

BEDROCK

Vol 20 #2, June 2015

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Thumbs down for business health checks

P16



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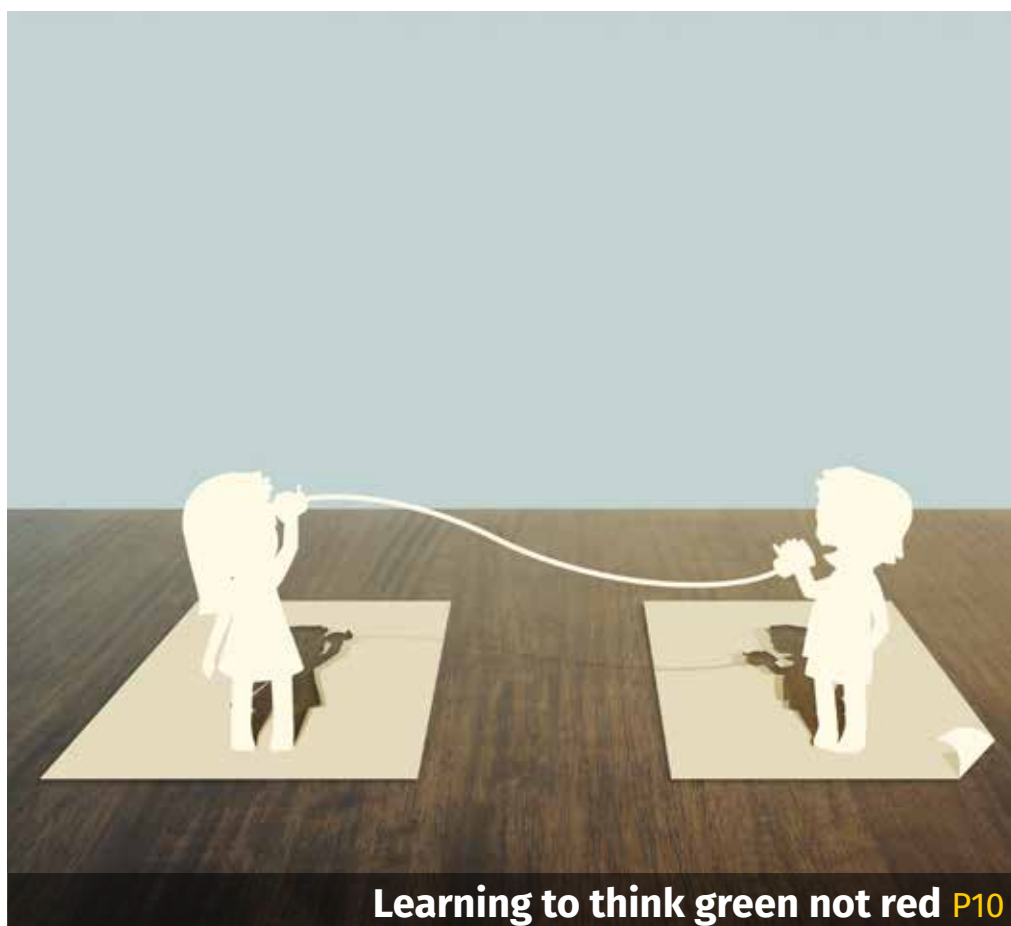
BEDROCK is published three
times per year by the NSW/ACT
and QLD Independent Education
Unions and has a circulation of
4,000. Intending subscribers and
advertisers are invited to direct
enquiries to Chris Ruddle at the
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Is a joint publication of
the NSW/ACT Independent
Education Union (NSW/ACT IEU)
and the Independent Education
Union of Australia - Queensland
and Northern Territory Branch.
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News in brief



Transition to school resource website

This practical website developed by Early Childhood Intervention Australia (NSW) includes specific information to help Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) professionals support families of children with disabilities to transition to school. The focus of this resource is upon the need for a community-wide, collaborative approach to transition to school, rather than placing an emphasis on children's school readiness skills. The Transition to School Resource includes practical tools such as: downloadable planning checklists, a concise template for sharing information about a child with the new school, a social story template,

sample visual supports, calming strategies, and examples of activities which can help prepare children for school. Information relevant to enrolling in all education sectors in NSW (independent, Catholic and public schools) is provided. www.transitiontoschoolresource.org.au



Register to vote

For the first time early childhood teachers in NSW are able to vote in the BOSTES Quality Teaching Council (QTC) elections. The QTC is the peak body that represents working teachers at BOSTES. It advises BOSTES about quality teaching initiatives

and accreditation policy. However, all early childhood teachers need to register to vote by 9 October. They can do this by following this link: <http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/about-us/quality-teaching-council-qtc/election-of-teacher-representatives/>



New technology links children to families around the world

Australia's most experienced early childhood education provider, KU Children's Services, has today announced a partnership with software innovators, Storypark, to introduce new software technology

Editorial – Budget short changes early childhood education



John Quessy

NSW ACT General Secretary



Terry Burke

QLD NT General Secretary

When selling this year's budget the Federal Government used its early childhood funding announcement as the main plank of its media campaign, garnering photo opportunities for its politicians with cute babies.

But there's smoke and mirrors at play here. The emphasis on 'childcare' as an economic tool to encourage women back into the workforce actually demeans the role of early childhood education and its teachers.

In our feature story on page 6 well known Early Childhood Consultant Lisa Bryant analyses what the budget really means for you, your family and the children in your care.

Time and again research has shown the importance of early childhood education in children's lives, yet this message keeps getting missed. In the long run, investing in teachers and early childhood education will benefit

the economy, because a good start in life reduces social problems down the track. A good early childhood education means people are less likely to be involved in crime, drugs and other social ills.

But that advantage would require politicians taking a long-range view, and they are not renowned for that skill.

So the fight goes on, and early childhood teachers and the IEU will continue to lobby for better recognition and financial support for the sector.

Lack of understanding in the sector by the NSW Government is also highlighted in our story on page 16, Business health check fails to ease ailments, which shows how the NSW Government has misunderstood the needs of preschools.

We look forward to your feedback. Contact us at bedrock@ieu.asn.au.

to childcare centres across the country. New to Australia, the Storypark platform allows parents and family members across the globe to connect with their children's early education experiences in real-time, ensuring they are kept up to date on their child's learning, while allowing ongoing feedback between educators and families. KU teachers will use the online system to document children's learning and share experiences with families by uploading photos, short videos, stories and news. Parents and family members are able to log in to a personalised account and will receive real-time notifications when at work, in transit or at home via their PC, tablet or Smartphone. The opportunity to respond to stories and experiences with suggestions and comments allows for deeper interactions and connections.

Qld member reaches 25-year milestone



Early childhood education members make an immeasurable contribution to the prosperity of our Union and continue to ensure our Union is a strong voice for employees in our sector. Every year, IEUA-QNT takes the opportunity to recognise a significant group of our membership: those who have been members for 25 years. For 25 year members in the early childhood sector, the intervening years have been a period of significant change in the sector. This year, Director at Yeronga Hyde Road Kindergarten, Helen Knaggs, marks 25 years of membership, and reflects on how the sector has changed over the years. Helen said there is more pressure and accountability now than in years gone by. "Before

the National Curriculum and Assessment process, a teacher could work in a kindergarten and teach what and how they wanted, provided it made the parents and affiliated consultants happy. That teacher and centre could survive in a little isolated bubble," Helen said. "Today, despite how happy parents may feel, teachers have to comply with a large number of external standards and regulations, some of which seem to change with the opinion of individual assessors, so we all feel less secure and rather vulnerable. The focus on documentation now is retrospective; you spend far more time writing up what you have done rather than designing what you plan to do, which seems to be an odd way to provide what is best for the child."



