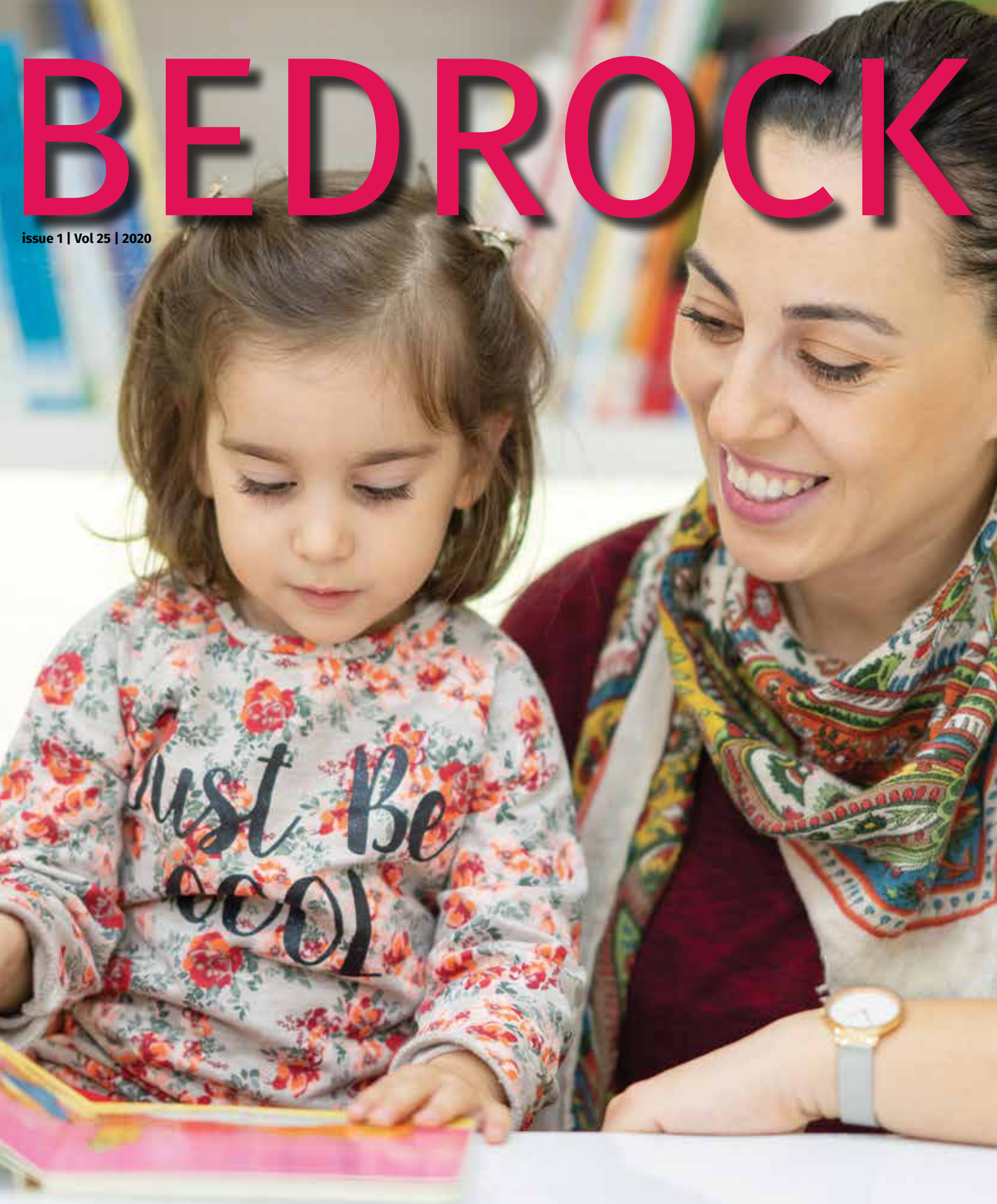


BEDROCK

issue 1 | Vol 25 | 2020



Better outcomes in out-of-home care p8

Helping children after disasters p6

Challenge us to find YOU a better deal!



Union Shopper is a 100% union-owned service that provides members with discounts on a huge range of products and services.

Take advantage of Union Shopper's **collective buying power** and be part of the savings!

Some of our most popular products & services include:

- electrical products
- motor vehicles
- travel
- accommodation
- tickets & attractions
- carpets & flooring
- cameras
- car hire
- computers & printers
- mortgage planners & finance
- manchester
- sewing machines
- furniture
- perfumes
- gifts
- vet products
- health products
- vitamins & pharmacy items
- tyres
- and much more!

On average, members save between
9% and **13%** off their best price
on electrical goods!



BIG savings on a wide range of products & services!



