

# BEDROCK

issue 3 | Vol 22 | 2017



## ‘EDUCARING’

Planning safe learning environments for children with trauma P6

Girls developing more behavioural skills than boys P18 | Early Childhood Conference stories inside



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# BEDROCK

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## BEDROCK

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# BEDROCK UPFRONT



## Myth Busters

**This issue of *Bedrock* features a number of stories from presenters at the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Conference held in September.**

The theme of this Conference was Myth Busters – Challenging the Things We Know are Wrong.

Among the things we know are wrong are the comments by Federal Senator David Leyonhjelm in February this year that early childhood teachers are not real teachers but spend their time “wiping noses and stopping kids from killing each other”.

This statement is an appalling belittling of the positive commitment made by those who devote their working lives to early education and care. It is ill-informed, inaccurate and insulting.

But it points to the way politicians are thinking and the way the current Government is trying to take public discussion in regard to what they call ‘child care’.

In simple terms ‘child care’ is a mechanism by which mothers can return to the workforce more quickly. Hence, they connect access to a work test.

We must dispel that myth. Take every opportunity to voice the value you as teachers add to the intellectual development of the children you work with.

Stories from the conference can be found on pages 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 19 and 20.

From the Queensland/Northern Territory Branch we have further insight into the early childhood profession, including why graduates are developing an apparent aversion to working in early childhood education (p14); some wonderful stories of reconciliation from Mt Isa’s oldest kindergarten (p8); a look at how boys and girls are developing behavioural skills differently in the lead up to school (p18) and a fascinating insight into dealing with discussions of mental health with kindergarten aged children (p16).

**Terry Burke**      **John Quessy**  
QLD NT Secretary   NSW ACT Secretary

### Are you worth the same as a scientist?

The IEUA is pushing through a ground breaking case at the Fair Work Commission, arguing that early childhood teachers are historically underpaid because they are mainly female and in a ‘caring’ role.

If successful, the IEUA’s case will result in the Fair Work Commission issuing Equal Remuneration Orders, which would result in higher wages for early childhood teachers across Australia.

At the moment, the IEUA is collecting evidence in the shape of comparison case studies about males in similar occupations who are paid more. These case studies include male primary teachers, engineers, IT professionals and scientists.

This evidence must be submitted by the end of this year. The ‘opposition’ which is a large group including government representatives as well as numerous employer groups, will then present its own evidence, with the Fair Work Commission hearing the case in July/August next year.

A final decision is expected late 2018.

### Centralisation by Uniting

Uniting, which administers the Uniting Church’s not for profit services, is taking over the employment of teachers, educators and administrative staff employed in previously locally managed services including preschools, long day care, occasional care and out of school hours care centres. About 400 staff will be affected.

Many locally managed services had enterprise agreements which provide significantly better wages and conditions than under the directly managed agreement. The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch is ensuring that staff are aware of the implications of transitioning their employment conditions and trying to preserve the better conditions and wages.

### More free PD

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch has announced it is continuing to offer free professional development for NSW/ACT early childhood teachers through Teacher Learning Network (TLN) into 2018.

TLN is a not for profit professional development provider sponsored by the IEUA and Australian Education Union in Victoria.

Many TLN courses are NESA registered and will count towards the maintenance of your teacher accreditation and provide opportunities to stay on top of current issues in early years education. To register for TLN courses follow this link: [www.tln.org.au](http://www.tln.org.au)

Remember, reading *Bedrock* can also contribute to teacher identified accreditation hours.





### Fundamental flaw

It is a “fundamental flaw” in our system that we “do not value those who deliver the all important education to children at the most critical times of their lives,” Opposition Early Childhood Minister Kate Washington said.

Washington addressed the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Conference via video, saying the unequal treatment of early childhood teachers was also causing

inequality for the children in their care.

Opinions such as those expressed by Senator David Leyonhjelm (see editorial) were “outdated, ridiculous” and “quite obscene”.



### Optimising emotional learning

A research team from Griffith University is conducting a study of the ways in which early childhood teachers and educators support social and emotional development of 3-5 year old children.

The goal of the research is to identify ways to provide greater support to early childhood practitioners as they work to optimise social and emotional learning opportunities in the critical preschool years.

IEUA-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said members were well aware of the importance of supporting children’s social and emotional development.

“As societal pressures grow increasingly focused on the academic elements of education, it is vital that early childhood educators are in a position to argue in support of teaching practices that support more holistic learning.

“This is an opportunity for our members to identify the nature of the critical judgements they make as professionals in the emotional development of children.

“We invite members who work in early childhood Education to participate in this research to ensure their professional voice is heard because as teachers they know what is best for their students,” Burke said.

The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete and can be found via [bit.ly/ECEsurvey](http://bit.ly/ECEsurvey)

The time spent completing the survey may also be counted towards teacher registration renewal in Queensland – reflection/self-assessment for your centre’s Quality Improvement Plan for Quality area 1 (Educational program and practice) and Quality Area 5 (Relationships with children).



### Elders as storytellers

The importance of family and community involvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ learning has been highlighted by The Early Years Count Elders as Storytellers campaign.

On 29 June, Queensland Education Minister Kate Jones launched the Elders as Storytellers campaign to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to enrol their children in kindergarten.

“Using the trusted voice of prominent community elders and personalities it will draw attention to the powerful role our Elders, ancestors, families, early childhood services and many more, play in the development of children in the early years,” Jones said.

IEUA-QNT Branch Secretary and Caretaker of our union’s Reconciliation Action Plan, Terry Burke said lessons learnt from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are invaluable.

“By ensuring families play a role in their children’s early childhood education, not only will it benefit their child’s learning, it will also help develop their cultural identity and sense of self.

“Ultimately, this is what is needed to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can thrive, and that culture is preserved,” Burke said.

