

# BEDROCK

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Early childhood education magazine of the Independent Education Union of Australia

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# BEDROCK

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## BEDROCK

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THE SAME OLD WAY



THE COMFORT ZONE

THE NEW WAY



RISKS AND CHANGE !!

# Time for some fresh thinking

It's a new year and we have a new Early Childhood Minister in NSW, Sarah Mitchell. Federally, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has flagged changes to childcare as being a top priority.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were some fresh thinking around the recurring problems with childcare in 2017?

Exorbitant costs to parents, particularly in NSW, continue. The cap of \$75000 per annum on the Child Care Rebate is leaving many parents struggling.

The latest Report on Government Services (RoGS) shows a sharp decline in affordability of childcare for low to middle income families, according to analysis by Early Childhood Australia (ECA).

Compared with last year, families earning \$35,000 per year are paying nearly 20% more in out of pocket expenses (as a proportion of their weekly income, after subsidies are factored in), while families on \$135,000 per year or more are paying just 5-7% more.

ECA said this confirms anecdotal reports that more families are reaching the \$7500 annual cap on Child Care Rebate earlier in the financial year and then having to pay higher out of pocket costs. For low and middle income families this has a significant impact on the household.

Yet these high fees do not translate to higher wages for teachers. The issue of pay parity for early childhood teachers with school teachers remains outstanding.

There must be a better way. Universal access to preschool, adopted in many countries such as the UK, needs to be accepted in Australia. Frustrating and outdated attitudes like those displayed by Senator David Leyonhjelm, that early childhood education is just 'babysitting' keep recurring, despite overwhelming international research on the importance of good quality education for 0-5s.

We need to once and for all put to bed the idea that early childhood education and the people who teach it are of lesser importance than any other form of education. We in the sector might feel like we are constantly banging the same drum, but it falls on us to make sure our leaders step up and move in the right direction.

**John Quessy**  
NSW ACT Secretary

**Terry Burke**  
QLD NT Secretary

BEDROCK

# UPFRONT



## New membership benefit

The IEU has partnered with the Teacher Learning Network (TLN) to provide access to free Professional Development (PD) for NSW/ACT members. TLN has been providing PD to teachers for more than 20 years and specialises in early childhood education.

This member only benefit is valued at \$250 but now comes as part of your NSW/ACT IEU membership as an early childhood member. Many TLN courses are registered with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and will count towards your maintenance of accreditation. We will be emailing you details of how to access TLN PD over the next few weeks so watch your inbox. Let your colleagues know that the IEU is committed to providing professional services to our professional members.

IEU members in Queensland can also access TLN professional development opportunities. TLN operates on a membership basis and all kindergartens and early childhood services can join TLN and access the online courses. When a kindergarten or early childhood service joins then all staff in that centre can access TLN courses free of charge. It simplifies the process, where just one payment covers access to all courses. Membership is \$350 for 12 months. Most TLN programs are offered online and so are readily accessible wherever you live in Australia (many schools in Queensland already make use of TLN online courses). Go to [www.tln.org.au](http://www.tln.org.au) for the full list of 2017 courses and to join TLN, or email our early childhood specialist, Max Garock, for more information [mgarock@tln.org.au](mailto:mgarock@tln.org.au)





### New NSW minister

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has named Sarah Mitchell as her new Early Childhood Minister in NSW. Ms Mitchell was previously Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health and Western NSW. The Nationals MP is the second person to hold this relatively new portfolio in NSW, taking over from Leslie Williams. On leaving Ms Williams said she was proud to be leaving the Starting Strong initiative in place in NSW.

Ms Mitchell is also the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Assistant Minister for Education. Her background in rural Australia may give Ms Mitchell insight into some of the challenges facing preschools in rural and regional Australia.

NSW still has the highest childcare costs in the country, and problems around the Starting Strong funding in preschools, a long way to go to closing the gap and of course providing pay parity for early childhood teachers with school teachers. The IEU looks forward to a good working relationship with Ms Mitchell in 2017.



### Protecting members' rights

The IEU is providing legal representation at the Fair Work Commission for three early childhood members who have not received their redundancy entitlements from their employer. The once busy Norwest Childcare Centre in Sydney was sold to developers in December last year for around \$9 million. The case was due before the Fair Work Commission in February.



### Disability funding threat

Queensland early childhood education members have raised significant concerns about the future of a number of state government programs that currently support inclusion of children with disability, particularly as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is explicitly directed to provide intervention services rather than support for education.

Implementation of the NDIS commenced on a trial basis in north Queensland in 2016, with a complete statewide rollout expected by 2019.

Currently, Queensland kindergarten services that require funding and support for the inclusion of children with disability may obtain this from a number of federal, state and non government sources.

Education Minister Kate Jones has announced that Early Childhood Development Programs (ECDPs) are unlikely to continue past 2020, once the NDIS is in place and that the future of the Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens (DISQK) Program will be determined by the level of support provided by the NDIS.

Uncertainty around the future of these programs leaves families and teachers in doubt about how they will obtain important foundational and educational support for children with disability.

Implementation of the NDIS comes at a time when members are already frustrated in their attempts to provide support for students with a disability, especially in kindergartens with high numbers of students with diverse needs.

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the nature of support provided or funded by government is already limited and cannot always be deployed in ways that would bring most benefit to the child.

A lack of clarity around the relationship between intervention and education contributes to this issue and creates unrealistic demands on teachers and inclusion support staff.

The IEU-QNT believes it is incumbent on state and federal governments to provide more frequent and transparent communication as the full rollout of the NDIS nears.

It is also imperative that full levels of funding for inclusion of students with disability is maintained.

Read more about the NDIS and early childhood education at [www.ndis.gov.au/ecei](http://www.ndis.gov.au/ecei).

# Navigating the maze

**Preschools across NSW are now working with the State Government's new funding model Starting Strong, Journalist Sue Osborne writes.**

Reaction to the funding model when it was introduced in October last year was mixed. The model is so complex it was difficult for many preschools to work out how the funding would impact on them.

Some are better off, some are not. Melinda Gambley is Director of Clunes Preschool. Clunes is a small village in the northern rivers region of NSW. The circumstances at Clunes means the preschool is one of those that will slip through the net and actually be worse off under Starting Strong.

Clunes is a low population area with a high SEIFA (Socio Economic Indexes for Areas) rating. There are simply not enough four year olds and equity three year olds to fill places. Unfunded three year olds will fill many places.

"We don't get funding for these children so it throws the whole model out," Melinda said.

Melinda is a member of the NSW/ACT IEU's Early Childhood Sector (ECS) Council and the Northern Rivers Preschool Alliance, and she said there are other preschools in the same boat.

