

# bedrock

issue 1 | Vol 30 | 2025



Jump to it  
**How to  
bridge the  
activity gap**

## 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.

Endorsed by:



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## 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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# Editorial

**The IEU has long been at the forefront of securing better pay and conditions for employees in the early childhood education sector, thanks to members like you and the power of collective action.**

But the fight for safe workplaces continues. Employers are responsible for providing a physically and psychologically safe workplace. But teachers and educators in the early childhood education sector still face challenges such as high staff turnover and heavy workloads that can lead to psychosocial hazards (page 12).

Dealing with child abuse is another challenge that members in the sector sometimes face, however rare. Former detective-turned-expert on child sex abuse prevention Kristi McVee offers advice for teachers in early childhood education (page 18).

While our union fights for better pay and conditions, members such as Elena Palmitessa, a teacher and IEU rep at IGS Early Learning Centre in Sydney, work tirelessly to enrich the lives of students and the school community through bilingual learning. We explore the benefits of teaching a language in a bilingual or multilingual early learning centre (page 6).

We find out how arming yourself with skills in teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills improves learning outcomes for children (page 9).

We also speak to the researchers behind the Play Active program, which is designed to tackle Australia's dismally low levels of physical activity undertaken by children aged 2-5 (page 16).

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

**Carol Matthews**  
Secretary  
IEUA NSW/ACT Branch

**Terry Burke**  
Secretary  
IEU-QNT Branch



## Pressure mounts on G8 Education to fund paid parental leave

The IEU backs the campaign by activist shareholders to pressure G8 Education into funding paid parental leave for staff.

G8 is the country's largest sharemarket-listed childcare provider. It employs about 10,000 people – mainly women – at more than 400 childcare centres throughout Australia. Yet G8 is in a minority of Australian employers not offering paid parental leave on top of the government-funded scheme to attract and retain staff.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said childcare providers such as G8 should provide staff with employer-paid parental leave to address the sector's staff shortages and high turnover rates.

"A lack of employer-paid parental leave contributes to women's economic inequality," Matthews said. "And a lack of paid parental leave exacerbates the 'motherhood penalty', whereby women suffer a dramatic loss in earnings in the first years of parenthood."

More than 91 per cent of the early childhood education and care workforce are women.

The IEU welcomes the campaign by shareholder lobby group Sustainable Investment Exchange to pressure G8 to fund paid parental leave for staff.

"Our members in G8 are women supporting other people's families," Matthews said. "They should have support for their own families."

G8 Education chief executive Pejman Okhovat's salary package is reportedly worth \$3 million a year. Yet university-qualified teachers at long-day care centres operated by his company earn only a fraction of this salary and have no access to employer-paid parental leave.

"Improving pay and conditions for teachers and educators in this sector means better learning outcomes for children," Matthews said.

**Sign the petition: [www.ieu.asn.au/petition-g8-paid-parental-leave](http://www.ieu.asn.au/petition-g8-paid-parental-leave)**



## NSW/ACT: Become an IEU delegate (rep)

Would you like to know more about your rights at work and how to support your colleagues?

Under new laws, you can be paid while attending union training during your normal working hours.

Join us for an important training session designed to empower you in your role as an IEU delegate (known as a rep).

*For organisations with 15 or more employees:* Thanks to recent regulatory changes, early childhood members in larger organisations can now access paid union training during normal working hours.

*For organisations with fewer than 15 employees:* The union can cover the cost of a release day, so you can attend training without impacting your income or workload.

The IEU conducts training for reps in Sydney and throughout NSW. This training for reps will provide you with:

- an understanding of your rights and responsibilities as a rep
- useful skills for supporting members
- an understanding of the current industrial landscape.

Be sure to let your employer know when you register for one of our sessions. If you encounter any issues securing release entitlements, contact the IEU immediately for help.

### NSW/ACT: Reps training dates

<b>Wed 26 March</b>	Exie's Club, Griffith
<b>Fri 28 March</b>	Quality Hotel, Dickson
<b>Tue 1 April</b>	Gosford Golf Club, Gosford
<b>Thu 3 April</b>	Penrith RSL Club, Penrith
<b>Fri 2 May</b>	Tamworth Hotel, Tamworth
<b>Fri 30 May</b>	Dubbo RSL Club, Dubbo



### QNT: Urgent review of Queensland's teacher registration laws needed

Our union is advocating for an urgent review of Queensland's laws underpinning teacher registration, which should not be further delayed by the recent change of government.

IEU-QNT Research Officer Dr Adele Schmidt said the *Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005*, last updated in 2019, required amendment to address significant registration issues affecting staff across the sector, including early childhood education teachers.

"Early childhood education teachers currently work without registration but should have access to a registration category under the Act," she said.

"This includes both those with qualifications that meet full teacher registration requirements and those with Birth-Five Years qualifications that are recognised by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority but do not meet QCT requirements for full registration," Dr Schmidt said.

The exclusion of early childhood education teachers from Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification must be remedied.

"Our union will continue advocating to the new Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek that early childhood education teachers must have access to the same career pathways primary and secondary teachers do," Dr Schmidt said.

"Highly experienced early childhood teachers must be acknowledged for their skill, expertise and contribution to the profession through eligibility for HALT certification."

### NSW: Fight continues for preschool pay rises

The union continues to push for pay rises for teachers and educators in community preschools in NSW.

The Unite for Change campaign bargaining team met with preschool delegates on 12 February to discuss government-funded wage increases and improved conditions including paid parental leave, additional personal leave and allowances for directors and educational leaders.

The team, which include IEU campaign ambassadors and officials, was joined by representatives from Community Early Learning Australia (CELA), the peak body for Australia's early childhood education sector, to discuss the campaign for government-funded pay rises for teachers and educators in community preschools.

A focus of the meeting was achieving pay equity with teachers in public preschools, who are paid the same as primary and secondary teachers in government schools.

At previous meetings with officials from the NSW Department of Education, IEU preschool ambassadors spoke about the need for change in the sector and the challenges in attracting and retaining quality staff.

Our ambassadors gave evidence from their services about losing teachers and educators to schools, where they are paid more. Pay rises would help attract and retain quality staff.

The supported bargaining claim currently includes 103 preschool services in NSW. Services and employees that are not part of the current bargaining can still vote to join the agreement in the future.

It's time for the NSW government to commit to funding community preschools to ensure comparable pay with teachers in schools.

If you need more information about our Unite for Change campaign, please contact your IEU organiser, or call the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch on 02 8202 8900.

### QNT: Updated QKLG applies from 2025

An updated version of the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (QKLG 2024) is now available for members to access via the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) website.

The revised guideline replaces the QKLG 2018 and will be implemented in Queensland kindergartens from January 2025.

The QKLG 2024 better aligns with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2.0) and reflects contemporary understanding and practices for learning in kindergarten with revisions made to Principles, Practices and Learning and Development areas.

It is designed to support Queensland kindergarten teachers and leaders to nurture confident, creative lifelong learners.

In early 2024, our union provided members' feedback via a survey to the QCAA as part of a review seeking input from stakeholders about the revised QKLG clarity, usability, strengths and opportunities.

As part of the transition to the new QKLG 2024, the QCAA has created a suite of resources to support familiarisation and planning, including:

- a summary of the key revisions from the QKLG 2018 to QKLG 2024;
- summaries of the revisions to the five learning and development areas;
- posters, factsheets and videos.

