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**Fostering scientific interest
at an early age P20**











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DECISION PENDING

Welcome to the November edition of *Bedrock*.

This edition comes at a crucial time for early childhood teachers especially in NSW and the ACT, with a decision from the Fair Work Commission expected between December and April on the outcome of the IEUA's landmark Equal Remuneration Orders (ERO) case (see page 9). This case has been a monumental effort by the IEUA, but well worth it as a favourable outcome would ensure your professionalism is appropriately recognised and valued. It's a long term commitment to improving salary outcomes. The IEUA sends its appreciation to the many member witnesses who made statements and were cross examined.

This edition also features articles based on presentations from the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch annual early childhood conference held in September, such as leadership expert Sarah Moore's look at your invisible leadership superpowers on page 6 and exploring how to break free from preconceived toys and introduce play with recycled materials, by Reverse Garbage on page 18.

We also look at new research which once again reinforces the invaluable long term benefits of early childhood education for our nation's future and asks why early education isn't being backed by government funding (page 10).

We explore fun ways to introduce science to your young charges, with a great list of resources and experiment ideas on page 20.

Our popular regular features like Giveaways (page 23) and Your questions answered, where you can find out about your rights and conditions (page 22) return. If you have any further questions or suggestions, do not hesitate to let us know. Just email bedrock@ieu.asn.au.

NSW/ACT Branch members requiring further information regarding the ERO case please contact the Union office. Briefings for groups of members can be arranged.

Mark Northam
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Branch Secretary

Terry Burke
IEUA QNT/NT
Branch Secretary



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UPFRONT



Catholic schools expand into early learning

Catholic school employers are looking at new ways of securing enrolments in schools by opening early childhood centres on school grounds. Parramatta, Broken Bay and Newcastle dioceses have established a number of early childhood services, many of them located on or adjacent to school grounds. The new St Therese Catholic Preschool and Long Day Care Centre at Sadleir in Sydney's west, is the first of a number of centres planned for the Archdiocese of Sydney. Staff at these services are not paid the same as school employees, with many teachers being employed on the modern award. IEUA NSW/ACT Branch is currently organising these centres and having discussions at diocesan level on the employment conditions of these staff.

Changing life trajectories

Report two of the *Changing the Life Trajectories of Australia's Most Vulnerable Children* provides an initial assessment of the impact of the first 12 months in the Early Years Education Program (EYEP) on children and their primary caregivers.

The findings on outcomes after the first 12 months of the EYEP trial are that the program had a quite large (but only marginally significant) impact on children's IQ, with most of this impact being on boys. No significant impact on other outcomes for children or their primary caregivers was detected.

The report describes the outcomes as encouraging but not conclusive. Details: https://fbe.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/2781248/EYERP-Report-2-web.pdf



QLD kindergarten children with disabilities worse off

A recent change in the funding model of what was previously known as Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens (DISQK), now known as the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Scheme (KISS) has reportedly led to less funding being available to assist children with disabilities in Queensland kindergartens.

Prior to 2019, the DISQK program meant kindergartens could individually apply to the Department of Education for additional funding to assist with the education and needs of disabled children on a per-child basis.

With the change to KISS, the funding is now provided to the relevant Central Governing Bodies (CGBs), who are then in charge of distributing the funding to individual kindergartens.

The purpose of the KISS funding is to further build the capability of community based kindergarten program providers to support children with additional needs, in particular, children with diagnosed or suspected disability, to fully participate in a kindergarten program.

Recent reports note kindergartens are having trouble accessing the funding from their CGBs, resulting in less funding for those children who need it most. Early intervention is critical for children with disabilities, but many kindergartens have been left short when it comes to this funding, which they rely heavily on and had anticipated.

This inexplicable shortage of funds has been identified as a serious issue by our Union in representations to the relevant government department.

We will continue to argue for reasonable levels of funding from both the government and the CGBs until the issue is resolved.

Study reinforces significance of smaller classes

A recent study titled *Relating preschool class size to classroom quality and student achievement* has found that smaller classes resulted in more one-to-one interactions with teachers and students and improved literacy skills.

The Canadian study conducted early this year examined the effects of kindergarten class size on classroom quality and student achievement.

The data forming the basis of the study is from an experiment involving 21 teachers and 354 children who were either in a 'regular' kindergarten class size of 20 students versus a teacher with a reduced class size of 15 students.

The results showed that children who attended a reduced size class experienced more beneficial one-to-one interactions with teachers compared to those in the regular sized class.

There were clear benefits in children's cognitive development when in a smaller class and results also identified students in the reduced size class had gained more literacy skills throughout the 12 months the experiment was conducted.

Although there were no clear differences between the groups in regard to vocabulary or mathematics, the study makes recommendation that positive results for the reduced classes would be increased if teachers had participated in professional development strategies that aim to maximise their effectiveness with smaller classrooms.

With increasing pressure on teachers due to work intensification, class size can have a significant impact on a teacher's workload.

The study states that smaller classes have been found to reduce teacher stress levels, which contribute to a better learning environment through improved teacher-child interactions and indirectly by reducing teacher turnover.

To download the full study, see www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885200619300687

Welcome to new ALP representative

New NSW Shadow Minister for Early Childhood, Jodie Harrison was a guest speaker at the IEUA NSW/ACT Early Childhood Conference held in Sydney on 7 September. Harrison replaced Kate Washington, who attended two previous conferences.

Harrison said she was familiar with the turf through her work with the United Voice union, and she would be "jumping up and down" about pay parity for early childhood teachers.

She said she recognised the first five years of a child's life were fundamentally important for their development and recognised early childhood teachers did "incredible work" in that field.

She would be pushing for early childhood education to become more prominent in policy discussions and funding arrangements.



The invisible leadership **SUPERPOWER**



Recently, a well established and highly regarded early childhood centre received news that quickly made the entire team feel overwhelmed, Leadership, Neuro-linguistic and Conversational Intelligence Coach Sarah Moore writes.

They instantly went from being engaged, focused and productive to a place of heightened 'distrust'. Distrust is not tangible, but rather it's a feeling of negative energy which can breed quickly within a team.

In fact, based on the life's work of organisational anthropologist Judith E Glaser, *Conversational Intelligence*, "within 10 feet of another person, the process of connectivity begins and through this connection we feel what others feel". In the instance of 'distrust', this feeling can permeate a team just as easily as the common cold.

So, what was it that moved this effective team of early childhood professionals to a state of 'distrust'? Simply, it was a written notification that their Assessment and Rating process had commenced. A regulatory authority email of less than 20 words sent an entire team into a place of perceived danger and uncertainty!

As human beings, we are programmed to anticipate and protect ourselves from threat and harm. For many directors and early childhood leaders, personal and professional identity is intrinsically caught up in the success of their centre. The very thought that they could be heading towards a less than exceeding rating can overwhelm a director and their team.