"The Department did a good job of listening to us about the tiny preschools with less than 20 children

and putting in a safety net for them. But we have 23 children enrolled and just miss out.

"The timing of the funding announcement was not good as we had already offered places for 2017 by then anyway."

*"Regional preschools, and the communities they serve, are being hurt the most under the new funding model."*

Rosemary Gibbs is Director of Mudgee Preschool, also a regional town in NSW, but her centre will actually be better off under the model, and able to offer reduced fees to families in 2017.

She agreed the timing of the funding announcement in October was not good, as enrolment for 2017 had already been organised.

In order to fulfil the funding requirements the preschool has increased its enrolment hours, and this will provide a challenge to teachers.

Less release time from teaching may reduce time for programing, planning, meetings and documentation.

"This will particularly impact on children with a disability and additional needs," Rosemary said.

"One of the adjustments the preschool has made is to increase the hours that professional cleaners work at the preschool to take some of the burden of maintaining the centre off the staff."

Rosemary said the funding would increase the viability of the centre.

Sustainable Communities funding will see Clunes Preschool through to 2018, but after that the future is uncertain.

Melinda said: "We've been marketing heavily to families from a lot farther away than we would really like. We just can't manufacture more four year olds from our area. In fact we have an ageing population in this area with less children likely to be coming up in the next few years".

"But the fact is people can go to a preschool 20kms away and pay lower fees. The SEIFA ratings vary a lot.

"The Department has told us it's an operational matter and we just have to enrol more children. But the reality is that may not be possible."

Kate Washington, Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education, met with the IEU's Early Childhood Sector Council late last year to hear their views on this issue.

"Regional preschools, and the communities they serve, are being hurt the most under the new funding model. For those sitting just above the funding safety net, their





ongoing viability is a challenge. In a small town, it's hard to adjust your enrolments when you've enrolled every three and four year old in sight.

"It is clear that the government's 'one size fits all' approach is all stick and no carrot, which sees some preschools fighting for survival instead of being supported. Many people are frustrated by the focus on ticking boxes instead of what's in the best interests of children.

"Once again, regional and rural NSW appears to be bearing the brunt of an ill conceived funding policy, further deepening the equity gap between the city and country.

"I'm keenly aware of the importance of having three year olds in the preschool system. Academics, teachers and parents are in agreement on this issue.

"To do so, we will need a new funding approach from the Federal Government, something Kate Ellis MP, Federal Shadow Minister for Education and Early Childhood, has flagged in her

recent National Press Club address.

"Other feedback I hear loud and clear, is the undervaluing of teachers and workers in the sector. Quite simply, pay inequality is something which must be addressed.

"I am committed to working towards a fairer system which supports all preschools, a system which is child focused, while meeting the needs of parents, teachers, workers and communities.

"In any funding model, we must ensure that services do not lose their ability to meet the needs of the communities they support.

"The NSW Opposition has set a goal of delivering 15 hours a week of quality, affordable early childhood education in the year before school. This is a benchmark many states have already met.

"Regrettably, NSW is tying itself up in unnecessary complexity, and losing focus on the end goal.

"For me, it's quite simple. We must recognise the importance of early education, we must value it appropriately and we must support early education services and professionals to do what they do best – make a real difference to young people's lives and, in turn, make our community stronger."

## How is Starting Strong impacting on your preschool?

We'd love to hear your feedback. Email us at [bedrock@ieu.asn.au](mailto:bedrock@ieu.asn.au) or post a comment on the IEU Facebook page



**Join the conversation**  
[facebook.com/ieunswact](https://facebook.com/ieunswact)



# Understanding and valuing the work of early childhood educators

*“We hope to dispel the myths surrounding early childhood education by identifying, highlighting and documenting the distinct and complex nature of educators’ work.”*

**Skilled and knowledgeable early childhood educators are the key to high quality early childhood education, Dr Frances Press writes. So why is it that, in an era where the importance of early childhood education has been recognised throughout the world, the working conditions and pay of early childhood educators are so poor?**

In November 2013, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) drew together a Panel of Experts to promote decent work for early childhood personnel. Their report noted that early childhood educators all over the world “often worked under poorer conditions than educators in other levels of schooling” and called for improvements in their status and working conditions. They also made clear that early childhood educators require a diverse range of professional knowledge and skills so that they are able to “respond to the learning needs and challenges of all children”. The skills and knowledges identified by the ILO included an extensive knowledge of child development, learning, play, pedagogy, wellbeing, maternal and infant health and safety, first aid and nutrition.

Additionally, early childhood educators need good communication skills and empathy; to be creative, innovative and self reflective; be able to “impart to children values, knowledges and skills necessary for peace, gender equality, tolerance and respect for diversity”. Finally, they often need to know how to support children who, for whatever reason, faced challenges to their development and inclusion.

Yet popularly, the work of early childhood educators is beset with myths and misconceptions. In part, this is because the workforce is highly feminised – with many countries having an early childhood workforce that is over 90% female. Thus, often the work is constructed

as an extension of mothering and ‘instinctual’ for this predominantly female workforce. In addition, early childhood’s emphasis on learning through play is at odds with the more structured, teacher led examples of children’s learning often associated with the school classroom. Hence, the thoughtful deliberations that underpin educators’ actions as they set up the environment, work with small and large groups of children, and their ongoing interactions with children, may fail to be recognised as forms of teaching.

## **A multi level investigation**

To help address these and other issues (including the ongoing shortage of qualified educators), researchers from Charles Sturt University (CSU), the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and Rutgers University in the United States are conducting a three year study: Exemplary early childhood educators at work: A multi level investigation (LP 160100532). We have partnered with eight early childhood organisations, including the IEU, to conduct a multi level study, which we hope will dispel the myths surrounding early childhood education by identifying, highlighting and documenting the distinct and complex nature of educators’ work. The research which has a dual focus is on the nature of educators’ work and the context within which they work.

## **Specifically, it aims to:**

- identify the work, skills and knowledge of exemplary educators in each of the three mandated qualification levels: certificate III, diploma, and degree, and
- investigate and document the organisational, professional and relational dimensions evident in high quality childcare centres and preschools with educators whose work is considered exemplary.







### What the study involves

This is a three year study, taking place in Queensland, NSW and WA – the states where our partner organisations are located. It will work with educators in early childhood services rated as Excellent or Exceeding National Standard through the National Quality Standard assessment and rating process, with an exceeding rating in every quality area. Using the ACECQA ratings will help ensure that data obtained on educators' typical activities, understandings and dispositions is tied specifically to the delivery of high quality programs.