1300 368 117
unionshopper.com.au

BEDROCK

EXECUTIVE EDITORS

Mark Northam
Independent Education Union
of Australia NSW/ACT Branch
Terry Burke
Independent Education Union
of Australia - QNT Branch

MANAGING EDITOR

Sue Osborne

JOURNALISTS/

SUB EDITORS

Jessica Willis
Mykeala Campanini
Monica Crouch
Sue Osborne
Bronwyn Ridgway

COORDINATOR

Verena Heron

DESIGN

Chris Ruddie

PUBLICATION

MAILING ADDRESS

Independent Education Union
of Australia NSW/ACT Branch
GPO Box 116
Sydney, NSW 2001
Tel: (02) 8202 8900
Email: ieu@ieu.asn.au
Website: www.ieu.asn.au

ADVERTISING

AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

BEDROCK is published three
times a year and has
a circulation of 3000.
Intending subscribers and
advertisers are invited to
direct enquiries to Chris
Ruddle at the IEUA on
(02) 8202 8900 or
chrisr@ieu.asn.au

ADVERTISING DISCLAIMER

Advertising is carried in
BEDROCK to minimise costs
to members. Members are
advised that advertising is
paid at commercial rates and
does not in any way reflect
endorsement or otherwise of
the advertised products and/
or services.

BEDROCK

This is a joint publication
of the IEUA.

Print Post number 100007356
ISSN 1326-7566



Embedding culture in your curriculum 10

Diverse culture should be more
than just a date on the calendar

Upfront 4

What's happening in your world?

Helping children who have experienced disaster 6

Advice on coping with trauma for
both teachers and children

Fostering better outcomes for young children in out-of-home care 8

Foster children are not thriving.
How can early childhood
teachers help?

Making a difference to their world 12

Environment grants benefit
children and teachers

Accreditation 14

What it really means for NSW
teachers

Rhythm and movement the key to a successful transition to school 15

Children blossom when they
move to music

Assessing your work environment 16

Be aware of the risks in your
workplace

You are what you say you are 18

Early childhood teachers need
to be loud and proud

Drought's heavy toll on teachers 20

Life at a rural and remote
mobile preschool

Your questions answered 22

Industrial advice

TERMINOLOGY

*The union acknowledges regional
differences in some terms. Please
bear these in mind as you read.*

QNT

Kindergarten

NSW/ACT

Preschool/Early
childhood centre

Trauma-informed learning approach crucial

With the devastation of the catastrophic Australian bushfires this past summer and more recently the floods across NSW/ACT and QLD-NT, early childhood teachers will have a critical role in supporting children as their families and the wider community come to terms with the trauma associated with these events.

As Emeritus Professor Marjory Ebbeck writes on page 6 “teachers hold a unique position in the world of young children, as they are the most significant and trusted adults children know outside their family.”

When traumatic events such as the recent natural disasters occur, children may experience extreme feelings of confusion, pain and negative emotions which impact on their behaviour in the classroom.

Teachers need to understand how to help children develop emotionally, be able to express their feelings and build resilience.

Early childhood teachers frequently deal with students who experience trauma from a variety of factors.

As such, a trauma informed learning approach should be embedded in their professional practice and judgements.

An example is children in out-of-home care (OOHC) and the role of early childhood teachers in building the protective factors in a child's life whilst at kindergarten (page 8).

There are numerous programs that work in conjunction with early childhood teachers to help support children.

Trauma experienced by children also affects family members and the wider community and this can have a significant impact on early childhood teachers (see page 20).

Our union plays an important role in offering support for early childhood teachers through professional development including such events as the inaugural ‘dealing with trauma’ online course run by IEUA NSW/ACT Branch following the bushfires.

We can also connect members with psychological support services and to that end members who are needing assistance in dealing with trauma are encouraged to contact our union for details of support services.

Terry Burke
IEUA-QNT Secretary

Mark Northam
IEUA NSW/ACT Secretary

BEDROCK

UPFRONT

Early learning report

The State of Early Learning in Australia 2019 report shows sharp differences in access to affordable, high quality early learning across the country and emphasises the need for strong federal oversight. Some young children are missing out based on which state, territory or region they live in, with the report identifying significant pockets of unmet need and problems associated with affordability. “Just a 1.75% increase in the Federal Government’s spending on education would bring Australia in line with other leading English speaking countries and deliver outcomes that benefit our nation throughout each child’s educational journey and beyond,” said Early Childhood Australia CEO Samantha Page. See report at: <http://bit.ly/SOELReport2019>



Meet your new team

A new leadership team at IEUA NSW/ACT Branch will keep fighting for improved pay and professional recognition for early childhood teachers, following the retirement of long term leaders John Quessy and Gloria Taylor late last year.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Mark Northam, Deputy Secretary Carol Matthews and Assistant Secretaries Pam Smith and Liam Griffiths (pictured above) have played an integral role in progressing the IEU’s landmark Equal Remuneration case (see p18) for early childhood teachers and have the needs of early childhood teachers at the forefront of their agenda.

“Early childhood teachers are an important and dynamic part of the union’s membership, and we will grow and strengthen union representation in this area,” Northam said.

We want to hear your stories and find out what matters to you. Contact us at bedrock@ieu.asn.au

Online resources

Podcast: Brain architecture

Why are the early years of a child’s life so important for brain development? How are connections built in the brain, and how can early brain development affect a child’s future health? This episode of *The Brain Architects* dives into all these questions and more.

See: <https://bit.ly/2RAYN4d>



Podcast: Babytalk

Do you know how important play is for a child's education? While some of us obsess over choosing childcare and early learning programs that have academic outcomes, what the educational experts are telling us is that education is nothing without play. Play is part of our curriculum.

Professor Pasi Sahlberg is a Finnish educator and author who has worked as a schoolteacher, teacher educator, researcher, and policy advisor and has studied education systems, analysed education policies, and advised reforms around the world.