The impact at times like this can be extremely detrimental to the operations of a service, but also very harmful to the overall health and wellbeing of the team, in addition to the children and families supported by the service. Let's not forget Glaser's observations that feelings can be shared between people just by physical proximity alone.

Impact of uncertainty

It is vital for educators and service leaders to understand the neurological impact of uncertainty and threat.

The Assessment and Rating process is a useful example because it can be such an intense process experienced over a set period. The really important work that educators and service leaders perform, all their energy and time investment, ends up publicly measured under a few distinct headings (National Quality Standards areas).

Like exam conditions, the Assessment and Rating process can place people under an enormous amount of pressure. Everyone wants to present the best of themselves and their services. This is a time for educators to celebrate and showcase the multidimensional aspects of their work and the profound impact they have on the children and the families they support.

However, there is often a gap between what people want to portray and what actually transpires. And this can largely be explained by the nature of the Assessment and Rating process itself and a lack of understanding of the neurological impact of threat. That is, people don't have an awareness of how their brains respond under that kind of pressure.

After the visit from the assessor, people nearly always say there were things they omitted or didn't even think to include in the QUIP. What this suggests is that during the assessment process, directors and their teams are operating in an elevated space of distrust. They are coming from a place of protection rather than a place of high trust. In a high trust environment, they might otherwise be primed to share, explore and be open and receptive to the assessor.

This facilitates them sharing the information that the assessor needs to hear. Instead what happens is they

shut down and lose the ability to highlight the often obvious and key details the assessor needs. Under a threat environment, people lose their voice and, with that, the opportunity to showcase the wonderful work of their centre. This can snowball when individual team members become nervous and stressed, often fearing judgement and rejection. And before you know it the sense of achievement evaporates, ability to demonstrate a wealth of knowledge disappears and their ability to showcase experience is diminished.

Threat to transparency

Although we are hard wired for self protection, we're also inherently social. Successful leaders can make sure that the latter instinct trumps the former simply by fostering a transparent environment in which everyone can share and discuss thoughts, experiences and ideas openly. Transparency and understanding is cultivated through the process of acknowledging how people feel, then giving them space to breathe into those feelings. But it isn't just about sharing feelings, the key step is to then create intentions about how they would like to feel in order to create the best outcomes for themselves and the centre. This process sends a strong signal to everyone's lower brain that 'trust is in the air'. Sharing this experience with a team can increase levels of oxytocin, a social bonding hormone, which promotes collaboration, connection and trusting behaviours and essentially just makes people feel good.

So, you can see, by applying some basic techniques and developing an understanding of what is happening neurologically, it is possible for the Assessment and Rating process to be a valuable team building process. Instead of a traumatic experience, it can be a way of validating and evidencing 'what you do' and 'how you do it'.

This is about appreciating quality and excellence as well as grasping the opportunity for improvement by

identifying the blind spots and things that you may have overlooked before. Leaders can take their teams on a journey of exploration in a celebratory way so that the process becomes more important than the rating itself. This is about fostering a heartfelt connection for early childhood professionals and the space in which they work.

Co-creating an aspirational roadmap can help teams to understand all the different elements to the process: the timeline, the people involved and, importantly, the outcomes the centre wants to create. This can be a visual recipe that includes 'feelings' the team aspire to and also celebratory milestones based on the team's shared view of success.

Individuals and teams, even in 'protect' mode, can become more open and trusting. Priming for connection is a really good way of starting the internal conversation with ourselves first and foremost and then with our teams.

This allows us to acknowledge what is coming up for people and how they feel about it and start moving into creating an aspirational journey. Through that process we can hold ourselves accountable. We can see where we belong, what is required of us and then identify the feelings that we want to have while we move through that journey.

With more conscious leadership we can measure our success as leaders and discern whether we need to adjust some of the process or mechanisms in order to ensure people are neurologically kept in that 'air of trust'. We want to protect our team from moving into our primitive brains where we are more likely to feel a lack of safety and certainty.

By being open to explore team emotions, we make the invisible visible, we quell our primitive brain response and give space for conversations that build trust. Putting relationships before tasks helps us to understand different perspectives and pull together, even during an intense experience like the Assessment and Rating process.

If you would like to obtain a copy of *How to Thrive During an Assessment and Rating Process* email Sarah@earlyeducationleadership.com

“For many directors and early childhood leaders, personal and professional identity is intrinsically caught up in the success of their centre.”





Accreditation for NSW early childhood teachers

Merise Bickley, Head, Early Childhood at the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), discusses how early childhood teachers can use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards) to reflect on their teaching practice.

As teachers begin their careers, they develop their practice and work towards accreditation at Proficient Teacher – the mandatory level of the Standards. The process for achieving Proficient Teacher provides teachers with a structured induction to the profession that consolidates the skills and knowledge they developed in their teaching qualification.

Once a teacher achieves accreditation at Proficient Teacher, they maintain their practice and currency of knowledge by continuing to use the Standards to reflect on their practice and to inform their professional development goals.

Engaging with the Standards

The Standards were developed by the teaching profession. They describe what effective teachers need to know and be able to do at four career stages: Graduate, Proficient Teacher, Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher.

Engaging with the Standards involves reflecting on the 37 Standard Descriptors for a career stage to identify teaching practice and the impact on child learning.

Teachers can interrogate each Standard Descriptor by asking:

- what is the practice I would be expected to show?
- what is the impact I am expected to have?
- what do I need to know and do to meet and demonstrate this Standard Descriptor?

Using these questions to reflect on teaching practice and impact is key to engaging with the Standards.

Pedagogical documentation organises information to make young children's learning visible. Unpacking each Standard Descriptor to identify the practice and the

impact described can help teachers better articulate and make teaching practice visible.

As an example, let's look at the teaching practice and impact described in Standard Descriptor 2.2.2: Organise content into coherent, well sequenced learning and teaching programs.

Teaching practice and impact

Standard Descriptor		
Practice	Organise content...	Examples Documentation of extended investigations or projects.
Impact	...into coherent, well-sequenced learning and teaching programs.	Where holistic learning for children across a range of content areas is evident.

Working with teacher colleagues to unpack the Standard Descriptors in this way can provide opportunities for early childhood teachers to build collegial networks and share expertise across the profession.

Australian Professional Standards for teachers

- 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.
- Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

Visit educationstandards.nsw.edu.au for more information. Get in touch with NESA at ectaccreditation@nesa.nsw.edu.au

DECISION PENDING in landmark equal pay case

It became known as the ‘EROsaurus’ by the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch. The Equal Remuneration Case (ERO) has finally concluded and a decision from the Fair Work Commission is expected between December to April.

It is estimated a million words have been generated by the Union in preparing and arguing this case. The Union has two key bases for its claim, which, if successful, could be life changing for early childhood teachers.