### Phase one

The first stage of the study involves documenting what educators actually do. We will invite educators to fill out a Random Time Sampling Time Use Diary (RTS TUD) using a smart phone application. This app will buzz educators twice a day for two weeks. When prompted, educators record (through a series of phone 'swipes') what they have done for the previous hour. The app has been designed to quickly capture the many activities educators engage in, as well as who they are with (parents, staff, children) and how stressed or satisfied they have feel by their work in the previous hour. Through this phase of the study the research will build a profile of early childhood educators' work days and illustrate its complex and multifaceted nature. Although the app takes a day or two to get used to, the involvement of educators is crucial. This app has the potential to build a large and robust data base that can tell us a lot about the nature of the daily work of educators.

### Phase two

Documenting what educators do in a day is only one part of the picture. We also need to understand why educators do what they do, what skills they use to do their jobs well,

and what information and knowledge they draw on. So in the second part of the research we will conduct focus groups. These focus groups will be organised according to qualification level (certificate III, diploma and teaching).

### Phase three

The final phase of the study, involves a small number of intensive case studies. Researchers will go into a selected number of eligible services to closely observe the work of excellent educators and talk to them about what they do and why. But we also need to understand what is happening in the service more broadly. A great educator can languish in a poorly run centre, just as a centre with a strong commitment to quality for children and families can support staff to thrive. Therefore, in this last stage of the study all staff working in the case study centres will be asked to fill out an online survey: the Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning (SEQUAL). Designed by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) at the University of California, SEQUAL will be adapted for the Australian context. The researchers and their partners are hopeful that this research will contribute to the retention and further development of a skilled, appropriately remunerated early childhood workforce. We hope our findings will be used to support pay equity, well targeted professional development and preservice early childhood educator preparation, and the effective management of high quality early learning environments.

If you have any questions about the research, email me on [fpress@csu.edu.au](mailto:fpress@csu.edu.au).

**Dr Frances Press is Associate Professor at the School of Teacher Education (SOTE), Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE), Charles Sturt University.**





# Pint sized environmentalists

**A new early childhood program in Queensland is giving children a chance to make a difference in local conservation, helping to empower a generation and make real change for the future. Journalist Fiona Stutz looks at the educational benefits of teaching kindergarten aged children about the environment.**

Tangalooma EcoMarines is a Brisbane based not for profit organisation that takes local action to clean up the waterways and to protect and preserve marine life and wildlife through a range of activities and initiatives. This conservation movement to save the marine life of Moreton Bay also helps communities fight pollution and learn about changes they can make in their everyday lives.

However, environmental preservation and action is not just

restricted to adults. The organisation has developed the Tangalooma EcoMarines Early Childhood Program to help younger people become pint sized environmental superheroes.

The new program can be run in any early childhood centre or facilities, such as kindergartens and day care centres, and is free to join and participate.

## Starting young

Tangalooma EcoMarines Director Penny Limbach said the number one aim of the early childhood program was to educate younger children on the importance of looking after our local marine wildlife.

"It is so important to educate children from a young age. If they are encouraged to learn about our local environment and learn how to protect it, it will make a difference

in years to come. And after all, they are the future custodians of this land," Penny said.

She said she was concerned that environment conservation did not factor into people's lives as much as it used to.

"I think that somehow it's skipped a generation, caring about litter, and I guess science is really proving how marine debris is having an effect on our wildlife.

"It is easy to make small changes that can have a big difference. Everyone can make a few small changes in their lives, which will result in a better environmental footprint."

## Reflecting on sustainability

The National Quality Standard (NQS) encourages educators to reflect on sustainability and what it means in an early childhood setting. Standard 3.3





of the NQS invites services to take an active role in promoting sustainable practices in the immediate service environment and beyond, as well as fostering children's respect and care for the environment.

The Standard also aims to support children to develop positive attitudes and values by engaging in learning experiences that link people, plants, animals and the environment and by watching adults around them model sustainable practices.

### Spreading the word

Tangalooma EcoMarines has already developed a successful primary school program before deciding to turn its attention to early childhood.

"We want to encourage our early childhood centres to spread the word about the program to include parents."

When a centre signs up to the program, they receive all resources

and support they need to help them educate the children about marine conservation in a fun and engaging way to involve them in protecting waterways and wildlife.

Already 151 early learning centres have signed up for the program, to begin this year.

"The program is a free online kit and includes environmental challenges for the centres to do. Challenges include wrapper free Wednesday, recycling activities and more."

### Currently the program includes:

- a certificate template for educators to fill in for kids to become a Tangalooma EcoMarine
- a video message from Tangalooma EcoMarine Ambassadors Tangalooma Eco Ranger and the Dolphin mascot
- games and colouring in activities, and
- recycling activities.

The early childhood program also aims to educate about the local area and how Moreton Bay is home to approximately 600 dolphins, 700 dugongs, 2000 loggerhead turtles, more than 10,000 green sea turtles and many other marine wildlife.

Early learning centres that want to introduce the program can visit <http://www.tangaloomaecomarines.com/early-learning-program> for more information.

The Tangalooma Education Resource Library is available for free online for teachers and students at [http://www.tangalooma.com/info/education/resource\\_library/](http://www.tangalooma.com/info/education/resource_library/)

For additional information on Standard 3.3 of the NQS, refer to the Guide to the National Quality Standard available from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority website [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au).



*"I think that somehow it's skipped a generation, caring about litter, and I guess science is really proving how marine debris is having an effect on our wildlife."*



# EARLY YEARS

## count towards maths achievement

**Children show informal understanding of numerical concepts long before they start school, influencing their future achievements in mathematics. These skills can be strengthened through direct and indirect instruction in early learning settings, according to a recent ACER report. *Bedrock* Journalist Fiona Stutz looks at the role early childhood professionals play in understanding early numeracy development in order to construct learning contexts that assist children to develop their mathematical thinking.**

A report released in 2016 by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has shown that children's numeracy knowledge when they enter school provides a foundation for their school maths achievement and strongly predicts their maths competence later in school.

The report, *Counting on it: Early Numeracy Development and the Preschool Child* by ACER Research Fellow Kate Reid shows that counting skills and understanding of quantities, and the relationships between them, in the year before starting primary school predict children's mathematics achievement.

"Children's informal number sense when they enter school provides a foundation for their school mathematics achievement and strongly predicts their mathematics competence later in school," Dr Reid said.

The report points to a child's informal knowledge of numbers, or 'number sense', defined as the flexible use of numbers to compare, recognise patterns and solve problems.

Children show their number sense in many everyday problem solving situations involving numbers and measurement. They may reason about who has more or less, devise strategies for creating equal shares of countable objects or amounts, or use counting in a range of situations to reason about a single group of objects or to compare two groups, the report surmises. Children informally build these skills in their everyday interactions with carers and with other children, and they can be encouraged to develop their understanding in play situations, the report states.


According to the ACER report, early numeracy knowledge may initially be fragile and incomplete, but it can be fostered through interactions with parents and teachers to provide a solid foundation on which school mathematics teaching can build.