More information on The Early Years Count Elders as Storytellers campaign is available via [www.qld.gov.au/biglearninglife](http://www.qld.gov.au/biglearninglife)



### New vaccination rules

The NSW Parliament has passed a Bill to amend the *Public Health Act* to strengthen vaccination enrolment requirements in early childhood. From 1 January 2018, children who are unvaccinated due to their parent’s conscientious objection will no longer be able to be enrolled in childcare. It will be an offence (with penalty of 50 penalty units) for a director to fail to comply with the child care vaccination enrolment requirements and it will be an offence (with a penalty of 50 penalty units) for a person to forge or falsify a vaccination certificate. Details: [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/childcare\\_qa.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/childcare_qa.aspx)





# ‘EDUCARING’

## Planning safe learning environments for children with trauma

**We often say: ‘Our children are our future’, Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson writes.**

However, children learn from us as parents and as teachers. If children are surrounded by love and care, with opportunities for optimal development, they grow up to be people with creativity, empathy, social skills and resiliency which enables them to contribute to the society in which they live.

Unfortunately many children grow up in situations where there is violence.

Adults who should be relied upon for nurturance, may actually be a source of terror. The use of the term ‘family violence’ refers to three forms of harm to children: witnessing domestic violence, being the direct victim of abuse, and being exposed to neglectful caretaking.

Children who witness or hear violence, experience violence. Their

world is unsafe. A child’s early life can cause negative effects on cognitive, neurological, psychological development as well as attachment development, resulting in children experiencing developmental trauma.

By the age of three a child’s brain is 90% developed. They have already progressed through the developmental task of thinking for themselves, are capable of being assertive, and are beginning to





*"We are the product of our childhoods. The health and creativity of a community is renewed each generation through its children."*

*Bruce Perry MD PhD*



separate from their carers. Teachers play an essential, in fact critical role in connecting children to programs which enable them to become competent learners advancing in the worlds in which they live.

In fact naming and responding to developmental trauma through an 'educaring' approach in early childhood settings, in partnership with carers, can help children heal from trauma.

### **Behaviour is language**

In 2011, Margaret Hayes, Principal of the Barwon Learning Centre, invited me to work with her to develop an educational program designed to respond to the needs of children sent to the centre by NSW Department of Education. This is a special school for children suspended or expelled from other schools in the region. The children's needs would be the centre of our concern. We understood: children's behaviour was language.

The needs of the teachers/teacher aides were assessed for professional

development. The school was opened to parents and carers of the children as their complex trauma became apparent. We ran trauma specific professional development programs, while also running community based workshops for the carers of the children attending the school. The school introduced healing therapies in their curriculum called 'educaring': dance, art, music, theatre, body work and nature discovery.

Carers started to regularly visit the school. Children developed emotional literacy, on top of the improvement in literacy and numeracy in the first full year that the 'educaring' approach was run: under NAPLAN literacy and numeracy levels increased between 150% to 300%.

Success however was illustrated when teachers said: "We have the freedom to teach in the way that the children need". "They are so excited about learning". "They are not angry anymore".

Children said: "I like music because I can feel the beat through my body".

"I like dance because I can tell different stories". "I like body work because I feel calm and relaxed". "I like theatre because I can be growly different characters". "I like art because I can't make mistakes". "I like nature discovery because I can learn things when I am outside".

The Barwon Learning Centre has developed an educational model which responds to the needs of children and their families who have experienced generational, complex, developmental trauma.

**Professor Atkinson retired from professional life at the end of 2010 so she can focus on working across Australia and PNG in trauma informed and trauma specific educational and healing work. Professor Atkinson was the keynote speaker at this year's IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Conference.**



# Mt Isa kindergarten receives reconciliation award



**Shawn Major and Sam Eaton with Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk at Queensland Reconciliation Awards in Cairns. Photographer: Andrew Watson.**

**Estelle Cardiff Kindergarten in Mt Isa, North Queensland was recognised earlier this year at the Queensland Reconciliation Awards for its work in promoting reconciliation in the centre, Bedrock Journalist Sara El Sayed reports.**

Estelle Cardiff received a Highly Commended award for educating children to be part of practical, meaningful and insightful exploration of cultural integrity through an ongoing program of reconciliation.

Being the oldest kindergarten in Mt Isa, Estelle Cardiff has set the precedent for exceptional work in promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and cultural competence among the children who attend the centre.

Engaging local Elders and members of the community, Estelle Cardiff has exposed its students to invaluable learnings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their history and their culture.

IEUA-QNT member and centre Director Narelle Elliot said the centre first launched their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2009 with a handprint painting to show all children belong in the kindergarten.

“We have our Elders and cultural leaders come in and work with the children teaching weaving, painting, walking on country, collecting ochre, bush tucker. We have been very fortunate this year to gain an Artist in Residence grant,” Narelle said.

Local Kalkadoon artist Aunty Barbara Sam was invited to the kindergarten to help create the children’s end of year handprint painting.

Early childhood assistant member and descendant of the Tagalaka people from the Croydon/Normanton Area Sam Eaton said handprints mean belonging in Aboriginal culture and belonging is one of the centre’s fundamental core learnings.

“Our centre is continually incorporating reconciliation and

cultural competency into our kindergarten program,” Sam said.

Some of the elements that have been incorporated into Estelle Cardiff’s program include:

- an end of year painting assisted by a different artist each year
- NAIDOC Celebrations Family Fun Day
- an Artist in Residence program
- working with Uncle Shawn Major to teach children about Aboriginal culture including weaving, spear throwing, bush tucker, walk on country, animal tracking, dancing, ochre painting and fire making
- teaching painting and storytelling, and creation of a ‘Deadly Kindy’ shirt and hat
- a ‘Let’s Walk The Talk’ painting being the inspiration for the front cover of C&K’s RAP Book
- celebrating Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, Closing the Gap Day and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day



- recognising Sorry Day, and
- participating in NAIDOC March and Community Celebrations.

“The award is definitely a great honour,” Sam said.

“Narelle has worked behind the scenes doing wonderful things for our kindergarten for many years and it was great to see all of the hard work recognised.”

IEUA-QNT North Queensland Branch Organiser Wendy Hutchinson said Estelle Cardiff’s efforts deserved such recognition.

“Staff at Estelle Cardiff do excellent work in their centre and with their students – they truly deserve this award.

“As a union, promoting reconciliation is one of our main focuses, and Estelle Cardiff’s work in doing so at a Chapter level is to be commended,” Wendy said.

Sam suggested ways to create a culturally inclusive environment in kindergartens, including:

- incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dolls into the centre
- displaying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags
- dedicating a special area of the kindergarten to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander display, and
- creating a song, learning some language and dancing.

