11-14).

These are useful resources for early childhood education staff to help streamline documentation processes and reduce unnecessary duplication, while ensuring legislative and quality standards are met.

On page 16, learn about why our federal union has partnered with a new coalition, launched by The Parenthood, which is fighting to ensure children in rural, regional and remote parts of Australia have equitable access to ECEC services.

A global report published recently by UNESCO has also reinforced the importance of quality policy and investment in ECEC, as discussed on page 22.

Please enjoy this edition of *Bedrock* and as you read remember that the positive progress made in the ECEC sector is thanks to IEU members like you and the power of our collective action.

Carol Matthews
Secretary
IEU NSW/ACT Branch

Terry Burke
Secretary
IEU-QNT Branch

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UPFRONT



Accreditation: New rules more flexible

NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is giving teachers broader scope to meet their professional development (PD) requirements.

The changes provide greater flexibility compared to the narrowly mandated priority areas put in place by the previous Liberal-National government in NSW.

Under the new policy, teachers will be able to include a wider range of professional learning opportunities and other compliance training as part of their maintenance-of-accreditation PD requirements. Teachers will still need to complete 100 hours of professional development over a five-year cycle.

This new policy will be particularly welcomed by early childhood teachers working in regional and rural NSW, who find it difficult to access PD.

"This new policy will reduce some of the heavy workload pressures on our members," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"The IEU has been calling for these changes for several years, and we appreciate NSW Education Minister Prue Car's vote of confidence in the teaching profession.

"Where courses were available from private providers, they were often prohibitively expensive, especially for accredited teachers in early childhood centres," Matthews said.

"This new process puts teachers back at the centre of the profession and the government is to be congratulated for listening to the voice of the profession."



A taste of nature at environment conference

Members from far and wide gathered among towering eucalypts at the Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre on Wallumedegal Country in north-west Sydney for a day of professional development.

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch organises a bi-annual Environment Conference for all members.

Early childhood teachers explored the world beyond their centre through engaging workshops and hands-on learning experiences.

They shared information about environmental initiatives at their centres. Driven by her passion for nature pedagogy, Leanne Everingham, from Charlestown Child Care and Early Learning Centre, added regular bush walks to her centre's program. "The benefits have surprised me," Leanne said. "Children go home and take their family on a walk; they are being the leaders."



Amanda Blakers and Annette Reeves from West Epping Preschool have developed close relationships with local Dharug knowledge holders and introduced Dharug language into their preschool's Acknowledgement of Country and other areas of learning.

Children at their preschool begin the day outside all year round. "We talk a lot about Country and caring for Country," Annette said. "We start outside and part of that is to give children predictability and structure. It allows them to feel the difference in the seasons and what the environment looks like."



Committed members win activism award

Two exceptional IEU-QNT members have been recognised and celebrated for their activism and commitment to making a difference for staff in the sector (for more see page 20).

IEU members Debbie Quig and Tanya Donaghey were worthy recipients of the inaugural John Spriggs Award for Outstanding Activism in the Early Childhood Education Sector.

The award was established in recognition of the extraordinary contribution to the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector made by former IEU-QNT Senior Industrial Officer John Spriggs throughout his 28-year tenure at our union.

Debbie, a kindergarten teacher at Aspley East C&K, and Tanya, a kindergarten assistant at Samford Community Kindergarten, are to be congratulated for promoting union values in their workplaces.

Both women are long-standing and active members in their workplaces and are respected, trustworthy points of contact for their colleagues.

Congratulations to Debbie and Tanya on your well-deserved honour, and thank you for the difference you make for our members.



Bargaining update

The latter half of 2024 continues to be a busy time as the IEU-QNT undertakes collective bargaining negotiations on behalf of members in more than 40 affiliated early childhood education centres across Queensland.

Key issues members want addressed include recognition of kindergarten assistants, maintaining and enhancing wages and working conditions and establishing improved career pathways for teachers and assistants.

Most active IEU-QNT chapters in the sector have achieved the inclusion of an Experienced Senior Teacher (EST) classification step for the most experienced early childhood teachers.

"A kindergarten teacher classified as an EST under an affiliate services agreement would be paid the same as EST Step 1 in a Queensland state school, or equivalent to a Proficient 8 in Queensland Catholic schools.

Other wins for IEU members in kindergartens, thanks to their efforts in recent collective bargaining negotiations, include paid pandemic leave, enhanced employer superannuation contributions of 12.75% and annual percentage wage increases that match the Education Queensland outcomes.



Long day care staff to get big pay rises

The IEU welcomes the news that teachers in long day care centres across Australia will receive a 15% pay rise thanks to a much-needed \$3.6 billion funding injection from the federal Labor government.

The historic announcement, made on 8 August, is a union win for members in long day care, whose work providing quality early childhood education and care services to children and parents is invaluable.

The 15% pay rise is above the current rate in the modern award, with a 10% increase in December 2024 and another 5% the following year.

Under the modern award, an experienced teacher in a long day care centre is currently paid \$93,000 a year. The new top rate after the 15% increase will be more than \$107,000.

Teachers who are already paid above the award will also gain increases that will be calculated on the award rate, not the over-award rate.

As part of the pay rise, long day care centres will be required to limit fee increases to parents to 4.4% until August 2025.

The pay rise is a vital step towards closing the pay gap for the highly feminised ECEC sector.

Value of ECEC teachers

While announcing the pay rise, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese recognised the value of teachers in the sector.

"Early educators shape lives and change lives," Albanese said in a media statement.

"We can never thank them enough for what they do, but we can make sure they are properly valued and fairly paid. Today our government is doing just that."

Dr Anne Aly, the Minister for Early Childhood Education, also honoured the work of ECEC teachers during question time on 15 August. Despite the importance of teachers in the sector, their work has gone undervalued, she said.

"That's why our historic announcement of a 15% pay increase across the early childhood education sector is incredibly important," said Aly.

"This pay rise means that by the end of this year early childhood educators – around 200,000 of them right across Australia – will get at least an extra \$100 in their pay packets."

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare said, "The childcare debate is over. It's not babysitting. It's early

education and it's critical to preparing children for school".

"They lift our kids up and now we are lifting their pay," Clare said.

Aly joined the IEU for a roundtable in late 2022, during which members shared heartfelt stories with her about how low wages, intense workloads and workforce shortages were impacting their lives.

Sector-wide success

"This is an historic outcome of unions, the federal government and a group of 64 employers working together to lift pay and conditions across the long day care sector," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

The pay increases, to be funded by the federal government, will help ease critical teacher shortages in long day care centres across the country. Early childhood teachers have been leaving in droves to take up roles in schools and other sectors where the salaries and conditions are substantially better.

For IEU member and long day care centre teacher Amy Martin, the news is a welcome relief.

"The recent announcement about the Australian Government finally acknowledging the need to fund a



Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly, left, talks to IEU members at our Reality Roundtable on issues in the early childhood education and care sector, 4 November 2022

“This is an historic outcome of unions, the federal government and a group of 64 employers working together to lift pay and conditions across the long day care sector.”