In the *Babytalk* podcast you'll meet Professor Sahlberg, who explains what's really letting the education of Australian children down. <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/brisbane/programs/babytalk/babytalk/11711628>

Documentary: Poverty and unborn babies

The dangers of foetal exposure to alcohol, drugs and lead are now widely known. But researchers have found increasing evidence of another potential threat to babies in utero: toxic stress. And, more specifically, the kind that's churned up in a mother who's struggling to make ends meet. See: <https://yhoo.it/2vtivpW>



Star ratings for NSW

Every NSW centre is now required to display a coloured star chart on its front door showing how it rates against the National Quality Framework for Education and Care Services.

Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* when the system was announced in November, early childhood consultant Lisa Bryant said NSW was the only state to introduce such a system, and also spent the least of all states on early childhood education.

"If our government really wanted to make sure parents can make good choices about where to send their children and make sure children are safe and receive high quality care, it should get rid of the companies that are rubbish at providing quality care," Bryant said.

"Forcing centres to display a star chart devalues education and care, devalues the professionalism of educators and teachers and won't stamp out providers that shouldn't be awarded a single star."



Queensland Lutheran early childhood members start collective bargaining

Securing parity with the state sector on additional teacher classifications is set to be a critical issue for members in the Queensland Lutheran Early Childhood Services (QLECS) as negotiations for a new collective agreement commence.

State schools and all major denominational sectors currently provide additional classifications for teachers. These further classifications come with improved remuneration – the most obvious example being Senior Teacher.

In state schools, a new classification of Experienced Senior Teacher already exists, and an incremental step will be added to this classification in 2021.

Teachers in Lutheran kindergartens do not currently have access to these additional senior teacher steps and would not have these in the future under the employer's current position in bargaining.

This means the most experienced teachers working in QLECS centres would not, under the employer proposal, receive wage rates comparable with the other educational sectors in Queensland.

Employee representatives are also hoping to secure paid domestic violence leave in the new agreement – aligning with the majority of the non-government sector.



Wage parity for C&K members

Creche & Kindergarten (C&K) members across Queensland have overwhelmingly endorsed a new collective agreement which saw employees receive a 2% wage increase backdated to 1 July 2019, with a guaranteed 2.5% increase on 1 July 2020.

As a result, the teacher wage rates in the new agreement are largely consistent with teacher wage rates in other sectors, maintaining hard fought wage parity for Queensland early childhood education teachers.

IEUA-QNT Senior Industrial Officer John Spriggs said securing wage increases and parity was a priority for members.

John said the overwhelming endorsement of this agreement by members in C&K sites reflects the importance of recognising kindergarten teachers and staff through professional rates of pay.

The new agreement was endorsed by 95.28% of employees who voted.

Other issues of concern identified by members will now be on the agenda for the next round of collective bargaining, which will occur in late 2020 or early 2021.



Helping children who have experienced disaster

Teachers hold a unique position in the world of the young child, Emeritus Professor Marjory Ebbeck, University of South Australia, writes.

Outside of the family they're the most significant and trusted adults the child knows. They provide a welcoming and secure environment and have established a trusting bond with the children they teach and care for.

Teachers will understand how important the overall wellbeing of their children is. The social/emotional welfare of children is of paramount importance. In a rapidly changing world, children will have to cope with many changes during their life and teachers need to understand how to help children develop emotionally and become resilient.

This issue of coping with disasters has been brought to the forefront by the catastrophic bushfires that have ravaged much of Australia in recent months, leaving families homeless and devastated. The loss of a secure home with its familiar surroundings and precious belongings, including comfort toys, is likely to cause great distress, even trauma, in young children. The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch recently ran an innovative online professional development course called *Responding to Bushfire Trauma*. It was accessed by hundreds of members.

Teachers need to be prepared to work proactively and reactively when children experience a disaster. They need to understand that trauma is a shock after some serious environmental disaster, a major family loss or other forms of disaster. A family separation can also cause trauma in some instances. The child may be experiencing extreme feelings of confusion and pain, and other negative emotions, resulting in various forms of adverse behavioural responses.

Build resilience

There are strategies teachers can use to build resilience in children: getting them to persist, to stay with tasks, to

solve problems, develop independence and allowing them to take risks (children need to be safe, however).

Teachers must build a trusting relationship with their students. Children need to feel emotionally and physically safe. This is what a trusting relationship can provide. Always be consistent and respectful in interactions with children. Understand and accept their individual differences. Be responsive to the needs of children. Creating a bond with children takes time. Wellbeing is of prime importance. If children are happy, they will learn effectively. However, in times of disasters, children's confidence and wellbeing may be adversely affected.

Continue to provide a predictable routine with your children. A daily routine helps to develop a sense of security. However, there will be times when flexibility is needed. In times of disaster returning to the secure base of a school or centre may help children to regain some sense of security and normality in their lives.

Express feelings

Very young children, infants and toddlers, however, often have their own timetable and it changes over time. Encourage the expression of feelings and make talking a part of the room practices. Listen attentively to children. This is not always easy in a busy room. However, be aware of the quiet child – often it is the children with outgoing personalities who claim most teacher attention and others can be overlooked in discussions. Children who have experienced trauma may be reluctant to express emotions and could be withdrawn.