“Becoming culturally competent is a very important step towards reconciliation,” Sam said.

Narelle said kindergartens should invite Elders to come into their centres and work with students.

“Telling Creation stories, teaching arts and crafts, weaving, teaching children about bush tucker – community Elders have so much knowledge to share.

“Kindergartens should also support and encourage staff to attend workshops to gain knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture,” Narelle said.

Sam said the centre is proud to be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kindergarten.

“Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is promoted in centres starts with connectedness with families.

“Kindergartens should talk to parents, ask them to come in and show the children about their culture. It is important to create a culturally safe environment.”

Sam said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family engagement is integral.



**Estelle Cardiff Director Narelle Elliot (left) and ECE Assistant Sam Eaton (right)**

“We get a lot of our enrolments through word of mouth and connections with current and previous families.

“It’s about valuing the families’ culture and beliefs, encouraging children to share their knowledge and culture, and respecting that culture is part of a child’s everyday learning.

“Every child is important, every child is unique.

“We all belong at Estelle Cardiff Kindergarten,” Sam said.

## References and credits

Photographer: Andrew Watson

<https://www.qld.gov.au/about/events-awards-honours/awards/reconciliation-awards/2017-award-winners>



# Early childhood teacher accreditation: **What are the facts?**

**Teacher accreditation enhances and protects the quality and reputation of the profession, and provides NSW teachers with a framework for ongoing professional development, writes Merise Bickley (pictured), Head, Early Childhood, Teaching Standards, NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).**

Improving educational outcomes for all children and students, through quality teaching, is at the centre of teacher accreditation.

The NSW teacher accreditation system, overseen by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) provides a rigorous assessment of a teacher's achievement of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards).

The Standards define the knowledge, practice and professional engagement needed for high quality effective teaching. The Standards use nationally agreed indicators of teacher quality to guide the preparation, support and development of teachers throughout their careers.

***“Improving educational outcomes for all children and students, through quality teaching, is at the centre of teacher accreditation.”***

**Myth** All early childhood teachers who submitted documents in 2016 are accredited at Proficient Teacher.

**Fact** It actually depends on where you are up to in your career. If you were accredited between 18 July 2016 and 30 September 2016 you are now maintaining your accreditation at Proficient Teacher level.

If you were accredited after 1 October 2016 you are provisionally accredited and working towards Proficient Teacher.

**Myth** I have to complete 100 hours of professional development every year.

**Fact** All teachers maintaining their accreditation at Proficient Teacher have to complete at least 100 hours of professional development over their maintenance period.

For all early childhood teachers accredited at Proficient Teacher (under interim arrangements until 2018), the 100 hours must include a minimum of 20 hours of NESA Registered Professional Development. The balance of hours can be Teacher Identified Professional Development.





Maintaining accreditation by participating in high quality professional development is essential for teachers to improve their teaching practice.

Teacher accreditation and its maintenance is your responsibility and a condition of your employment in any NSW school or approved centre based early childhood education service.

NESA Registered Professional Development is aligned to the Standards and is delivered by providers who have been endorsed by NESA.

Teacher Identified Professional Development can include activities undertaken in or outside of an early childhood service that contribute to teachers' professional growth against the Standards.

**Myth** I am an early childhood teacher – the Standards aren't relevant to me.

**Fact** The Standards outline what teachers should know and be able to do:

- know students and how they learn
- know the content and how to teach it
- plan for and implement effective teaching and learning
- create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments
- assess, provide feedback and report on student learning
- engage in professional learning, and
- engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

Accreditation is a teacher's personal pursuit of professional growth with the use of the Standards intending to inform and drive early childhood teaching practice. Language and terminology used in the Standards may sound school centric to an early childhood teacher. However replacing; 'students' with 'children', 'classroom' with 'learning environment' 'lessons' with 'plans for

play and learning', may help a teacher's reading and understanding of the document.

Early childhood teachers' engagement with the Standards can offer insight and reflection to a service's engagement with National Quality Standard.

**Myth** NESA only focuses on primary and secondary school teachers.

**Fact** NESA is committed to supporting you on your accreditation journey. A dedicated Early Childhood Team has been established at NESA to guide and support your accreditation. The team brings experience from preschool, long day care, profit and not for profit providers, national and state departments of education and organisations and recent teaching experience.

## Stay in touch

### NESA Early Childhood Team

(02) 9367 8409 [ECTaccreditation@nesa.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ECTaccreditation@nesa.nsw.edu.au)

Web: [educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/TeacherAccreditation](http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/TeacherAccreditation)

Twitter: @myteaching

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## Changes are coming in 2018

### New maintenance of accreditation requirements

The requirements for teachers maintaining their accreditation are changing from 1 January 2018. These changes provide a more streamlined process and recognise the professionalism and experience of NSW teachers. The requirements will apply to teachers whose maintenance period ends on or after 1 January 2018. Further information about the requirements can be found on NESA's website <http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/maintaining-accreditation/how-it-works>

### NESA as a Teacher Accreditation Authority (TAA)

NESA is the TAA for most early childhood teachers. NESA is currently finalising procedures that describe what early childhood teachers need to do to achieve and maintain their accreditation. More information will be available soon.

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch also provides accreditation advice. Email [accreditation@ieu.asn.au](mailto:accreditation@ieu.asn.au).

**Merise's employment in the early childhood sector ranges from working as an early childhood teacher, managing professional development and training teams in early childhood and working in children's services quality assurance. She was appointed Head of Early Childhood at NESA in 2016. Her presentation was a keynote at the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Conference.**



# Building positive relationships with parents

*“Try to keep it in perspective though, with the 80/20 rule: 80% of the problems will come from only 20% of the parents and in fact, it’s probably less than 5% of that 20% that will potentially cause you a sleepless night.”*

**One of the trickier aspects of working in an early childhood centre can sometimes be navigating the relationships we have with a wide variety of people: our colleagues, the children themselves and the parents or carers of the children, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Professional Officer Karen Forbes writes.**

In this article, we’ll look at some types of parents you might meet across your experience of working in a centre, as well as some strategies that might help when dealing with some of the more challenging behaviours displayed by adults.