More than half of Queensland education and care services yet to receive Quality Rating

The latest Snapshot released by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) reports that only 47% of Queensland education and care services have received an NQF Quality Rating. The figure lags behind the national average of 52%. The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of rated services at 66%. The Snapshot reported that services are more likely to receive an 'Exceeding' or 'Meeting' rating in National Quality Standard (NQS) Areas: 4 - Staffing arrangements, 5 - Relationships with children and 6 - Partnerships with families and communities. In contrast, services are less likely to meet the NQS in Areas: 1 - Educational program and practice, 2 - Children's health and safety, 3 - Physical environment and 7 - Leadership and service management. The ACECQA Snapshot is released quarterly to monitor implementation progress of the National Quality Framework, which was introduced in 2012.



Dear Lisa,

I have recently been offered a position as a part-time teacher. My contract states that by signing the employment agreement I am agreeing to work up to 10 hours a day at ordinary rates. It says this arrangement can only be changed by mutual agreement. I am a bit unsure about this. Do I have to sign the employment agreement to start work?

Mary

Dear Mary,

If you sign your contract there is an assumption that you have agreed to work 10 hour days. However the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award* is quite clear on this issue. In Clause B4.1(b) it states: No part time employee may work in excess of eight hours in any day without the payment of overtime. The only way that your employer could ask you to work 10 hour days without the payment of overtime is through an 'Individual Flexibility Agreement'. If you were to enter into such an agreement, it must be in writing, dated and must specify exactly the clauses of the award that are to be varied and most importantly it must state how you would be better off over all if you enter such an agreement and how you can terminate such an agreement.

Without such an agreement your employer must pay you.

This means your employer must pay you overtime for all work over eight hours in a day unless you agree to be paid your normal rate of pay. I advise you to explain that you want to retain your entitlement to overtime to your new employer and request that any reference to ordinary rates of pay being applicable beyond eight hours a day be removed from the employment agreement before you sign it.

Kind regards,

Lisa

Budget breakdown

The more things change, the more they stay the same

“\$3.5 billion more for childcare!” That’s what the headlines in the newspapers read in the lead up to, and after, the Federal Budget, Early Childhood Consultant Lisa Bryant writes.

It was hard to turn on a TV news show without seeing a politician with children at a service – whether it was Scott Morrison doing the ‘Wombat Wobble’ or children looking somewhat uncomfortable around the Prime Minister.

But what does it all really mean for educator and care services and for early childhood teachers? Will it make things easier? Will fees reduce for parents? Does it really represent a major ‘child care’ overhaul?

Let’s look at what the main changes are first and then we can examine their impact.

A new single child care subsidy

This is the major change. From July 2017 (yes, two years ahead) existing payments like Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) will be combined into one new payment – the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). (By the way, get used to having to decode a lot of new acronyms).

The Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to services through the Child Care Management System (CCMS). Families will no longer be able to opt to have it paid to them.

The Child Care Subsidy will be based on a mean benchmark cost varying for different service types. The Registered Child Care Benefit category (used by preschool parents) will no longer exist.

Families will be subject to an activity test. Families essentially will be able to receive access to more

subsidised childcare the more they work, study, train or volunteer.

The Child Care Subsidy will replace the existing CCB and CCR so only services which are eligible to receive these on behalf of families will be eligible. Sorry NSW preschools!

A child care safety net

This is the section which will impact education and care services. It consists of three components – an Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS), and Inclusion Support Program (ISP) and a Community Child Care Fund (CCCF).

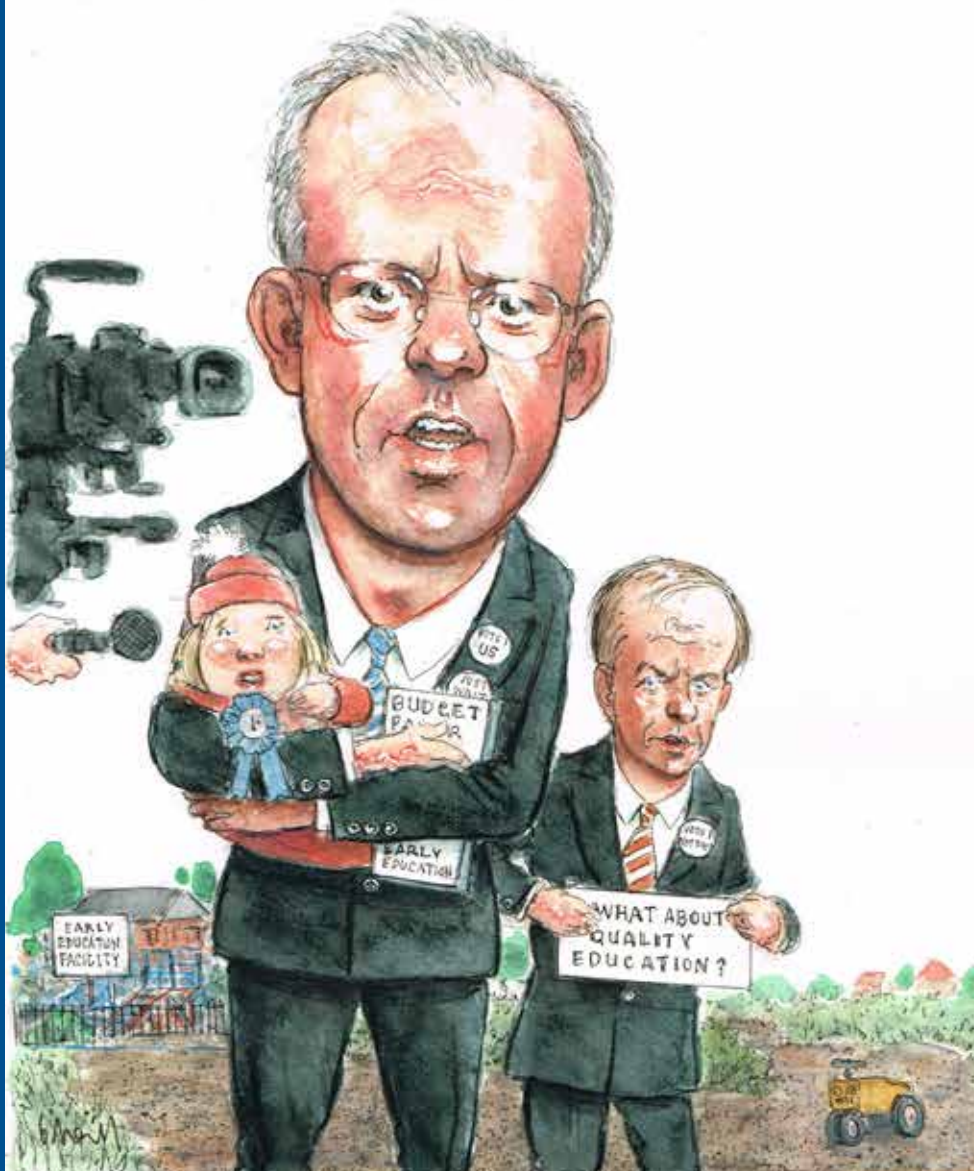
Additional Child Care Subsidy

This starts in July 2017 and is similar to the Special CCB but is only for children at risk, families with temporary income drops and families coming off benefits. Periods of benefits are shorter (for children at risk it is six weeks then additional 13-week periods, for others a maximum of 13 weeks) and some categories appear to be removed eg Grandparent Child Care Benefit.

Inclusion Support Program

This starts in July 2016 and is similar to the old Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) and will have a subsidy for services to employ an additional worker to assist inclusion of children with extra needs (Inclusion Support Subsidy?) bicultural support, specialist equipment and access to “practical inclusion advice and support” – it is not clear if this means the Inclusion Support Agencies will be retained. It appears as if funded professional development has been removed, which will obviously impact on early childhood teachers greatly.

“The lack of anything to ensure pay parity? This is a package called Jobs for Families. What, other than the fact that you are in a job and may well have a family you are trying to support on a unjustly small wage, made you think this new package may have good news for you in this area?”