IEU Member and teacher in long day care Amy Martin at a union event in 2021

pay increase for early childhood educators and teachers is incredible,” said Amy.

“A decent increase is definitely welcome and needed to be able to keep up with the cost of living, especially living in Sydney.

Our hard work and dedication is finally being recognised as being underpaid and we can’t wait to see how this will be rolled out.

“We hope that every organisation gets on board with the requirements for the government to fund it.”

Next steps

The IEU is currently discussing with the federal government how the funding will be distributed and the mechanisms to ensure the full increase in funding is passed on to teachers and educators as pay rises.

It is expected this will occur through the proposed new enterprise agreement which will include not only the pay increases but other improved conditions aiming to boost

workforce attraction and retention, professionalism and service quality.

“We’re pleased with the government’s cap of 4.4% on fee rises in the next 12 months, but we want to make sure that the funding increase is actually passed on to teachers and educators,” Matthews told SBS News.

“I’m sure that that’s the government’s intention. We understand that will be done through an enterprise agreement, which the unions have been seeking, and we think that’ll be the mechanism for ensuring that the pay rises do go to the employees.”

The IEU joined with the United Workers Union and the Australian Education Union to access the supported bargaining stream in new industrial relations laws passed as part of the *Secure Jobs Better Pay Act* in 2022.

The provision enables unions to bargain for enterprise agreements with groups of employers in a sector rather than in individual enterprises. The laws aim to address the long-

term failure to properly value work in feminised sectors such as early childhood education and care.

On August 26-28, unions and employers met at the Fair Work Commission in Melbourne to work towards finalising the agreement.

Parties involved in the proceedings included the IEU, United Workers Union, Australian Education Union, Community Early Learning Australia, Australian Childcare Alliance and G8 Education.

Strong start but more to do

While the union welcomes the pay rise announcement, “more work still needs to be done”, Matthews said.

“The gap in pay and conditions between teachers in the early childhood sector and those in schools is still too big. Teachers are teachers no matter the age of their students, and we will keep fighting until there is equity between teachers in the early childhood education and care sector and those in schools.”

A photograph of a young child with brown hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt and green shorts, climbing a wooden play structure. The child is positioned on a horizontal wooden beam, with their feet on a lower beam and hands on a blue metal ring. The structure is made of weathered wood and has several blue metal rings attached. The background is filled with green foliage and trees.

Risky play empowering children

Early childhood teacher Alex Sutherland is a recent recipient of the NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship, and he's just back from four weeks overseas studying play pedagogy.

Alex Sutherland, from Newcastle, NSW, has a passion for play and pedagogy.

Before becoming a teacher, he worked in the film and television industry, primarily in the art department. "Working in that industry gave me a deep appreciation for creativity, aesthetics, and hands-on experiences," he says.

His early childhood education and care (ECEC) career began in 2016 when he took a Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood/Primary) at the University of Newcastle.

It was during this period that Alex discovered a deep sense of purpose in early childhood. He is now studying a Master of Early Childhood at Macquarie University.

Becoming a teacher at 26 was a surprise change of direction. His mother Jane, an experienced early childhood teacher, may have played a subtle role in his decision.

The NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship allows recipients to explore best practices in their chosen focus area through self-led research.

In this article, Alex discusses his research and his philosophical approach towards play.

Synergy with learning

My research centres on the Original Learning Approach, a pedagogical reflective tool developed by Suzanne Axelsson, a Swedish pedagogical consultant, author, and educator.

Suzanne has inspired me for quite some time. Focusing on this approach felt natural because it offers new ways of thinking about early childhood in Australia.

At the heart of Original Learning is the vitality of play and its synergy with learning and teaching.

In early childhood, play is central to much of what we do, yet it's something that's incredibly difficult to define.

The scholarship provided me with the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom and Sweden, where I spent four weeks visiting preschools, adventure playgrounds, ateliers, and play provisions such as playgrounds and exhibitions.

During this time, I conducted in-person interviews, collected digital and physical data, and engaged with relevant readings and blogs.

Upon returning to Australia, I have set out to share my insights into the rich, interweaving nature of Original

"Play is central to much of what we do, yet it's something that's incredibly difficult to define."



Opposite page and right:
Children at the local
park expanding their
'parkour' ideas. The
park supported their
emerging knowledge of
measurement.

Left and above:
Children working on
their sculptures in the
woodwork area.



Learning and its implications for early childhood education and care in Australia.

Original Learning, as a reflective tool, encourages us to think and rethink the context here in Australia.

The depth and interconnected aspects of Original Learning – as well as my findings connected to my experiences in the early childhood sector – continue to shape my work.

Original Learning starts with the notion of play, then branches from there. While the significance of play in children's learning, development, and wellbeing is well-documented, there is no universal definition of play.

Choice and joy

Axelsson defines play by identifying two key characteristics: choice and joy.

During my time in the United Kingdom, I had the opportunity to observe the Playwork approach firsthand, a major influence on Original Learning.

This was instrumental in understanding what is defined as 'play' and what is defined as 'non-play' from the perspective of Original Learning.

In the Original Learning Approach, play originates with children and belongs to them. This perspective emphasises that children's play can be adulterated — meaning interrupted, controlled, manipulated, or (over)scheduled.

Reflecting on this idea within my practice, I thought, 'It's about having a deep respect for children by honouring their right to play and trusting in their self-directed play'.

Physical risk-based play is a powerful means of children's play. My visits to three adventure playgrounds in Wrexham, Wales, led by Playworkers, reinforced this perspective.

I noted the similarities between Playwork and my own working experience, highlighting the Playworkers' 'visibly

invisible' approach, where they are always ready to support children — whether by being present or by adjusting the environment — without interfering in their play processes.

Supporting physical risky play is largely about creating conditions and environments that challenge children in a healthy and appropriate way. It's certainly not about letting them do whatever they want, but about scaffolding their capabilities and bravery.

This approach is primarily achieved by starting small and gradually increasing the complexity for children.

Start simply

For example, when using fire pits with children, it begins with something as simple as a tea-light candle at the lunch table. This becomes a catalyst for discussion and developing children's ability to conduct an informal risk assessment.

I have always enjoyed working in early childhood settings that allow children unstructured, self-directed time to play.

I discovered that the concept of 'autonomous play' in the Original Learning Approach offered fresh perspectives on the idea of autonomy.

In Australia, children are often viewed as individual autonomous learners, yet in Original Learning, the word 'interdependence' is key.

The Original Learning Approach broadens the concept of autonomy by emphasising that personal autonomy must not impede the autonomy of others, which offers valuable insights for early childhood education in Australia.

The idea of autonomy as described in Original Learning is visible in gathering children for a 'morning meeting'.

I really enjoy engaging in daily morning meetings where the children share their play ideas, questions, or thoughts. It became an essential time for reflection, listening, and sharing ideas together.

These morning meetings were guided by specific parameters. The children understood that entering a circle meant no one – neither adults nor children – held more power, and everyone’s voice was equally valued and deserved to be heard.