Safe risk taking

Encourage children to take safe risks within their level of development. Physical activity is important for growing children and activities outside as well as inside need to be challenging but safe.



“Help children to understand that it is okay to feel frightened or angry.”



Engage in activities to solve interesting and relevant problems that children can identify with. For children four years plus, encourage them to think about how we can protect the environment.

Be involved in some community activities to become more aware of the role of community members, for example, firefighters, water bombing planes and how these people keep us safe.

Encourage empathy

This, in essence, is to understand the feelings of others, and be able to show this in some way. Young toddlers have been known, for example, to offer a tissue and touch a child who is crying in a caring way.

Practise emergency routines

Some years ago, one would not have thought it necessary to practise emergencies many times, but teachers today need to show children how important routine practices are in times of emergencies as it's necessary to keep everyone safe.

Climate change is occurring and environmental disasters are increasing. Teachers and children need to know and follow the preschool or service's emergency plan without hesitation.

After a disaster

Make contact with families to assess what the situation is, how they can be supported and specifically how their children can be helped. Teaching is a human services endeavour and often extends beyond helping the child to also helping the family.

When the child returns to the service, check that they are drinking fluids and eating. After a severe trauma some children may not feel like eating. They can become dehydrated if they do not take enough fluids. Keep in touch

with parents in relation to sharing their child's welfare and challenges in coping with the effects of a disaster.

Observe children closely and work out an individual plan. Although children will differ in their responses, there are some strategies that usually help.

Encourage children to use words to express their emotions. When children feel safe, they are more likely to express emotions. Avoidance of talking is normal for children who may not want to talk about painful events. Show sensitivity to the needs of individual children.

Help children to understand that it is okay to feel frightened or angry. Follow the lead of the child and be a listener if they are able to talk about their emotions.

Give children the opportunity to express their emotions through drawing, painting and other art forms such as modelling and collage work.

Play out fears

Provide opportunities for children to play out their fears through dramatic play. For young children, this should be undirected with the child spontaneously playing out what is important to them. Teachers can provide props and importantly give children time. Privacy is important and makeshift cubby houses can provide this for young children.

Include in story time books that deal with emotions. *Leave me Alone!* (Bode & Broere, 2013), is a good example. Teachers need to discuss the emotion, asking children if they have ever felt this way, emphasising acceptance of emotions.

Encourage children to play freely with friends as this can help children to release emotions and enjoy needed companionship.

After a disaster, a child's emotional state may take a long time to return to some feeling of wellbeing and optimism. Sustained support is going to be essential for children and their families.

Thank you to our teachers who make an enduring commitment in their role as 'educarers' of our young children in an increasingly unpredictable world.

Books dealing with emotions

Bode, A. D., & Broere, R. (2011). *I can't find you, mom!* London: Tulip books.

Bode, A. D., & Broere, R. (2011). *I don't like the dark!* London: Tulip books.

Bode, A. D., & Broere, R. (2013). *Leave me alone.* London: Tulip books.

Burgess-Manning, J., & Cooper, J. (2015). *Maia and the Worry Bug.* NZ: Kotuku Creative.

French, J., & Whatley, B. (2011). *Flood.* Lindfield, NSW: Scholastic Press.

Kaiser, C., & Pillo, C. (2004). *If you're angry and you know it!* New York: Scholastic.

Kobald, I. A., & Blackwood, F. (2014). *My two blankets.* Richmond, Victoria, Australia: Little Hare, an imprint of Hardie Grant Egmont.

Marin, G., & Grantford, J. (2007). *A true person.* Frenchs Forest, NSW: New Frontier Publishing.

Potter, M. (2014). *How are you feeling today?* London: Featherstone Education.

Wiesner, D. (1990). *Hurricane.* USA: Clarion Books.



Fostering better outcomes in out-of-home care

There are over 48,000 Australian children currently in out-of-home care (OOHC). Journalist Mykeala Campanini explores why a majority of these children are struggling to reach national literacy and numeracy benchmarks, which puts them at risk of becoming disengaged with schooling, resulting in lifelong disadvantage.

Children in OOHC are unable to live with their primary caregivers for various reasons such as experiences of abuse, neglect or parents being unable to care for their children.

OOHC may be long or short term and includes a number of care arrangements such as foster care, kinship care, residential care and other arrangements.

With 30.81% of children in OOHC in Australia being between the ages of 5-9 years – which are critical ages when children learn language and literacy skills – this can affect their literacy development, learning and earning potential later in life.

Interventions at these early stages play an important role in helping children in OOHC to develop their learning skills to strengthen the protective factors known to improve educational engagement and reduce educational disadvantage.

Kindergarten key to positive outcomes

Research from the Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women has found that access to early learning experiences such as those gained through quality kindergarten programs is associated with higher levels of language, cognitive development as well as more cooperation and less aggressive behaviour.

Dr Ruth Knight from QUT's Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (ACPNs) released a report titled *Children in out-of-home care and their educational outcomes*, identifying what puts children in OOHC at risk of educational disadvantage and what can protect them and their educational outcomes.

"Children in foster care or OOHC are more likely to be at an educational disadvantage, they need effective interventions from an early age to reduce the risk of disengagement from school and subsequent long term social and economic challenges," Dr Knight said.