Community Child Care Fund

This starts in July 2017 and is similar to the old Community Support Program but is based on a competitive grant program where services will apply for additional funds to address barriers for disadvantaged children, to help services be viable in areas where they otherwise wouldn't be, to help reduce fees for low income families in areas like Sydney and to develop new centres and mobile services. With the start of this program services receiving funding for operational and sustainability support under the Community Support Program will face changes.

A nanny trial

This won't affect education and care services that much (4000 nannies, 10,000 children across Australia). Nannies do have to be linked to an approved provider so some long day care services, family day care services or in-home care services may be involved in the program this way. Interestingly nannies will not need any qualification other than first aid. (After all, looking after children is just babysitting, right? Why does one need a qualification for this?)

Universal Access funding extended for two years

The Universal Access funding from the Commonwealth to the states has been extended for another two years till the end of 2017.

Impact on children and families

The Abbott Government believes that making these changes will make childcare more affordable and less complicated. Critics have already pointed out that it does little to make childcare more accessible. There is no doubt that the existing CCB/CCR system was complicated. Because the new subsidy does not come in until 2017, (and there is an election due before then) relief for families in the way of higher subsidies will not happen immediately.

There are two main concerns about the impact of the entire package on children and families. The first is the clear separation of education and care. The Universal Access Program has remained with the Commonwealth Department of Education, whereas all else 'childcare' related is now with the Department of Social Services. Whereas the previous government worked to pull together early childhood education and care and reduce the divide between them, the current government is embedding it.



The second concern is about access of vulnerable children to childcare/early education and care. Access to subsidised childcare at all will now depend on families passing an activity test. Although there are exemptions (families earning under \$65,000 per year and families whose children have been identified as at risk of harm) it is possible that some vulnerable children will miss out on access. Early childhood teachers are aware of the benefits of early education for children who have not yet been formally declared at risk as well as other children who for a range of reasons may not have parents who are working or studying. Tying children's access to early education to their parents' employment status further entrenches the idea that early education is not a child's right but merely something that enables children to be safely stored whilst their parents are otherwise engaged. Provision of universal access to early education and care is the only way to ensure vulnerable children benefit.

Organisations such as The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) are concerned about the impact of the changes on Aboriginal services currently funded through the Budget Based Funding program. These services will be expected to transition to the mainstream Child Care Subsidy – which they believe will result in funding shortfalls and consequent funding cuts for many services.

Impact on services

The impact on services will be varied. Indications are that the new inclusion support funding may be at a higher rate than previously (up to the rate of a Certificate III qualified educator). If so, this is clearly a good thing.

The changes to existing programs feels a bit like 'here we go again'. So often in this sector changes mean new rules, new guidelines etc to essentially do the same things.

Services will always need extra funding outside of the parental subsidy system to include children with additional needs and to include CALD children. There will always be a need for extra funding for services, who because of what the government calls 'thin markets' (eg they are in small towns or have fluctuating populations) cannot survive on parental subsidies alone. How we fund these things and the programs that these needs fall under however keeps changing. There is never enough money provided to do the job required.

The new subsidy for families is supposed to be more generous than existing subsidies. (This is where the additional \$3.5 billion comes in). But it is also expected

by the government to put a downwards pressure on childcare fees. By basing the subsidy on a benchmark fee, will the gap between actual fees and the subsidy grow over time? Will services be forced to keep fees low (and thus keep fees affordable? What will the impact of this be on service delivery?

Impact on teachers

The three main impacts on early childhood teachers are status and standing issues, possible reduced access to funded professional development and the lack of a skerrick of anything to ensure a trajectory for pay parity.

A government that considers there is a key difference between early education and care, would seem to have some respect for early childhood teachers. But by separating education and care it perpetuates the myth that educators and teachers in some service types (eg long day care services) are merely babysitting children.

The loss of access to funded professional development will cut deeply into teachers and services pay packets.

The lack of anything to ensure pay parity? This is a package called Jobs for Families. What, other than the fact that you are in a job and may well have a family you are trying to support on a unjustly small wage, made you think this new package may have good news for you in this area?

Round up

Professor Edward Melhuish from Oxford University said on ABC's *Lateline* a few weeks ago that our system was "equivalent to the child care system in the UK 25 years ago and what we would have seen in other countries several decades ago".

Additional investment in 'childcare' is always nice, but with the majority going to parental subsidies, it is hard to see how this package will bring our education and care system up to what is required in this century and to what other countries now have.

Overly negative? You only have to look at the fact that compared to other OECD countries, Australia spends the least on early education to know that a minor increase in parental subsidies is just not going to do the job required.

What's your reaction to the Federal Budget and will it affect your service and your career? We'd love to hear from you. Contact us via email: bedrock@ieu.asn.au or facebook: www.facebook.com/ieunswact.

Determination pays off



“I don’t mind being fed, but I can feed myself. I can’t get back time I’ll be spending at work away from my family . . . I’m worth more than half a Subway sandwich.”

Teacher Gertrudes Mitchell has achieved better working conditions for herself and all her colleagues with a bit of determination and help from her Union writes *Bedrock* Journalist Sue Osborne.

Returning to work after a seven-year break to raise her children, Gertrudes landed a job with an early childhood provider run by a business group in regional NSW.

“I was given a contract to work five days a week, 37.5 hours, but I was classified as part time on the contract,” Gertrudes said.

“This didn’t sit well with me and I asked the boss about it but she said everybody was classed as part time,” she said.

“I’d been out of the workforce for seven years so I thought maybe this was common.

“But it still worried me so I checked against my award, and I thought I ought to be full time. The award stated part time was less than 90% of full time hours, which were 38 per week.”

At this point Gertrudes contacted her IEU Organiser to check that her thinking was correct.

Her organiser suggested she send an email to her employers with the relevant section of the award attached.

The employers replied and said if Gertrudes wanted to be classified as full time, she must work 38 hours a week, an extra half an hour a week, which she agreed to.

‘Being part time meant that with four weeks notice my hours could be changed. Getting changed to two days a week did not work for my family. I wanted more certainty.’

At the same time Gertrudes’ employer was holding regular staff meetings outside normal working hours, usually 6pm to 7.30pm or 8pm. The staff meetings were not paid for and were not deemed ‘compulsory’. Staff were offered dinner.

“At first I was a ‘keen bean’ willing to go to all the meetings, but then I went back to my award and checked with my organiser what my rights were.

“We agreed I should be entitled to time in lieu or paid overtime for those meetings.

“I don’t mind being fed, but I can feed myself. I can’t get back time I’ll be spending at work away from my family.

“It did cause me some stress not going to the meetings, as I wanted to be a team player. But I would not be emotionally blackmailed.

“All those poor childcare workers that earn even less than me were attending the meetings and getting

Subway. I’m worth more than half a Subway sandwich. I get paid more per hour than that.”

Gertrudes watched a staff training video in which the business’ CEO said “staff were the company’s biggest asset”.

She decided to write to him about the unpaid overtime issue.

“I ran the email past my organiser again to make sure I wasn’t doing anything illegal or being rude before I sent it.”

The following Monday the signage advertising the next staff meeting was changed to say the meeting was compulsory, and a policy stating that all staff meetings attracted time in lieu was posted on the company intranet.

“I’m not sure I could have pulled all this off without Union support because I would not have been sure of myself,” Gertrudes said.

“I’ve heard staff saying they are not sure if they will get the time in lieu. If they were familiar with their award or joined their Union and talked to them, they would know that if they don’t get time in lieu within four weeks of the meeting they should be paid overtime instead.

“I was able to move forward because I knew I could call the Union and they would get back to me quickly on these issues.”

Learning to think green not red

A professional development opportunity for teachers in the early years is giving children strategies to build the social skills and emotional wellbeing necessary to assist them to flourish and become more resilient. Bedrock Journalist Fiona Stutz looks at the Fun Friends program and the important role educators play in introducing resilience into a child's life.