To help children begin the day calmly and mindfully, I use deep breathing exercises assisted by a singing bowl. A ‘yarning stick’ supports children in these meetings, allowing them to practice turn-taking and build the confidence to speak in front of others.

For some children, speaking in a group is a big personal risk, and I’ve seen it take months for some to build up the courage.

Democratic practice

The morning meeting is more than just a gathering; it is a space for fostering children’s democratic practice, a core element of the Original Learning Approach.

Axelsson describes this as ‘mwe’ – a blend of ‘me’ and ‘we’ – which advocates for children to feel valued, develop a sense of belonging, and actively participate in a community.

Another key insight from my research was the concept of a ‘play-responsive’ pedagogy, as outlined in the Original Learning Approach. This pedagogy brings to life the diverse rhythms of children’s play and encourages educators to rethink about play beyond normative cultural and neurotypical assumptions.

A play-responsive pedagogy emphasises the importance of understanding play deeply to create inclusive learning environments where children’s play informs the teaching approach.

Central to this pedagogy is the recognition that when children play, they are not just engaging in actions but are also feeling the essence of play.

Original Learning further explores this by discussing how children, when playing autonomously, can enter a ‘flow’ state – an immersive experience where they become fully absorbed in an activity, and everything else fades away.

This concept is rooted in research on the brain’s neuro-connectivity and is crucial for understanding how children and their surroundings co-exist.

I have witnessed this flow state firsthand, particularly when woodworking with children. I’ve noticed children enter a flow state when they are deeply invested in something, like woodwork.

Like other forms of physical risky play, I worked with the children to gradually build their competence and safe handling of tools over time. Children learn quickly, and we were able to move on to some exciting projects.

Creative spark

Integrating woodwork with creative arts and using recycled loose parts sparks a strong interest in children. I have made sculptures with them using timber and recycled materials, including bottle caps, pieces of dowel, and more which were donated by surrounding businesses.

These designs were inspired by an excursion to Sculpture by the Sea with a colleague. The children designed their own sculptures, and it became a truly creative process.

Woodwork requires significant chunks of time, allowing children to engage in deep exploration, problem-solving,



More measuring experiments at the local park

and idea-making – the perfect environment for entering a state of flow.

A final significant finding from my research was the identification of three distinct roles that educators can take within the Original Learning Approach: the playworker, the facilitator, and the teacher.

Each role is unique, yet fluidity in transitioning between them is essential to align seamlessly with children’s play flow.

This perspective offers fresh insights into the concept of ‘Intentionality’ as outlined in the updated Early Years Learning Framework.

This fluidity between roles has happened in past experiences, such as a particular project where I supported children’s emergent understanding of measurement through their interest in parkour.

In the role of a playworker, I created an environment where children could explore and practice parkour movements freely.

Transitioning into the facilitator role, I engaged with the children to scaffold their informal risk assessment and movement techniques, such as how to roll safely to avoid injury.

As a teacher, I deepened their knowledge by introducing creative provocations for parkour planning.

One example involved using charcoal to encourage children to continue the vigorous movements of parkour through mark making, blending physical activity with artistic expression.

This ability to move fluidly between roles – playworker, facilitator, and teacher – enabled me to support the children’s learning and development in a way that was both intentional and responsive to their interests and needs.

Reference

Axelsson S, 2023 *The Original Learning Approach: Weaving Together Play, Learning and Teaching in Early Childhood*. (1st ed.). Routledge

Workloads

Better practice, less duplication



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority™

12 July 2024

Brad Hayes
Federal Secretary
Independent Education Union of Australia
PO Box 177
DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600

Dear Mr Hayes,

I would like to acknowledge the contribution and support of the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) in the development of ACECQA's 'Educational program documentation information sheets' for teachers, educators and approved providers.

We believe the suite of information sheets will support the early childhood education and care and school age care sector to clearly understand the minimum requirements of educational documentation under the National Quality Framework and support them to make informed decisions about documentation that is relevant to their context. Through the guidance, services are encouraged to avoid duplication and unnecessary documentation and consider ways their approaches can be streamlined, whilst still providing quality outcomes for children, young people and their families.

As of 12 July 2024, we have published the information sheets on our website, as a freely available resource. We encourage IEU to share the information sheets more broadly through your members and communication channels.

Yours sincerely

Gabrielle Sinclair
Chief Executive Officer

Is the amount of documentation you are undertaking causing you stress? Are you writing more and more just in case you don't have enough evidence for assessment and rating?

Are you duplicating information? Is all of your documentation valuable or are you repeating things because you feel obliged to meet some self-imposed or other-imposed quota?

Get the facts from the ACECQA Educational Program Documentation information sheets, which were developed in collaboration with the IEU.

The IEU has worked with ACECQA to clarify what is – and is not – required for compliance with the National Quality Standards and National Law documentation of the educational program.

The National Quality Framework was implemented in 2012, and the quantity and type of documentation demanded of teachers has intensified exponentially over time, increasing teacher/director workloads unnecessarily.

We encourage you to pull out or print these information sheets and use them to review the amount of documentation in your service. Keep a copy handy for your next assessment and rating visit and please let the union know if the authorised officer appears to be familiar with the information sheet.

Are they operating within the advice contained in the information sheet during your visit and do they have adequate training and experience in early childhood pedagogy to recognise how the learning cycle (including critical reflection) is demonstrated through your program/plans without the need for lengthy explanatory texts?

How did we get here?

1. Members identified unsustainable workloads due to duplicative and excessive documentation to justify planned activities and resources through lengthy explanatory documents recording critical reflection, which would be obvious to any trained early childhood teacher.
2. The IEU investigated the origins and authority for requirements related to documentation of the educational program and identified the National Quality Framework overseen by ACECQA.
3. The federal office of the union sought to collaborate with ACECQA to write information sheets to clarify what is and is not required for compliance with the National Quality Framework (NQF).

Educational program documentation for educators and teachers

This information sheet is designed to give practical guidance for educators and teachers in early childhood education and care services to streamline documentation processes and reduce duplication while ensuring the legislative and quality standards are met.

These two pages are extracts from the ACECQA information sheets for teachers and educators, written after consultation with the IEU.

Pull them out and pin them on your noticeboard.

Educators and teachers are encouraged to explore a range of styles and methods to document children's learning. Services can choose what documentation suits the unique context of their service, including the needs of their children, families, educators and teachers.

Did you know?

To ensure documentation is meaningful and authentic for children's learning to be made visible, educators, teachers and service leaders use their professional judgment in selecting methods that best reflect the intent and purpose of the documentation.

Complying with the national law and regulations – what services must do

The regulations define what must be done to comply with Section 168 of the Education and Care Services National Law, but they do not prescribe how to do it or what educational documentation must look like. In collaboration with services and educational leaders, approved providers will make informed decisions on the best approach to maintain documentation compliance.

Services must meet the following:

- Regulation 73
- Regulation 74(2)
- Regulation 75(a)
- Regulation 76.