Members can access the new QKLG 2024 and supporting resources online at:  
[www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/kindergarten/qklg/qklg-2024](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/kindergarten/qklg/qklg-2024)

# Teaching in another tongue

**Bilingual and multilingual early childhood education can benefit both children and teachers, Lucy Meyer writes.**

Each December, the children at an early learning centre in inner Sydney do something you're unlikely to see anywhere else. At the end-of-year concert, without prompting, they burst into song in languages they've never been taught.

"I have to say, it's the most emotional time," says Elena Palmitessa, a teacher and IEU rep at International Grammar School Early Learning Centre in Ultimo, NSW.

Palmitessa teaches in both English and her native Italian at the multilingual preschool, which offers the choice of French, Mandarin, German, Japanese or Italian. Half the children in her classroom are learning Italian, and the other half Mandarin.

At the annual concert, the children learning Italian begin to sing along with

their classmates in Mandarin, and the children who've been learning Mandarin join in on the Italian song.

They've picked up the words without any instruction by simply listening to their peers practise in class. It's a "proud moment" for Palmitessa and a highlight of her year.

While it's rare for an early childhood centre to offer as many languages as IGS, there are a range of bilingual preschools and long day care centres across the country.

There's no one way of teaching a language in a bilingual or multilingual early learning centre. At IGS, children learn by doing, Palmitessa says.

There's a language class that lasts for around 20 minutes, and then the teacher and educator will integrate that knowledge throughout the day to reinforce vocabulary and other lessons, she says.

"If children are learning about an apple, then maybe you're sitting with the children at lunchtime and they have the apple and can start continuing the vocabulary", so that they learn throughout the day.

Children are often split into smaller groups so they can practise speaking and have a "little bit more communication, which is very important" for learning another language, she says.

## **The appeal for teachers**

Working in such a multicultural environment is "very stimulating", says Palmitessa, who enjoys learning about other cultures from her colleagues.

An Italian who moved to Australia as an adult, Palmitessa believes a multilingual centre offers something conventional centres cannot – "the opportunity to have my culture and

Salut!

Hi!

Hallo!

Hello!

नमस्ते

B



my language as resources and not as a weakness,” she says.

For Palmitessa, it’s satisfying to see the effect multilingual early education has on the children she teaches. Before starting at IGS, she taught in other childcare centres in Australia and Italy, “and I can say that having a program of languages, I see children much more stimulated”, she says.

Palmitessa has noticed how children in her classroom are “curious to learn and experience the culture”. She feels lucky to “be there and see this”.

### Gains for early learners

Palmitessa isn’t alone in observing the positive impact of additional language acquisition in early learners.

There’s a body of research pointing to improved literacy, as well as social, cultural and developmental benefits for bilingual and multilingual young children, says Dr Emilia Djonov, an associate professor in the Macquarie School of Education at Macquarie University.

With a background in linguistics and multimodal communication, Dr Djonov specialises in language and literacy in early childhood and primary school education.

When considering how learning an additional language can improve early learners’ literacy skills, it’s important to discuss how literacy is defined, says Dr Djonov.

It can be defined narrowly to refer to things like spelling, phonics and vocabulary knowledge, or it can be understood in a more expansive way, such as the approach taken in the Early Years Learning Framework 2.0, “which focuses on children’s ability to communicate effectively across an increasingly expanding range of contexts”, she says.

Either way, “learning more than one language offers clear advantages in literacy learning”, Dr Djonov says.

Dr Djonov says children who speak more than one language develop greater metalinguistic awareness — meaning they have a stronger understanding of the building blocks of language and are more attuned to different sounds (or phonemes).

## *“The opportunity to have my culture and my language as resources and not as a weakness”*

If you’ve ever noticed that people who grew up bilingual seem to pick up other languages more easily, even as adults, there’s a reason for that. Having metalinguistic awareness from an early age “will no doubt support the learning of additional languages later in life too”, she says.

That’s something that makes sense to Palmitessa. “Because once you get the tricks, like, ‘oh this is table, but then it’s tavola (in Italian). Then, like, I wonder what it is in another language?’ So, you have the trick already,” she says.

With greater metalinguistic awareness, you can also expect the development of a better understanding of grammatical structures in bilingual and multilingual children, Dr Djonov says.

Palmitessa has noticed this in her teaching. When you learn another language, “you start thinking in a more inquisitive way”, she says. You’re exposed to what goes into forming a sentence.

Languages reflect ways of seeing the world, so “bilingual children also tend to have a stronger ability to consider other people’s perspectives,” Dr Djonov says. When we read stories, “we need to interpret the perspectives of characters in the story, their motivations and feelings. Similarly, to create an engaging story or write a persuasive letter, we need to predict [or] imagine the perspectives of our target audience.”

### Additional benefits of bilingualism

Learning another language also promotes social and cultural benefits for children. Appreciating that there are other perspectives is important for building empathy, a critical social skill, Dr Djonov says. For children learning their heritage language, it can also enhance their communication skills with their family and their connection to their culture, she adds.

The academic and teacher agree that exposure to another culture and language from such a young age opens children’s minds. The “more languages we speak and experience, the better our awareness and appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity will be”, Dr Djonov says.

For Palmitessa, building this awareness in centres like IGS serves a larger purpose by encouraging an appreciation of diversity in a multicultural country.

Bilingual and multilingual early learning also has positive neurological effects for children. There’s evidence in the literature that “it supports the development of executive function”, Dr Djonov says. This can enable children to better focus their attention and ignore distractions like noises.





**Teacher and IEU rep Elena Palmitessa**



**Dr Emilia Djonov, Macquarie University**



### Myth busting

Despite the many advantages to teaching an additional language to early learners, myths and misunderstandings about so-called “risks” persist.

There’s the long-held belief that adding another language will just confuse children, which Dr Djonov is amazed she still hears. “There’s no research evidence to back this up, but yeah, these ideas, for some reason, they still persist,” she says. When people in positions of power repeat these claims, Dr Djonov says it can limit educational opportunities for children.

There’s also a belief that when children learn more than one language, their development will be stunted in some way. There is some research that when children grow up bilingual, when they are tested in the first couple of years, they vocalise less.

This can be misinterpreted as a slower pace of development. “But we really need to stop and think about what the findings show and how the testing was done,” Dr Djonov says. “The problem is that a lot of our tests are not designed to really test bilingual knowledge and bilingual development or multilingual development,” she says.

Dr Djonov uses the example of a two-year-old child who may have a smaller vocabulary in English than her monolingual peers, but she also knows words in another language that isn’t being tested.

And while children growing up with two or more languages may initially seem quieter, the gap disappears over time, Dr Djonov says. As the two-year-old grows, her English vocabulary will too, and she’ll catch up to her peers, and have additional language knowledge and skills.

### The challenges of teaching in more than one language

The main obstacle for bilingual and multilingual early childhood centres like IGS is finding staff, Palmitessa says. Not only do these centres have to grapple with the shortage of early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers, but they also need to find staff who can teach and speak another language.

“So you need to have these two skills,” she says. Overseas qualifications may not automatically be recognised here, she adds, and migrants starting a new life may be looking for a higher salary than the sector offers.

Additionally, Palmitessa has found that even though she and her colleagues work hard to be inclusive, it can be challenging to teach bilingually when they have a non-verbal child or a child who struggles to verbalise.

Bilingual early education can also require more classroom organisation and planning, Palmitessa says. If you want to plan a big art project, you need to keep in mind the children are also learning another language and “you

don’t want to overcharge the children with a lot of activity,” she says.

### Highlights for a bilingual teacher

Palmitessa has no shortage of memorable moments of a child in her class picking up her native tongue. They happen “practically every day, more or less”, she says. The afternoon she spoke to *Bedrock*, the class had done a lucky dip. One child took out a toy snake, turned to her and said: “It’s a serpente in Italiano’. I was like, ‘yes!’” she recounts, smiling with pride. It was unprompted and unrelated to the day’s lesson.