The Pathways to Resilience Trust is a charitable organisation in Queensland whose aim is to promote social and emotional learning and resilience in children through education and working with centres and schools to implement social and emotional learning programs. The Trust offers a suite of programs to assist in teaching cognitive, behavioural and emotional skills in a simple, structured format. Educators in early childhood settings are utilising the Fun Friends program to help four to seven year olds increase social-emotional competence and resilience while decreasing and preventing worry and emotional distress.

Training manager James Ryan works with teachers to help them better deliver resilience programs to children. James said most centres and schools approach the Trust once they realise children need to be resilient, or socially and emotionally intelligent. Once they have established what is needed in the centre or school, what has been tried, what has worked and has not worked, employees can be educated on the basics of neuroscience and emotions, then trained to run programs such as the Fun Friends program.

Early intervention

The Trust's website claims that research shows that as many as 20% of preschool age children already exhibit moderate to clinical levels of emotional and behavioural disturbance, indicating the importance of early intervention. Fun Friends aims to prevent the onset of later life emotional and behavioural difficulties. Skills taught in Fun Friends include: building a sense of identity, how to relax and self-soothe, social skills, recognising and regulating emotions in self and others, how to be kind, empathic and make friends, how to be brave and try new things and positive coping strategies, including positive 'green' thinking.

The Trust works with the children and teachers to practice then runs the resilience program with the option of adding further professional development.

"The first session of Fun Friends is about understanding, looking at how we are going to attach this child to the classroom, and to the group of children within them. It is about belonging and

connecting – that's the foundation of it all. Good teaching is always rested on good attachment, trust, and building wonderful relationships," he said.

However, the program also goes similarity into differences; the development of empathy, how we are the same, and how we are different.

"If kids don't understand that even though our skin is a different colour, we all feel hurt, angry or sad, then we have that sense of empathy is developed, which is so important."

"Good teaching is always rested on good attachment, trust, and building wonderful relationships."



The second session deals with feelings and helping children understand, build a vocabulary about feelings and learn how to be smart with emotions.

“First of all you have to identify your emotions. Looking at where you feel different feelings in the body – we call them body clues. Then it goes into exploring feelings in ourselves, other people – how do you recognise what a feeling is in somebody else? You might see it in their facial expressions and so forth.”

The cognitive behaviour aspect is also explored in the program, and includes the concept of ‘red and green thinking’.

Helpful thoughts

“Red symbolises thinking that is unhelpful, and green symbolises thinking that is more helpful. If you want to feel a bit more confident, happy and connected to your friends, if you want to stay in the part of your brain that awards for problem solving, then you will need to think in a more helpful way.

“Red thoughts aren’t bad, but they take you in a different direction. You are not going to feel confident or pleasant on the inside if you have unhelpful thoughts. It’s not about judgement; it’s about taking the stigma of judgement away from unhelpful thoughts and negative feelings.”

‘Step plans’ are also looked at in their program, where you learn to break anything challenging down into more manageable steps, he said.

The Trust works closely with teachers to implement these strategies to the children and coach them through it.

“Some teachers will grab ‘red and green’ thinking and use that as a stick to beat the kids around the head with; you know ‘you’re having unhelpful thoughts get out of that, what are you doing? That’s wrong.’ Therefore we have to fine tune a bit and mentor.

“When you look at program implementation, even if a program is evidence-based, unless it’s actually

implemented with support, its only 5% effective. If you give the people that you’re helping to run the program support, it’s 85% successful. Support is so important. You can’t just deliver one day’s training and expect educators to get it and be able to run it with any sort of fidelity,” James said.

Professional development by the Trust is provided for teachers; once complete, they can chose to continue to receive support or start implementing practices on their own, he said. Training encompasses:

Early Years Learning Framework

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

National Quality Standard Elements

Area 2: Children’s health and safety

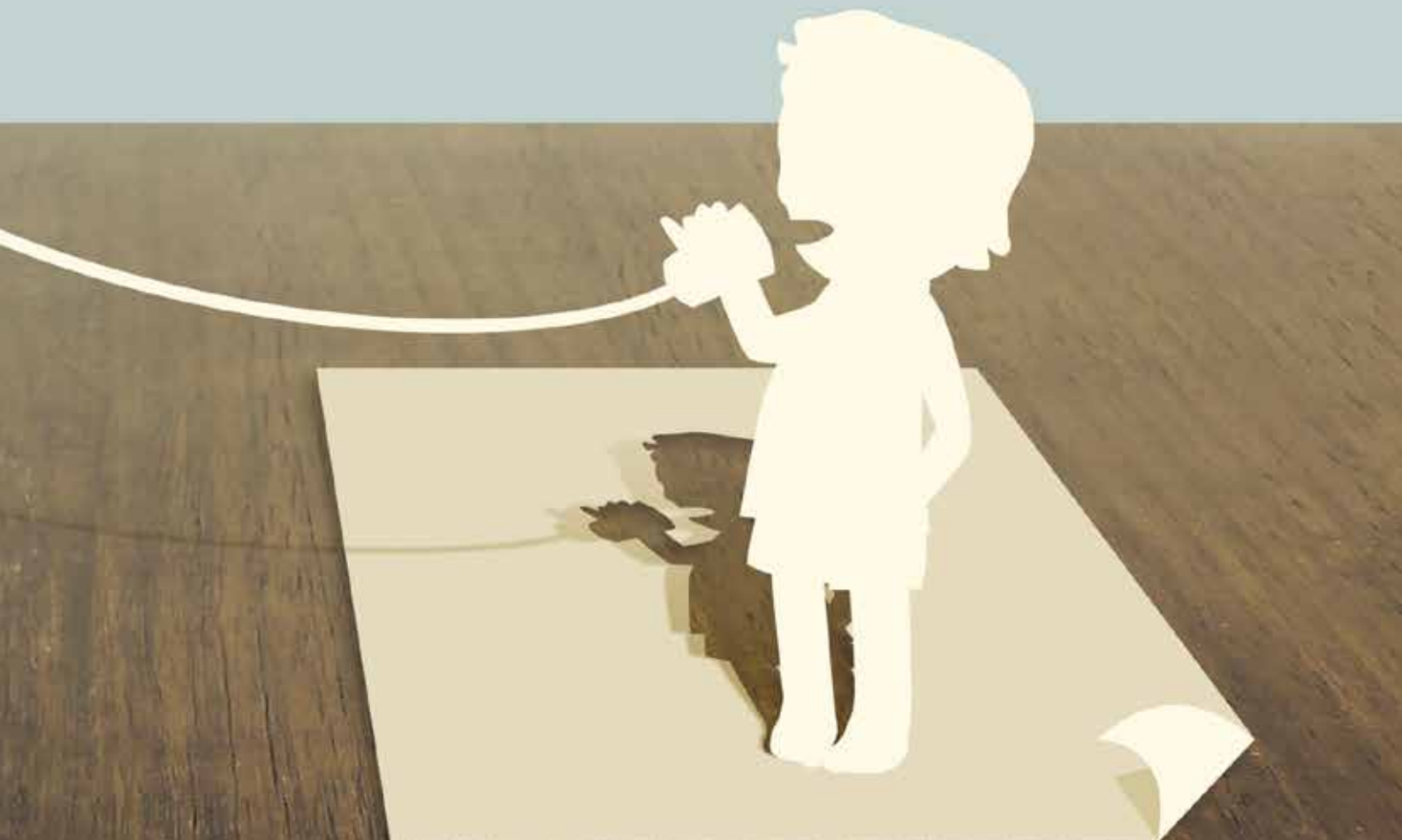
Area 4: Staffing arrangements

Area 5: Relationships with children

For more information on the program or the Pathways to Resilience Trust, visit <http://www.pathwaystoresilience.org/>

What is resilience?

Resilience refers to a person’s ability to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, and to achieve good outcomes regardless of life events, circumstances or background. According to the Trust’s website, research shows that resilient children are happier, do better at school, have increased confidence, form good relationships, show fewer behavioural problems, take on and persist with challenging tasks, and are more able to communicate effectively.