"Understanding more about preschoolers' early numeracy development is important in informing educational practices, understanding the variation in early numeracy skills among preschoolers, fostering early numeracy among children

whose skills are less developed, and understanding why some children with well developed early numeracy have difficulties learning mathematics at school," Dr Reid said.

*"Children's informal number sense when they enter school provides a foundation for their school mathematics achievement and strongly predicts their mathematics competence later in school."*





In the past, counting was initially regarded as a rote activity for preschoolers, with little relevance to children's developing thinking skills.

However, it is now recognised that the emergence of counting skills is a significant conceptual development that provides a strong foundation for developing complex mathematics skills, according to the report.

Director of Borilla Kindergarten, Jenny Finlay, incorporates numeracy into the daily program at her centre which requires planning, time and resources to be made available for children to explore and become confident in the area of numeracy.

However, Jenny warns this should not be to the detriment of play and children should not feel pressured to learn.

"Educating children in our care on numeracy does not have to be highly structured and can be achieved through a play based program.

"There should be less pressure from schools, and the wider community, for formalised instruction to be occurring at this young age when research so overwhelmingly tells us that exploration and building confidence works best," Jenny said.

Jenny employs above ratio staffing to ensure all children have time with an adult so, as with literacy, numeracy can be purposefully embedded across the many areas of the daily program in informal but intentional ways.

"Many aspects are incorporated into the daily program. For example, number songs and rhymes at transition times, adding a pattern sequence as a transition, reading books where numeracy concepts are explored.

"Cooking is another regular activity in which numeracy concepts are explored. This can be carried through to the water play activities using measuring cups. These all form the basis of my numeracy program," she said.

The ACER report also reveals the critical importance of effective support for early childhood educators – highlighting the importance of children's numeracy development in the early childhood years in childcare, kindergarten and the first years of schooling.

"Since early childhood numeracy development is so

important for later school achievement, we must find ways to help early childhood educators provide the best possible foundation for school," Dr Reid said.

Jenny agrees that access to professional development, adequate resources and the time to develop activities based around numeracy would help educators in doing their job.

"Adequate resources should be made available for both the educators and children, such as measuring scales and cups, books, numerous counters, play money, water play.

"Educators need time for planning, time to offer these activities in a play based environment without formal structure, time to read books together, one on one, and discuss numeracy concepts such as big, small, tall, taller, tallest."

Already in preschool learning environments, teachers can vary significantly in the amount of mathematical information they convey while interacting with children, the report states.

Such variation is related to the growth in numeracy skills over a year, with greater growth in numeracy skills related to greater maths specific talk among teachers. Preschool teachers could be trained in the explicit use of 'maths talk' in their everyday interactions with children to enhance opportunities for children to develop their early numeracy skills, the report stated.

"It is important that early childhood educators know more about the skills of preschool children so that they can better encourage their development. It's also necessary to understand the numeracy skills of preschool children to enable appropriate school entry teaching and learning can occur," Dr Reid said.

The report, *Counting on it: Early Numeracy Development and the Preschool Child* is the second in the ACER series, *Changing Minds: Discussion in Neuroscience, Psychology and Education*. It is available at [http://research.acer.edu.au/learning\\_processes/19](http://research.acer.edu.au/learning_processes/19).

**The Queensland kindergarten curriculum, The Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline, shows developing numeracy skills under the area of communicating.**

"Communicating key focus: exploring and engaging with numeracy in personally meaningful ways.

Significant learnings:

- exploring number symbols and their purposes,
- confidence and interest in counting and exploring patterns and relationships, and
- exploring mathematical thinking, concepts and language".



# A history of caring before convention



*"Inclusion isn't just about providing appropriately sized furniture, it underpins the language we use, the decisions we make, the practices we put in place, who we are as individuals."*



**Above:** Matron Louise Taplin on the steps with children. **Left:** The property at Ashfield was originally a farm with gardens that mothers maintained and with cows for milk. **Right:** The horse and cart that children used to go on excursions in.



**The Infant's Home (TIH) was awarded the HESTA Early Childhood Education and Care Award 2016 in the category Excellence in Building Inclusion, Journalist Sue Osborne writes.**

The TIH's extraordinary history goes a long way to explain its philosophy of making inclusion core to every aspect of its functioning.

TIH was founded as a rescue operation in 1874 for abandoned babies and mothers. From the beginning the aim was to provide a place where mothers and babies could stay together.

Many young women working in manor houses were abused by the 'master', and thrown out when they became pregnant. A group of far sighted women banded together to provide a refuge for these and other women and babies in need. They received much criticism at the time, including being pilloried in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, as they were seen as encouraging illegitimacy.

Originally in Darlinghurst, then Paddington, the TIH finally moved to Henry Street, Ashfield thanks to a large loan by Sir Thomas Walker. Since its inception TIH has challenged conventional wisdom to protect

children at risk and strengthen families in vulnerable situations.

Over the years TIH has evolved into a unique large service with five early learning centres, a family day care provider, early intervention service provider including therapy, family support, playgroups and parent education and specialist health services, including a GP clinic, and allied health clinics.

It has served 188,000 children over 142 years. It was one of the first places to offer long day care in 1972 and remains one of NSW's biggest early childhood centres.



Each year TIH services are accessed by over 2500 children and their families from over 100 suburbs across Sydney. Thirty per cent of services onsite at The Infants' Home in Ashfield are targeted to support children living with vulnerabilities or additional complex needs.

Director Lynn Farrell said inclusion isn't an add on but "who we are".

"Inclusion isn't just about providing appropriately sized furniture, it underpins the language we use, the decisions we make, the practices we put in place, who we are as individuals.

"All the children are encouraged to develop a strong sense of social justice and equity. We talk to the children about differences and that's it's okay to choose a different path or way of doing something."

The inclusive approach goes towards TIH employment policies too, with a diverse workforce reflecting different ages, ethnic backgrounds and gender.

### The inclusion model

Achieving inclusion at TIH has been underpinned by critical reflection and collaboration throughout the process. In particular, features of inclusion at TIH comprise:

- Drawing on research stating the quality of a service is pivotal when working with children with additional needs, TIH focused on operational aspects such as improved ratios, qualifications of educators, and additional numbers of allied health staff within programs.
- Putting the above operational structures in place to increase the capacity of staff in delivering the services and shifting to a deeper and truer enactment of inclusion.
- Considering inclusion in a holistic way at all levels of the organisation including staff, children, families, disciplines, and cultures. This necessitates assimilation of often conflicting professional disciplinary practices.
- Ongoing collaborative and reflective practices to bring allied health staff and early childhood staff together to establish goals with families, external agencies, and wherever possible the children.
- Designing new indoor and outdoor learning spaces also enabled us to create a structural building that promotes inclusion, through the intentional use of fences and gates in ways that make inclusion visible.