The first is a claim for an Equal Remuneration Order, seeking higher rates of pay for teachers in early childhood services, because they are paid less than male employees who have similar skills, qualifications and responsibility.

IEU witnesses included male engineers and male primary teachers as comparator groups with early childhood teachers, who are overwhelmingly female.

Evidence was supplied during the proceedings that early childhood education has been affected by perceptions that lower the perceived value of the work in the eyes of the community.

In particular, perceptions that the work involves caring for children and as such is work that women are ‘inherently’ capable of doing, rather than complex skills and knowledge learnt through university training.

The IEU wishes to pay tribute to members who volunteered to be witnesses in this case, and withstood grilling from opposition barristers. Centre-based witnesses included Gabe Connell, Emma Cullen, Amanda Sri Hilaire, Lauren Hill, Emily Vane-Tempest and Margaret Gleeson.

Primary and high school teachers, engineers, academics and IEU staff were also witnesses. Kenan Toker, 27, is a software engineer with Langdale Consultants who took a day off work to attend the commission in support of early childhood teachers.

Witness Jenny Finlay travelled from Queensland to make a statement. Finlay is Teacher/Director at Borilla Community Kindergarten in Emerald, in rural Queensland. She is also the Early Childhood Representative for IEUA QNT.

Rates too low

The second basis for the IEU claim is that the Teachers’ Modern Award rates have been set too low and do not reflect the proper work value of any teacher, including teachers in schools.

The award rate for teachers has not moved to reflect increases in work value since at least 1995.

The award rate does not take into consideration how much the work environment has altered over the last 20 years.

The early childhood setting comes with additional challenges of being noisy, chaotic, not in large part equipped for adults in the rooms and outdoor areas, and – necessarily – full of very young children who have little experience of working in groups, difficulty controlling emotion and following instructions.

The union argued that the award contains rates of pay that are considerably below the rates necessary to achieve the modern awards objective of being a fair and relevant safety net.

The vast majority of primary and secondary school teachers in both

the government and non government sector are employed under enterprise agreements that provide for rates in excess of those claimed by the IEU.

However most early childhood teachers in NSW and the ACT are paid at or only slightly above the award rate, which means they are paid on average 22% to 30% less than their primary and secondary school teacher colleagues, and in some cases up to 49% less.

Former IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary John Quessy said “I am proud that we ran this case, proud that we committed the time, the resources and the money to see it through to the end when there were plenty of times when it looked just too hard and there was temptation to throw it all in – we did not yield to that temptation.”

Context of case for IEUA-QNT members

While the outcome of this case is critical to securing pay equity for teachers in NSW early childhood education centres – the majority of IEUA-QNT early childhood education members have, through their collective agreements, already secured pay rates which provide equity with their teacher counterparts in Catholic and state schools.

Terry Burke, IEUA QNT Branch Secretary

Compiled by journalist Sue Osborne





Funding our future

Seminal research into the long term benefits of early childhood education has revealed investment in the sector doubles the return to Australian children, families, businesses and the economy – so why is the Federal Government failing to provide the funding the sector needs? Journalist Jessica Willis investigates.

For every one dollar invested in early childhood education, our economy will see a return of a notional two dollars over a child's life, which is a higher return than many of our nation building infrastructure projects.

Why then, is the Federal Government continuing to provide a weak and disappointing funding model?

Investing in our future

Released this year, *A smarter investment for a smarter future* is the first comprehensive Australian analysis of the economic impact of early childhood education.

While we already know that the early years create the foundations for all future learning, health and wellbeing, we now have evidence that quality investment into Australian early childhood education benefits children, their parents/carers, governments and employers.

The report found the current Australian system, which offers 15 hours of early childhood education delivered by a Bachelor qualified teacher in the year before school, provides a significant return on investment.

Jane Hunt, CEO of The Front Project which commissioned the report, said its findings highlight the importance of investing in quality early childhood education for all facets of society.

"We all want our children to be more and have more than we had, and this report demonstrates that early learning is a vital part of making this possible," Hunt said.

"It's also vital to our economic stability as the world of work becomes more complex.

"We know that 65% of children today will do jobs that have not yet been invented, so the reality is that our children will need to learn how to learn – early childhood education enables this.

"Early learning develops the skills needed to engage in lifelong education and succeed through career changes, and we now have the data that shows Australia's universal early childhood education policy could double its return on investment.

"The benefits of early education can be seen immediately and returns continue as those children become adults.

The report also bolsters the argument that quality early childhood education should be expanded to children two years before they start prep.

Key findings of a smarter investment for a smarter future report:

- collectively, children see a \$997 million increase in lifetime earnings, educational achievement and employment, and better health and wellbeing
- families see a collective \$1.463 billion boost in earnings for parents who can return to work or increase their hours of work
- business and the economy see \$319 million boost in productivity from a more educated workforce, and
- governments see increased tax revenue of \$313 million every year and decreased spending on health, welfare and justice worth \$1.194 billion.

Evidence overwhelming

Research into the extensive benefits of investing in quality and accessible early childhood education has been

around for decades. IEUA-QNT member Vikki Hartog said she first became aware of these benefits at a conference presentation by Professor of Child Development and Education Iram Siraj-Blatchford in the early 2000s.

“The early childhood sector has some of the most obvious short term as well as less obvious long term benefits regarding successful education outcomes for all students,” she said.

“[Siraj-Blatchford] demonstrated the positive long term benefits to school outcomes for children who attended high quality early childhood education settings and I realised that we, as early childhood education teachers, are critical in setting up children for success.”

Other notable research includes Nobel Prize winner Professor James Heckman’s work on the economic gains in investing in early childhood education which has shown quality early childhood education heavily influences health, economic and social outcomes for individuals and society at large.

Yet despite the evidence of the significant impact of early childhood education, successive Australian governments have failed to put the best interests of all Australians first by choosing to renew funding on a year-by-year basis, rather than commit to a long term, high quality investment strategy.

Permanent not piecemeal funding needed

The current federal funding model is the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (Universal Access).

It is a federal/state agreement that commits the Federal Government to fund states and territories to provide all Australian children with access to a kindergarten program for 600 hours per year, in the year before they start school.

Universal access means that services are available to all children, irrespective of their circumstances and ensures children in rural and remote as well as low/socioeconomic communities have access to quality early childhood education.

Currently, the Australian government drip feeds the funding on an annual basis and can decide to cease funding Universal Access at any stage, much like their ‘subtle’ attempt to withdraw \$440 million of funding in the May 2018 budget.

This tactic means that current Universal Access funding is only guaranteed until the end of 2020.

The fact that the government can, and has attempted to, abandon Universal Access by stealth is shameful.

Australia currently ranks below the Organisation of Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) average in spending on early childhood education as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), trailing behind Chile, Israel, Estonia and Slovenia.

According to 2019 OECD figures, Australia invests 0.57 per cent of GDP in early childhood education and care, the OECD average being 0.8 per cent of GDP.