Before we get into the nitty gritty of what to do and when to do it, something to keep in mind when dealing with parents, is that for most of the time, most of the parents will be pretty good – they’ll be understanding, flexible, happy to communicate and trust that you’re doing the job you’re supposed to do each day. But occasionally, they’ll be challenged by something about your centre (or about anything else – we don’t always know the reason) and they’ll want answers! Try to keep it in perspective though, with the 80/20 rule: 80% of the problems will come from only 20% of the parents and in fact, it’s probably less than 5% of that 20% that will potentially cause you a sleepless night.

Remember that the parents or carers generally only have one or two little poppets to think and worry about, so they can easily seem blinkered in their viewpoint. How

many times have you had a parent say to you, ‘I’m not interested in anyone else in the room/centre/class, I’m only interested in <insert their poppet’s name here>’?

You know that the big picture is important for every child, that education is an holistic journey and that each child has a role to play in the developing relationships among the other children in the centre. So when the parents only want to know about their poppet, you can have the conversation with them about their darling, knowing that you are aware of any extenuating circumstances within the centre and that you probably have positive behaviour management strategies in place already.

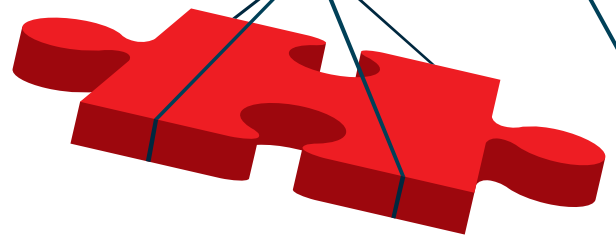
So what ‘type’ are you likely to come into contact with? Let’s name the ‘top four’: helicopter, hot house, submarine and volcano. Helicopter parents are those worriers who hover about, controlling every facet of their child’s life. Hot house are the ones who expect the child to be reading Latin and solving algebraic equations by the age of three or are expecting a contract from the Australian Ballet/Symphony or Tennis Australia for their four year old any day now.

Submarines are the ones you never see but also leave their children with you every day with no lunch, no hat, no toilet training; and the volcanos are those who erupt over the most minute detail, spewing a lava of words (sometimes in quite strong language) all over you.

And now, how do we deal with them? Whenever we have to deal with any (or all) of the above, essentially we want to stay calm, assertive and in control. What we don’t want to do is ‘pick up the rope’ because once we get into a tug of war with them, we have no idea if we’ll win or lose. Try to remind yourself that everyone brings some ‘baggage’ with them, including yourself and that on an ‘off’ day, that baggage might have a less than positive effect on how you deal with a particular situation. Don’t beat yourself up if you come away from a meeting thinking I could have handled that better – be reflective by all means and try to learn from the situation but also remember that you do a complex and demanding job that a lot of other people would never manage – but you do, every day!

Ideally we’d all like to resolve issues with others in a way that keeps the relationship intact, but sometimes the relationship might wobble a little as you try to weather the storm – that’s okay too! Be fair, firm and consistent with the parents – just like you are with their children!

**IEU Professional Officer, Karen was previously a primary teacher in the Newcastle and upper Hunter region for 30 years. She presented on building positive relationships with parents at the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Conference.**





# 7 self care rituals you can practice at work

**There are three things that many early education leaders have in common: you are passionate about the work you do, but often feel overwhelmed by the demands of the job; you are lacking in time and you put everyone else's needs before your own, writes Sarah Moore.**

## **There's a better way**

We can't reduce our workloads or add hours to the day – but we can change the way we manage ourselves. We can choose to do things that powerfully and positively impact on the way we feel about our work, our time and our ability to mindfully integrate self care into our working lives.

Mindful self awareness is key. We need to consciously consider what beliefs we hold around self care so we are able to set ourselves up to believe that as 'leaders' we need to put ourselves before others.

It doesn't have to be complicated. A few slow and grounded breaths can take five minutes or less and can be practiced on the spot, and most importantly can provide a disproportionate benefit to one or more of the core common challenges early education leaders experience. It literally allows you to slow down, tune in and reset, and if practiced regularly, can reduce stress hormones and boost your immune system.

As Michael Bunting, author of *The Mindful Leader*, wrote, "Your effectiveness as a leader depends on your self awareness. The more self aware you are, the more strength, wisdom and compassion you have and the more inspiring you are to the people you lead". Mindful self care is a win for everyone!

Here are seven self care rituals to try, and then pass on to your team for them to try too:

**1. Set intentions.** Before you get out of bed each morning, ask yourself how you want to 'feel' throughout your day. It could be that you want to feel calm, focused, relaxed.

**2. The in between moments.** Step into the space in between activities, claim some time before moving from one thing to another.

**3. Focus your attention inwardly.** Be conscious of your internal dialogue, befriend yourself and feel self compassion.

**4. Be open to receiving.** Slow down and stop talking and really listen, while being open and receptive. Look and feel for people and events, environments and experiences that make you feel good.

**5. Be kind to yourself.** Ask yourself in any given moment; how can I support myself? It could be drinking some water, being grateful for an experience or the people around you.

**6. Stop the input.** Be mindful not to fill in space as a way of downloading. When you do get a moment, use it like a precious gift, rather than filling it to numb the feeling of overwhelm.

**7. Shift your energy.** When you feel tried, move your body, go for a walk, stand up and shift your physiology.

*"It literally allows you to slow down, tune in and reset."*

**Sarah Moore Director at Leadership without Limits, specialises in early education leadership development; offering facilitation, coaching, mentoring and training to assist early education**

**professions make positive change and achieve professional and personal success. She presented the workshop Myth: Practicing Self Care means Making a Choice between Yourself and Others at the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Conference.**

**Join Sarah's Facebook group to be part of the conversation**

<http://www.sarahmoore.space/> and send a request to join our conversation about Leadership Self Care Rituals in our closed Facebook Community.



# Why aren't more graduates choosing early childhood education?



**A lack of professional recognition of early childhood teachers has led to preservice teachers developing an apparent aversion to working in the sector early in their careers. Bedrock Journalist Sara El Sayed explores the factors that are devaluing the work teacher qualified staff do, and what can be done to attract and retain graduates in early childhood education.**

## Career aspirations

With graduate teachers reluctant to pursue careers in early childhood education, research into graduate career pathways and aspirations is essential.