The highlights of teaching bilingually aren’t just about a child learning an additional language. When children in her class look at a map, “they’re looking for the country of the language they’re learning,” Palmitessa says, leading to lessons in geography. Languages can be an avenue for so much more, she says, opening up “many other opportunities of learning and teaching”.

# Embedding age-appropriate STEM learning in your practice

**Little Scientists Australia believes equipping early childhood professionals with relevant science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills is essential to improving STEM outcomes for children, Ella Doyle writes.**

Little Scientists Australia (LSA) is a hub of STEM-related professional development opportunities for teachers and educators in the sector.

According to the not-for-profit organisation, children who engage in STEM learning early will likely develop strong STEM identities and cognitive abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and resilience.

By the age of six, girls' participation in STEM is already negatively impacted by gender stereotypes in the classroom.

LSA suggests all children can find joy in STEM learning if given the chance to learn in a nurturing and playful environment.

The organisation believes that empowered early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals are the key to creating joyful STEM experiences for children.

## **Educator focused**

LSA uses low-cost everyday materials in its lessons to make STEM teaching accessible to all educators and centres.

Its resources encourage reflection and aim to give educators the confidence to start STEM conversations in their daily practice.

Through its pedagogical approach, LSA empowers teachers and educators to enter a genuine dialogue with children and make learning a joyful and shared experience.

LSA recognises that children approach learning differently, and its diverse selection of resources reflect this - with online, in-person and in-centre workshops covering a range of topics from computer science to the human body.

Its STEM workshops align with the National Quality Framework (NQF), Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), making them great professional development opportunities.

## **Free resources**

LSA's website hosts an extensive online library of free resources that teachers can reference in their practice or use as professional development tools with topics including:

### **Risky play in early STEM learning**

This blog explores how STEM can extend risky play experiences and includes an interview with risky play experts. The page also offers tips for embedding risky play in ECEC with example activities.

### **Chemical reaction experiments for children**

Guides teachers and educators through hands-on science activities that support critical thinking, problem-solving and observational skills in their centre.

### **Explore technology through computer science**

Computer science is more than digital technology. In this blog, LSA reframes computational thinking by breaking it down into pattern recognition and sequencing skills activities for different age groups.

### **Exploring maths, music and patterns**

This resource uses songs and rhythmic patterns to highlight the connection between music and mathematics. Each activity aligns with the Australian Education Research Organisation's Mathematical thinking: Trajectory: [bit.ly/3XfH1oL](https://bit.ly/3XfH1oL).

### **Forensic science in ECEC**

The fundamentals of forensic science can provide inspiration for inquiry-based learning in the classroom. This article discusses how ECEC teachers can develop activities that spark curiosity and collaboration among children.

LSA also runs a Facebook group where professionals can share stories and ideas.



**Members can access LSA resources at [littlescientists.org.au](https://littlescientists.org.au) and the Facebook group by scanning the QR code.**



# Enriched preschool program reduces youth crime

**It will come as no surprise to IEU members that participating in high-quality early childhood education programs sets up children for happier, healthier and more successful futures, Emily Campbell writes.**

However, groundbreaking research has shown preschool interventions such as the Pathways to Prevention Project (Pathways) could also be key to reducing youth crime.

## **Enhanced communication curriculum**

Emeritus Professor Ross Homel and Dr Jacqueline Allen from Griffith University are part of the research team behind Pathways, which operated in a disadvantaged and multicultural region of Brisbane between 2002 and 2011.

Professor Homel says Pathways, a collaboration between Queensland's Department of Education, charity Mission Australia and Griffith University,

was aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people.

"As part of the broader Pathways project, 214 four-year-old children attending two of seven local preschools in 2003 and 2004 received an enhanced curriculum with a particular focus on oral language and communication skills," Professor Homel says.

"The enriched preschool program was integrated into the standard curriculum and delivered by specialist early childhood education teachers who had undertaken postgraduate study in oral communication and literacy."

In the enhanced program, children were separated into small groups alongside other children with similar levels of language ability and given the opportunity to meaningfully practise and extend their oral language skills.

Over two years, the specialist communication teachers worked

with classroom teachers to improve children's oral literacy and communication skills.

Dr Allen says the specialist teachers worked closely with the children's parents to support language development at home.

"A corresponding family support program was made available to parents, providing families with practical support, including counselling, parenting education and connections with community workers from relevant cultural backgrounds," she says.

"The support services were offered for several years following and involved over 1000 families and 1500 children."

## **Youth offending reduced**

Within a year of the Pathways program, children who received the enhanced preschool program showed improved school-readiness, with better language



## *“Investing in human beings when they’re young turns out to be a very good idea.”*

According to Professor Homel, there is a growing body of research that has been accumulating for more than 50 years demonstrating the root causes of severe youth crime can be prevented through interventions in the early childhood years.

### **Early years a critical and opportune time**

Dr Allen, who completed the most recent evaluation of the data from Pathways, says the early years were a critical time for setting up children for success by preventing youth crime and antisocial behaviour.

“There’s a growing recognition in many fields, particularly health, about the importance of the early years for all sorts of reasons,” she says.

“We see the roots of many behaviour problems emerge in that age period, which is why focusing on supporting children in this age group is vital.”

Dr Allen says the transition to formal schooling is a major and challenging milestone for children and, if it goes poorly, there can be cascading negative consequences.

“A difficult transition to school is a known risk factor for antisocial behaviour,” she says.

“Anything that can be done to improve that transition and school-readiness has a lot of benefit down the track, and can prevent antisocial behaviour, crime and other problems before they occur.”

Children from middle-class and advantaged backgrounds typically come to school with many tools to succeed compared with children from disadvantaged homes.

Professor Homel says high-quality early childhood education and access to an enriched preschool program, such as Pathways, can narrow that gap.

“We talk about proportionate universalism in health, which means you build in extra resources for children with identified special needs to ensure ultimately equity, not just equality,” he says.

“It’s not just equality of exposure to a high-quality preschool curriculum; it’s about equity of outcome in terms of school readiness we should be aiming for.”

### **Non-punitive and evidence-based strategies key**

Despite the recent emphasis in media, politics, and public discourse on detaining youth offenders, the Pathways researchers agree expensive and punitive approaches to youth crime do not improve community safety.

“Our study shows it is possible to address some root causes of serious youth crime while respecting children’s human rights,” Professor Homel says.

“It requires recognising the developmental pathways and linked events and experiences from early childhood that lead to crime and enhancing life conditions very early in that journey.”

The researchers hope to see more research conducted and similar initiatives incorporated into early childhood education systems.

“We’re not saying Pathways needs to be replicated exactly, but our findings show it could certainly be used as a model to achieve similar positive outcomes,” Professor Homel says.

“The key is supportive, non-punitive strategies that improve children’s life chances, implemented cost-effectively through existing systems including schools and primary care.

“Ultimately, everybody in society has a stake in these disadvantaged children having the best possible start in life, because everyone benefits.

“Investing in human beings when they’re young turns out to be a very good idea.”

### **References**

Read more about the Pathways to Prevention Project online at: [bit.ly/418bDtp](https://bit.ly/418bDtp)

Allen, J., Homel, R., Vasco, D. & Freiberg, K. (2024) Family support, enriched preschool and serious youth offending. Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, no. 700. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Available at: [www.doi.org/10.52922/ti77567](https://www.doi.org/10.52922/ti77567)

proficiency, social skills, classroom behaviour and academic achievement than children in the non-participating preschools.