### Positive impacts

Non stigmatised environments and quality services underpin inclusion at the service. These help to uphold the rights of children with additional support needs, allowing them to feel valued, acknowledged and respected by their peers and the organisation.

This acceptance can result in a sense of belonging that further promotes their independence, resilience and wellbeing, and supports them in building strong and capable futures.

Lynn said this has enabled all children attending TIH services to see beyond the images of difference they are presented with and look deeper to the individual characteristics people may possess, which facilitates the development of true, reciprocal friendships.

Each of the five early learning and education centres at TIH have teaching directors to lead their teams, rather than directors behind a desk. The directors' demonstration of professional skills and knowledge help strengthen their teams' everyday practice and has been a significant step towards implementing quality practices.

Additionally, Lynn said TIH has recently employed a teacher just to provide professional development to staff in its five centres.

The teacher works one day a week in each centre in collaboration with the staff and director, talking about potential resources, new research and practice or activities that can support the TIH philosophy.

"The difference has been amazing. All our teachers are four year trained and all very engaged – everyone has a voice here. It is not a top down organisation."

Lynn said the award honoured not only the current staff but also the work of the ground breaking founding mothers of the school, who defied convention to aid women and children.

HESTA awards are announced biennially. The next awards will be in 2018.

### References

**HESTA awards:**

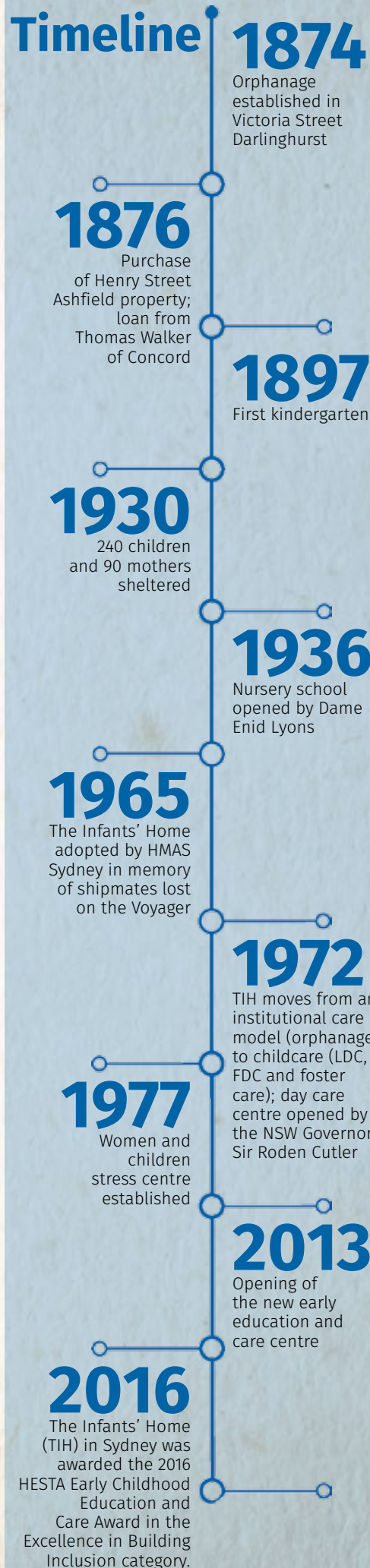
<http://www.earlychildhoodawards.com.au/>

**TIH:** <http://www.theinfantshome.org.au/>

**For more on the TIH history:**

<http://www.theinfantshome.org.au/about-us/history/>

[http://www.theinfantshome.org.au/site/assets/files/1016/history\\_book\\_order\\_form\\_revised\\_aug15.pdf](http://www.theinfantshome.org.au/site/assets/files/1016/history_book_order_form_revised_aug15.pdf)





# Drawing on their changing world



**A Queensland project is helping to capture the artistic side of infrastructure growth and changes to the local environment through the eyes of kindergarten children. Journalist Fiona Stutz looks at how an artist in residence program is transforming the way children and educators increase their engagement with arts and culture.**

A state government funded program, Arts in Residence, provides arts and education funding to kindergartens and schools seeking to increase their engagement with arts and culture through partnerships with artists, arts organisations or arts facilities.

Toowoomba's C&K Vera Lacaze Memorial Kindergarten and Preschool (pictured) recently received funding as part of the program.

The Kindy-Connect Project, a collaboration between the kindergarten and a group of professional artists, helped kindergarten children discuss and document regional infrastructure growth in the Toowoomba region and then share it with the local community.

With assistance from professional painters, sculptors and musicians, kindergarten children went on excursions to local construction sites to witness first hand the construction and local environment changes going on around them.

Kindergarten Director Bridget Kings (pictured) said involving professional artists in the program allowed the children to observe methods of expressing ideas and developing skills within a variety of curriculum areas.

"The artists exceeded our expectations as they worked with the children. They were able to embrace our philosophy of allowing the children to experiment, explore the mediums and ways of representation, and to avoid prepared material for the children to simply copy or just 'fill in,'" Bridget said.

She said the centre decided to become involved in the project as an opportunity to extend upon the experiences of the kindergarten children, increase their skills and







exposure to varied art forms as well as observe, interact and learn from recognised artists in their particular fields.

Back in the classroom, artists and teachers worked with children to explore their feelings and thoughts about the construction, growing urbanisation and changes to the natural environment, through a variety of art genres including painting, sculpture and photos.

"Teachers noted a significant increase in student's ability to express themselves creatively across different art forms. The children's willingness to explore and participate in all the activities allowed them to develop skills and the confidence to take risks with the arts in order to increase expression and representational skills in many forms."

The skills the children at the kindergarten developed were also extended to the educators.

### Art extension

"We saw the opportunity to extend the knowledge, skills and understanding of a broad range of art forms and expression so as to develop our own professional skills and ability to support arts in the kindergarten context.

"The educators improved their artistic skills, learnt new ways of teaching and engaging children as well as discovering different methods of using the arts."

The work resulted in a book showcasing the infrastructure growth and changing local environment in the region through the eyes of the children.

Bridget said as a further result of the project, a number of the artists have visited the centre to continue their work on a volunteer basis.

"Some of the children are now also attending classes by the artists as extra curricular activities.

"We have also set up a partnership with the airport where we aim to bring children for special visits each year."

She said the centre has also been awarded another grant for their next project, Embracing our Diverse Community, in 2017.

### Create funding

According to the Queensland Government, which funds the program, its objective is to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum – The Arts and the Early Years Learning Framework through high quality arts education initiatives while fostering new relationships between kindergartens and the arts and cultural sector.