The National Quality Standards (NQS) is a schedule of the National Regulations and documentation expectations are outlined in Quality Area 1 Educational Program and Practice, in particular Standard 1.3.1 Assessment and Planning:

1.3.1 Assessment planning cycle

1.3.2 Critical reflection

1.3.3 Information for families

Evidencing documentation under the NQS – what services may do

As the NQS is underpinned by the legislation, there will be alignment between practice that is compliant with the law and regulations, and evidence of how they meet the aligning NQS standard/s.

Careful consideration and reflection should inform decisions to promote practices that support quality outcomes for children, families, educators, and teachers and:

- align with the legislative and quality requirements
- reflect contemporary research and knowledge about children's learning and development
- eliminate or minimise duplicative or unnecessarily onerous practices
- empower educators, teachers and service leaders to build ownership of and commitment to agreed processes for documentation
- focus on the primary purpose of documentation; to inform teaching practice and children's progress
- ensure expectations/benchmarks of documentation practices are meaningful, sustainable, reasonable and achievable
- ensure documentation practices complement (rather than hinder) educators' and teachers' engagement in valuable learning experiences and interactions with children
- ensure that educators, teachers and service leaders have the appropriate resources (including time and professional development) to successfully undertake the documentation, and
- recognise and value the diversity of ways to document children's learning and capture each phase of the planning cycle outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.



How authorised officers gather evidence

The Guide to the National Quality Framework is a useful tool that explains how authorised officers may observe, discuss or sight evidence.

Observe: service practices and interactions

Discuss: why and how particular practices occur at the service

Sight: documentation provided as evidence to support practices at the service.

Authorised officers will:

- empower service leaders, teachers and educators in the process of collecting evidence, so it is important to think about what an authorised officer will see happening during their visit, what you can talk about, and what documentation can be made available at assessment and rating
- use effective and efficient ways to collect evidence to assess against the NQS and underpinning legislative standards, through a combination of the observe, discuss and sight methods
- use the Guide to the National Quality Framework and the Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0, 2022 to determine ratings and compliance.

Authorised officers will not:

- expect to see copious amounts of photographs, or videos, or
- determine the documentation, templates, apps, tools or approaches to be used.

Articulating evidence about documentation

Educators, teachers and educational leaders are encouraged to consider strategies to support their teams to articulate the thinking and planning that informs documentation. For example, it may be helpful to discuss and share thoughts about:

- theories or philosophical approaches
- how professional judgment is used

- how the documentation process reflects the related requirements of the Law, Regulations and NQS
- how the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is embedded and information shared about the framework
- how the documentation is used to support each child's meaningful participation, engagement and progress towards the learning outcomes and is informed by each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests, and
- how children and families views and ideas have informed the documentation processes.

Reflecting on documentation and its purpose

The amount of documentation

- is setting a benchmark or quota of observations per child meaningful? Is the focus on quantity rather than quality?
- are documentation processes duplicative in any areas?
- can documentation be reduced without compromising quality?
- is the process for documentation impacting on the quality and time of interactions with children?

The purpose of the documentation

- are there opportunities to streamline or reduce documentation while continuing to meet the requirements of the regulations and the NQS?
- could documentation be more concise or used for a dual purpose?

The rights and privacy of children

- are documentation processes ensuring the most effective use of available time?
- can your processes for documentation be reduced, removed or combined to be more sustainable in the long term?
- are there other strategies that could be explored to build in or use time in the work day to effectively and concisely document, that don't impact on children's learning, supervision or wellbeing?

Educational program documentation for approved providers

The following text contains short extracts from different sections of the information sheets for employers. They may be useful for discussions with employers about documentation and processes at your preschool or centre.

Did you know?

There is no one way to meet documentation requirements under the NQF. Approaches to documentation should reflect the children, families and communities of your service. To ensure documentation is meaningful and authentic for children's learning to be made visible, educators, teachers and service leaders use their professional judgement in selecting methods that best reflect the intent and purpose of the documentation.

Approved providers should provide support to educators, teachers and service leaders and collaboratively set expectations to ensure documentation meets legislative requirements as well as to encourage continuous improvements of programs and practice.

Approved providers should also empower and encourage educators and teachers to explore a range of styles and methods to determine what works best for their unique setting including the children, families, service and community.

In settings or collaborating on processes to meet the requirements of the National Law, National Regulations, NQS and align with the approved learning framework it is important to:

- consult with and empower educators, teachers and service leaders to build ownership of and commitment to agreed processes and expectations for documentation
- focus on the primary purpose of documentation
- ensure expectations/benchmarks are sustainable, reasonable and achievable
- eliminate or minimise duplication
- ensure documentation practices complement (rather than hinder) educators' and teachers' engagement in valuable learning experiences and interactions with children
- ensure that educators, teachers and service leaders have the appropriate resources (including time and professional development) to successfully undertake the documentation.

To ensure that documentation processes remain fit for purpose, sustainable, contemporary, meaningful and continue to meet the legislative and quality standards, it is worthwhile to implement regular collaborative practices and provide time for educators and teachers to focus on and streamline documentation processes.

Listening to and empowering educators, teachers and service leaders is a key component to ensure documentation methods are manageable, implementable and reflect their pedagogical and philosophical approaches.

To ensure documentation expectations are met, educators and teachers should be provided with adequate non-contact time to effectively document and plan for children's learning.

Approved providers should refer to relevant employment awards for educators and teachers in relation to non-contact allocations for staff members responsible for educational documentation and consider the varied roles and workload of each educator and teacher.

Excessive and/or duplicative documentation practices may be overwhelming or burdensome and have negative impact on educators and teacher wellbeing.

Excessive and/or duplicative documentation also undermines the aims of the NQS by diverting educator and teacher energy and time to administrative work, rather than planning and assessment of rich learning experiences.

Educational leadership

It is important to consider how the role will continuously support educators and teachers and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families.

If the educational leader has a strong voice in the decision making of the educational program and documentation, they are more likely to be successful in their role and fulfill their responsibilities under the National Regulations.

How to avoid duplication

What should you do if you're directed to undertake duplicative or excessive practices related to the NQF Educational Program documentation?

1. Identify any duplicative or unnecessary documentation. You may find the reflective questions from the information sheet helpful.
2. Work out how the process or requirements can be improved (for example using the same document to satisfy several required records).
3. Approach your employer/manager and draw attention to the information sheet. Discuss your suggestions for how documentation can be reduced, removed, combined and/or used for multiple purposes while meeting legislative requirements.

If the issue remains unresolved, encourage all staff at your service to make a written request for a review of practices at your workplace based on the official advice in the information sheet. Contact your union organiser for support with this.

Let's eliminate duplicative and excessive practices together

The information sheets form part of an ongoing process the IEU has undertaken with several government and regulatory authorities, with a view to addressing, at a structural level, processes that lead to excessive teacher workloads.

Access the information sheets here:

- Educational Program Documentation for Educators and Teachers – Early childhood - bit.ly/Educatorteacherfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Educators – School age care - bit.ly/schoolfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Approved Providers – Early Childhood - bit.ly/ECprovidersfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Approved Providers – School Age Care - bit.ly/schoolprovidersfactsheet

The common theme is that a teacher's professional judgement should be paramount in determining what constitutes an appropriate level of documentation for teaching and learning, administrative and data collection processes.