Now, the long-term success of the program is evident, with the research team using anonymised data-linkage procedures to track the children’s progress.

Professor Homel says by the time participants were teenagers, the rate of youth criminal offending in the program’s region was 20 per cent lower than in comparable socioeconomic regions in Queensland.

“The enriched preschool program reduced the likelihood of participants being involved in serious youth crime by over 50 per cent by age 17,” he says.

“Remarkably, of the children whose families received additional support in conjunction with receiving the enhanced preschool program, none went on to be involved in youth crime.”

# Stay vigilant about psychosocial hazards

**Working in early childhood education is a rewarding career path for many IEU members, yet kindergartens, preschools and early learning centres can present a raft of challenges that place the wellbeing of staff at risk, Emily Campbell writes.**

Just like physical health and safety hazards, workplaces can also have psychosocial, or mental health and safety hazards.

IEU-QNT Industrial Officer Melanie Stellmacher says psychosocial hazards are anything related to the design or management of work, the work environment, or workplace interactions or behaviours that increase the risk of work-related stress and/or psychological injury, whether or not the hazard also causes physical harm.

These can include:

- high workload and work intensification
- exposure to traumatic or violent events
- violence, aggression and bullying
- high or low job demands
- isolated work
- poor role clarity
- low job control
- poor workplace relationships and interpersonal conflict
- poor organisational change management
- lack of consultation with employees
- poor organisational justice.

Stellmacher says psychosocial hazards are not always obvious as they may interact or combine to create new, changed or higher risks.

“As such, it is important that all psychosocial hazards workers may be exposed to are considered when managing psychosocial risk,” she says.

“If unaddressed, workplace psychosocial hazards, even at low levels, can potentially lead to serious mental health injuries in workers.

“Unfortunately, our union has seen an increase in the number of members across all sectors seeking assistance to deal with psychological injuries arising from work.”

## **Work-related mental health issues rising**

A report published by Safe Work Australia in early 2024 revealed that work-related mental health issues continue to rise, with a disturbing 36.9 per cent increase since 2018.

The Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace report noted workers with claims for mental health conditions reported poorer outcomes related to their return to work and faced stigma from colleagues and employers.

The report highlighted the enormous cost of mental injuries and illnesses resulting from workplace psychosocial hazards, with the median time lost and compensation paid for mental health conditions over four times greater than for all other injuries and illnesses.

The report also found 57.8 per cent of all mental health conditions were reported by women.

Safe Work Australia’s report suggests the higher number of mental health conditions reported by women can be, in part, attributable to feminised industries having the highest cases of serious mental stress, workplace bullying, work pressures and exposure to occupational violence.

Stellmacher says IEU members employed in the early childhood education sector face several challenges that can lead to psychosocial hazards.



These challenges include high staff turnover, the prevalence of burnout and compassion fatigue, high workload and work intensification, and increasing complexities associated with working alongside children and families with high needs.

“These factors are why it is so crucial IEU members can identify the associated risks and psychosocial hazards, so they can be proactive in addressing them or seeking our union’s support, if necessary,” Stellmacher says.

“Employers too must understand their obligations to manage such situations and provide staff with a physically and psychologically safe workplace.”

### Legal implications

In 2011, Safe Work Australia developed a single set of work health and safety (WHS) laws to be implemented across Australia, also referred to as the ‘model’ WHS laws.

However, for the model laws to become legally binding, the Commonwealth, states and territories must implement them as their own laws.

As *Bedrock* went to press, all Australian states and territories except Victoria have implemented ‘model’ laws aimed at harmonising different jurisdictions.

Stellmacher says at the state level, psychosocial codes of practice support WHS legislation by setting minimum ‘reasonably practicable’ measures and standards for controlling psychosocial hazards that need to be met or bettered by employers.

“It should be noted that both Victoria and the Northern Territory are currently considering the introduction of a code of practice specific to psychosocial hazards to provide clearer guidance to employers on how to identify and control risks to protect workers from psychosocial injury,” she says.

This would also recognise that psychosocial hazards are just as harmful to worker health and safety as physical hazards.

Stellmacher says employers in all Australian states and territories owe a primary non-delegable duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers.

“As such, employers must control WHS risks (including psychosocial risk) in consultation with workers to eliminate or minimise the risk of harm,” she says.

“Employers must further ensure that any control measures implemented are effective and establish a protocol for the review of existing control measures.”

Recent developments indicate a future in which Australian employers, including early childhood education centres and kindergartens, could potentially face criminal prosecution for failing to protect the mental health of their staff.

### Member action

Although the ultimate responsibility for mitigating workplace psychosocial hazards lies with the employer, IEU members can feel empowered to take action to reduce psychosocial hazards and bring them to the employer’s attention.

### Attend IEU member training

Your IEU branch runs free member-exclusive professional development opportunities to build members’ understanding and knowledge about psychosocial hazards and equip members with skills to address these.

Typically, the sessions cover the following:

- Duties under the WHS Act
- What are psychosocial hazards?
- How to manage psychosocial risks and hazards
- Relevant matters and identifying foreseeable hazards
- Assessing risks
- Exacerbating and individual factors
- Developing specific controls for psychosocial hazards in education environments.

### Elect a rep and establish a Health and Safety Committee

One of the most powerful ways members can protect themselves and their colleagues is to elect a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and establish a Health and Safety Committee.

*“Employers too must understand their obligations to manage such situations and provide staff with a physically and psychologically safe workplace.”*



Doing this is a critical way to reinforce members' rights to be consulted over workplace issues, because HSRs and Health and Safety Committees are essential to safeguarding employee health and safety by holding employers accountable regarding enshrined working conditions.

Employee-elected HSRs differ entirely from employer-appointed Workplace Health and Safety Officers.

While both roles are necessary, only HSRs represent and act independently on behalf of workers in the workplace.

HSRs are not personally liable for anything done or omitted to be done in good faith under the WHS Act, and the primary duty of care remains with the employer.

Under the WHS legislation, every workplace can have at least one HSR whose role is to raise and represent the safety concerns of members in a workplace.

An HSR's job is not to make the workplace safe or to undertake employer duties, but they have the power to:

- represent employees in a work group relating to WHS matters
- monitor measures taken to comply with WHS legislation
- investigate complaints made by employees
- inquire into anything that appears to be a risk to the WHS of employees
- direct work to cease
- issue Provisional Improvement Notices in certain circumstances.

While HSRs have traditionally focused on physical hazards, psychosocial hazards are just as important, and members are encouraged to use their WHS rights to manage psychological hazards and prevent injuries.

Your IEU branch can help your IEU Chapter establish a WHS Committee, elect a HSR and provide information and advice about psychosocial hazards.

### **Use your voice to fight for change**

The collective bargaining process is the primary mechanism by which IEU members can fight for better working conditions.

Increased member density and activism are key to successfully negotiating improvements and building worker strength and power.

Wellbeing initiatives are sorely lacking in the early childhood education sector, although certain collective agreements in Queensland community kindergartens (C&K and Lady Gowrie centres) provide for one paid wellbeing day per annum for staff and provide employees with access to an employee assistance program (EAP).

It is important to exercise the use of hard-won provisions and enhancements to working conditions, like the recently legislated right to disconnect.

### **Contact our union for support**

Remember, our union exists to support and advocate for IEU members.

Our union can help your IEU Chapter establish a WHS Committee, elect an HSR and provide information and advice about psychosocial hazards.

Members should contact our union immediately for support and advice about potential psychosocial hazards in the workplace or psychological injury.