The Early Childhood Graduate Teachers go to Work (ECGTW) project, led by a research team at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), will be the first of its kind to collect longitudinal quantitative data on early childhood graduate employment destinations, along with their career aspirations.

This research aims to identify the factors that shape the career aspirations of preservice early childhood teachers' careers over time, and develop understandings of the ways in which graduate employment destinations align or misalign with career aspirations.

QUT academic and project team member Dr Megan Gibson said the study will track students throughout their four year Bachelor of Education degrees at six monthly intervals and ask questions about their career aspirations: where they want to work, why they want to work there and what is informing or influencing that thinking.

"The study aims to bring more clarity to the influencing factors so that all early childhood degrees can be preparing students and preparing our future workforce optimally for working across a whole range of early childhood contexts."

Dr Gibson said a factor that is anticipated to emerge is the validation and valuing of the work.

"This valuing of the work of early childhood teachers is shaped by discourses that form people's understanding of the work, including the media, and government policy."

Dr Gibson pointed to her PhD project *Heroic Victims: Discursive Constructions of Preservice Early Childhood Teacher Professional Identities* as a precedent in anticipating the issue of valuing the profession.

Interestingly, while Dr Gibson's PhD research did not find that wages and conditions were explicitly talked about by the preservice teacher participants, pay parity between primary school teaching and teaching in long day care was an unspoken frustration.

"It's almost implicit – preservice teachers and teachers

themselves are frustrated that there isn't pay parity between prior to school settings and teachers in schools – they've been saying it for so long that they've almost stopped saying it," Dr Gibson said.

## Perceptions of teachers

Dr Gibson said early childhood teachers have a great sense of the worth of their work.

"Research that has come out in the last decade shows us that there is a very strong case that the early years matter, and working in teaching in the early years matters.

"Teachers themselves know this to be an absolute and it's irrefutable that the work of early childhood not only matters for very young children but it actually matters now for the economy and for society.

"The exasperation comes from others not valuing the profession as it should be valued.

"Until we have pay parity and condition parity across early childhood contexts then we are not going to attract and retain teacher qualified staff."

## Dispelling myths and misconceptions

Dr Gibson's study sits alongside a growing number of research projects that focus on issues of early childhood education and care workforce, including the *Exemplary Early Childhood Educators at Work: A Multi-Level Investigation*, a study for which IEUA is a partner organisation.

This project aims to dispel the myths surrounding early childhood education by identifying, highlighting and documenting the distinct and complex nature of educators' work. It will produce the largest database ever collected about the work of early childhood educators.

Dr Gibson said this study intends to look at what exemplary early childhood educators do.

"Using a number of methodologies, including a smart phone app, to capture the depth and breadth of what it is that early childhood teachers do on a daily basis, the study aims to highlight the value of the work they do – making it clear to policy makers and to the broader community, and educators themselves that issues such as pay parity and conditions need to be addressed," Dr Gibson said.

Research leader Professor Frances Press said in a media release that skilled and knowledgeable early childhood educators are the key to high quality early childhood education.

"But despite the importance of early childhood education being recognised by governments throughout the world, the working conditions and pay of early childhood educators remain poor.

"The work of early childhood educators is beset with myths and misconceptions. Often the work is constructed as an extension of mothering and instinctual for the predominantly female early childhood workforce.

"In addition, the emphasis on learning through play is



at odds with the more structured, teacher led examples associated with the school classroom. As a result, the thoughtful deliberations that underpin early childhood educators' actions as they set up the environment, work with small and large groups of children, and interact with children to support their learning, may fail to be recognised as teaching.

"The outcomes of this three year research study will contribute to the retention and further development, of a skilled, appropriately remunerated and valued

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. It might also help address the ongoing shortage of qualified educators," Professor Press said.

With the growing number of research projects being conducted in Australia, it is evident that there is a great focus on shifting the landscape of perceptions of the profession.

Dr Gibson

said this is beneficial for children and their families in continuing to receive quality education delivered by teachers who feel their profession is valued, and remunerated accordingly.

"Our research is committed to professionalising the profession," Dr Gibson said.

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<https://research.qut.edu.au/itepl/projects/early-childhood-teachers-go-to-work-where-do-they-work-why/>

*"It's almost implicit – preservice teachers and teachers themselves are frustrated that there isn't pay parity between prior to school settings and teachers in schools – they've been saying it for so long that they've almost stopped saying it,"*







# Addressing mental health in kindergarten



**Mental health is an important factor that contributes to the wellbeing of children at all ages, and it is vital that strategies aiming to target mental health issues are appropriately directed, especially in early childhood education. Bedrock Journalist Sara El Sayed looks at how mental health discussions should be approached in a kindergarten context.**

A \$53 million Mental Health in Education initiative announced by the Federal Government earlier this year will see students, including those in kindergarten, being taught about suicide awareness and mental health.

It was announced that teachers from early childhood through to Year 12 would be provided additional mental health and suicide training in their university degrees or VET education, and those already teaching would undergo additional online and face to face training to better improve the discussion with children around the issue.

While leaders of the initiative have highlighted the need for consideration of language used in discussions surrounding mental health and suicide prevention with younger children, it is important to consider the character of those conversations that might occur between teachers and children.

The kindergarten context differs vastly to that of primary and secondary school, and consideration needs to be given to the most effective and sensitive way to approach these issues.

### **The discussion with parents**

Expert in the area of early intervention and promotion of mental health, Emeritus Professor Graham Martin of the University of Queensland, said these discussions should not be focussed with the kindergarten aged children; rather with their parents.

"It is not necessarily useful to be talking about these issues directly with young children at the kindergarten age.

"The real conversations need to be with the parents and caregivers.

"What we know is that children emulate and copy their parents, and their parents' ways of doing things.

"If a child has parents who are angry, are verbally or physically abusive, or act negatively towards the child, the child will adopt that language, adopt the style, could eventually start abusing other kids, and the effect on their own mental health could be detrimental."

Professor Martin pointed to research conducted in South Australia showing that suicidal children have parents who are hyper critical, have extremely high expectations which are almost impossible to meet, that are negative and are relatively uncaring.

"The combination of being hyper critical, verbally abusive and relatively uncaring seems to be related to young people taking overdoses and feeling suicidal.

"The focus should be on addressing the root of the issue and helping the parents change their way of operating with their children.