The IEU is constantly working with employers, regulatory authorities and government to achieve positive industrial and professional outcomes for members. Encourage your colleagues to join their union to ensure the voice of the profession is heard at every level and in every forum.

Lisa James

Veronica Yewdall



IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, above, with members and Unite for Change campaigners, addresses the media outside the Fair Work Commission in Sydney in July; and left, Jude, 6, a member's son, joins in.

Historic bid for better preschool pay

The groundbreaking Unite for Change campaign is in full swing in NSW, providing a model other states and territories could emulate, using new supported bargaining provisions to improve pay and conditions for teachers and educators.

Launched in April, the campaign is focused on a substantial pay rise for teacher and educators in community-based preschools in NSW and to address the workforce crisis in the sector.

The union is making use of industrial relations reforms passed in 2022 by the federal Labor government. Under new provisions, the supported bargaining stream was introduced, which allows individual preschools to bargain together as a group.

Over 100 preschools are participating in the bargaining process for a single multi enterprise agreement.

Reflecting work value

The supported bargaining process allows the union, the employer and the NSW government to come together to address pay and conditions for preschool teachers.

For the campaign, the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch and preschools have initiated

a process with the NSW government to fund pay rises that reflect the value of the work of preschool teachers and educators.

On July 5, IEU members and officials gathered at the Fair Work Commission to file an historic application and show their support for the campaign.

The event attracted significant media attention, including coverage from 7News, 9News and 10 News First, as well as ABC Radio in Newcastle and the Illawarra region, *The Canberra Times*, 2GB, Australian Associated Press and other regional media.

"A successful outcome would be a game changer, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews told the media in attendance. "Community preschools are crying out for teachers — their work has been undervalued for far too long and this must be fixed."

Addressing shortages

Inadequate salaries have contributed to an acute staffing shortage, she said. In other states and territories, community-based, not-for-profit preschools receive considerable state government support.

Matthews called for a 25% increase for beginning teachers in preschools and more for their experienced

colleagues. Under the applicable modern award, beginning preschool teachers currently earn \$70,045 a year while the top annual rate for experienced teachers is \$90,134.

While preschool teachers in most other states and territories earn comparable wages to their counterparts in primary and secondary schools, there's a gap of up to \$30,000 for many in NSW, said IEU member Janene Rox when she addressed the media at the Fair Work Commission.

"It doesn't make sense," said Rox, who is a teacher-director at Cronulla Preschool. "Paediatricians are not paid less because they specialise in supporting younger children, so why are we still differentiating between teachers?"

A supported bargaining hearing was held on 2 September at the Fair Work Commission in Sydney.

As *Bedrock* went to press, Deputy President Judith Wright was deciding whether the supported bargaining authorisation would be issued. The union expects a successful outcome. We will keep members posted on the application's progress.

Union joins Access for Every Child Coalition

Our federal union has joined a new coalition fighting to ensure all children are granted equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC), writes Emily Campbell.

Launched in May by not-for-profit advocacy organisation The Parenthood, the Access for Every Child Coalition is calling on all levels of government to urgently address the persistent lack of access to ECEC services experienced by families in rural, regional and remote Australian communities.

A partnership for change

IEUA Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall said it was an easy decision for our federal union to sign up to The Parenthood's Access Coalition, which currently has over 50 partner organisations, including the United Workers Union (UWU), Australian Education Union (AEU) and Mindereroo Foundation's Thrive By Five.

"The objectives of the Access Coalition align closely with several of the key changes our union has been advocating for to improve the ECEC sector for many years," Veronica said.

"We are proud and excited to be working alongside a coalition of like-minded organisations who want to ensure every Australian child gets the best possible start to life with high-quality ECEC, regardless of where they live," she said.

Campaign Director of The Parenthood Maddy Butler said the current ECEC system was not adequately serving rural, regional and remote communities.

"It can be challenging to access an early learning service anywhere in the country, but it is especially difficult in the regions," Maddy said.

"The Access for Every Child Coalition advocates for accessible, high-quality early childhood education and care so that every regional, rural and remote child, family and community can thrive.

"Children in rural and remote areas are not receiving the same opportunities as those in urban centres, which impacts not only their individual development but also the broader community's economic and social wellbeing," she said.

Six key actions

At the campaign launch, the Access Coalition released a joint statement outlining six key strategic actions the federal government must take to effectively transform the landscape of early childhood education in underserved areas:

- Implement strong public management of the ECEC system in collaboration with state and territory governments.
- Offer a range of supply-side subsidies for ECEC providers in rural and remote areas.
- Invest in quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years services in rural and remote areas.
- Implement a regional, rural and remote national workforce strategy including culturally safe training for First Nations educators.

- Improve family day care and in-home care provision.
- Provide interim solutions.

Professional respect, pay and conditions

Veronica said the ECEC sector has suffered from a lack of appropriate funding and status commensurate with schools, as well as disparity in recognition of the professionalism of its staff.

"Our union, while supporting calls for stronger investment and measures to address inequity, has also been focusing on the overly burdensome compliance requirements affecting the recruitment and retention of teachers in ECEC," she said.

"Teacher shortages in the ECEC sector are a massive issue and pay rates for qualified early childhood teachers in some states and territories remain inferior to teachers in many primary and secondary schools.

"There is an urgent need to attract and retain qualified ECEC teachers in our sector because we are losing them due to burnout, unsustainable workload, insecure work, inferior pay and working conditions," Veronica said.

Community consultation critical

Maddy said because the federal government had committed to universal access to early learning, it must deliver real solutions for every child and every region and there can be no 'one size fits all' approach.

"Solutions must be tailored to the needs and challenges of each area and include meaningful and effective community consultation and involvement," she said.

"Anything that falls short of this will not be a real solution – Australia is a vast country, and our regions have differing needs, challenges and opportunities for service provision that best supports and empowers their children and families.

"Interim solutions could include mobile services, in-venue care and local initiatives to provide a stopgap for struggling families while long-term solutions are rolled out," Maddy said.

An equity issue

As a union comprising 75 per cent women members, lack of ECEC services in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia is an alarming equity issue which should concern all IEU members.

Among the many devastating flow-on effects of lack of access to ECEC is the detrimental impact on women's workforce participation and career prospects.

Veronica said various IEU branches across Australia had heard anecdotal reports from members located in rural, remote and regional parts of Australia who have struggled to enrol their own children in ECEC services.

"There are many instances of parents who wish to participate in the workforce but simply cannot or are forced to work reduced hours due to the absence of ECEC services in their local area," Veronica said.



From left: Tony Mahar of the National Farmers' Federation; Jo Schofield of United Workers Union; Maddy Butler, campaign director of The Parenthood; rural mother and campaign supporter Kirsty Starling; Michele Carnegie of Community Early Learning Australia (CELA); and rural mother and campaign supporter Kate Brow



“The objectives of the coalition align closely with several of the key changes our union has been advocating for to improve the ECEC sector for many years.”