Applicants can seek funding from \$5000 up to \$20,000 and must take place in a recognised Queensland school or a Queensland Government approved kindergarten.

Another centre, The Joey Club in Brisbane, was also funded under the program. Collaborating with Scale Free Network, an Australian

art/science collaborative made up of two artists and a microbiologist, the centre helped deliver the Little Laboratory Project, an art/science laboratory.

The interdisciplinary workshops and interactive installations focused on observation of the micro scale as a source of inspiration and wonder, combining drawing processes, sculpture and microscopy as tools for visualising, exploring and learning about 'invisible' worlds.

The children used technology including a microscope camera to find objects and artworks that could be projected.

A theatrical light play space allowed the children to make and interact with large projections and capture video and photographs.

An exhibition showcasing the variety of drawing, painting, sculpture, video, photography, collage and assemblage was also produced by the children.

'The Lab' has now been set up as a permanent space at the centre, and is available for other groups in the centre to experiment with technology, equipment and art materials.

Centres are encouraged to apply for future funding and can read more about other centres' projects and application guidelines at <http://www.arts.qld.gov.au/case-studies/investment-program/569-artist-in-residence-program>

# The circle of love

**I recently had the privilege of attending the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Conference in Darwin, NSW/ACT IEU Organiser Lisa James writes. The highlight for me was a keynote presentation and workshop by Maria Aarts, founder of Marte Meo.**

Marte Meo was developed initially to give parents the skills to form relationships with their children with additional needs. It was first developed for children under psychiatric care and later 'deprived' children after a parent of a child with autism noted that her child was far more responsive to Maria than with the parent herself. The mother turned to Maria and said: "I've time, love and energy enough but not the information".

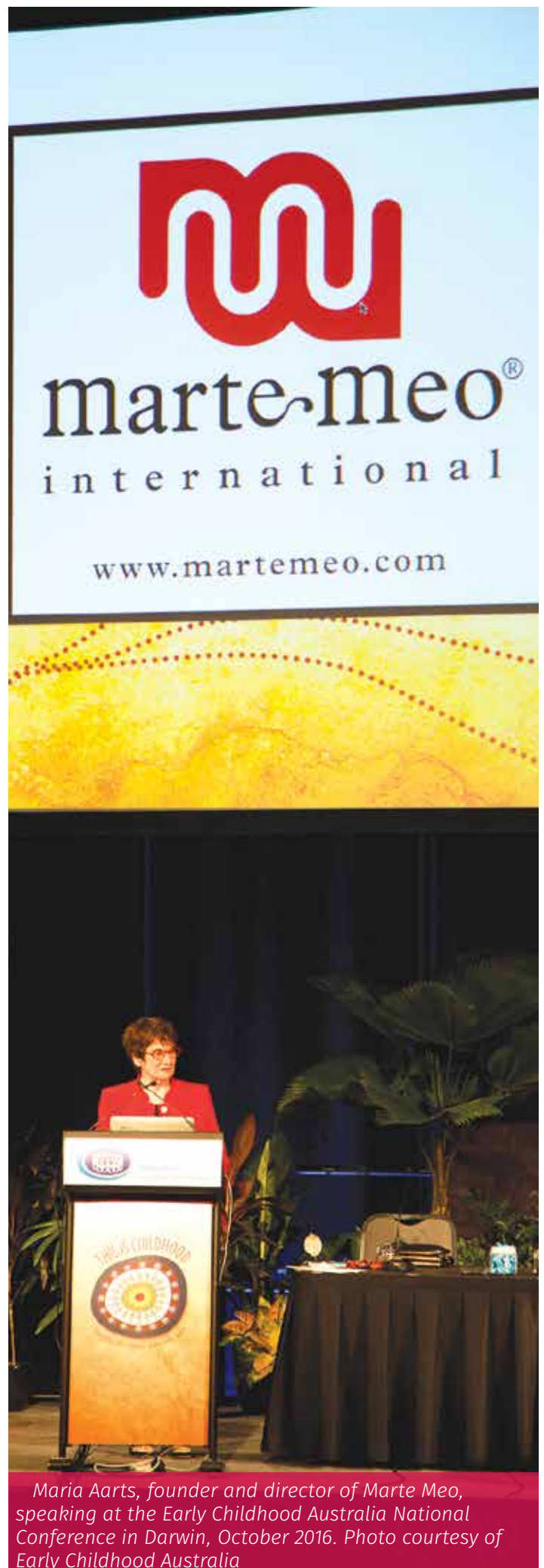
Marte Meo has been successfully implemented in early childhood settings around the world, and Maria Aarts works in conjunction with KU Children's Services and has worked with the teachers and educators at KU James Cahill Preschool in Sydney to help them become more developmentally focused.

Marte Meo teaches people to recognise and take action during the contact initiative – the moment when a child is trying to make a connection with an adult. This could be as simple as noticing when the child smiles and the adult smiles back. If the child makes eye contact, does the parent or educator see it, support and confirm the child's initiative?

Maria noticed that some parents did not attempt to communicate with their infants. She turned to one mother and said: "You can speak to your baby" and the mother replied: "About what? When he speaks to me I will speak to him."

Maria's new program is called The Golden Gift, which Maria explains is the gift parents can give their child in the first year of life.

Building relationships between siblings is important. Marte Meo helps parents identify the moments that are important opportunities for children to get to know their siblings and this assists them to get along with one another.



*Maria Aarts, founder and director of Marte Meo, speaking at the Early Childhood Australia National Conference in Darwin, October 2016. Photo courtesy of Early Childhood Australia*





Maria Aarts, Founding Director Marte Meo (centre) with KU Children's Services CEO Chris Legg (right) and General Manager Early Education Professional Practice Kim Bertino (left). Photo courtesy of Early Childhood Australia

Parents and teachers from all over the world send three minute video clips to Maria to analyse. Maria then provides feedback about how to improve the interactions between the adult and child in the video. Another clip is sent three weeks after Maria's analysis and advice are received about the first clip.

Marte Meo teaches parents to help their child to regulate their feelings. For example, a toddler is placed on the kitchen bench and turns on a tap and looks at his mother. Instead of shutting down the child's communication initiative by scolding the child or solving the situation herself by turning the tap off, his mother took his hand and turned off the tap with the child's hand so the child effectively assisted to turn off the tap. A natural reaction can be to step in and take over the situation whenever problems arise but when parents do this they take over the opportunity for a child to learn to solve problems. Maria cited one of the benefits of training children to be independent problem solvers is when they grow into teenagers and they call their parent because they have missed their train, the parent does not take responsibility for fixing this situation but demonstrates they trust the teenager to work it out for themselves: "I'm curious how you are going to solve this".