In comparison, countries such as Sweden, Iceland and Norway all spend at least one per cent of GDP on early childhood education.

World Bank data from 2015 shows that of 207 countries examined, the majority provided two to three years of pre-primary education and only 11 provided one year: Algeria, Angola, Bermuda, Gibraltar, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Australia.

Secure jobs and quality education

Recurrent and ongoing funding commitments will lead to improved service viability, planning, job security and quality.

The extension of Universal Access to three year olds would also ensure Australia meets international benchmarks.

Hartog said uncertainty regarding continued funding, and the Federal Government’s failure to provide a long-term commitment, conveyed a total lack of understanding about the value and benefits of quality early childhood education.

“It undermines the professionalism and contribution early childhood education teachers make and, if cuts need to be made, we will be the ones who suffer,” Hartog said.

“For example, long term professional development plans are made but these may not be possible as they depend on continued funding.”



The current system also means many jobs in the early childhood education sector continue to be insecure, as staffing arrangements depend heavily upon funding.

“Educated and experienced teachers need funding security to continue their work,” said Hartog.

In addition to permanent funding, Hartog believes extending Universal Access to three year olds is critical.

“If one year of high quality early childhood education is good, then two years is even better,” she said.

“I’ve had many children who start as a three year old and continue on when they are four.

“The growth in all areas of development over two continuous years is profound and I’ve had several prep teachers comment that it is obvious to them which children have attended such programs.

“Funding early childhood education is an investment in the future of our children, families, communities and the country as a whole – it’s time for that to be recognised and funded appropriately,” Hartog said.

To read the full report, visit https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/images/downloads/ECO_ANALYSIS_Full_Report.pdf

MENTAL HEALTH

among top three health concerns for young children

Supporting children's mental health in the early years of their education is vital, writes journalist Mykeala Campanini.

Significant mental health problems can occur from a young age, with young children showing clear characteristics of anxiety disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders, depression and post traumatic stress disorders.

Research shows direct correlation between the emotional wellbeing of children and the functioning of their caregivers, homes and communities, highlighting the importance of early intervention in early childhood educational environments.

Judy Kynaston, General Manager of Early Childhood Australia's Be You team, said many interrelated factors affect children's mental health.

"Risk factors for children's mental health and wellbeing increase the likelihood of mental health issues developing during childhood and beyond and include internal (biological and psychological) family or environmental characteristics, and experiences and events that challenge social and emotional wellbeing," Kynaston said.

"When children observe positive and warm relationships between their family and educators, they will feel secure and accepted and have a positive sense of wellbeing.

"Therefore, the most effective approaches to mental health promotion are those that involve everyone in the community – teachers, children, young people and families."

Nadine Bartholomeusz-Raymond, General Manager of Education and Families for Beyond Blue, said one in seven young people aged between four and 17 has experienced a mental

health issue in the past 12 months, totalling 560,000 young people.

"A recent Beyond Blue survey of teachers and early learning service educators found 86% named mental health issues among the top three major health concerns for children," reported Bartholomeusz-Raymond.

"Two out of three believed anxiety was the most common mental health issue for children and young people, and one in five named depression."

The Be You Initiative

Teachers are often the first to notice when a child or young person may be struggling with their mental health, which is why Beyond Blue partnered with Early Childhood Australia and national youth mental health foundation Headspace to ensure all teachers across Australian early learning and school settings have the capacity to respond to mental health concerns of the children in their centres and schools.

"Be You officially launched in 2018 and builds on the success and learnings from five existing programs aimed at promoting social and emotional health and wellbeing for children in the education space," said Bartholomeusz-Raymond.

"The program is a mental health resource for educators. It's free to every early childhood education centre, primary and secondary school and aims to work with teachers to improve the mental health outcomes of generations of young Australians."

"By using Be You, teachers and learning communities can embed strategies that promote help seeking, create opportunities for career growth and personal development, and offer resources for staff to build a sense

of self efficacy," said Bartholomeusz-Raymond.

"It provides information on how to reduce and manage stress levels, maintain positive social interactions and how to seek support."

Resources for teachers

Early childhood teachers have access to the Be You professional learning resources that can be linked to their participating early childhood education centre or school and follows them should they change positions.

Teachers are also able to add their teacher registration number and state/territory to their profile to support their professional development requirements linked to teacher registration.

"Be You is for every Australian teacher, including preservice teachers, and offers a range of online tools, guides, resources and professional learning aimed at developing skills and knowledge to promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people," said Kynaston.

"The Be You professional learning resources consist of 13 content modules grouped under the five domains centred around Mentally Healthy Communities.

"The initiative is designed to benefit individual teachers as well as whole learning communities. Registered Be You Learning Communities will have access to a Be You Consultant so they can be supported every step of the way."

Visit <https://beyou.edu.au/> for more information and to register your learning community.

References:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/deep-dives/mental-health/>



Building bridges for bright beginnings

The changing nature of society has brought with it new challenges for early year learners and the teachers who are tasked with educating them, early childhood teachers Cathy Cuff and Tracey Sutton write.

Twenty first century parenting is different to parenting of the past. Children are spending more time in care due to the working commitments of their parents. The advancements in technology have increased children's screen time causing a decrease in social interactions, outdoor activities and play.

Some students seem to be arriving in kindergarten classrooms with skills that are less developed than is necessary for independent and successful learning. This, coupled with the higher expectations of the kindergarten curriculum, have seen more challenges placed on learners entering formal schooling for the first time.

Skills that are essential for academic learning appear to be less developed than previously. Appropriate oral language skills, which include speaking in complete sentences and having the ability to ask questions in order to gain knowledge and help with any problems they may encounter are lacking. Correct pronunciation of words and correct terms for everyday items, language and vocabulary should mature with age. This will lead to effective communication skills with peers, teachers and others.

Fine motor skills are important for all aspects of life, especially school life. Students need to be able to manipulate buttons and zippers in order to put on and remove articles of clothing, pack and unpack their own school bags, open their own lunch containers and packets – along with the highly important skills of holding and manipulating pencils for learning to write, turning one page at a time when learning to read and using exercise books, as well as using glue sticks and scissors correctly for expected activities.

The ability to listen actively and retain information is an extremely important skill. Skills include listening to more than one instruction at a time and following correctly and promptly without losing focus, being able to listen in a conversation and to another person's points of view. Listening skills are also needed for phonemic awareness, which is essential for all life and academic

learning particularly learning to read and write in the foundation years.

The onus now falls to early learning teachers across prior to school and kindergarten settings to facilitate the development of these skills for early learners.

Reliance on early learning

Society is relying on prior to school settings to provide essential building blocks for successful academic learning upon entering formal schooling. Now more than ever it is crucial for kindergarten teachers to engage in shared dialogue and reciprocal classroom visits with prior to school teachers to ensure the transition to formal schooling is simply a continuum of their learning and development.