We can support members through the best process of dealing with an injury or making a Workers' Compensation Claim.

If you or someone else is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, contact emergency services on 000. For 24/7 telephone mental health support, call:

- Lifeline – 12 11 14
- Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636

### **Reference**

Safe Work Australia (2024), Psychological health in the workplace, Safe Work Australia, Canberra. Available from: [bit.ly/431ti8B](https://bit.ly/431ti8B).

# New hub educates children in a digital world

**A new website launched by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) provides information and evidence-based resources for early childhood education staff on protecting children in our digital world, Emily Campbell writes.**

The Young Children in Digital Society website is an outcome of landmark research undertaken by education and health experts from ACU, Curtin University, Deakin University, Monash University, La Trobe University and the University of Canberra.

Lead researcher Professor Suzy Edwards from ACU's Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education says the website is a go-to hub to keep children aged up to eight years actively and safely engaged, entertained and educated in the digital world.

"The website has free resources that take the guesswork out when it comes to best practice," Professor Edwards says.

"The resources will benefit children, their families and educators through easy-to-use and evidence-based exemplar practices children and adults can try at home or in their early learning services."

## 40+ new resources

The website was established following research into four key areas of

technology use as outlined in the Early Childhood Australia Statement on Young Children and Digital Technologies – relationships, health and wellbeing, citizenship, and play and pedagogy.

More than 40 new free resources for early childhood education staff and families are available, with content including:

- articles on topics such as how to use technology to build relationships and social skills, as well as the ways digital technologies can support peer-to-peer interactions between children
- tips on how digital technologies can be used to encourage physical activity rather than sedentary digital device use
- videos to support families to safely enjoy digital content together, including a *Play School* segment to support children's early understandings about safe online communication, ways to transition from tech to non-digital activities and how to link digital content to children's interests
- webinars, interactive modules, picture books and animations for children, parents and early childhood education professionals about online safety.

Professor Edwards says the free resources align with the National

Quality Standards, National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes.

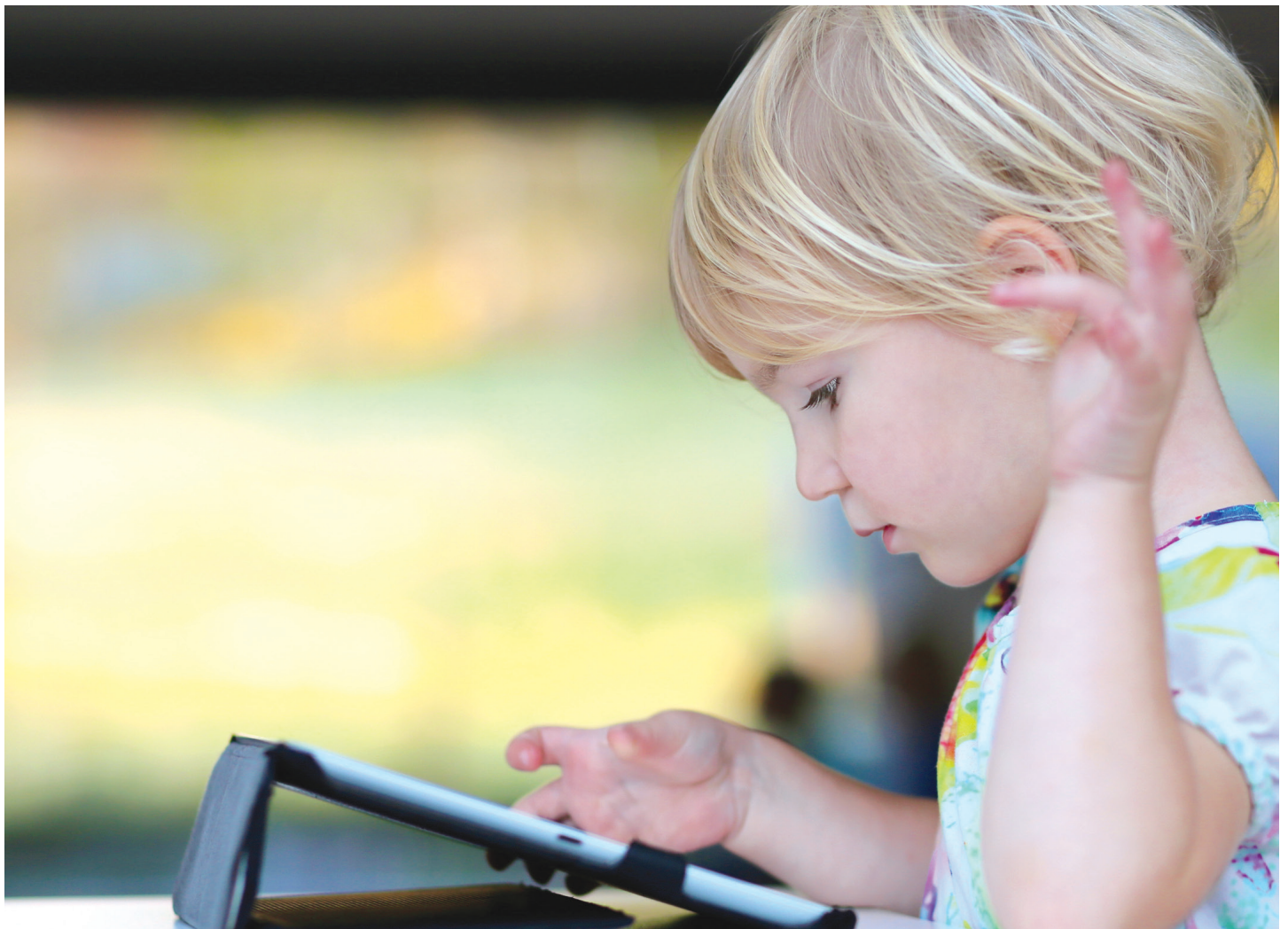
"The user-friendly website has been designed with children's best interests at heart," she says.

"We know young children and their families live in a digital world and we intend for children to use digital technologies safely, effectively and informally.

"To do this, service providers, families and educators need access to evidence-based advice and resources, which is exactly what we've delivered."

Several partner organisations were involved in the study, which was funded by an Australian Research Council grant, including Early Childhood Australia, The Office of the eSafety Commissioner, ABC Kids, Australian Federal Police, The Alannah & Madeline Foundation, and more.

Members are encouraged to access the contemporary and high-quality resources via the Young Children in Digital Society website: [www.youngchildrendigitalsociety.com.au](http://www.youngchildrendigitalsociety.com.au)



# Jump to it

## How to bridge the activity gap



Children taking part in the Play Active program.

**Australia is scoring a 'D minus' for the levels of physical activity undertaken by children aged 2-5, but a new program could help change that, Sue Osborne writes.**

University of South Australia post-doctoral researcher Kylie Dankiw says research shows two out of three preschoolers are not getting the required levels of physical activity.

The Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines recommend children aged 3-5 get at least three hours of physical activity a day, of which a minimum 60 minutes should be energetic play.

Dankiw says mandated, standardised policies exist for nutrition, sleep and sun protection in early childhood education and care, but not for physical activity.

"Within the National Quality Framework (NQF), there is a strong focus on health and wellbeing for children in Standard 2.1 that includes supporting and promoting physical activity," Dankiw says.

"What is so interesting is that many services do not have policies around physical activity, even though it is part of the NQF."

### Filling the gap

A survey in Western Australia found only 15 per cent of services had a physical activity policy.

To address this gap, Professor Hayley Christian at The Kids Research Institute Australia and The University of Western Australia developed the Play Active program, based on 10 years of research.