Fish in water or fish out of water – cultural competence, reconciliation and reflective practice

It can be easy to quickly identify differences between your own culture and another's (think food, language, dress, celebrations etc) but when it comes to understanding the less visible aspects it's more challenging to understand how our culturally tinted glasses affect our perceptions and interactions.

Rhonda Livingstone (pictured), National Education Leader at Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) recently unpacked culture, cultural competence and how to deepen your own cultural competence at Early Childhood Australia's Reconciliation Symposium. *Bedrock* Journalist Suzanne Kowalski-Roth caught up with Rhonda to find out more.

Suzanne: What is culture exactly?

Rhonda: The concept of culture is described beautifully in the Aboriginal Cultural Competency Framework 2008. It says: "Culture is to people as water is to fish – we take our own culture for granted as it is part of our identity and part of our every being".

I find it helpful to define culture as 'a system of social rules of interaction that helps us to act in an accepted and familiar way'.

The Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework

recognises the central role of culture in our identity and calls it the "fundamental building block of identity". The development of a strong cultural identity is essential to children's healthy sense of who they are and where they belong.

Suzanne: How would you define cultural competence?

Rhonda: Cultural competence is more than acknowledgement of cultural diversity in our community. It's one of the eight pedagogical practices identified in the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care. As described in the approved learning frameworks cultural competence involves:

- being aware of your own world view
- developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views, and
- developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures.

As teachers we need to constantly reflect on how our

practice is influenced by our own world views.

Cultural competence

requires us to become aware of them and to move beyond our own experiences and examine our practices so that no child is disadvantaged. It also includes fostering a respect within children for diversity and helping them to become culturally competent themselves.

Suzanne: What do you understand reconciliation to mean?

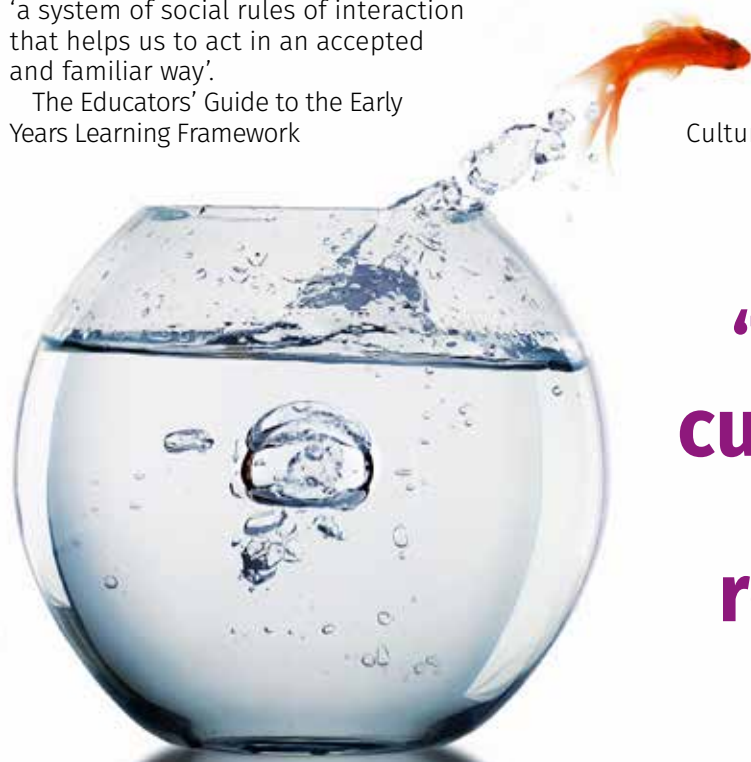
Rhonda: In a general sense it means 'restore friendly relations with'. In Australia reconciliation is about bringing together Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non Indigenous Australians. It is an ongoing journey for each of us, for organisations and Australia.

As teachers we have the potential to make a significant difference in National Reconciliation through programs, practices, advocacy and most importantly relationships.

Suzanne: What role do early childhood teachers and educators have to play in reconciliation?

Rhonda: This quote from Nina Burridge from the book *Teaching Aboriginal Studies* by Rhonda Craven rings true for me: "Education is the medium through which young minds can be encouraged to think

'Teachers who are culturally competent will welcome reflective practice'





critically about history, to respect the diversities of cultures in our neighbourhoods and to learn to treat each other with respect. Teachers and educators are a crucial link between the rhetoric of reconciliation and the reality of the vision fulfilled”.

There is a significant gap in advantage between Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non Indigenous people across the areas of life expectancy, health, education, economic wellbeing, social justice and mental health. Closing the Gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non Indigenous children is a commitment made by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The approved learning frameworks give us guidance about opportunities for teachers to assist in closing the gap in educational achievement.

Suzanne: How can services engage authentically in raising cultural competence?

Rhonda: I sometimes hear teachers say ‘but we don’t have Indigenous children attending the service’. Moving beyond tokenistic approaches, the NQF promotes the notion of culturally competent teachers who:

- challenge discriminatory viewpoints of other educators and of children and explore where these understanding have come from
- adapt curriculum to the individual ideas, interests and culture of each child by consulting with families
- use resources that are culturally relevant and are mindful of literature which may contain bias, and
- engage in open conversations about diversity and difference. Interestingly research shows that:
- children as young as three years old and sometimes earlier can show prejudiced behaviour and attitudes.

Children are affected by the attitudes and behaviours of adults around them, and educating children reduces discrimination and violence in society over the long term.

Suzanne: What does a culturally competent teacher look like?

Rhonda: Teachers who are culturally competent will welcome reflective practice, a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. This involves:

- reflecting on your own personal biases
- examining and rethinking your perspectives
- questioning whether your perspectives generalise
- engaging in professional conversations with colleagues, and
- using the reflective questions in the learning frameworks, for example ‘who is disadvantaged when I work in this way’?



Best practice case study

The Jindi Woraback Children’s Centre has developed a partnership with the Moondani Bullak Indigenous Studies Unit at Victoria University, helping the service embed a respectful and authentic Indigenous program into everyday practice.

This program of art, stories, songs, dance, music and visits from local Aboriginal groups and individuals, promotes and sustains family and child connection to land and country through links to Australian Indigenous heritage.

Staff from Indigenous Studies Units share the creation stories of the local Kulin Nation with educators and children. The service regularly celebrates its Indigenous roots by inviting a Yorta Yorta woman from the Indigenous Studies Unit to perform smoking ceremonies to show respect for the spirits of the land.

Children’s experience of these events is not limited to special occasions, but is extended into children’s everyday learning.

Children visit the local Indigenous Garden (called Iramoo Field Station) where they hear stories about how the land and animals began. The children explore the grasslands, wetlands and the Indigenous plant nursery, where teachers teach the children the names of native plants and their uses for healing, cooking and creating art and craft. They explore Indigenous ways of being and belonging in dramatic play and discuss the importance of culture, family and the ways everyone celebrates their difference.

Resources

Early Childhood Australia
Reconciliation Resources
<http://bit.ly/1bhzyLv>

Cultural Competence in Early Childhood Education and Care
Services SNAICC Consultation Overview <http://bit.ly/1IOAJ0x>

Children’s Services Central
- Engaging with Aboriginal Communities: Where do we start?
<http://bit.ly/1IOAJ0x>

ACECQA We hear you blog: What does it mean to be culturally competent? <http://bit.ly/1GIuyLv>



How to prevent and report child abuse

Queensland early childhood teachers are well placed to report suspected instances of child harm. However, many educators are unaware of the legal and reporting frameworks in place, *Bedrock* Journalist Elise Cuthbertson writes.

In some states, there is no legal requirement for early childhood education services or their staff to report incidents of suspected child harm or abuse that are occurring outside the service. However, the overwhelming majority of child abuse takes place inside private residences.

Early childhood teachers, given their regular day to day interaction with children, are urged to report suspected incidents of child harm or abuse. Child protection laws enable any person to report such suspicions and protect any person making a report from liability, including defamation.

How to report suspect child harm or abuse

For children that teachers suspect to be in immediate or

life threatening danger, teachers should contact emergency services by dialling Triple Zero.