***"The real conversations need to be with the parents and caregivers."***

"We know that parents who are abusive, negative, hyper critical, physically or sexually abusive are actually creating a cycle which will go on for generations.

"This can start at a very young age. If a parent shows care, love, concern and support to all people they come into contact with, they're providing a role model for the child to adopt – that's what is most important for kindergarten aged children.

"Parents who are sensitive towards their children's needs, who provide warmth in their relationship and act as positive role models allow their children to develop into kind, gentle, perceptive people."

Professor Martin suggested parents should read to their children every night to support good mental health.

"There is a wide range of books and picture books that cover the issues beautifully and allow parents to simply work through stories with the children that demonstrate the kind of care and relationships that are necessary to support mental health and avoid the negative influences.

"Richard Scarry books, for example, or *Possum Magic* by Mem Fox; reading any story that helps children to understand feelings and find ways to deal with feelings is a good start."

### **What teachers can do**

Professor Martin said teachers and kindergarten staff need to step in if they see parents are struggling, or if

they see parents being hyper critical, abusive and negative.

"If there is a professional watching the interplay between the parents and child, they can pick up on whether the parent might be struggling or might need some extra help and then either take them aside or recommend support for them.

"It's about that early recognition of where things are going wrong.

"Teachers have the ability to make a difference in building protection for young people at that early age which will be lifelong."

The focus, then, of the Mental Health In Education funding in a kindergarten context should not be on having teachers address these sensitive topics with their young students directly, but support should be given in equipping teachers to appropriately approach discussions with parents, and to flag warning signs.

Professor Martin recommended that early career teachers seek the help and guidance of experienced colleagues in addressing issues with parents.

"It shouldn't be expected that a recently graduated teacher or early career teacher handle these conversations with parents alone.

"The first step is to discuss how to proceed with the director or manager of the kindergarten, or the senior person in the centre.

"It's a case of getting support from colleagues and administration and then conducting the process together.

"Often it's not a question of being punitive with the parents – it's about sitting down and discussing what was noticed, and what can be done to help or resolve the issue," Professor Martin said.

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14 or visit [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

**Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467 or visit [suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au).

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# Girls developing more behavioural skills than boys



**A recent study from the latest edition of the *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* found that girls are starting formal schooling with more of the behavioural skills that have been shown to predict academic success. Bedrock Journalist Sara El Sayed explores the prior to school setting influencers that have caused girls to pull ahead.**

*Gender Differences in Early Literacy and*

*Mathematics Achievement and Self-Regulatory Behaviours in the First year of School: An Australian Study* discussed the gender differences in prior to school competence and how they suggest that girls are entering school better equipped for learning and with better self regulatory behaviours than boys.

These skills are enabling girls to take greater advantage of school based learning environments when they commence Year 1.

Boys, along with showing lower self regulatory behaviours in the first year of school, were also rated by their teachers as demonstrating higher rates of problem behaviours than girls.

Co-author of the article, Professor Susan Walker said early interaction prior to school with parents and others are helping girls develop these self regulatory skills.

"These skills include being able to stay on task, pay attention and look after their belongings, which makes them more prepared to start school," Professor Walker said.

## **Dramatic play**

Professor Walker said a strong predictor in kindergartens of developing self regulation skills is dramatic play.

"Children who are engaging in dramatic play develop self regulation skills and the ability to inhibit behaviour as they have to stay in the role and have to maintain dramatic focus.

"Engaging in dramatic play with all children is a way in which teachers can develop their students' self regulatory skills," Professor Walker said.

Some academics argue that girls in the kindergarten age bracket of 3-5 years old display a higher frequency and level of dramatic play behaviour, and choose dramatic play more than boys do.

While kindergarten teachers and centre staff have the ability to plan activities for children, some behaviour such as preference of play can be out of their control when it comes to free play.

## **Games**

Professor Walker said simple games such as 'Simon says' and 'duck, duck, goose' are also helpful in improving children's self regulatory skills.

"These games require children to inhibit a first response and think about their response.

"Sorting tasks or games are also a great way to develop a child's self regulation skills.

"These can be as simple as asking children to sort objects by colour and then sorting by shape," Professor Walker said.

## **Reading**

Professor Walker said another strong influencer of a child's behaviour is everyday reading.

"Children who are read to on a daily basis prior to starting formal schooling exhibit better self regulatory behaviours later."

Professor Walker said it may be the case that girls are more willing to engage in shared story books with parents or other caregivers, or caregivers may see reading as something that girls would prefer to be engaged in as opposed to boys.

According to a 2016 study by Ozturk, Hill and Yates, girls reported relatively more positive attitudes to reading than boys did. Additionally, parents' gendered views about literacy favouring girls correlated negatively with both girls' and boys' reading attitudes.

This suggests that not only do gendered views about literacy negatively affect boys, but have a negative effect on girls' reading attitudes as well.

Professor Walker suggested Harvard University's Activities Guide: *Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence* as a useful resource for learning how to target the development of executive functions.

The guide can be found via [www.developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/activities-guide-enhancing-and-practicing-executive-function-skills-with-children-from-infancy-to-adolescence](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/activities-guide-enhancing-and-practicing-executive-function-skills-with-children-from-infancy-to-adolescence)

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# Change yourself from within



**Our world is fast paced and constantly changing. Strong social and emotional skills are needed now more than ever before to be content and successful, writes Radha Badicci.**

Research tells us that for early childhood teachers this is of particular significance, as it is the early years before school where children are developing the foundations of their social and emotional skills, such as sense of self, empathy, attention, self control, resilience and self regulation skills.

Research has also found these skills to be a big predictor of children's future wellbeing and academic and life success. This gives the early childhood sector a big, yet exciting, responsibility to be able to help children develop these skills and thus shape their lives.

For early childhood professionals this is not likely to be surprising news, as we tend to understand this well, supporting children's social and emotional skills every day.

## **New tools**

Mindfulness and yoga, however, could be the new tools you are looking for, as was I a few years ago. These practices can enrich your teaching to support children as well as supporting your own wellbeing.

Studies are showing us that mindfulness and yoga can help children to increase their social competence, cognitive control, emotional self regulation skills, confidence, compassion, attention and resilience and reduce impulsivity and symptoms of anxiety, depression and ADHD.