Kindergarten teachers realise that students arrive at varying developmental stages, meaning that classrooms must provide for individual students at their point of learning.

The kindergarten classroom needs to reflect and facilitate the needs of 21st century learning, with the understanding that the world we are preparing them for does not yet exist.

Developing programs and activities within environments that allow for smooth transitions and the continuing development and reinforcement of diminishing skills are vital for the kindergarten classroom.

Building on from the foundations established by prior to school teachers and the opportunities they provide through play based learning, many kindergarten teachers are now embracing this pedagogy in their own classrooms. Play based learning in kindergarten provides continuity between home, prior to school settings and the wider world.

In addition, it encourages language skills, develops social and emotional skills, fine and gross motor skills and allows students to engage in problem solving and creativity. Play supports pre literacy and pre numeracy skills and encourages collaboration and resilience.

Through continued open dialogue and collaboration prior to school and kindergarten educators can continue to build bridges to provide bright beginnings for every student.

“The onus now falls to early learning teachers across prior-to-school and kindergarten settings to facilitate the development of these skills for early learners.”

“After all who children are and who we are as professionals are entangled – each shaping the other in a reciprocal relationship.”

A group of children wearing red baseball caps are playing outdoors. One child in the center is holding a black goggle up to their face. To their right, another child is holding a blue water balloon. In the background, a third child is holding a blue water gun. The children are all smiling and appear to be having fun. The background is a blurred green, suggesting a park or garden setting.

Children as activists and advocates

In early childhood education we have a long and rich history of advocating for children and their right to a quality education, as well as advocating for the value of ourselves as early childhood teachers and educators, early childhood consultant Stephen Gallen writes.

We have made some significant shifts and strides over the past few years. The introduction of the National Quality Framework in 2012 gave us a shared language to use and a recognised theoretical and practical knowledge base to draw on. Along with this came a change in professional identity with the term 'educator' and a new focus on the nature and quality of programs, curricula and outcomes for young children.

At the same time childcare and early childhood education has begun to figure more prominently in the national conversation and in the mainstream media. So why is it that the significant shifts in the last few years have not resulted in a shift in professional recognition? And on a cultural level, why have we been unable to shift the conversation about early childhood education and care (ECEC) from productivity, affordability and access (the concerns of the economy and of parents and society – in other words adult concerns) to conversations about the meaning, purpose and quality of ECEC (concerns more directly related to children, and also to teachers and educators)?

It's worth considering that at base, almost all of our claims for the worth of our profession and the work we do are informed by a particular (and increasingly outdated) construction of the 'child' who we educate and care for – they rely on a 'futures' oriented perspective of the child (Dahlberg et al, 1999).

Developmental psychology points us towards future developmental outcomes, education emphasises broad educational (learning) outcomes and future employment and economic results, while the 'care' and social interventionist lenses lead us to consider future social (and economic) benefits that will result from investment in the early years.

This idea of 'children as the future' and ECEC as an investment in this future, seems attractive as

a way of advocating for our work and our profession but what if instead of an effective argument towards valuing and respecting both children and early childhood teachers, this popular image actually undermines and terminally limits our struggle for recognition and respect?

Within the context of the National Quality Framework, children are characterised as competent – full of strength and potential, with a capacity to participate actively in the groups and communities that they belong to. This active participation is not just seen as a matter of capacity or potential, but also a matter of rights. This image of the child as a full human being, an agent and a citizen has gradually been emerging into view (Cannella, 1997, Dahlberg et al. 1999). Maybe it's time that this started to inform our own professional image as educators. After all who children are and who we are as professionals are entangled – each shaping the other in a reciprocal relationship.

We have attempted for many years to argue for the long term economic and social benefits of our work, but the trouble with pinning our worth and value on the results of the future is that our contributions are never really visible, never really seen, because they are always deferred to the future, in the same way children's value is seen as a potential only.

When we start to view children as human beings now we start to see our ECEC services in a different light too. They are not just spaces or enclosures for achieving outcomes for the future, for preparing children for life and for school, and to one day take their place in the community (Moss & Petrie, 2002). Our services are spaces where children are already living their lives, here and now, already communities where children are actively participating as citizens (Dahlberg et al, 1999). Carla Rinaldi (2006) talks about the possibility of constructing our services as productive and generative spaces, that make a visible and valued contribution to the cultural and social life of the community in the present as well as in the future.

Maybe it's time to start advocating more vividly, more proudly as well as more loudly for what children (and we) contribute to

society and culture here and now. What might be possible if we started turning our attention and our advocacy to describing and articulating the complexity (as well as the mundanity) of our daily lives together? All of the complexities, challenges and opportunities that arise out of facilitating and navigating groups of human beings living their lives together.

It requires a radical shift for us to begin to reconceptualise and re-describe our work as work that involves facilitating and enabling children's active participation and engagement in the community, rather than as educational or caregiving work. In other words to describe this as work 'with' children rather than work 'for' or 'to' them. To stop talking about education and care and instead talk of how we amplify children's voices and their activism. Maybe it's time to stop being advocates for children and support them to advocate for themselves. Such a shift might also lead to a similar shift in how we as a profession are seen and valued in the broader community.

The work that we do, and the work that children do is really important, really valuable, really productive social, political and cultural work, as much as it is an educational and economic investment in the future. It matters. We know this. We just need to make this visible to others.

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Teaching in capitalist times

When many of our older early childhood teachers in NSW graduated their workplace was probably a small community based service, or one managed by Kindergarten Union or Sydney Day Nursey Schools Association. In 2019 our world looks different, with corporate and for-profit services dominating. How does this impact teachers? What is a teacher's role when early education becomes a product? As children become widgets has the act of teaching changed?

As advocates in the sector, and the voices behind the *Early Education Show* podcast, this is an issue of ongoing concern to us. Almost half of the entire education and care sector are now for-profit services and in some parts of the sector such as long day care, the proportion is as high as 70%.

We believe that the changing composition of the sector impacts on the day to day work of teachers. In this article we examine four key ways we see that impact playing out.

Push to keep customers (ie families) happy to maintain occupancy rates

In late August/early September our largest corporate provider of early education and care, G8, lost \$152 million in market value when their interim profit fell because they couldn't get their occupancy rate above 71.3%.

What will be the impact of this on G8 teachers directly and on all teachers indirectly?

Curriculum will be affected. Risky topics that might upset families will be halted. Things that families want rather than what children need (eg early reading and writing) will be prioritised. Teachers will be urged to become actual creators of products (the hallmark of capitalism) for families, eg Mother's and Father's Day presents.

Teachers will be co-opted into marketing the service. Documentation will be about pretty pictures and engaging stories.

Pressure will be placed on teachers to do those things that will assure high ratings. NQF will become more about the way of doing things 'the right way' to achieve high ratings.