"Issues leading to this disadvantage include trauma, low self-efficacy, behavioural and emotional problems, as well as home and school instability.

"There is also often a lack of fundamental language and pre-reading skills due to poor access to early childhood education, books at home and disruptions due to moving between care placements."

Dr Knight's report highlights the importance of early childhood education as an early learning intervention for children in OOHC through play and engagement with others, as well as engagement with learning that results in positive factors such as good self esteem and a sense of self efficacy.

"Good literacy and social skills early in life are seen as crucial protective factors, because these skills form the foundation for learning and subsequent success in achieving an education and doing well in life," Dr Knight said.

"It is considered important for children to play and engage well with school, as these educational experiences have important implications as they mature and seek lifelong wellbeing."

The role of early childhood education teachers

Early childhood education teachers and assistants can play an essential role in supporting children in OOHC,

through building the protective factors in a child's life whilst at kindergarten.

"Building these protective factors can be done through providing safe, kind and loving relationships which develop a child's self efficacy, their literacy skills and resilience, all while learning," Dr Knight said.

"In addition, given the specific needs of the OOHC cohort, a trauma informed approach that builds trust and communicates effectively with these children is crucial.

"Attending professional development in the area of OOHC children is a great strategy to provide more skills and support to early childhood teachers who work with children in foster care.

"Increasing teachers' confidence so they can provide flexible learning programs which are underpinned by relational pedagogy, for example, Circle of Security, will have significant individual and social impact."

Funding and government policy

Each Australian state and territory government is responsible for administering funding for children in OOHC including funding for education support.

The funds are provided on a needs basis to "enhance education support services for individuals in OOHC when an early learning centre or school identifies a need for literacy and numeracy support, mentoring programs and flexible/alternative education options".

One of the standards in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 states that children in OOHC should be able to access and participate in education and early childhood services.

The framework states: "The importance of early exposure to education is particularly highlighted as the most effective way to help children in OOHC reach their potential."

Although government policy acknowledges the importance of children being engaged in learning and education, a lack of effective communication and planning between carers, child protection officers and teachers inhibits effective interventions and outcomes.

A report published by the Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, titled *Valuing and improving educational outcomes for children in OOHC* revealed this lack of communication between core adults with regards to education and recommended that strategies to

improve the outcomes for children in OOHC should include engaging all stakeholders in a child's life.

The Love of Learning Program

The Love of Learning Program, delivered by The Pyjama Foundation, is one of only two mentoring interventions focusing on improving literacy in children living in OOHC in Australia.

Bronwyn Sheehan, Founder and Executive Director of The Pyjama Foundation, said with 92% of children in OOHC being below the average reading level by age seven, The Love of Learning Program is essential to breaking the cycle of educational disadvantage.

"By giving children their own learning mentor and empowering them with education and confidence to succeed, we aim to change the educational future of children in OOHC," Sheehan said.

"Children in OOHC have the lowest educational attainment of any cohort in Australia and require a support network around them to help guide their path and allow them to reach their full potential.

"Through The Love of Learning Program, The Pyjama Foundation trains committed volunteers from the community to mentor a foster child in the foster home on a weekly basis.

"The volunteers meet with the children to read and implement educational play. The program was initially based on the empirically proven impact of a simple activity that most take for granted – having books read to them.

"The program has now expanded into numeracy and a variety of life skills, socialisation and life mentoring. The volunteers deliver a specifically designed literacy and numeracy model which encapsulates the theory of making learning fun."

Dr Knight said notable strengths of The Love of Learning Program are that it actively develops protective factors for the child by providing a continuous mentoring relationship even if the child moves foster placements or schools.

"The program encourages a sense of pride in a child's identity as a learner, with the activities deliberately promoting the child's self-efficacy and resilience," Dr Knight said.

"The Pyjama Foundation currently provides 62,100 hours per year to mentor and support children in OOHC, with 84% of mentors reporting positive change in children's ability to concentrate on a task as well as a general positive attitude towards learning."

Early childhood educator referrals

When it comes to raising children in OOHC, the saying 'it takes a village' really does speak volumes.

Sheehan advises that early childhood teachers can assist not only through the work done in the classroom, but also by referring a child in OOHC to join The Love of Learning Program.

"We advise that early childhood teachers who believe a child in their class may benefit from the support of a Pyjama Angel should touch base with their foster carer and share with them the value of the program," Sheehan said.

"If the foster carer is happy to go ahead, teachers can make referrals via our online portal; in order to finalise the referral, our organisation will need to make contact with the child's Child Safety Officer.

"The program is available in specific locations in Queensland, NSW and Victoria and children from as young as one month up until the age of 18 are eligible.

"In order to be approved for the program, the child must be living in OOHC and have an approved referral from their Child Safety Officer," Sheehan said.

Further details can be found at <https://thepyjamafoundation.com/refer-a-child/>

References

- https://eprints.qut.edu.au/122389/19/__qut.edu.au/Documents/StaffHome/StaffGroupB%24_bakerj2_Desktop_Pyjama%20Foundation%20Literature%20Review%2031-10-18%20%20FINAL%202018.pdf
- <https://www.qut.edu.au/research/article?id=137790>
- <https://thepyjamafoundation.com/love-learning-program/>
- <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/resources/dcsyw/child-family/foster-kinship-care/early-childhood-education-care-min-gap-payment-640.pdf>
- https://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/517036/Facilitating-Childrens-Trans-School.pdf

Embedding culture in your curriculum

Exploring culture and diversity is a requirement in early childhood services, Rachel Rooke, RARE Early Childhood Support Services, writes.