When teachers practice mindfulness research has found it can reduce teacher stress and burn out and increase their compassion and teacher effectiveness.

This is further supported by brain research that shows long term mindfulness practitioners actually grow thicker prefrontal cortexes, this being the brain region responsible for cognitive control, attention and emotional self regulation. Mindfulness is not just a learnt behaviour but it has the power to actually change us from the inside out!

Mindfulness and yoga come in many forms. While they are often viewed as a silent and serious practice for adults, they don't have to be! It is about finding what works for you to connect to the present moment.

***“Teaching yoga and mindfulness to children is fun, interactive and often loud.”***

This could be dancing, listening to beautiful music, walking or even laughter yoga! Teaching yoga and mindfulness to children is another such variation as it is fun, interactive and often loud. In my children's yoga and mindfulness classes I use stories, games and songs to engage them, such as telling a story that we act out with yoga poses; or playing breathing games

like breathing into our bellies like a balloon; or focus games like staring into each other's eyes or focusing on sensations in our hands after clapping.

In my own practice I meditate by focusing on my breath or doing a body scan, practicing daily gratitude and practicing yoga regularly.

These techniques teach children and adults how to focus and give them tools to self regulate and calm down. Many of the poses in yoga require children to balance and focus their mind on how to hold and place their body and limbs all while having fun in a supportive, creative and non competitive environment. Children will often use the breathing techniques to calm themselves throughout the day too. After a few classes I have seen children increase their confidence and self esteem and their capacity to self regulate and focus.

Yoga and mindfulness are fun and accessible ways for us to support both children's and educators' social emotional skills and wellbeing. I look forward to the day when sitting down to meditate or practicing yoga at school or preschool is seen as just as essential to children's health and wellbeing as exercise and healthy food.

**Radha Badicci is the program director of Super Kids Yoga, teaching kids yoga in schools, preschools and long day cares around Sydney. She is also the Director of Styles Street Children's Community Long Day Care. [www.superkidsyoga.com.au](http://www.superkidsyoga.com.au). She presented the workshop Yoga and Mindfulness for Children at the IEU NSW/ACT Early Childhood Conference.**



# Why women need to boost their super



**Women haven't always enjoyed the same super rights as men. In fact, until the 1970s, some women were even excluded from super when they got married.**

While super rights for women have thankfully improved, many continue to miss out on valuable super benefits.

On average, women are still paid less than their male counterparts. Plus, the amount of super women generate during their working lives is often impacted by career breaks to care for family and a greater tendency to work part time.

Coupled with the late introduction of compulsory super in 1992, these factors have left many working women at a disadvantage when it comes to their super savings.

That's why it's so important for women to take a proactive approach to managing their super.

By keeping track of your account balance, choosing investment options that meet your needs, and

contributing a little extra, you can keep your super on track for the retirement you want.

At HESTA, we're here to help our members every step of the way.

In fact, most of our 820,000 members are women, so our Associate Superannuation Advisers, Superannuation Advisers, Member Education Managers and Financial Planners understand the challenges women face in building their super.

Take your first steps to a better tomorrow today — to start changing your future.

Visit [hesta.com.au/boostmysuper](https://hesta.com.au/boostmysuper) for ideas on how you can boost your super or call 1800 813 327 to speak to a HESTA adviser.

With almost 30 years of experience and \$40 billion in assets, more people in health and community services

choose HESTA for their super.

***“Until the 1970s, some women were even excluded from super when they got married.”***

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# Start Strong: YOUR SAY

**One year on and the NSW funding program Start Strong is still causing considerable angst for early childhood directors and teachers in preschools. *Bedrock* has received a number of letters and there were plenty of members with a view on Start Strong attending the IEU NSW/ACT Early Childhood Conference in September**

## **At the conference:**



**Julia Cameron**  
**Director, Werris Creek and District Preschool**

Start Strong is not a positive for our preschool. We are a rural community and one year we will have a lot of unfunded three year olds, the next year those three year olds will move through and we will have a low enrolment rate for three year olds and high for four

year olds. It's not flexible enough to suit our small rural community with a transient population.

**Melinda Gambley**  
**Director, Clunes Preschool**

We're a regional area and the enrolment fluctuates. Funding is low as it is based on last year's data and the flow of new funding for increased enrolment is a long way off. Getting the funding in a timely way that will support the families in the services and managing all that as a director is really difficult.



**Ariane Simon**  
**Director, St Stephen's Preschool, Sydney**

It's all about productivity and getting women back into the workforce, and nothing to do with education, pedagogy or quality for the children. Start Strong does not follow any research that says two years of early childhood education is what's important – it's all

about bums on seats. For many services, the industrial adjustments for existing staff who have in place historic agreements or understandings is also a challenge.



**Marie Jacobsen**  
**IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Councillor**

Services are crumbling under the pressure to try and make sure they are doing the 15 hours. Staff are up in arms about being asked to look after children for longer hours than they normally would. I think it's about getting preschools in the federal arena.



**Kate Washington**  
**NSW Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education**

It's really complex, which is a concern, and it creates enormous challenges for the sector and the way services operate. The delay in the census data means the funding doesn't reflect on the children actually in the service and this particularly impacts on

children with special needs. There's a big question mark on whether Start Strong is delivering the best preschool education.

## **Letter to the editor**

Thank you for the article in *Bedrock* (June 2017) by Lyn Best regarding Start Strong. I had the same experience as Lyn in that we were told the wrong information at the roadshow about our funding.

We were told that we were getting full funding as we offered before/after school care. However we charge a separate fee for before and after school and I questioned them about this on three separate occasions.

This year they realised that we aren't meeting the requirements of the model. We now have to make changes to our structure before August. We have reduced our fees significantly from 2016 thinking we were getting full funding.

I have an issue with extending teachers' contact time, but I have to, to cover the extended hours and ratios.

Teachers are teachers? No way would the government attach funding to schools based on extending pupils hours. Why does it happen to preschool and no one does a thing?

**Kate Damo**  
**Birrahlee Children's Centre**  
**Sydney**



# Your questions answered

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



## Dear Lisa

I have a Bachelor Degree in Visual Arts and a Master of Early Childhood. My university told me I would be classified as a five year trained teacher but I have applied for a position as an early childhood teacher and I have been told that I am only entitled to be paid as a three year trained teacher. I can't see how someone who spent five years at university can be

paid \$25.35 an hour. Can you please tell me what level of the award I should be on?