The role of the teacher will be undermined. Corporate providers will have to create a narrative that teachers are not that important to ensure that exemptions for teachers

remain in place under the regulations. We saw this in the IEUA wage case where the Australian Childcare Alliance were arguing that the NQF and EYLF have made it easier for teachers. As if!

Teachers who are directors will be under immense pressure re numbers. The focus of their work will be ensuring occupancy.

Teachers at not-for-profits will have to work to retain parents under sustained marketing of for-profit services.

Competition between services rather than co-operation will become the norm. This means teachers will not be able to grow professionally by learning from each other.

Impact of VET training becoming a commodity

Training is now a product like everything else. Educators obtaining Diplomas and Certificate IIIs are choosing courses based on the lowest cost, the fastest study options. The quality of VET courses do not matter to for-profit training companies plus they market to everybody. People that perhaps shouldn't be educators will obtain qualifications – this will impact on teachers' day to day work.

The influence of capitalism on innovation and risk taking

The capitalism story has many friends. Those friends are customer satisfaction, never a default in the payment of fees, a blemish free compliance record and a healthy cohort of indentured slaves to do the important work of keeping everyone happy. But where does risk and innovation fit into that story? People love innovation... it brings them new products, new ways of doing things that frees up their lives and makes every day more interesting. Risk creates opportunity for innovation, for trying out new things or taking a different, perhaps unpopular view, except in early childhood education.

In early childhood education we may be beset with an unreasonable fear that risk and innovation may adversely affect children or offend customers. This could result in changing sentiment among families (customers) who may refuse to pay fees or could take their 'business' elsewhere.

Regulation is one of the greatest attributes of our ECEC system. We believe regulation and the setting of standards has a most important role to play for children's wellbeing



“Happy staff give you happy children, happy children give you happy families and happy families pay you money happily, giving you happy shareholders.”

and safety but the implementation of those regulations could be capitalism's greatest friend and the enemy of risk and innovation. Try something new? Is it possible you could be hit with a punitive compliance notice? How do you explain that to parents. Will they tell you you have violated the terms of your agreement to keep them happy at all times? Share a different view on social issues that conflicts with local community views? No need to tolerate difference – there's a centre down the road talking their talk and walking their walk.

Innovation and risk could affect your utilisation and therefore your very existence

Marketing every little bit of the sector. One of the fundamental principles of capitalism is that everything has a price. Do you manage the email inbox for your service? You might have noticed over the last decade or so an alarming increase in the amount of things that are being marketed to you.

Need a guaranteed 5% lift in occupancy? Our innovative waiting list platform can make it happen?

Want to save time and make that pesky documentation easy? Our children's learning software will make parents so happy!

Worried about Assessment and Rating? Our templates and checklist will make an Exceeding rating a sure thing!

It seems like these days there's no part of the sector that can't be separated out, 'innovated' or 'made simple' and then sold back to us at a tidy profit.

The marketing goes outwards as well. High quality early education services are a thing of the past – now they have to be 'boutique'. Learning programs for children aren't clear and child focused – they're 'dynamic' and 'innovative'. Services aren't part of a sector of professionals anymore – they're 'unique' and 'exceptional'.

This kind of marketing does more than just divert our time and resources and devalue the work teachers do. It breaks us apart and sets us against each other, fighting for a precious few percentage points of occupancy. If that happened in services, it wouldn't meet the National Quality Standard. Why have we let it happen to the sector as a whole?

This article is based on an episode of the *Early Education Show* podcast by Lisa Bryant, Leanne Gibbs and Liam McNicholas which was recorded at the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Education Conference on 7 September. Details: <https://www.earlyeducationshow.com/about>

Break loose from boring play



Loose parts play may not be a new idea but it's a good one, for the children and for the planet when using re-use resources, the Reverse Garbage team write.

Interest in the concept is experiencing a resurgence – perhaps because teachers emerging from tertiary studies are of an age where they themselves haven't been exposed to this type of play. Or perhaps because it is an effective way of introducing children to sustainability.

What are loose parts?

Loose parts are open ended items that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in countless ways. They don't have a prescribed use, come with no directions, and very few rules. Loose parts play supports invention, divergent thinking, problem solving, team work and activates children's imagination.

The term 'loose parts' was coined by architect Simon Nicholson in 1971 to describe open ended materials that can be used and manipulated in many ways. Even then it was not a new way to play, but by giving it a

name and backing it up with research and theory, it became a more conscious method of play.

Earlier generations experienced childhood very differently. From a young age they had the freedom to play outside with whatever (and whoever) they could find – the only boundary was they had to be home when the streetlights came on.

This is now

This freedom is rare these days, particularly in suburban areas. When children do have the opportunity to play outside, it's often on the school or local park's fixed playground equipment – usually the standard slide, ladder, swings combo – with a seesaw and a rope climb if the kids are lucky. And live grass is even becoming scarce.

The point is, this equipment usually has only one prescribed and obvious way of using it, therefore very little imagination, creativity, exploration or problem solving is required. When children dare to stray from that purpose, ie going up the slide instead of down, they are often stopped for 'breaking the rules'.

As equipment has been made safer, it has become more sterile and less

stimulating. Reverse Garbage recently delivered a starter kit of loose parts play equipment to a Sydney school where the children had completed their own project on loose parts play and decided they wanted to give it a go.

"They recognised that the kids at their school were too familiar with the play equipment they'd had for years, and were bored, so they sought their teachers' help with invigorating their playground with loose parts," Brett Lyon, Education Manager at Reverse Garbage, said.

The impact was immediate. "When we arrived to deliver their loose parts play items, the kids worked together to roll large barrels and spools to the play space. They had to problem solve together to find the best way of moving the heavier items. It was precious to watch."

Benefits and opportunities

It is well documented that play is one of the best ways for children to learn. They learn to take turns, negotiate, communicate, build teams and organise.

Those learnings multiply when playing with open ended items in loose parts play. When approaching an item that has no set purpose, a

child's mind starts turning over the possibilities. 'What can I do with this? What can I add to this? How heavy is this? Who can help me move it?'

Loose parts play empowers and stimulates creativity. There's no right or wrong way to use an object if it has no prescribed purpose. Every child will have a different approach to every object. A cardboard tube can be anything from a ball tunnel, to a telescope, sound tube, microphone, flagpole, limbo stick and so much more.

Loose parts play promotes inclusivity. Children who don't participate in ball sports, or gymnastics or on the monkey bars tend to engage with the loose parts. Some choose to play individually and others work together. The beauty of loose parts play is that every child can find their place and engage in a way that suits them. No one is advantaged or disadvantaged. The unpredictable nature of the materials brings kids together as the play becomes focused on the objects rather than physical achievements and competition.

The Sydney Playground Project found children are more engaged when they have the opportunity to play with materials that are intriguing and require some level of physical exertion. This means more time being physically, socially and mentally active.