### Sibling relationships

Parents need to step back to make space for siblings to develop relationships with one another, such as letting a preschool age child to help feed the baby. A video of this scenario was shown at the presentation. The preschooler was filling up the spoon but he put too much on the spoon for the infant. The mother did not take the spoon and feed the baby herself or remove some of the food. Instead, the mother turned to the child and said, "that's a big spoon for a little mouth, your brother has to open his mouth very wide to fit that spoon in". The preschooler then removed some food from the spoon and said "a little", demonstrating that he had understood the need to decrease the amount of food on the spoon for the baby.

It is important to teach children to be happy when something good happens to their siblings or to empathise

when their siblings are upset by explaining what is happening for the other child and how the child is feeling about the situation. Marte Meo starts where the families are now, not where they want them to be.

A teacher's role is to activate not compensate by helping parents to learn to respond to their child's initiatives when you are not present. Parents may need to be taught to wait attentively, follow what the child does and naming the child's actions and/or objects the child is using and providing developmentally appropriate verbal instruction before taking action.

Parents may need to be shown how to follow and lead when communicating with their child. The child does something and adult verbalises it (following) and alternately the adult says something and child performs the action (leading). For children who do not develop language, parents may not be responding to the child's communication attempts. Some parents do not know what activities are appropriate for their

child's development, some do not sit on the floor and play with their child and still others dominate the play and perform the actions for the child and this removes the 'play' element from the activity and makes it about performing 'correctly' according to the adult's perception. Once parents have internalised a picture of themselves as a good parent this is self reinforcing.

Teachers need to read the developmental message behind special behaviour. They need to share the information about how to support the child's development with the parents, not share the child's behaviour problems. Parents are not living with a diagnosis, they are living with a child and they need to know how to support their development.

A little girl is playing with a small porcelain tea set. Another child pushes the porcelain tea set off the table into the basket and some of the delicate porcelain items break. This is translated to: "The child is interested in other children and he needs support to participate in play ideas and words to communicate. Give him the words at home as we do at the centre".

For further information visit the Marte Meo website: [www.martemeo.com](http://www.martemeo.com).



# The transformative power of early childhood education

**Yet more evidence on the importance of early years development has been released by the influential medical journal *The Lancet*.**

Its series, *Advancing Early Childhood Development, from Science to Scale 2000-2015* shows an increase in the number of scientific publications relating to early childhood and its benefits.

Looking specifically at developing countries, the studies show overwhelmingly that early intervention has long term benefits for society at large.

*The Lancet* researchers write: “First, new research in early human development shows that epigenetic, immunological, physiological, and psychological adaptations to the environment occur from conception, and that these adaptations affect development throughout the life course.

“This knowledge calls for an approach targeting caregivers and children with effective interventions during sensitive times across the life course, with the period from conception to age two to three years being of particular importance.

“Second, evidence on long term outcomes from low income and middle income countries shows that a program to increase cognitive development of stunted children in Jamaica 25 years ago resulted in a significant, 25% increase in average adult earnings.

“Conversely, long term follow up of children from birth shows that growth

failure in the first two years of life has harmful effects on adult health and human capital, including chronic disease, and lower educational attainment and adult earning.

*“We must act now to lay the foundation for a lifetime of health and wellbeing — for the benefit of today’s children, tomorrow’s adults, and for future generations.”*

“Moreover, deficits and disadvantages persist into the subsequent generation, producing a vicious inter generational cycle of lost human capital and perpetuation of poverty. These findings shine light on the transformative potential of early childhood development programs in low income and middle income countries.

“Only by breaking this cycle will the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be achieved.

“Nurturing interactions are crucial to mitigating these risks. A young child’s developing brain is activated and patterned by the nurturing care of trusted adults.

“Nurturing interactions comprise attentive responses to young children’s efforts to connect to and learn about their world, and involve efforts to present children with age appropriate learning experiences in a safe and mutually enjoyable way.

“Nurturing care takes place in the context of families and through service providers across many sectors — health, nutrition, education, child and social protection — that provide the essential care for children to survive and to thrive.

“Nurturing care can break down under conditions of extreme poverty, family and societal conflict, discrimination, and other forms of individual and social stress.

“As lead authors of this series, we call upon all stakeholders to step up strategic and equitable investments in early childhood development. The SDGs provide the vision and the multisectoral framework, while the findings of this series map pathways for action towards ensuring that every child can realise their right to development and to achieve their full human potential.

“We have the knowledge, the resources, and the opportunities. We must act now to lay the foundation for a lifetime of health and wellbeing—for the benefit of today’s children, tomorrow’s adults, and for future generations.”

To read more see <http://www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016>



# Building Belonging:

## Teaching respect for cultural diversity

**As National Children's Commissioner, my role is to promote and advocate for the rights of children and young people in Australia, Megan Mitchell, National Children's Commissioner, writes.**

This work is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the human rights treaty that defines the rights of children under international law. The CRC is also a guiding document for the Early Years Learning Framework:

*"Early childhood educators guided by the Framework will reinforce in their daily practice the principles laid out in the [CRC]. The Convention states that all children have the right to an education that lays a foundation for the rest of their lives, maximises their ability, and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages."*

After hearing from teachers that there were limited resources available to support them to appropriately discuss and address cultural diversity and racial prejudice, in 2015, the Australian Human Rights Commission conducted an online survey of 476 early childhood educators in an attempt to better understand their experiences with these issues. Seventy two per cent reported that there were challenges to educating about cultural diversity, and 43% reported that there were challenges to addressing prejudice. Further, 77% indicated that a child had asked a question about their own or another person's racial, cultural or ethnic background. While many of these were simply a result of children's natural curiosity, 43% of respondents told us that a child had said something negative and 49% that a parent had said something negative, about another person's racial, cultural or ethnic background.

Based on the results of the survey and with input from a reference group of early childhood education experts, the Commission developed its first series of early childhood resources. *Building Belonging* is a comprehensive toolkit of resources which includes an ebook, song with actions, teacher guide, posters and lesson plans. The resources are linked to the EYLF, the Australian Curriculum (Foundation Years) and the Australian Professional Standards for

Teachers and focus on encouraging respect for cultural diversity and tackling racial prejudice in early childhood settings.

For example, the ebook *All My Friends and Me* tells the story of Pax and her friends at preschool. They observe their differences but quickly realise that they have much more in common and conclude that they are happiest when they are dancing, singing and playing together. *All My Friends and Me* is available in multiple formats – as a website, PDF download and as an audio file. Like all of the resources, it is available for free from the Commission's website and can be used by teachers and parents alike.

The toolkit also includes a guide for responding to difficult questions and comments from children and parents. The guide provides suggested responses to a number of potentially challenging questions and comments, based on real life examples provided by surveyed teachers.