“ECEC is essential social infrastructure, and when parents and carers do not have ready access, their ability to participate in the workforce is severely compromised, which has flow-on effects for local businesses, essential services and the economy more broadly.

“Consider the case of a teacher living in a rural area, employed at a local school, who has no choice but to take a period of unpaid leave because there are no ECEC services available for their own children to attend.

“This not only diminishes their family’s financial stability but also disrupts the educational continuity for their students, affecting the overall quality of education in the community,” she said.

Unions winning for women

The union movement has a long and proud history of fighting to improve working women’s lives, particularly those employed in feminised sectors such as ECEC.

Recent wins like increased government-funded paid parental leave (PPL) and superannuation now being included in PPL will go a long way, but more must be done.

“In 2024, it is overwhelmingly women who still bear the brunt of unpaid domestic and caring responsibilities, who

take unpaid leave or reduce their earning capacity to care for children and ageing relatives,” Veronica said.

“The gender pay gap persists, and women still retire with sparse super balances compared to men.

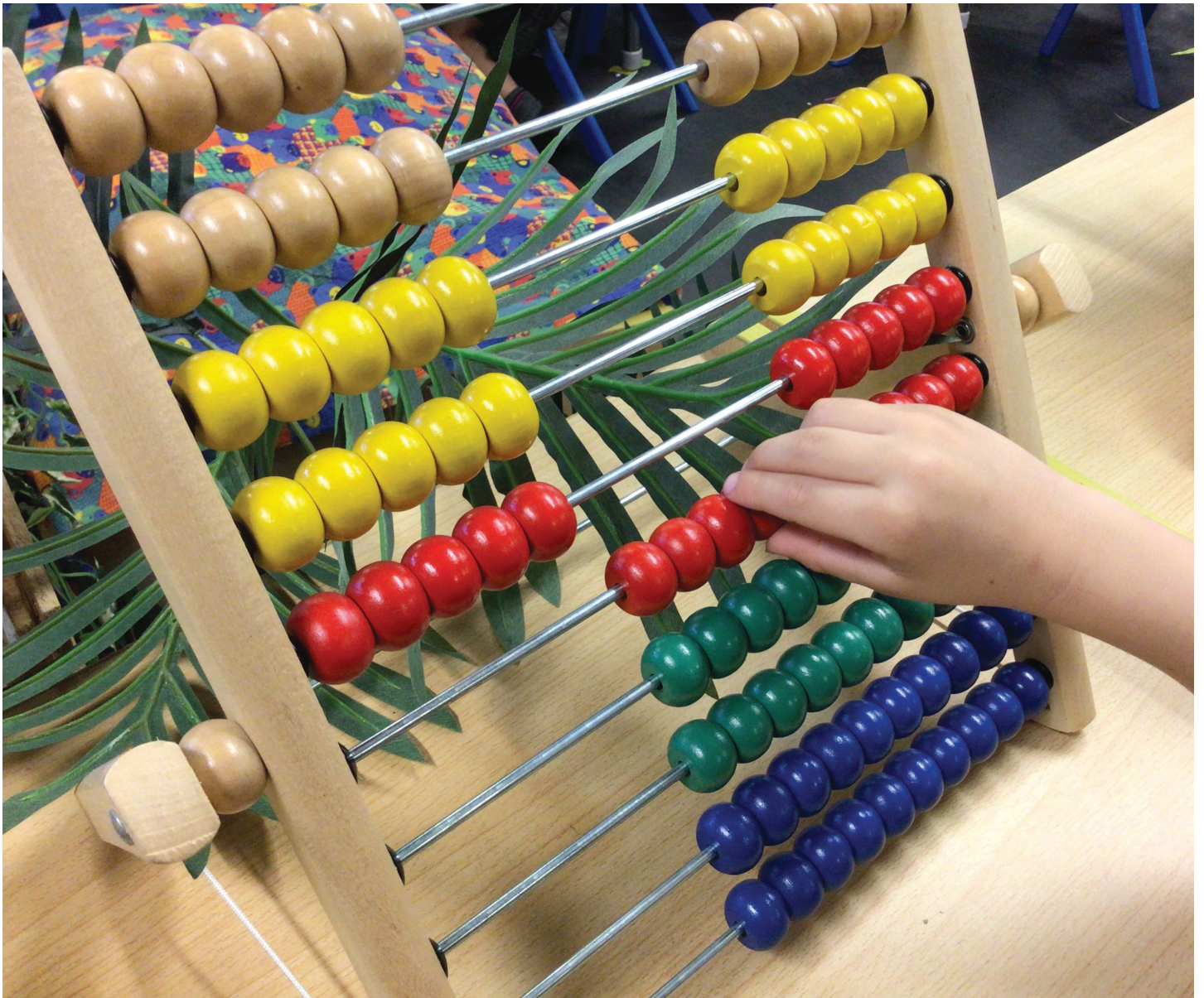
“Ensuring access for all Australians to high-quality ECEC is one of many obvious solutions all levels of government must deliver to improve the long-term financial outcomes for women workers and ensure children have the best possible start to life,” she said.

Veronica said she encouraged all IEU members to support the Access for Every Child campaign.

“I encourage members to visit the website and use the online templates to write to your local MP, urging them to heed our calls and take action,” Veronica said.

“Every voice counts in amplifying this message and making change.”

For more information and further details about the Access for Every Child campaign and to add your voice to the alliance of supporters, visit: theparenthood.org.au/access_for_every_child



Hands-on learning event

The Early Years Conference, held at St John's Anglican College in Forest Lake, Queensland, provides a valuable networking and professional development opportunity for early childhood education professionals every year, Emily Campbell writes.

IEU members Deb Wilson and Ronnelle Sanders are early childhood teachers employed at St John's and organisers of the annual conference, first held in 2007.

Deb said the conference has become an annual highlight for many teachers, who have become repeat attendees.

"The original idea for the conference was to network with other early years teachers and share the amazing things happening at St John's in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) space," Deb said.

"More recently, the purpose has evolved to bring early teachers together to consider current trends in education with a hands-on, practical focus that can be taken back and taught in the classroom the very next day," she said.

Although the conference targets ECEC teachers and assistants working with children from infants to Year 2, staff from primary and secondary cohorts who have attended report gaining valuable insights and learnings they have adapted to their professional practice when teaching older students.

Connecting early years educators

Ronnelle said the St John's conference was an important event for ECEC professionals.

"Often at other conferences, the focus is on middle to upper years, and early years teachers must adapt any concepts to their age brackets.

"Our event is specifically for staff in the prior to school settings, which is a unique place, yet crucial as the foundation for all future learning," she said.

A growth mindset in maths

Each conference has a particular theme, with the 2024 topic being Growth Mindsets in Mathematics.

Developed by psychologist Carol Dweck, a growth mindset refers to the belief that abilities and intelligence are not fixed traits, rather, they can be developed through effort, learning and perseverance.

Deb said that a growth mindset is crucial in the context of mathematics because it influences how children approach challenges, setbacks, and learning opportunities.

"A growth mindset encourages persistence, promotes resilience and fosters a love for learning," Deb said.