Loose parts play isn't restricted to the playground. It can also be explored in the classroom for STEAM learning.

How do I choose loose parts?

The Sydney Playground Project compiled a helpful guide to choosing loose parts.

1. The object has no obvious play purpose
2. Encourages cooperation and gross motor development (heavy, big, takes more than one child to move)
3. Has multiple potential uses (eg, children can go inside of or on top of the object) or can be easily combined with other objects
4. Readily used in creative, challenging, or uncertain ways
5. Promotes interesting sensory experiences
6. Free from potential hazards that cannot be easily seen and managed by a child (eg, not likely to break easily), and
7. Sustainable (re-use resources).

Where do I find them?

Loose parts are everywhere! There's no need to go to a catalogue or buy anything new for this type of play.



"Loose parts play empowers and stimulates creativity. There's no right or wrong way to use an object if it has no prescribed purpose."



That defeats the purpose.

Start by asking your students' families. Give them an idea of what you are looking for: bottle tops for counters, saucepans and old kitchen utensils for the sandpit or mud kitchen.

Contact local communities and businesses for donations of things they no longer need as it saves them having to dispose of their unwanted goods.

In fact, that's how Reverse Garbage started 45 years ago. A group of switched-on teachers recognised the offcuts discarded by local industry would be valuable resources in their classrooms – saving them money and the environment.

Reverse Garbage is a not-for-profit charity in Sydney that rescues over 260 tonnes of industrial and commercial discards by giving them new life with educators and many others including artists, upcyclers, DIY enthusiasts, tinkerers, set builders, window dressers, community organisations, festivals and charities.

It is the place to go for the unusual loose parts items that you just won't find anywhere else. The Marrickville warehouse is filled with interesting items that stimulate children's imaginations. Drop by seven days a week and choose your own loose parts, or if you live further afield, send an email to info@reversegarbage.org.au with a

general description of your space, number, age range and budget and we'll curate a kit for you.

Reverse Garbage also run professional development sessions that will help you introduce loose parts play into your curriculum. Starting at \$1200, a half day session includes:

- delivery and unpacking of a curated starter kit of loose play materials
- demonstrations for the school leaders on safe lifting, storing and setting up
- class demonstration sessions, and
- post play review with staff, a professional development session and implementation discussion.

This program can be tailored to include parents and the community, or a consultation on other areas, eg, playground construction, sustainability curriculum.

Using re-use materials in play is a fantastic way of starting conversations about how every item is created from valuable resources withdrawn from our planet. We can't put them back, so we have to make sure we re-use them as many times as we can. These conversations start a framework for their sustainable future.
www.sydneyplaygroundproject.com
www.reversegarbage.org.au
 Hut 8, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville
 Phone 02 9569 3132.



Fostering scientific interest at an early age

Jayne Ion, courtesy of Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

Kindergartens are full of young scientists who are innately curious about the world around them, with research showing children naturally engage with scientific concepts while they play and explore – meaning early childhood education teachers have an important role to help children investigate and experiment, journalist Jessica Willis writes.

Our world is increasingly dominated by science and technology. In order for children to be prepared for future education and jobs, they must develop science skills and dispositions early.

Strength in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) has also been linked to increased economic prosperity in developed countries.

Interests form early on

The foundations of an interest in science form in the early years and have long term implications for participation and learning.

Research has found many young children develop domain specific interests that persist for months and even years, including interests in science related topics and activities, such as birds, dinosaurs and mathematics.

Researchers studying early childhood interests in general have found:

- children as young as three years old have strong and individualised interests focused around activities, objects, themes, or topic domains
- gender differences in these interests are already apparent at this early age, and
- these interests are associated with attention, recall, play behaviours, temperament, and persistence.

Early childhood education teachers are expertly placed to foster interest in science and broaden engagement with science topics, careers and hobbies.

Science experiments

There are many experiments which introduce STEM concepts that are appropriate for early childhood education.

Ben Carew is part of the University of Queensland's Science Demonstration Group which regularly perform science experiments in kindergartens, schools and the community.

Carew said it is important to show young children that science is fun and interactive.

"We want young children to think science is an exciting experience, so we try to keep our demonstrations and workshops highly engaging," Carew said.

"The younger that children are exposed to science and scientific processes, the more they grow their intuition for



Ben Carew from The University of Queensland.



it – a lot of people have trouble understanding science later in life because they perceive it as unintuitive.

“We find young children to be quite perceptive, and although we tailor demonstrations and explanations to be simpler and more age appropriate, the important thing is engaging them in the scientific process.

“This means we always ask our young audience to describe what they think is happening in the experiment and guess why or how it is happening.

“It’s about trying to make them think, ‘how did we do it?’”

Research has suggested that there is sometimes a lack of confidence amongst teachers when teaching, developing and extending children’s STEM knowledge.

However, teachers should keep in mind the scientific process is about questioning, investigating, observing and communicating.

“A lot of people can get hung up on scientific facts and neglect the fact that science isn’t about a body of facts but a process, and you can teach this process to anyone – kindergarten children included,” said Carew.

“Young children are naturally scientific because they are so curious; our demonstrations merely guide them through the process of inquiry.”

Another perception that may hinder teachers from conducting experiments is that they need to be big and require cumbersome equipment.

“There are so many simple experiments you can do to demonstrate areas such as physics and chemistry,” he said.

“Some of my favourite experiments use everyday objects you can buy at the supermarket or use recycled materials.

“For example, bouncy balls to demonstrate energy transfer, bubbles to demonstrate chemistry or bi-carb soda and vinegar ‘explosions’ to show chemical reactions.”

Managing risks and safety

Members should always be wary of the risks involved when conducting experiments in kindergartens, including possible allergies to materials (eg, nuts or latex), choking hazards, hygiene practices, the strength and heaviness of objects and any other foreseeable impacts of the activities planned.

Always ensure you adequately assess activities, document the materials, tools and procedures to be used in risk assessments, and discuss in detail with your colleagues the potential risks involved, as well as any incident response plans that may be needed.

Following any organisational guidelines that are in place and having all staff on the same page will go a long way to making sure all risks are minimised and help keep the fun in science.

You can also get information from our Union on your rights and responsibilities for risk management in your roles.

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https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/educators_guide_to_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf

Resources

Here are four great resources for implementing STEM in early childhood education including age-appropriate science experiments.

The National Science Week Early Childhood Activities booklet contains inspiring ideas and experiments, including ‘cloning’ plants, sensory gardens, super space science and fireworks in a jar.

https://www.scienceweek.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Science_Week_Early_Childhood_ideas_WEB.pdf

The Early Childhood STEM Booklist compiled by Early Learning STEM Australia (ELSA) aims to develop young children’s interest and engagement in STEM through picture books. According to ELSA, picture books can act as hooks to explore as well as learn about new things, and introduce new vocabulary, concepts and ways of thinking.

https://elsa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/STEM-Booklist_Publishing-040518.pdf

The Australian Museum allows teachers across Australia to loan a ‘Museum in a Box’ for up to three weeks. There are over 30 different boxes containing real museum specimens, casts, artefacts, dioramas, images, digital resources, books and teacher notes. The museum also provides information to assist teachers completing risk assessments.