Children are never too young to start learning about their rights and responsibilities. Children's learning experiences shape their thinking and values. Children who grow up knowing they have rights and responsibilities will carry the messages of respect and dignity that accompany this knowledge into adulthood. *Building Belonging* supports teachers to introduce and discuss some of the basic concepts of human rights – non discrimination and fair and equal treatment – to young children.

### References

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/building-belonging-kids@humanrights.gov.au>

You can read the full text of the Convention at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> There are also child-friendly versions available. See for example: <https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/unccrchilddfriendlylanguage.pdf>

DEEWR. *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (2009) 5



# Your questions answered

Sherryl Saunders is an industrial officer for IEU-QNT and Lisa James is an organiser for the NSW/ACT IEU. They answer your industrial and legal questions as they relate to state laws and regulations.

## Dear Sherryl

I work as a full time assistant, supporting two groups of children (start of the week group and the end of the week group). The program offered to children and their families has always been on the basis of a five day fortnight. The committee wants to change the contact time to make the children attend on only two days (albeit very long) days. It means I would no longer be needed on a Wednesday and I would be part time. I'm not sure what my rights are in this area?

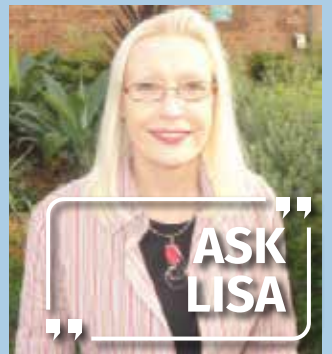
**Cassie**



## Dear Lisa

I have worked for my employer since 2000, working between one day per week and five days per week during that time. I am currently working three days but next year this will be reduced to two days. I would like to know if I can take my long service leave on the other three days each week (the days I will not be working next year) as I would like to be working five days per week, but there is not enough hours available at my workplace.

**Ros**



## Dear Cassie

Employers are required to consult with staff over major changes in operation that are likely to have a significant effect on employees. A proposal to change the teaching program at the kindergarten, particularly where this may result in employees losing their full time status, would be considered a major change requiring consultation with staff. Has the committee consulted with all staff, including you, about the need for the change and the ways to minimise the impact on employees? You have the right to be consulted over the change and to have your views taken into consideration. You may be able to suggest an alternative proposal to your employer, such as being redeployed into another role.

If, after consultation with staff, the committee decides to move ahead with the change and working part time is not suitable for you, you may be entitled to a redundancy from your full time role. You should contact your Union for advice on your options.

**Sherryl**

**To ask Sherryl a question email [ssaunders@qieu.asn.au](mailto:ssaunders@qieu.asn.au)**

## Dear Ros

The Long Service Leave Act 1955 (NSW) provides that for every year of service you accrue 0.8667 weeks of long service leave which may be taken after 10 years of service. The Act also states that it is to be taken in week 'lots'. Your employer would have to enter into a legally enforceable agreement, preferably in an enterprise agreement, that converts your long service leave accumulation from weeks to days. This would then allow you to take one day at a time.

**Lisa**

**To ask Lisa a question email [lisa@ieu.asn.au](mailto:lisa@ieu.asn.au)**



# BEDROCK GIVEAWAYS

Email entries to [giveaways@ieu.asn.au](mailto:giveaways@ieu.asn.au) with the giveaway you are entering in the subject line and your name, membership number and address in the body of the email. All entries to be received before 21 April



## The Universe has Your Back

**Author: Gabrielle Bernstein**

**Publisher: Hay House**

*Three copies to give away*

In her latest book, *The Universe Has Your Back*, New York Times best selling author Gabrielle Bernstein teaches readers how to transform their fear into faith in order to live a divinely guided life. Each story and lesson in the book guides listeners to release the blocks to what they most long for: happiness, security, and clear direction. The lessons help readers relinquish the need to control so they can relax into a sense of certainty and freedom. Readers will learn to stop chasing life and truly live. Making the shift from fear to faith will give listeners a sense of power in a world that all too often makes them feel utterly powerless. When the tragedies of the world seem overwhelming, this book will help guide them back to their true power.

## Little Rhymes for Little People

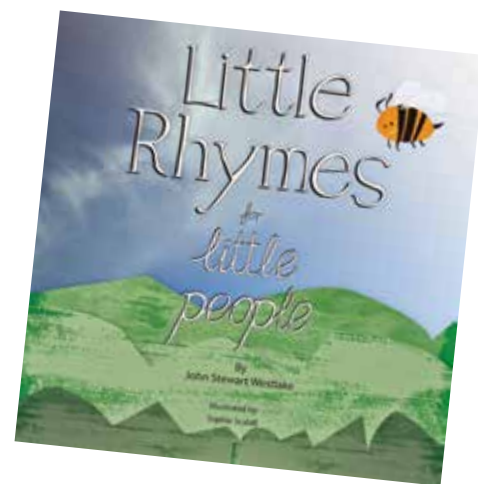
**Author: John Stewart Westlake; Illustrator: Sophie Scahill**

**Publisher: John Stewart Westlake**

*Three copies to give away*

In *Little Rhymes for Little People*, author John Stewart Westlake has crafted an enchanting collection of rhymes that aim to educate children about the different kinds of animals and other land and sea creatures.

The book, which features beautiful colour illustrations from Sophie Scahill, contains 21 illustrated rhymes, each one about a different kind of animal or sea creature. Children will be delighted and amused by the rhymes, and the illustrations create a unique world where they get to learn more about the animals that roam this earth.



## Steve Goes to Carnival

**Author and illustrator: Joshua Button and Robyn Wells**

**Publisher: Magabala Books**

*Three copies to give away*

Steve is a gorilla who lives at a zoo in Rio. In the evenings, he listens to jazz on the radio with his friend, Antonio the zookeeper. One night, Steve is feeling a little lonely and so he lifts the latch of his cage door and goes off to search for Antonio. At the tram stop outside the zoo, he finds a hat — the perfect disguise. Steve climbs aboard a tram and rides down the hillside, past the

favelas and into the city. It is carnival time in Rio! Fireworks explode in the sky and sequined dancers shimmy along the avenue. 'Feliz carnaval' cry the sambistas. Steve follows the sounds of a saxophone and discovers his friend Antonio playing in a quartet at the Blue Jaguar Jazz Club. When a beautiful dancer steps on to the dance floor, Steve takes her by the hand. They twirl and twist to the music until suddenly, Steve's hat falls off to reveal he is a gorilla! Calmly, the dancer puts Steve's hat back on his head and they spin this way and that way, this way and that way, all the way to dawn.



# your future, divided

On average, Australian women have  
just over half the super of men.\*

**Maybe it's time to change that?**

**[hesta.com.au/mindthegap](http://hesta.com.au/mindthegap)**