However, the way this is approached can either support holistic compliance or leave your service at risk of not meeting compliance in other areas.

Most services explore culture and diversity through a calendar of events and celebrations that introduce a range of international traditions into the curriculum.

The problem is that these events are generally implemented in an adult directed and universal approach, not allowing for the children's individual interests and needs to be supported during these calendar driven experiences.

How do you choose which event is right for you? With over 500 different days and weeks to choose from on the many government released calendars, there is a mind-boggling array of choice.

If you represent every culture, then there would never be a day free that didn't have something adult directed on it. Often the calendar of events is set based on traditions and historical importance within the service but may not represent current stakeholders and therefore prevent a sense of belonging for those not visible in the events chosen.

It is important to reflect on the events being chosen, not only to ensure that they represent the stakeholders but also to ensure they allow for meaningful compliance.

With the emphasis on a child directed curriculum that is taught through open ended, play based experiences

that reflect children's current interests, it is important to explore how adult directed events planned around the calendar can achieve this compliance requirement.

Reflection should be conducted around the notion of maximised learning opportunities and whether calendar events achieve this if children have to abandon their interests to participate in experiences that may or may not be meaningful for them.

More than just a craft opportunity

When choosing the events that are right for you, it is important to explore the meaning and tradition behind an event, then use this knowledge to assess whether the event aligns with your values and philosophy. Aim for events that are not just fun or produce cute experiences.

Some events are not age appropriate, some are not culturally sensitive and have evolved into something commercial, some exclude certain groups of children because of their own cultural background or current circumstances.

How can you explore different cultures with young children? Often the way in which culture is explored in services, particularly around calendar events, is through craft.

Making something that is a clear and obvious piece of evidence that different cultures are explored and celebrated, often becomes part of a display on a wall.

The challenge is to consider whether this craft experience is achieving the stated outcomes of



“Moving away from calendar events allows children the opportunity to have meaningful exploration of other cultures throughout the year.”

educating the children about different cultures.

If the craft experience is semi-structured creating or decorating of an item, then usually the conversations that occur around this experience are about the craft, which items to use, what colours have been selected, how to make it look nice as a finished product and so forth, with a conveyor belt of children being ushered through to have their turn.

Rarely is the discussion about why the experience is being conducted and an intentional opportunity to connect children to different cultures by sharing knowledge and valuing the child's current level of understanding and insight into the intricacies of those from other backgrounds.

Ideally, experiences around culture should be child focused, play based and open ended, an experience that has many different learning opportunities, one of which is about different cultures and traditions.

This can be achieved through calendar events; however, it is more valuable if incorporated into the everyday curriculum through resources and carefully selected materials that allow children to explore and discuss cultural diversity as and when they are developmentally ready.

An embedded approach

Such experiences can include loose parts play, sensory bins, play dough, home corner, art, music and movement. All of these activities can reflect the current event while allowing children to be creative

and engage in holistic learning opportunities that are not just about the finished product and the display to demonstrate compliance.

Moving away from calendar events allows children the opportunity to have meaningful exploration of other cultures throughout the year as more than just an event, but as part of everyday life and experience, providing a more realistic approach to cultural diversity in Australia.

The most meaningful way to introduce and explore a variety of cultures, including Indigenous culture, is through aspects of what is already included in the service curriculum.

This way, the cultural element isn't seen as different or a novelty; instead, it is just an accepted part of everyday life. For example, using different traditional recipes when engaging in cooking experiences with the children, adding newspapers in different languages to craft areas, providing an assortment of food packaging from different countries to home corner.

Through approaches such as edible plants, music played at rest time, stories provided in book corner, and prompts provided in the art area, children have access to a range of different cultures to discuss as and when they wish.

This embedded approach takes more time and effort, requiring a commitment to developing knowledge about the cultures to discuss with children when they are ready; however, it will maximise children's learning opportunities.



Making a difference to their world

Each year the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch offers its Teachers Mutual Bank Environment Grants to a selection of winning entrants to develop a green project at their school or centre.

In 2019, three of the six winning entries were from the early childhood sector, including Old Bar Preschool, KU Pymble and Uniting St Luke's Preschool Belmont North.

KU Pymble teacher Catherine Atherton explains what the grant means to her centre.

"KU West Pymble has always been interested in environmental issues, especially sustainability. This year, we enjoyed being part of a pilot project initiated by KU Children's Services called Becoming Eco Smart within KU, an education for sustainability program for children/families and educators," Atherton said.

Embedding sustainability

"The aim of this project was to embed sustainability into our pedagogy and practice. A mentor was appointed to each centre to guide the process. The involvement and

commitment of families and children has been integral to its success," Atherton said.

"One significant feature of this approach is that the children are actively consulted within our program about decisions which impact the environment. In this way, they can see that they have a voice and agency, that they are able to make a difference to their world.