Dankiw and co-researcher Professor Carol Maher are implementing the program in South Australia to see if it is an effective way of increasing children's physical activity in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Play Active is the only program of its kind in Australia that provides evidence-based guidelines on the amount of physical activity, sedentary time and screen time children should have in ECEC.

It is an online program that costs \$200 for a two-year membership and supports services to boost energetic play throughout the day, every day.

"When a centre director signs up to Play Active, they complete a short self-assessment to determine the current physical activity and energetic play practices at their service, which helps us to understand their needs and some of the barriers they face in terms of programming physical activity," Dankiw says.

"They then get a tailored physical activity, sedentary behaviour and screen time policy, professional development, resources and ongoing support as well.

"We also ask services to be part of our accelerometry study where we ask children to wear a 'superhero belt' – an 'accelerometer' that measures their activity for 24 hours a day over an eight-day period.

"We're going to follow up the children in 12 months and ask them to wear the belts again so we can see the impact of the Play Active program on children's physical activity."



### Training welcome

Gloucester Preschool Director and member of IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Services Council Elizabeth Price says programming for the outdoor learning environment is more than moving craft and sensory play outdoors.

“But due to limited natural outdoor space and risk aversion policies, the opportunities for children’s free whole-body play is minimised in many early education services today,” Price says.

“Educators don’t need more layers of regulations or standardisation, we need more opportunities for professional development training and mentoring to continue to support and build on our current knowledge and practice.”

Price says playground design and educators’ active involvement in physical play are the two main factors that affect children from reaching their activity play time.

“Educators need to be physically active with children. Their roles need to be more than planning, supervision and encouragement,” she says.

“I agree that whole body movement that includes spinning, climbing, hanging, balancing, jumping from heights, coordination games, fundamental movement skills, etc, all need to be part of a service’s pedagogy for all children of all ability and energy levels.”

There’s a strong body of research on the short and long-term benefits of active play, but these benefits are “often lost with a poor understanding of what is ‘good’ for children and ‘school readiness programs’, which focus on academic skills,” she says.

According to Price, the research of Peter Gray and Pasi Sahlberg supports the value of active free play in natural environments that includes ‘risky play’.

“Active play builds resilience, muscle strength and memory, persistence, creative problem solving, mental wellbeing, adaptability, not to mention strength and coordination for all muscles needed to sit, write and learn,” Price says.

### Online courses

Dankiw recommends the free online professional development program for teachers. “It consists of a series of short videos, a few minutes long, so we’ve tried to make it as user friendly as possible,” she says.

“We’re hoping the Play Active program might be recognised by regulatory bodies. We want to ensure that it’s accessible to all services regardless of where they are located and their financial situation.”

Play Active is not a prescriptive program, but rather an open-ended guide that takes into consideration many centres’ philosophy of child-centred education and the need to allow children to have agency.

“The children still have a choice of what activities they want to do within the Play Active program,” Dankiw says.

“Young children need to be active and involved in energetic play, every day. Not only is it fun, healthy, and great for their physical development, but it also helps improve attention, memory, and language development.

“Not meeting recommended physical activity levels poses risks to their long-term health and wellbeing.”

*“The children still have a choice of what activities they want to do within the Play Active program”*

### Looking ahead

University of South Australia professor and co-researcher Carol Maher says the longer-term success of the Play Active initiative lies in standardised physical activity policies across early childhood education and care services nationwide.

“Australia’s early childhood educators are extremely committed to supporting the healthy growth and development of young children in their care,” Professor Maher says.

“But we need to appropriately support the sector – and the dedicated workers within it – to initiate positive change, and the grounding point is a national physical activity policy.

“By standardising these policies nationwide, we will be able to foster healthier environments for young children and keep them buzzing with energy.”

Play Active is being rolled out nationally with \$2 million in funding support from the federal government’s Medical Research Future Fund. The national rollout starts in Queensland and South Australia, with the program aiming to reach hundreds of childcare centres across all states and territories over the next three years.

### References

- Play active registration: [www.playactive.org.au/registration](http://www.playactive.org.au/registration)
- Guidelines for Healthy Growth and Development for your Child: [bit.ly/growthguidelineschildren](http://bit.ly/growthguidelineschildren)
- Christian H, Murray K, Trost S G, Schipperijn J, Trapp G, Maitland C, Divitini M, 2022, Meeting the Australian 24-Hour Movement – Guidelines for the Early Years is Associated with Better Social-emotional Development in Preschool Boys, Preventive Medicine Reports, 27, 101770: [bit.ly/movementstudy](http://bit.ly/movementstudy)



# **Lessons from the front lines**

**A detective-turned-expert on child sex abuse prevention offers advice to support teachers in early childhood education.**



**Instances of child abuse in early learning centres across Australia are rare, but a series of recent high-profile cases has drawn attention to the issue, writes Lucy Meyer.**

In November 2024, there were reports of three separate cases in different childcare centres in NSW in the space of a few weeks, garnering considerable media coverage. In Queensland at the same time, a former childcare employee was sentenced to life imprisonment, with a non-parole period of 27 years, after pleading guilty to 307 charges.

Sadly, these are issues that teachers working in the sector need to be prepared to deal with in case a child in their care is being victimised in some way.

Kristi McVee is a former detective with the Western Australia Police and a trained Specialist Child Interviewer who is now an expert and educator on child sexual abuse prevention and child protection.

"It's so important that people who work with children understand how impactful and important their jobs are," McVee says. She believes that those working in early learning can play a critical role in child protection.

McVee speaks to *Bedrock* about the warning signs of abuse, the need for body safety education, handling disclosures, documentation, grappling with fears of reporting, unsupportive workplaces, and vicarious trauma.

**What to look out for**

McVee says it can be very challenging to spot signs of child sexual abuse in early learners. This is partly because children may be groomed, "which makes the child feel like it's just their special little treatment, and the person who's abusing them will make it feel like it's a game", she says.

That's why McVee believes it's important for teachers to learn about grooming so they can recognise it. Grooming behaviours include isolating the child from supervision, creating secrecy, and sexualising behaviours, she says. McVee would like to see more training for teachers on grooming tactics and has provided this for some early learning centres.

Further warning signs of abuse may include an adult who minimises a child's reaction when they say "no" and who looks for opportunities to be alone with a child.

If you suspect or report a colleague and they have something to hide, they may attempt to discredit you, she says. "Because what they're trying to do is, if that person

speaks up, they want people to think that there's a vendetta between them, and then people will be less likely to believe the person, you know?"

Abusers also often attempt to discredit the children they victimise too, McVee says, and will describe them in a negative light to minimise the chances they'll be believed.

Children who have experienced abuse may act out what's been done to them in their playtime because that behaviour has been normalised by their abuser, she says.

When children are being abused in the home, McVee says they may not behave in ways you'd expect. Children still show love for that family member, which can make detection complicated.

**Why education matters**

While it can be very difficult for teachers to know if a child is being abused, teachers can still act to help protect children. For McVee, it's critical that early childhood centres include "some form of body safety education and protective behaviour curriculum".

If abuse is happening in the home and teachers are modelling safe and unsafe touch, talking about body safety themes and practising different kinds of 'no' (from the polite to the emergency) and so on, then a child may be in a better position to disclose what's happening to them. And teachers are in a "better position to protect that child and get them help", she says.

A class-wide lesson can be useful if you suspect abuse and want to make a child feel comfortable disclosing without singling them out. You can use general language, McVee says, such as: "If anyone's ever got something that they really want to tell Miss Kristi, you know I'm always here for all of you. You can tell me anything. Nothing is naughty or bad."