"Children with a growth mindset are more likely to persist through difficult problems and challenges and understand

that struggling is part of the learning process and persistence leads to improvement and success,” she said.

When faced with mistakes or failures, children with a growth mindset see these as opportunities to learn and grow rather than as a reflection of their abilities.

“This resilience helps them to tackle increasingly complex mathematical concepts with a positive attitude,” Deb said.

A growth mindset perspective can make learning mathematics more enjoyable and less intimidating.

Ronelle said embracing a growth mindset encourages children to approach maths problems creatively and explore different strategies.

“Children are more likely to develop critical thinking skills and engage in problem-solving processes,” Ronelle said.

“When children believe their abilities can improve, they are more likely to approach challenges with confidence.

“The self-assurance contributes to a more positive attitude towards maths and a higher achievement,” she said.

Anxiety around maths is relatively common in children, but in the early years, staff can help reduce fear of failure by focusing on growth rather than innate ability.

“Incorporating a growth mindset into maths education involves encouraging students to embrace challenges, celebrate effort and view mistakes as learning opportunities,” Deb said.

Early childhood education professionals can support this mindset by providing constructive feedback, praising effort over innate ability and modelling resilience in the face of difficulty.

A positive attitude

A positive attitude towards mathematics during the formative early years is important for children’s development, and numeracy skills provide an important foundation for lifelong learning and development.

Ronnelle said hands-on and play-based activities that utilise the natural world around children make maths fun.

“Young children use mathematical concepts to make sense of their world and connect these concepts with their environment and daily activities,” she said.

“It is not enough to merely teach concepts – children need engaging approaches, tools and resources that will spark curiosity and enthusiasm.

“Engaging with their natural play opportunities and current interests is important, as is combining curriculum areas so children can see the link between them,” Ronnelle said. Deb said the conference would provide attendees with practical strategies to captivate children’s interests in maths and develop their growth mindsets.

“It’s an opportunity to learn from a range of ECEC experts, including our 2024 keynote speaker, Dr Eva DeVries – a numeracy coach, mathematics consultant and researcher,” she said.

Ronnelle said the upcoming conference would empower educators who want to engage young children more in maths.

“We strongly encourage members working in ECEC to register for the upcoming conference, being held at St John’s on November 25,” she said.

“They’re an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues and improve your professional practice.”

For more information and to register your attendance at the 2024 St John’s Early Years Conference, visit: stjohnsanglicancollege.com.au/event/early-years-conference-2024/



Deb Wilson

During her career, Deb has been a classroom teacher, music teacher and music co-ordinator in the state, independent and tertiary education sectors.

Early in her career, she developed a keen interest in music and learning support and how music can enhance the development of oral language, literacy, numeracy, fine and gross motor skills and social skills in

the early years. Deb has been nominated for a NEITA award and a Teach-X award, both times for her interest in parent engagement and community involvement. She currently teaches kindergarten at St John’s Anglican College, Forest Lake.



Ronnelle Sanders

Ronnelle has been an early childhood education and primary classroom teacher in both state and independent school settings and is currently the EAL/D coordinator at St John’s Anglican College, where many students come from families who have English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D).

Language is her passion, focusing on the learning journey of children’s oracy skills and the strong interconnection with literacy and numeracy. She continues to strongly advocate for the explicit development and establishment of engaged, supportive relationships between the home and school. Ronnelle has been a finalist in the Australian Education Awards for her work in EAL/D Parent and Community Engagement and is an International Oracy Leader and EAL/D teacher.

Celebrating an exemplary activist and teacher

IEU-QNT member and early childhood education teacher Debbie Quig has witnessed many changes to the sector during her 38-year teaching career and loves that no two days in her job are alike, writes Emily Campbell.

A long-term staff member at Aspley East C&K Community Kindergarten in north Brisbane, Debbie has worked in not-for-profit community centres in both Queensland and NSW.

Changing children's lives

"Growing up, I enjoyed attending school and had some very special teachers throughout my life," Debbie said.

"I thought teaching would be a rewarding career and might provide different opportunities for meeting people, travel, relocation and career progression.

"I also felt the early years were an important aspect of children's lives, even before learning more about this at university," she said.

One of Debbie's favourite aspects of being an early childhood teacher is being involved in children's precious formative years.

"I enjoy developing relationships with the children and their families to provide a learning environment where each child is nurtured and can flourish," Debbie said.

"Each day brings new delights to children, and it's always exciting to explore new possibilities with them," she said.

A tight-knit work team

Debbie finds it a privilege to work alongside her colleagues at Aspley East Kindy.

"It's great being part of a team of dedicated, caring professionals who always strive to do their best for children, families, the community and each other," she said.

"To this day, we remain a not-for-profit organisation, maintaining high standards of education and care for children and providing a safe, welcoming place for all.

"There is a sense of pride, achievement and community spirit in our kindergarten.

"We continue to have great respect for the history of the service and core values that were developed when the Association was first established in 1965," Debbie said.

Throughout Debbie's career, the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector has seen incredible change, which she said has impacted staff and centre operations.

"There are constant changes in policies and procedures to keep abreast of but also numerous changes to curriculum frameworks, funding models and much more," she said.

"In 2007, the Queensland education system changed significantly with the introduction of Prep. Community kindergartens had to change their operational models to cater for the pre-Prep age cohort, rather than the traditional kindergarten (3 to 4-year-olds) and preschool (4 to 5-year-olds) age groups," Debbie said.

The most notable change was the development and commitment of a national approach to early childhood education with the introduction of the Universal Access funding and National Quality Framework (NQF).

"Both the Universal Access funding and NQF, which were implemented in our kindergarten in 2012, required significant planning, preparation and change, particularly to our operational models and employees' working hours," Debbie said.

"The introduction of Universal Access funding recognised the importance and value of affordable, high-quality ECEC for the youngest citizens of Australia – an investment in their futures.

"It provided funding across a range of different services, enabling families to choose between services best suited to their values and needs," she said.

Importance of IEU membership

During this time, changes occurred in the industrial relations space, with a shift from state awards to modern (federal) awards.

Debbie said these changes were the catalyst for smaller centres like her workplace, to begin organising and negotiating their own collective agreements, to ensure employees' wages and working conditions were maintained.

"I joined our union in 2011 when I began working temporarily in the role of Director/Teacher because I felt our kindy needed advice and support to navigate all the changes, particularly in relation to the impact on employees' working conditions," she said.

"My colleagues and I, individually and collectively, have benefited greatly from the expertise our union's officers provided, especially when negotiating our very first collective agreement.



Debbie Quig, recipient of the inaugural John Spriggs Award for Outstanding Activism in the Early Childhood Education sector

"IEU membership has been crucial to navigating the complexities of teaching and changing landscape of the education sector," Debbie said.

Making a difference

Earlier this year, Debbie was given special recognition by our union for her demonstration of union values and ongoing commitment to making a difference for staff in the sector.

She was presented with the inaugural John Spriggs Award for Outstanding Activism in the Early Childhood Education sector.