"Some projects this year included an analysis (through making a daily tally with the children over a few weeks) of how much soft plastic was being brought to preschool with the children's morning tea and lunches, with the goal of reducing it as much as possible, and ideally eliminating the need for it altogether.

Red cycle

"As a result, we have created a separate soft plastics bin which is recycled through 'red cycle' rather than ending up in landfill. The children are responsible for taking this to the supermarkets which have the red cycle bin. Obviously, it would

be better if no soft plastics were bought to preschool at all. However, in the meantime, the children are making sure that it does not end up in landfill.

"The preschool has many features which encourage sustainable living. For example, we feed our chickens with our food scraps and they repay us with eggs! We also have a compost bin and a worm farm. We do enjoy gardening, so we use the worm castings and juice and compost to help our veggies grow! We also bottle this with the children to sell to the families.

"We also have a native beehive and the bees do a great job helping to pollinate the bushland surrounding preschool. We go for regular walks 'out the gate' to explore the local bush.

"These visits have stimulated much thought about the importance of the interrelationships between people and the natural environment.

"The children have also designed their own plan to landscape the front entrance of preschool, where instead



of sticking to the path, foot traffic has destroyed the grass.

Water play

“The area has turned to dust and looks ‘unloved’. It has even attracted a vandal element, as there has been evidence of a bonfire being lit in the dirt there.

“Applying for the IEU TMB Environment Grant gave our centre another opportunity to extend our passion for sustainability. We have always wanted to install a dry creek bed with a tap for the children to enjoy another form of water play.

“However, with the dreadful drought, we were very conscious of not wasting water. The possibility of a grant prompted us to think about water and sustainability.

“How could we minimise water wastage with a water course? Maybe by recirculating or recycling it! To do

this, we would need a pump. Thinking with a lens of sustainability, wouldn’t it be fantastic to harness the energy from the sun to power the pump?

“Applying for the IEU Environment Grant gave our centre another opportunity to extend our passion for sustainability.”


“Therefore, we came up with the idea to create a solar powered recycled water course, for which we won the grant.

Wonderful example

“We are so excited to think that the finished product will be a wonderful example to the children of how we can use a renewable resource to create electricity and minimise water wastage at the same time.

“We have a responsibility to the children in our care to help them see what other possibilities there are for taking good care of our planet, especially at a time when climate change is such a concern.

“The children we are educating at the moment are the ones growing up needing to innovate in diverse ways to ensure the survival of our planet.”



Accreditation – what it really means for NSW teachers

July 2019 marked the third anniversary of the accreditation of early childhood teachers in NSW, Gabrielle Connell writes.

It's the third anniversary of our recognition as professionals, as skilled and qualified teachers alongside our peers – primary and secondary teachers.

At last we are recognised for our skill, expertise and knowledge, as well as the important role we play in the education and development of young children – research has proven over and over again that this is the most important time in a child's life.

Recognition means responsibility

However, with that recognition comes responsibility. That responsibility is to maintain our professional status by engaging with the Australian Professional Standards and continuing our growth as teachers through ongoing professional learning and ensuring that the Standards are reflected in our practice.

We can't accept accreditation without acknowledging what it means. It's not a piece of paper to put in a drawer and forget about until we make a rush to fulfil the requirements at the end of the accreditation cycle.

How many of us are actively working towards accreditation or the maintenance of our accreditation by engaging with the Standards in our teaching practice, undertaking professional learning and exploring current pedagogies?

We are time poor and we are already engaging with the National Regulations, the National Quality Standards and the Early Years Learning Framework and countless other regulatory requirements. We also need to know and engage with the Standards and know how they develop and reflect our practice. If we look closely, we can see that all these things are interlinked.

Use the Standards

The Standards are about us as teachers and it's crucial to recognise this and use them in our everyday work.

If we looked at the Early Childhood Evidence Guide for the newly qualified early childhood teachers who are working towards accreditation, I am sure we would find

evidence in our everyday practice that shows how we address the descriptors.

Working with them, recognising them in our teaching practice and being familiar with them puts everything we do as teachers into context. We need to look at the 'I' in this and what we do and the learning that comes from what we do.

Teaching moments

This is not about what the child did – it's about what we did in that teaching moment and the result of that teaching moment when we engaged the child and there was a learning outcome. It's about our professional growth as teachers.

Over the past two years, NESA has recognised the need for new early childhood teachers to have support through the accreditation process from provisional to proficient. It is doing this by training and appointing accreditation supervisors across the state for those early childhood teachers whose service has nominated NESA as their Teacher Accreditation Authority.

It can be difficult for beginning teachers to reach Proficiency when they may be the only teacher in a service or they are in services where there is no one able to supervise them.

Free training

The IEU has always recognised this for all teachers and provides free NESA accredited PD. IEU provides free subscription to the Teacher Learning Network (tln.org.au) for all early childhood teachers who are members.

This means they can access NESA accredited PD online, through webinars and face to face at no cost. This is wonderful for our sector, particularly teachers in rural and remote areas or teachers in services with limited PD opportunities.

The IEU fought long and hard for this professional recognition, for our accreditation as teachers – we certainly deserve this, but we need to show we are actively pursuing our own professional growth and putting what we learn into our teaching practice.

Gabrielle Connell is IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Early Childhood Services Vice President and NESA Accreditation Supervisor.