That may enable a child to tell you something critical. "So you become that lighthouse person for that child, because they might not have it in their own home," McVee says.

**Handling disclosures**

A child's disclosure can be confronting for any teacher, but there are ways to handle the situation sensitively. "The main thing for when you receive disclosures for any child, any age or any person, is to say: 'thank you for telling me. I believe you,'" McVee says.



“Because in a lot of cases, only one in three adults believe children when they tell them that they’ve been abused.”

If a child blurts out a disclosure in front of others, McVee recommends protectively interrupting, thanking the child, and then finding a safe space to talk to them.

After a child discloses, you can assure them that they’ve been very brave and that what they’ve told you is very important, McVee says. Find ways to support the child in that moment, whether that be by asking them what they need, or telling them they can go and play when they are ready, she adds.

As a mandatory reporter, a teacher has clear steps to follow after a disclosure. Those steps vary in each state.

### Managing the fears of reporting

Given the difficulty of knowing with certainty that abuse is taking place, it’s natural to fear the potential fallout for the child, family or accused if it turns out that child has not been harmed.

“I guess one of the things I would say is, I understand the fear of ‘what if I’m wrong?’” McVee says, “but what if you’re right?” It’s the child who “cannot save or rescue themselves, but you can”, she says.

It can be hard for teachers because they care so much about the children they teach, but it’s important to recognise what you can and can’t control, McVee says. If you’re acting on a reasonable belief or “something’s telling you that something’s going on, or if a child’s disclosed to you, then your job is done once you hand the report over, what happens to that child is not up to you,” she says.

### When your workplace is unsupportive

Dealing with a potential case of child abuse is hard enough, but when your workplace doesn’t support you, it’s even more challenging.

“I get quite a lot of educators contact me about, you know, how they’re struggling with centres, like with their management or administration, or the

fact they don’t feel like it’s been taken seriously enough,” McVee says.

McVee has also seen pushback from employers when teachers try to implement protective behaviour programs and are told there isn’t enough time. Part of the problem is that there is a broader cultural issue where people are reluctant to believe that child abuse happens in their family, neighbourhood or workplace, she says.

If a workplace isn’t supporting a teacher in these matters, the IEU can play a crucial role, McVee says. The union can be especially useful in protecting and supporting teachers.

### Protecting your mental health

McVee retired from the police force after experiencing PTSD and vicarious trauma from years spent investigating child sexual abuse. She understands the need to protect IEU members’ mental health when exposed to distressing information.

Knowing that you’ve done everything you can do with integrity and care can be helpful, she says.

It’s also important that members seek support, whether that be from family, your union, your employer (if they are helpful), or a professional. Teachers don’t just need to look after children, they must look after themselves too.

*For members, call your IEU Branch:  
QNT: 1800 177 938; NSW/ACT: 8202 8900.*

*Children, parents and teachers can call their Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, or Bravehearts on 1800 272 831.*

*For adult survivors, contact Blue Knot Foundation on 1300 657 380. The National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service can be reached on 1800 RESPECT. For crisis support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.*

### Further reading

Kristi McVee’s website includes resources and information: [www.cape-au.com](http://www.cape-au.com)

## Child protection IEU recommendations

**If you have concerns, consult the child protection, safety and grievance policies at your centre, writes IEU Organiser Lisa James.**

Teachers have mandatory reporting obligations and child protection allegations should be reported to the Regulatory Authority (complaints made by families, any occurrence or allegation that indicates the wellbeing of a child at the service has been compromised), the Office of the Children’s Guardian (reportable conduct) or the police (criminal conduct).

### Relevant regulations

The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 requires ECEC services to prioritise children’s safety and wellbeing. The Education and Care Services National Regulation 168 requires ECEC services to have policies and procedures that maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children, including a culture of child safety.

National Regulation 175(2)(d) mandates the reporting of any incident where the Approved Provider reasonably believes that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while in the care of the service.

National Regulation 175(2)(e) extends this to include allegations of such abuse.

Approved Providers also have responsibilities under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

### Disclosures

It is important to keep careful notes of any disclosures. This includes the name of the employee who is the subject of the allegation, the date, time of day, setting, what occurred or was witnessed and by whom, as well as which child or children were involved. After receiving a disclosure, you should notify the police, Department of Education and/ or the Office of the Children’s Guardian, depending on the nature of the allegation.

# Worth a listen

## PODCASTS ON ECEC



**There are growing number of great podcasts on early education to tune into. Here we highlight four that offer an engaging look at issues relevant to early childhood teachers, writes Sue Osborne.**

### **The Early Education Show**

The Early Education Show is hosted by Lisa Bryant (an occasional consultant to the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch, advocate and journalist), Leanne Gibbs (Senior Lecturer in School of Education at Charles Sturt University) and Liam McNicholas (teacher, writer and advocate). The podcast features three separate titles, exploring everything from policy and politics to practice in the early education sector.

The main show covers analysis of the news each week, explores in-depth topics of professionalism and advocacy, and includes interviews with some of the big players in the sector. Accompanying shows explore children's rights in Australia and the National Quality Standards.

**[www.earlyeducationshow.com](http://www.earlyeducationshow.com)**

### **Teaching with the Body in Mind**

This weekly podcast is hosted by Mike Huber, Joey Schoen, Ross Thompson and Tom Bedard. Huber is the author of *Embracing Rough and Tumble Play*. Bedard was the first early childhood teacher to be named finalist for Minnesota Teacher of the Year Program. He continues to promote and analyse sensory play to better understand children's curiosity and competence in all areas of development.

The team explore a variety of themes around play, movement and energy. In a recent episode called *Flow*, Bedard reflected on whether children achieve flow states in their play. According to an article that he cited, flow occurs when someone has expertise that allows them to release conscious control and go on autopilot. Do children have the expertise required to create flow?

Huber argues that children achieve flow in play, which is their area of expertise. The conversation closes with a

look at how to avoid interrupting children's flow states with transitions or intrusive questions. Other episodes include *Collective Energy*, *Cave and Treehouse*, *Relax* and *Real Play*. **[www.teachingwiththebodyinmind.com](http://www.teachingwiththebodyinmind.com)**

### **Dr Deborah Harcourt**

Dr Deborah Harcourt holds several visiting and adjunct professorial positions in early childhood and is the Executive Director of Asia Pacific Early Childhood Consultants. She has worked in the field of early childhood education for 30 years in Australia, Singapore, China, Malaysia, India, Indonesia, UAE, UK and Sri Lanka.

In her podcast, Dr Harcourt takes a critically reflective look at early childhood education and professional practice. Episodes look at budgeting, the educational leader's role, documentation, Reggio Emilia, identity, the sacred cows: water, sand and playdough and identifying quality. For example, in an episode titled *Educational Leader as a Respectful Challenger*, she re-imagines the role of educational (or pedagogical) leader as one who is a respectful challenger to help teachers confront ideas and make the familiar strange.

**[www.harcourtburke.podbean.com](http://www.harcourtburke.podbean.com)**

### **Thriving Children**

This legacy podcast for educators and parents is hosted by Clare Crew, an early childhood and inclusive education teacher specialising in the brain-body connection.

The episodes focus on child development – particularly helping the children the system leaves behind, including those with learning, attention and behavioural challenges.

Woven through each episode is a central theme of movement, play and connection – crucial ingredients in the early years of life.

**[www.youtube.com/@clarecrew1699](https://www.youtube.com/@clarecrew1699)**



Melanie Stellmacher is an Industrial Officer for IEU-QNT. Kate Damo 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 Mentor support for graduate teachers

Dear Melanie

I am a graduate teacher new to my role at a community kindergarten. I have questions about what my expectations should be regarding my workplace providing me with mentoring and support in my new position. What should I be asking for?