For non life threatening instances of suspected child harm or abuse, teachers should make contact with their relevant state department responsible for child safety.

How to recognise and document suspected child harm or abuse

Warning signs that a child may be experiencing harm or abuse can be emotional and/or physical. Emotional behavioural warning signs may include: distrust of adults, behaviours like rocking, sucking or biting excessively or wetting or soiling the bed. Physical warning signs may include the child being seemingly accident prone and the presence of unexplained injuries such as welts, burns or bruising. The Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability has issued advice about how teachers can recognise and document the warning signs that a child may be experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, abuse or harm.

If you suspect a child has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, it is important to:

- be alert to any warning signs
- observe the child and make written notes as soon as you begin to have concerns—pay attention to changes in their behaviour, ideas, feelings and the words they use
- have gentle, non-judgmental discussions with the child
- not pressure the child to respond and not ask questions that put words into a child's mouth
- assure the child they can come and talk to you when they need to, and
- contact the relevant department for expert advice.

Spotlight on prevention

Protective education programs are an important step in preventing child harm and abuse. Such programs place emphasis on establishing a safe culture for children and adults by encouraging communication and ensuring children are supported when they feel unsafe.

Holly-ann Martin (pictured) is the Founder and Managing Director of Safe4Kids, an organisation supporting child abuse prevention through training in protective education programs. Holly-ann worked as a teacher assistant educating children with special needs for 25 years before founding Safe4Kids.

Holly-ann recently launched a protective education program tailored for the early years and said it's critical for children to learn these skills as early as possible.

The 10-week program is linked to the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Framework and aims to provide educators with the tools to educate and empower children around abuse prevention.

"The program is centred on a 10-week lesson plan for teachers which includes activities for every day in the week. That way, children who may only be at the centre one or two days per week will still benefit from the program," Holly-ann said.

Holly-ann said that the program is structured but allows plenty of room for teachers to get creative and adapt the concepts to suit their particular needs. The program also encourages parents to become involved.

"The program includes a pre-written newsletter to send to parents at the beginning of each week, explaining the focus of the week and giving them an activity to complete at home. It can be difficult to get parents to attend workshops so this is a great way to help parents reinforce the concepts at home."

Persistence and language

Holly-ann said two key concepts are at the heart of the program: persistence and language.

"Children need to be persistent in addressing abusive behaviour because research shows children have to tell at least three people that they are being abused before they are believed. We need to give children the tools and ability to be persistent," Holly-ann said.

"Language is also a huge part of this. Children need to be taught to use correct anatomical names for their private body parts. If children are not using the correct terminology, it's going to be that much harder for them to be understood.

"If we can start children off with these really good strategies and an understanding of the concepts of safe and unsafe, of public and private, then we will give them the knowledge and vocabulary they need to identify and report abusive behaviour."



"Children need to be persistent in addressing abusive behaviour because research shows children have to tell at least three people that they are being abused before they are believed."

Holly-ann hopes that the 10-week program will provide educators with the tools they need to embed protective education in their professional practice.

"It's about having a common language and being able to use it in every day practice. Our hope is that the program gives educators skills that can be used in any learning activity.

"For example, every book you read to a child has the potential to be a protective education exercise. You can talk about how Little Red Riding

Hood experienced early warning signs or the Hungry Caterpillar showed persistence.

"We want to give educators a really good background that becomes part of their internalised language so it's not something extra to be done but rather a part of their professional practice."

The Safe4Kids early years protective education program and many other resources are available at www.safe4kids.com.au.

Safe4Kids 10-week protective education program for the early years

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Week 1 | Safe and Unsafe and "We all have the right to feel safe all of the time" |
| Week 2 | Yes or Safe Touches and No or Unsafe Touches |
| Week 3 | Feelings |
| Week 4 | Early Warning Signs, and Dobbing versus Telling |
| Week 5 | Risking on Purpose |
| Week 6 | Safety Team and "We can talk with someone about anything" |
| Week 7 | Persistence in Telling |
| Week 8 | Public and Private |
| Week 9 | Assertiveness: Saying 'No'. Personal Space and Strangers |
| Week 10 | Secrets |



Business health check fails to ease ailments

The business health check, stage one of the operational support program offered to preschools on transitional funding, is getting a poor report card from directors who have experienced it, *Bedrock* Journalist Sue Osborne writes.

The NSW Government scheme aims to assist preschools find ways to improve their business plans to adjust to the new funding model introduced following the Review of NSW Government Funding for early Childhood Education by Professor Deborah Brennan in 2012.

However, directors are reporting they are spending hours explaining how preschools run to business advisors with no background in the early childhood sector.

Funded by the State Government, each preschool is assigned a business advisor from the area's business enterprise centre, who comes and visits and then writes a report. This is stage one of a two-stage plan which continues into 2016.

The transitional funding for preschools runs out in 2017, and many directors fear they will still be unviable, despite the intervention.

"Really it is just a bit of PR covering up the fact the funding model is unsustainable," St Stephen's Preschool Director and IEU ECS Council member Ariane Simon said.

"It's an enormous waste of time," she said.

Understanding change

West Albury Preschool Director Jennie Kelly said she was not sure if the program was compulsory or not, but felt that if she did not participate, it might not be well regarded by the Government.

Ariane also said if she didn't participate "it could be interpreted that we didn't care about the future of preschools".

Jennie said: "The advisor who came to us had no understanding of preschools, and did not understand the implications of the funding changes like we do. We had to educate him. He might know about business but he doesn't know about preschools. We didn't get one useful thing out of it.

"I was particularly concerned by the suggestion that we review employment contracts for part-time staff. When I asked what was meant by this suggestion, I was told that it makes sense to review staffing as it is our greatest expense, to try to get the best fit for the funding model".

Jennie said the foundation of the funding model, the Social Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) was flawed and led to preschools quite close to each other receiving hugely disparate funding levels from government.



“The advisor who came to us had no understanding of preschools, and did not understand the implications of the funding changes like we do.”



Ariane Simon, St Stephen's Preschool.

“One preschool could be getting \$2000 per child and another \$4000 in the same area, which makes it hard to compete,” she said.

“The crux of the problem is that the people who really know how things work, the directors and management committees, are never consulted by the Government.

“The Brennan Review was well intentioned - access and equity for all NSW children. The resulting impact from the Department’s new Funding Model has resulted in NSW having a preschool system that is in complete disarray and far from accessible and equitable for all children. Fees range throughout the state from around \$8 per day up to \$85 per day, a situation that does not exist in any other Australian state. This is definitely not equity! It is also distressing that despite constant feedback from services, it is falling on deaf ears.”

Specialists engaged

A spokesman for the NSW Education Department said the Operational Support Program assists community preschools during transition to the new Preschool Funding Model.

“The Department is working with the NSW Department of Trade and Investment, which is delivering the first stage of the program – provision of general business advice from

a local Small Biz Connect advisor,” the spokesman said.

“For Stage 2, the Department has engaged three early childhood education sector specialists to work with community preschools and provide customised, specialised sector-specific advice and mentoring,” he said.

“This stage focuses on integrating educational objectives with effective business practice to help preschools meet the objectives of universal access to preschools and creating a sustainable sector.

“The Department has an early childhood education and care reference group comprising representatives from the sector including the IEU.

“The Department will share the feedback on Stage 1 of the project with the Department of Trade and Investment.

“It is anticipated that a client experience survey will be conducted at the end of Stage 1 and at the end of Stage 2.

“Most feedback to date indicates that the vast majority of preschools are benefitting from the program.”

No savings

Ariane, whose centre is in north west Sydney, said: “The advisors reported they could find no savings in our business model . . . marketing is our only tool but no one can afford to come anyway.



Melinda Gambley, Clunes Preschool.

“The real issue is that the funding model is flawed for rural and regional areas anyway.”

“They said the government’s funding model was unsustainable.