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/teachers/museum-box/>

IndigiSTEM are resources providing easy to follow activities and accompanying information about Indigenous culture, including bush foods, astronomy and creating bush shelters. Founder and resource developer, Debbie Hoyer, is a Dunghutti woman with a passion for STEM who wanted to see preschools and kindergartens drawing on materials which not only engage children in STEM but celebrate Indigenous Australia. <https://www.rileycallieresources.com.au/>

Your questions answered

Danielle Wilson is an industrial officer for IEUA-QNT and Tina Smith is an organiser for the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch. They answer your industrial and legal questions as they relate to state laws and regulations.



Dear Danielle

I am a teacher working in a kindy and I was talking with a friend of mine who is also a teacher working in another centre. We have both been teaching the same length of time and we are both working as directors in affiliate kindergartens, and yet my friend gets better entitlements than me. Why would this be the case?

Linda

Dear Linda

Our members who work in early childhood education settings generally have an enterprise agreement that applies to their centre. However, many of these are treated as individual worksites and the negotiations for an agreement take place at the individual workplace. This means that there is capacity for different conditions and entitlements to be negotiated. While this sounds okay, it is not ideal because it offers too much room for hard fought conditions to be undermined.

We do our best to keep a close eye on the trends in bargaining in our early childhood sector, because we know how important it is to maintain consistent conditions for our members.



We rely on our members to know their agreements and to alert us to their concerns in bargaining. We can see clear benefit for our members in the concept of industry/sector-wide bargaining. Having industry/sector-wide bargaining would offer much greater protection of wages and entitlements than what our members currently have.

It is good to know that our members are discussing these matters between worksites, and this networking is crucial to keeping the conversation going and ensuring that everyone is informed about industry standards and what is happening in other worksites. We definitely encourage our members to report these differences to us so that we can work with our members across our centres to try and improve conditions for all.

Danielle

Dear Tina

I am a four year trained early childhood teacher and I have been working as the only teacher in a private long day care centre near Wollongong.

I currently am paid for my lunch break because I am needed for child/staff ratios. However, recently my employer has not been paying my lunch break while I'm on annual or personal leave.

My question is, can my employer not pay me for my lunch break when I am on annual leave and/or take personal leave?

Michelle

Dear Michelle

Under the *Fair Work Act*, section 90, Payment for annual leave, and section 99, Payment for paid personal/carer's leave, you are entitled to be paid your ordinary rate of pay or what might be called your base rate of pay.

If you are ordinarily paid during your lunch break because you are required to stay on premises for ratios under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, then this is counted as time worked and you are

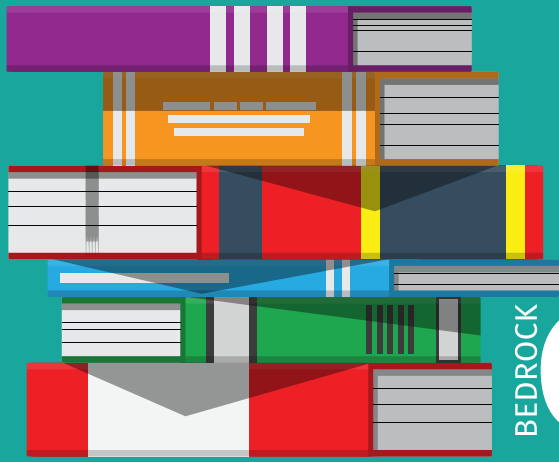


paid for this time. It is considered part of your base rate of pay.

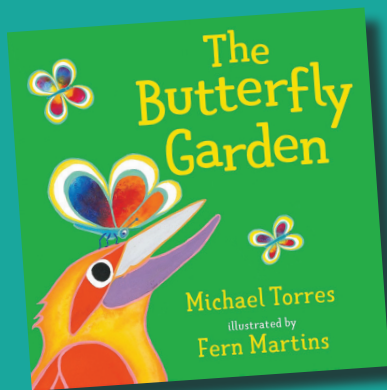
Your employer has stated that you are required to remain on premises to meet regulations, hence the time you start work and the time you finish are your base hours. Therefore, your employer must pay you for your lunch break when you are on personal/carer's leave or annual leave.

It would be remiss of me not to mention at this time that even though you are being paid your lunch break for ratios, this does not mean you don't get between 20 minutes and 30 minutes time away from the children to have your own lunch.

Tina



GIVEAWAYS



The Butterfly Garden

Author: Michael Torres

Illustrator: Fern Martins

Publisher: Magabala Books

Three copies to give away

The Butterfly Garden is an entertaining introduction to the life cycle of a butterfly – played out by a fat caterpillar, a hungry kookaburra and a supporting cast of beautiful butterflies.

Spare and simple, *The Butterfly Garden* also weaves in the idea of how the kookaburra may have got its laugh. Fern Martin's illustrations are a mix of strong colour and translucent beauty. Her stained glass interpretations of the cocoon at its various stages show its ephemeral quality in a joyful and fluid way.

Trouble in the Surf

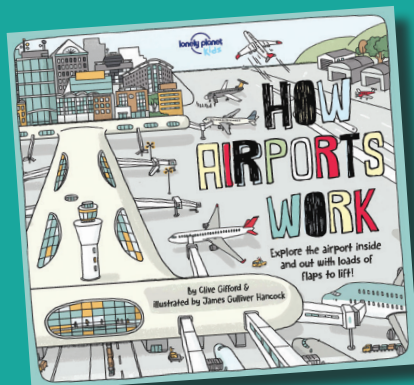
Author: Stephanie Owen Reeder

Illustrator: Briony Stewart

Publisher: NLA publishing

Three copies to give away

It's a hot summer's day in Sydney Town, and nine year old cousins Charlie Smith and Rupert Swallow can't wait to dive into the surf at Bondi Beach. But the beach can be a dangerous place. Out past the breakers, where the seagulls swoop and soar, lurks a strong rip that can drag unsuspecting swimmers out to sea. Travel back in time to January 1907, and join Charlie and Rupert on a true life, heart stopping seaside adventure.



How Airports Work

Author: Clive Clifford

Illustrator: James Gulliver Hancock

Publisher: Lonely Planet Publishing

Three copies to give away

Where does luggage go after check in? What happens in the control tower? How do planes actually fly? This interactive, lift the flap book takes you behind the scenes to uncover the hidden secrets of the airport – from a peek inside the cockpit to the hustle and bustle of departures.

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