Sally

## Dear Sally

Your employer can pay you as a three year trained teacher as a Bachelor in Visual Arts is not recognised in the *Educational Services (Teacher) Award 2010*.

The *Educational Services (Teachers) Award (definitions)* states that a "five year trained teacher means a teacher who has completed a degree in education or early childhood education that requires four years of full time study at an Australian university and in addition has completed a postgraduate degree at an Australian university requiring at least one year of full time study, or the equivalent as determined by... in the case of early childhood teachers the relevant licensing and accreditation authority".

The *Educational Services (Teachers) Award (definitions)* states that a "four year trained teacher means a teacher who has completed a degree in education or early childhood education that requires four years of full time study at an Australian university or the equivalent as determined by... in the case of early childhood teachers the relevant licensing and accreditation authority".

I suggest you provide your employer a copy of your university transcripts and ask if they will pay you above the award rate to better recognise your years of university study.

Lisa

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



## Dear Sherryl

I am a teacher in a community kindergarten that is run by a committee of parent volunteers. This year we have a new director at the kindergarten. For some reason the new director has taken a particular dislike to me and has been picking on me. It has now gotten to the point where I do not feel comfortable at work and it

is affecting my health and wellbeing. I have been reading online information about workplace bullying. Is there anything I can do about the director's behaviour?

Tammy

## Dear Tammy

Workplace bullying is a major health and safety issue in our sector and it is a significant issue in early childhood education. Early intervention can help minimise the impact of workplace bullying. Under the *Fair Work Act 2009* a "worker is bullied at work if an individual or a group of individuals repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards the worker or a group of workers of which the worker is a member and that constitutes a risk to health and safety". It is important to note that reasonable management is not workplace bullying. Any behaviours from your director which consist of raising possible issues with your performance unless completely unreasonable, are subject to the defence of reasonable management action.

If you are unable to resolve the issue informally, then it is likely you will have to make a formal bullying complaint to your committee. The outcome of a bullying complaint rarely results in disciplinary action being taken against the other party. The focus is usually on finding a way for you and the other party to move forward and continue to work together. If you are unable to resolve the issue informally, I suggest that you contact your Union office for advice and support.

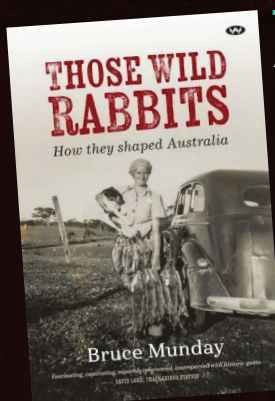
Sherryl

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





# BEDROCK GIVEAWAYS



## **Those Wild Rabbits: How they Shaped Australia**

**Author:** Bruce Munday

**Publisher:** Wakefield Press

**Three copies to give away**

A century ago Australia was home to 10 billion rabbits, thriving in their adopted home. Storyteller Bruce Munday finds the rabbit saga irresistible – the naive hopes of the early settlers, the frustration, environmental damage, cost to agriculture, dreams shattered, and the lessons learned and ignored.

*Those Wild Rabbits* highlights not only the damage done but also Australia's missed opportunities for real rabbit control. It recognises the bush's paradoxical love affair with an animal that was at one time a significant rural industry and is still recalled with nostalgia. More importantly, it offers hope for a brighter future, making the case for continued research to drive the next rabbit control miracle, because rabbit plagues of the past will become the future unless we capture the history and embrace the lessons.

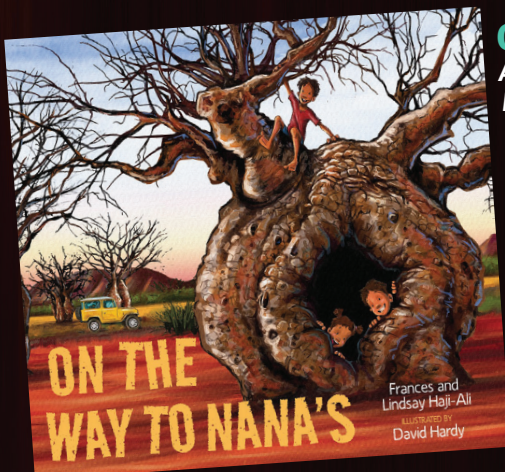
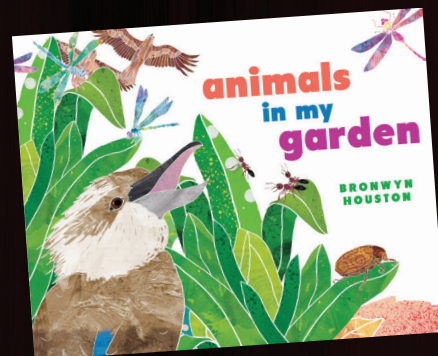
## **Animals in my Garden**

**Author:** Bronwyn Houston

**Publisher:** Magabala Books

**Three copies to give away**

Bronwyn Houston makes counting from one to 10 so much fun! From kookaburras to ants to dragonflies, her rich colourful illustrations are filled with texture and movement. Each single page includes numbers and words on a bright backdrop that will engage and delight both children and adults. *Animals in my Garden* introduces the diverse animals of Australia to toddlers in an entertaining and joyful way.



## **On the Way to Nana's**

**Author:** Frances and Lindsay Haji-Ali

**Illustrator:** David Hardy

**Publisher:** Magabala Books

**Three copies to give away**

Frances and Lindsay Haji-Ali take us counting backwards from 15 to one on this spectacular journey in the far north of WA. When Frances and Lindsay lived with their family in Broome, they often set out to visit Nana in the tiny outback town of Wyndham over 1,000 km north. These road trips took them across the magnificent Kimberley landscape and inspired this counting story.

From bulbous boabs and wild brumbies to weary travellers, flying magpie geese and flowing waterfalls, David Hardy's striking illustrations capture the awe and excitement of this special family adventure.

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 by 8 January 2018





# no butts about it

We've implemented a  
portfolio-wide tobacco exclusion.

**Has your super fund?**

**[hesta.com.au/no-butts](https://hesta.com.au/no-butts)**