“We’re losing \$5000 next year and \$5000 the year after that. We’re not unviable yet but that’s due to good management.

“The only way we can remain viable is to lower the quality of our staff. We have highly experienced qualified staff and we are working towards pay parity.

“This is our strong point. Preschools are focal parts of the community and if it gets out that they are paying staff as casuals or paying poorly it will be bad for them.”

Ariane said she was not looking forward to stage two, as it looked like it would be even more time consuming, and unlikely to lead to any answers.

“We’ll go through all that but if there’s no more money nothing is going to change.”

Hard to compete

Clunes Preschool Director, IEU ECS Council and Northern Rivers Preschool Alliance* member Melinda Gambley also felt obliged to participate in the scheme because she was concerned refusal might jeopardise future funding opportunities.

Melinda said she felt as if she had to push the whole thing forward herself, contacting her business advisor to make an appointment and then, with her administrative officer, spending two hours answering a questionnaire about preschools.

“They had no idea how preschool funding works,” Melinda said.

“The real issue is that the funding model is flawed for rural and regional areas anyway. We have lower populations and there just aren’t enough four-year-olds for us to enrol.

“Preschools that are quite close together are able to offer different fee levels which makes it hard to compete.”

Melinda fears some preschools won’t survive after 2017.

After spending two sessions with her business adviser Melinda said she had to chase up her report which contained a long list of actions she was meant to carry out.

The report highlighted the long serving staff at the centre as a bonus, but did not offer any advice on how to keep paying them.

“Here we are scrapping for money at preschools and here’s the Government wasting money on small business advisors. That money could have been better spent coming straight to preschools.

“This is just skirting around the real issues.”

Waste of time

Mulwala Preschool Director Liz Jessup similarly found the program time consuming and unproductive.

“At the end of the day, if we haven’t got the children we can’t increase our income. Where are we going to get them from?” Liz said.

“We’re right on the border with Victoria and parents can take their children there, where there are no fees. How can we compete with that?

“The advisor recommended that we duplicate our records and store them off site. I couldn’t make him understand that that was time consuming for us to actually do.

“He said our clerical officer could do it. She works one and a half days a week. I don’t know how storing records off site will save us money anyway.

“I believe he was getting \$150 an hour and travelling two and a half hours to get to us, yet knew nothing about preschools.

“He was surprised to find out staff spend a lot of time on ‘parenting’ duties like toilet training. He thought it would be more like a school.

“It’s just a shame to spend so much money on this sort of thing rather than give it to the preschools directly.”

*The Northern Rivers Preschool Alliance is a grassroots organisation of local directors of community preschools that meets online and face to face. For more details see www.facebook.com/northernriverspreschoolalliance or email northernriversalliance@gmail.com.



Leadership training benefits Indigenous children

An Indigenous professional development project is promoting pedagogical leadership and peer mentoring as pivotal in supporting the understanding and use of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Indigenous teachers.

The Remote Indigenous Professional Development (RIPD) project promotes the use of EYLF in early childhood education and care services that cater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote and rural areas of Queensland. Funded by the Australian Government and managed by the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE), the project aims to meet the learning needs of entry level teachers as they build on their understanding and implementation of the EYLF.

The project, which commenced in 2012, is delivered as a series of professional development workshops and is facilitated predominantly by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood teaching experts, known as Pedagogical Leaders, who have extensive experience teaching in remote areas of Queensland.

Workshops include site visits and practical activities using a custom-made kit of teaching resources that participants take back to their

centre. In each program, Pedagogical Leaders use the RIPD package to work with participants to plan for, reflect on, and document ways to improve learning outcomes for young children.

Services that have taken up the RIPD opportunity are already feeling the benefits of the learning that took place in past workshops. Director of Kutjala Playgroup and Kindergarten in Charters Towers, Kerry Halloran, has previously sent centre assistants to the Townsville RIPD. Kerry said she was enthusiastic about the impact of the workshop on her employees.

"I've noticed a lot of changes in their practice and the way they do their activities. They're using the kit to try and address the individual needs of the children and to come up with better ways to deal with challenging kids."

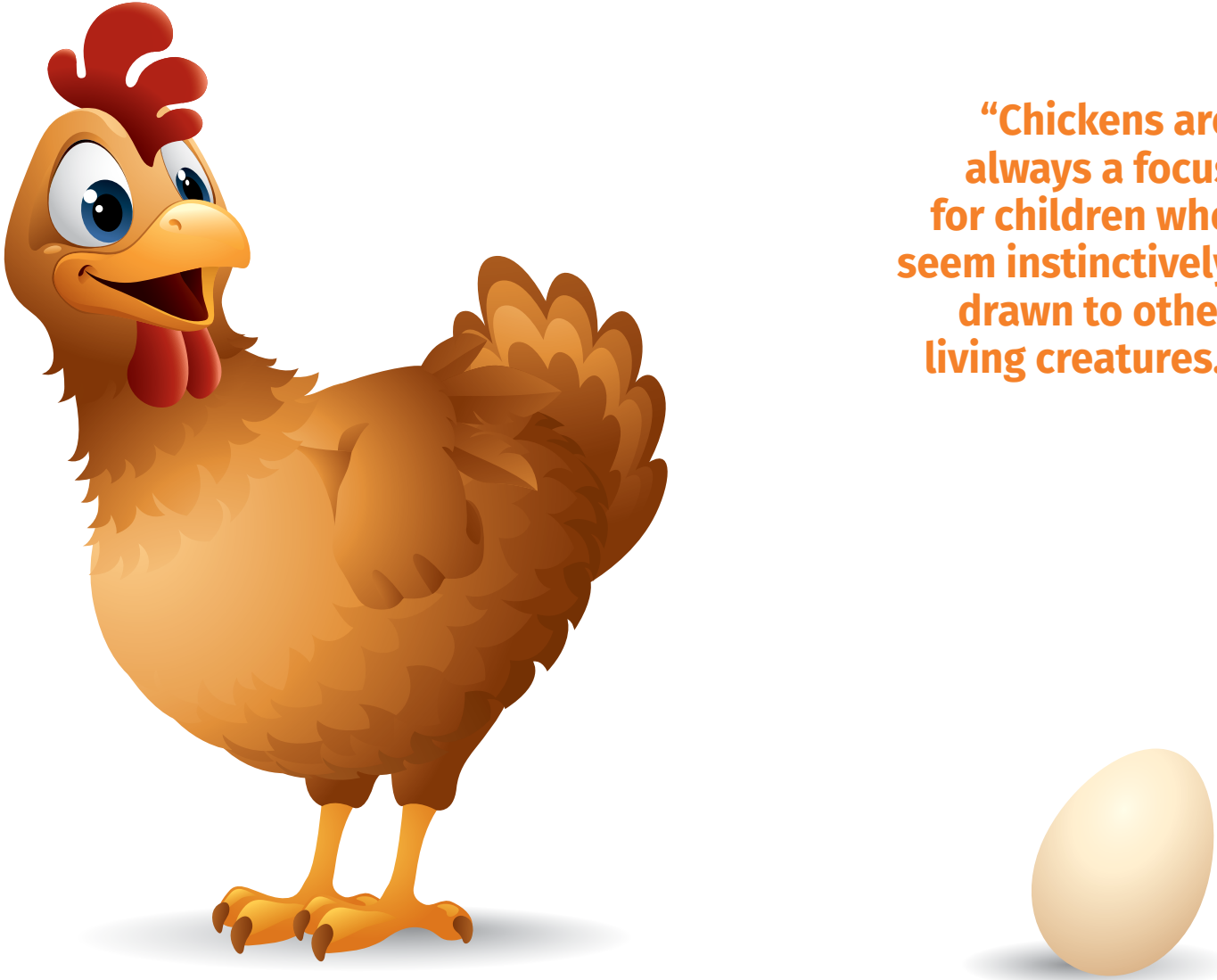
Another significant outcome of the workshop for Kerry and her centre was the positive impact on time management.