Kind regards

Josie



Melanie  
Stellmacher

Hi Josie

As a newly graduated teacher, you would be familiar with the Australian Professional

in the interest of your employer to support you in making the transition from provisional (Graduate) to full (Proficient) registration, and we would encourage you to ask for assistance if you do not already have a relationship with a suitable mentor. Note that there are conditions around who can act as your mentor. That person must not be a close relative, a parent of a child you teach, or the teacher of any of your children.

Having formed a professional relationship with a suitable mentor/reviewer, you should begin compiling evidence of your practice that shows you are working at the Proficient level. The QCT has developed an evidence guide that illustrates the types of teaching and learning artefacts that can be included in your portfolio, indicates how these artefacts can be annotated to support your recognition as a Proficient teacher, and scaffolds the professional conversations you should have with your mentor/reviewer.

You have a professional responsibility to access the professional support and mentoring that you require to transition from provisional to full registration. If possible, we recommend beginning teachers initiate the conversation with the employer about how they can support you through the process prior to appointment. If the employer has a website, explore it to see if they have any specific programs or arrangements to support early career teachers. At your interview, ask specific questions like "Does this service have another fully registered teacher on staff who could act as my mentor for registration purposes, or do you have a relationship with a teacher from another service who could assist?"

You may also find support through engagement with our union. Keep an eye on our member training and information sessions, or sign up for our free mentoring program, which calls for expressions of interest in the first semester of each year.

Kind regards

Melanie

Standards for Teachers (APST). Introduced in 2012, the APST provides a scaffold for all Australian teachers' career progression. Your initial teacher education (ITE) program is required to provide you with learning experiences that allow you to enter professional practice at the Graduate level, under provisional registration with the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) or relevant body interstate.

In your first two years of teaching, you should be actively working towards attaining full registration, which marks a point of transition to the Proficient level of the APST. To transition, you are required to undertake at least 200 days of teaching that is based on a kindergarten guideline that is approved by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA). In Queensland, most kindergartens deliver the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline (QKLG).

Transition from the Graduate level of practice to Proficient can, however, be challenging in an early childhood setting because you are required to work with a mentor (supervisor) who has attained full registration with the QCT. This can be difficult if you are the only registered teacher at your service. It is, however,

## NSW/ACT Long-service after 5-to-10 years

Dear Kate

I have been at my current workplace for just on five years, I was wondering if I can take some of my long service leave pro rata? I was able to do this in my old centre, but now I am covered under the Educational Services Teachers Award.

Wendy



Kate Damo

Dear Wendy

Thank you for your question. Under the Educational

Services Teachers Award you are covered by the provisions in NSW LSL Act 1955, which states that a worker with less than five years of continuous service with an employer is not entitled to long service leave.

A worker who has completed more than five years but less than 10 years' continuous service is entitled to a long service pro-rata

payment if they are dismissed (for any reason other than serious and wilful misconduct). If the person dies, the employer must still pay out their long service leave if they've completed more than five years' continuous service.

A worker who has completed more than five years but less than ten years of continuous service *may be entitled* to a long service pro-rata payment if they resign on account of illness, incapacity, domestic or other pressing necessity.

If they resign on account of illness or incapacity, it is suggested they provide a medical/specialist report(s) to the employer at the time they resign so an assessment can be made. (Note: The LSL Act does not define "domestic or other pressing necessity".)

The reason you were able to take LSL at five years in your old service was because the service had an enterprise agreement which allowed teachers to access the leave earlier.

This is one of the many benefits of bargaining for an Enterprise Agreement as opposed to being covered by the award.

Kate

# GIVEAWAYS

## A Life Song

Author: Jane Godwin

Illustrator: Anna Walker

Publisher: Penguin Random House Australia

From the award-winning team that created classics such as *Don't Forget, All Through the Year*, *Tilly and Starting School*, comes an exquisite, universal and captivating picture book that carries us through a child's life journey on the magical metaphor of song.

*When you are born, you make up a song  
It doesn't rhyme, and it isn't long  
A song of everything you hold dear  
It's your own tune, it's loud and clear  
And your whole world is in it.*

A musical journey from the time a child's life song first begins, through all its modulations, adding new verses and extra voices through the years, until it becomes their own unique composition - and one that is ultimately a part of the beautiful, grand and glistening score of the world.



## The Humongous Humdingle Family and the Tiny House

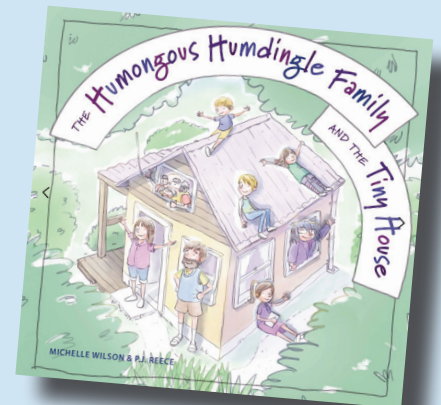
Author: Michelle Wilson

Illustrator: PJ Reece

Publisher: EK Books

Things are a bit squashy and noisy in the Humdingle family home, with three generations living under one tiny roof. It's easy to see why they sometimes wish they didn't have to share quite so much.

But when their wishes are granted, perhaps they'll find that there was something special about living in their tiny house after all. A vibrant story about minimalism, multi-generational living, family connections and the importance of appreciating what we have.



## The Mosaic

Author: Deborah Kelly

Illustrator: Nicky Johnston

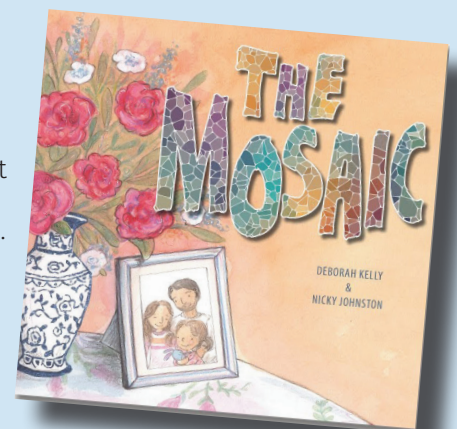
Publisher: EK Books

Frankie discovers that beautiful things can be made from broken pieces in this sensitive and hopeful story about family separation.

One day, Mum's vase breaks, and everything changes. Suddenly, Frankie's Dad doesn't live at home anymore, and Nana has come to stay for a while. Frankie's life has broken apart just like the vase, and she feels upset and lost. Then Nana has an idea...

Full of expressive, colourful illustrations, *The Mosaic* is an optimistic story about parental separation and the healing power of art.

Little readers will delight in following Nana and Frankie as they go on an adventure and find an unexpected source of hope and inspiration. They will see that while some changes can feel sad and overwhelming at first, they can also lead to happiness if we know where to look.



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 2025.

# Early childhood education membership

Quality education provided by professional early childhood education teachers and assistants is foundational to every child's learning journey.

Our union understands the unique challenges of the early childhood education sector including funding, professional wages and conditions, access to quality professional development and industrial representation and support.

We meet these challenges with our IEU member benefits and work to enhance stability, recognition and conditions in the sector.



**Scan the QR code to  
join the IEU QNT Branch**



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or 1800 351 996 (NT) | www.ieuqnt.org.au



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- Better pay and working conditions through collective bargaining
- Industrial advice, advocacy and representation
- Return from workers compensation and workplace health and safety
- Accreditation advice and professional development
- Keeping you connected



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