IEU Organiser Nicole Lakidis, who nominated Debbie, said she was a worthy recipient of the award, which was established in recognition of the enormous contribution to the ECEC sector made by former IEU-QNT Senior Industrial Officer John Spriggs throughout his 28-year tenure at our union.

"Debbie is a long-standing, exemplary IEU member and a respected, trustworthy point of contact for her colleagues," Nicole said.

"She always ensures her colleagues are informed and empowered regarding their rights at work.

"Debbie's concern is always for the viability of kindergartens and the welfare of others, and this honour is very well deserved," she said.

Debbie said she felt surprised and humbled to have received an award established to honour the work of

John Spriggs, who sadly passed away in April this year.

"John had a great understanding of how community kindergartens operated," Debbie said.

"He was always willing to provide his time and expertise to assist both

"It's great being part of a team of dedicated, caring professionals who always strive to do their best for children, families, the community and each other."

staff and management committees to improve their understanding of issues and negotiate conditions that were fair and reasonable for all.

"We are all very grateful and appreciative of all John has done for our kindergarten over many years," she said.

Advocating for the profession

Although she is pleased that the status and role of early childhood education professionals has improved in recent years, Debbie acknowledges there is a long way to go to strengthen the sector's viability.

"The investment and initiatives over time are to be commended; however, there is a need for ongoing commitments and funding certainty, particularly for community kindergartens, to assist with operational costs, support for inclusion and the ability to plan effectively for their futures," she said.

"Teaching, in general, is evolving with extra layers of complexity added to the role – our workloads seem to be increasing, although our work hours and conditions remain the same.

"We must advocate for the teaching profession and find solutions to these issues," Debbie said.



Global report

Importance of early childhood education

The 2024 Global Report on Early Childhood Care and Education emphasises quality policy and investment in early education as essential to addressing the global learning crisis, Ella Doyle writes.

IEU members understand that quality and inclusive early childhood education and care (ECEC) influences school readiness, foundational learning and lifelong wellbeing.

Unfortunately, only 40 per cent of children in low-income countries have access to this level of ECEC.

The 2024 Global Report on Early Childhood Care and Education by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) explores how children learn, the issues affecting access to ECEC and how research can be leveraged to improve access, investment and quality of service.

Essential investment

UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education Stefania Gianni said transforming ECEC is essential in addressing life-long issues.

"Investing in our youngest children brings the greatest returns, both socially and economically," Gianni said.

"It is the best investment a country can make."

While many countries have emphasised the importance of ECEC in recent years, this support hasn't translated into meaningful advances in the sector.

If improvements are not made, 37 per cent of the world's children will not reach minimum proficiency in reading by 2030.

While this disproportionately affects lower-middle and low-income countries, this is a global fight to ensure all children have access to early education.

Policy and investment lagging

To reach the 2030 target for reading proficiency, 2.4 million children must be enrolled in ECEC each year.

To achieve this goal, governments must address global shortcomings in ECEC policy and investment.

Early childhood education teachers and assistants, along with the sector, are being severely undervalued. Poor funding to the sector has created a global shortage of ECEC teachers and assistants and subsequently driven

preschool educator-to-child ratios up to 1:60 in low-income areas.

This is compounded by an increased shortage of trained educators with only 57 per cent of educators in low-income countries having qualifications.

With proper investments, countries could expand ECEC programmes, increase qualified practitioners and improve curricula.

Parental role

Globally, there is also limited assistance given to parents to support their children.

Parents play an equally important role as ECEC educators in teaching children during their first five years.

Without mandated provisions like parental leave, child cash grants and secure housing, vulnerable children will continue to be left behind.

The report establishes guidelines to measure the quality of ECEC.

To achieve a high standard, centres must:

- create a supportive learning environment
- facilitate learning by connecting lessons to other experiences, and
- promote the development of social and emotional skills.

Recommendations

The report offers nine recommendations to address these gaps in policy and investments:

- 1 promote ECEC
- 2 prioritise vulnerable children
- 3 support parents and caregivers
- 4 value ECEC personnel
- 5 invest in data and reporting
- 6 harness research to improve policy
- 7 increase government investment
- 8 enhance international efforts and partnerships, and
- 9 expand the right to education to include ECEC.

Access the full report, and its recommendations at:
unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390215



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

QNT Dealing with psychosocial hazards

Dear Monique

I am an experienced assistant at my kindergarten. A teacher repeatedly belittles me in front of children and parents. I am feeling anxious about working with them, and I do not feel comfortable resolving the situation informally as they are in a position of authority. I am hesitant about contacting my employer regarding what I am experiencing. What can I do?

Paige

The repeated behaviour exhibited towards you may meet the definition of workplace bullying and is considered a psychosocial hazard. We recommend that you diarise any incidents in the first instance.

Under the Work Health and Safety Legislation, your employer must ensure that workers and other persons are not exposed to risks to their psychological or physical health and safety.

Codes of Practice, such as the Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace Code of Practice, and/or workplace policies are typical WHS control measures that employers use to manage risks in the workplace.



Monique Roosen

Dear Paige

I am so sorry to hear you are experiencing belittling behaviour from a colleague.

It is always preferable to resolve the matter informally with the other person if possible, so you will have a greater chance of maintaining or rebuilding your working relationship.

However, if your situation cannot be dealt with informally because of the power imbalance, we recommend you make a formal written complaint. If you decide to make a complaint, your complaint should:

- outline the nature of your complaint
- give details of the incident(s) (when each incident occurred, who witnessed it, and what you were feeling)
- provide supporting evidence, and
- outline any resolutions you are seeking.

Before you submit your written complaint to your employer, your complaint should be reviewed by our union. Once your complaint has been submitted, your employer is required to investigate and resolve the matter through its complaints process. Your employer may offer a facilitated conversation or mediation as a way in which to address the bullying.

Should this not be successful, or should your employer not manage this appropriately, there are options you can consider. Our union can assist you in formally addressing the matter and ensure you receive the respect at work you deserve.

Monique

NSW/ACT Entitlement to Educational Leader allowance

Dear Tina

I'm a four-year trained full-time teacher in a long day care centre. I became proficient at the beginning of 2024 and my director asked if I would be the Educational Leader for two hours per day. I am willing to take on this role and provide the pedagogical support to our team. My understanding was that I would receive an annual allowance, but I have been told that I would only be paid the hours that I am designated as Educational Leader. Can you please explain what I'm entitled to.

Jessica



Tina Smith

Dear Jessica

Several members have raised this issue. Under the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020, the Educational

employee is required to act as educational leader for less than five days per week, the annual allowance prescribed by clause 19.4(e) will be payable on a pro rata basis calculated by reference to the number of days per week the employee is required to act as educational leader. For example, if you were working three days per week you would be paid 3/5ths of the annual rate.

Because you are working full-time five days per week regardless of the two hours you are allocated to perform the role, you are entitled to the full annual allowance of \$4253. The Educational Leader's allowance cannot be paid as an hourly rate. The two hours per day you are provided with may be the time you need to research, inform, and disseminate information to staff and to provide mentoring.

Tina

Leader's allowance is paid as a daily rate for an employee who works less than five days. Clause 19.4(e) says, "Where an

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