"What we've learned from the workshop has allowed us to halve our time in planning and documenting. Morale has improved because a lot of what we were already doing has been validated. If we can give them a start with an enjoyable program, if parents can see through photos that kids are

having a great time and learning, then our parents will be more inclined to send their kids to school."

The executive summary of the Interim Report for the Remote Indigenous Professional Development Project in Queensland, released in March 2014, outlines the positives to the project. "When reflecting on their leadership journey throughout the project, PLs (Pedagogical Leaders) reported they felt proud of their growth as Indigenous early education leaders and the contribution they had made to increasing the educational capacity of early years teachers to use the EYLF. They highlighted the importance of the interconnectedness of their personal, cultural and professional identities," the report said.

Though the programs were well received by Indigenous early years teachers and their supervisors, the report recommended that it be expanded to include other staff, including non Indigenous staff and service directors, and to promote cultural competence more broadly to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years the best possible start.



“Chickens are always a focus for children who seem instinctively drawn to other living creatures.”

Feathered friends lay foundations for learning and fun

Whether it's about fresh eggs, the gentle sound of clucking or supporting the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), a connection with our feathered friends can be full of joy but also present the occasional hiccup, as *Bedrock* Journalist Suzanne Kowalski-Roth discovers.

There are many possibilities when it comes to keeping chickens. The key to success is to work out what purpose the chickens will have and how it will be embedded in the life of your service for the greatest chance of success.

Choosing the right breed for the early childhood setting is important, Margaret Carey, Co-Director of Clovelly Child Care Centre said. The Centre has kept five to six chickens for the last 10 years.

“We usually have Isa Browns as they are reputed for their high egg laying ability and their general friendliness, which we thought was essential for the role that they play in an early childhood setting. We have taken in some chickens that were given to us and at the moment we have a couple of beautiful black hens,” she said.

Husbandry highs and lows

Permaculturalist Nevin Sweeney and his wife Linda have been keeping chickens for over 30 years in their Sydney suburban block in St Clair. Nevin runs workshops for Parramatta Council on keeping chickens and has encountered many of the highs and lows of chicken husbandry.

Nevin and Linda have kept a variety of breeds and he recommends Rhode Island Reds, Australorps and Barter Blacks for keeping as they're not flighty and they're hardy. He says cross breeds produce lots of



eggs at the start of their lives while pure breeds have a more even egg production over a longer period.

The rescue chook option

The Sweeney's own journey began with fronting up to one of the local egg producers and asking for spent layers – chickens who have spent the last year laying.

"They look pretty sad when you get them because they haven't been able to express their innate 'chookness', because they're been stuck in a cage with other chooks. Their beaks are trimmed of course which creates problems with them foraging. They've had a pretty rough life for 12 months," says Nevin.

From an ethical point of view keeping such chickens is a good thing, Nevin said, but if you're looking at producing eggs it's probably not.

"It really depends on why you're doing it. If it's to show the kids what the chooks are like then it's a good thing. The alternative is to get day old chicks and brood them so the kids get to see the whole thing," he said.

Chook tractor

At Clovelly the 'Taj Mahal' chicken coop is made from hardwood with an enclosed section with nesting boxes and perches for sleeping. The chickens are let out twice a day for a forage and a run.

Another option for housing is creating a chook tractor that can be wheeled around to various sections of the grounds. The chickens at Nevin and Linda's place visit each of their 14 veggie patches twice a year, fertilising the soil.

"They can see out of the wire, they've got ventilation and because they're moving you don't get a build up of pests and diseases on the soil they're in. A permanent structure is a good idea but it comes down to what

sort of run you want," Nevin said. Chickens not only bring joy but great utility.

"Clovelly has a kitchen garden program where chickens and the eggs play an integral part. The chickens are fed scraps along with the worms and rabbits, so they help us minimise our waste. As well as their environmental benefit they support the Early Years Learning Framework, particularly Outcome 2 – Children are connected with and contribute to their world. On a practical programming level this means that the children take part in feeding the chickens, watering them and collecting the eggs," Margaret said.

Fresh eggs are a big drawcard. Families and staff who want fresh eggs put their names on a list and collect their half dozen eggs when they're ready.

"The children help collect eggs and also see the daily feeding and upkeep. We have a lovely bunch of families and a small group form our chicken roster. They take it in turns to feed and water the chickens, and rabbits and water the garden on weekends and during holidays."

Chicken challenges

Challenges in chicken world can be varied as anybody who has encountered chook-led garden decimation would know.

Thankfully chickens are easier to catch than rabbits, Margaret said, and the Centre has fenced off the vegetable yard. When the run gets dirty or boggy chickens become susceptible to disease so it's a constant chore keeping it in good condition.

"We've had a steep learning curve regarding chicken husbandry, but our biggest challenge so far has been ensuring a child who has an anaphylactic reaction to chickens is kept safe."

The service recommends keeping chickens to other services. Co-Director Kerry Terrance says the chickens are always a focus for children who seem instinctively drawn to other living creatures.

"The pros are all about connecting with nature and connecting with food in an authentic way. Egg collecting and chicken wrangling are all part of the program particularly in the two to three-year-old room."

Did you know?

- Chickens under 12 months are called pullets.
- Councils requirements vary in the number of birds that can be kept and in the type of housing required. Ring your local council to check the regulations. Many councils don't allow roosters.
- Chickens moult annually and replace feathers.
- Keeping food in a suspended chook feeder can deter mice or rats. Nevin recommends keeping food in a steel container or garbage bin as rats will chew through plastic containers.
- Predators include foxes, dogs and birds of prey.
- Chickens control lice with a daily dustbath in dry dirt so try to keep this patch dry.

Resources

Barter & Sons Hatchery
<http://www.barterandsons.com.au>

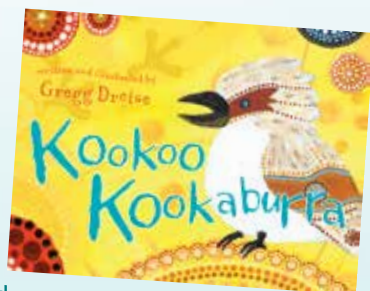
Moore Alanna 2004, *Backyard Poultry* – Naturally Python Press

Nevin and Linda Sweeney's blog about living sustainably includes articles about how to make chook tractors <http://www.underthechokotree.com/>

BEDROCK GIVEAWAYS

Kookoo Kookaburra

Written and illustrated
by Gregg Dreise
Publisher: Magabala Books
Three copies to give away



Kookoo is a kind and happy Kookaburra. He is famous throughout the bush for telling funny stories. One day Kooka forgets to be kind and he tells stories that make fun of the other animals. Kooka doesn't even listen to the wise words of Uncle Googaguga. Kindness is like a boomerang, if you throw it often enough it comes back often. Indigenous author Gregg Dreise brings his distinct visual style to a playful Australian fable that children will love. Magabala Books specialises in spreading Indigenous culture.

The Giver

Roadshow
Entertainment (M)
Three DVDs to give away

Starring Meryl Streep and Jeff Bridges, this movie is a haunting vision of the future, where a seemingly utopian society hides dark and deadly secrets. Jonas (Brenton Thwaites) is coming of age in a society without war, pain, suffering or disease, difference or choice. No one questions anything, no one remembers the past and no one ventures beyond borders. Jonas had been chosen as the sole person to learn the truth of the real world and to train with the 'Giver' Jeff Bridges. But knowledge is power and Jonas soon realises it is a matter of life and death that he escape this fake world.



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International Perspectives on Early Years Workforce Development

Editors: Verity
Campbell-Barr and
Jan Georgeson
Publisher: Critical Publishing

One copy to give away

Suitable for students and practitioners, this book looks at the current structure of the early childhood and care workforce in different countries, each representing a different tradition and philosophy. The chapter on Australia was written by Charles Sturt University Associate Professor Fran Press. Other countries covered include Japan, the UK, Russia, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Hungary and the Philippines.



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Helen Knaggs
Kindergarten Director

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