Rhythm and movement the key to a successful transition to school

Recent research conducted by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) has demonstrated improved self-regulation in young children through the use of music and movement. Journalist Mykeala Campanini explores the path between rhythm and school readiness.

Associate Professor Kate Williams (pictured), a Registered Music Therapist and Senior Research Fellow from the School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education at QUT, designed a kindergarten program titled RAMSR as part of a Queensland study investigating the effectiveness of rhythm and movement activities to boost self-regulation skills in young children.

The study explored the effectiveness of a kindergarten intervention, delivered across eight weeks, which focused on coordinated rhythmic movement with music to improve self-regulation and executive function.

"RAMSR stands for Rhythm and Movement for Self-Regulation. It is a program designed to be delivered to groups of children aged 3-8 years, in sessions of approximately 20 minutes," Williams said.

"The aim of the program is to build the kinds of neural connections that will support self-regulation development.

"Self-regulation is the ability to control our own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and is a really important skill to grow in the years prior to school.

"Being able to control your own emotions, cognition and behaviours is an important predictor of school readiness and early school achievement."

Rhythm and movement support regulation

Research and theory from a range of areas suggests that engaging in coordinated rhythmic movement will trigger auditory motor brain connections that will be very helpful for self-regulation.

"We know that children who have engaged in at least two years of formal music training will gain some great brain benefits that I call 'the musician advantage,'" Williams said.

"The 'musician advantage' refers to the structural and functional brain



benefits of formal music learning. We know that formal instrumental instruction and practice results in greater brain mass and enhanced neural plasticity (the ability of the brain to learn), and this lasts a lifetime.

"Music therapists use rhythmic audio cues to help brain injured patients learn to walk and talk again. RAMSR tries to bring the 'musician advantage' to more children by distilling the essence of it, which is the practice of coordinated rhythmic movement, to more children."

RAMSR improves school readiness

The RAMSR study showed that children who participated in the program for two sessions a week for eight weeks, compared to those who did not, had steeper growth in emotional regulation; and, for boys, mental flexibility.

"We hope to gain even better results in our next study, happening in 2020, with kindergarten teachers delivering the program," Williams said.

"Any improvements we can make in attention, emotional, or behavioural regulation, or the more complicated cognitive control skills (called the executive functions), will support children with a more positive transition to school.

"In RAMSR, we play games that embed practice of these self-regulation skills and little 'tricks' for the brain, with fun and active rhythmic movement – which will build brain connections across multiple regions.

Teachers encouraged to clap, stomp and dance

The research found teacher-reported cognitive and behavioural regulation improvements in children who participated in the RAMSR program.

These findings support the notion that rhythm and movement intervention has the potential to support early development of self-regulation skills, which is why Williams urges all early childhood teachers to get involved.

"I encourage all early childhood educators to use as much clapping, stomping, dancing, and rhythmic movement in their program as possible," Williams said.

"The RAMSR program can be run by any early childhood teachers, not just music teachers.

"Many teachers are already doing great things with children during transitions or at group time, and I would urge them to look into incorporating the RAMSR sessions into the regular daily activities of young children to help support their attentional and emotional regulation skills.

"We want all early childhood teachers to feel confident to run these fun and essential activities."

The RAMSR program is being supported by Creche and Kindergarten (C&K) centres and early childhood teachers can learn more about the program and stay up to date with future workshops by visiting www.ramsrblog.wordpress.com.

Assessing your work environment

When you think about hazardous workplaces, what springs to mind? Construction? Manufacturing? How about early childhood education?

In Australia, over 900,000 children attend services like preschools and long day care centres each year. More than 195,000 early childhood teachers and educators provide these children with stable, stimulating, supportive, effective learning environments. However, relatively little is known about teachers' and educators' work environments and how hazardous they can be.

High rates of serious injury

To learn more about teachers' and educators' wellbeing in their work environments, we have been analysing data from NSW's largest workers compensation insurer – icare – as part of our research in the Early Childhood Educator Wellbeing Project (ECEWP). Icare's 2016-2017 claims data indicates early childhood work environments can be very hazardous.

Physical injuries

A majority of the 1200 claims in 2016-17 were for 'injuries' (85%), with 15% for 'diseases and conditions'. Of 'injuries', physical injuries attracted the highest rates of claim (94%) with psychological injuries only making up 6% of claims. Educators and teachers aged 19-32 years were involved in 42% of claims for physical injuries, with 33-45 year olds involved in 25% of claims, and 46-60 year olds in 27%. Females made up 93% of claimants in this category, and males 7%.

To put these figures into context, claims for the top three most serious physical injuries for educators and teachers are higher, or the same, as for those working in construction. And, in early childhood education rates of physical injury in two of these top three categories are higher than the national average.

Psychological injuries and mental stress

One hundred claims were made in the claims period for psychological injuries or mental stress, including the effects of work related harassment or bullying, work pressure, and exposure to workplace violence or traumatic events.

Older educators and teachers were strongly represented in this category, with 46-60 year olds involved in 37.5% of claims for psychological injury or mental stress, 33-45 year olds involved in 35% and 19-32 year olds in 26%. The majority of injuries/stress in this category were caused by work related harassment and/or bullying (39%), or work pressure (32%). Females made up 90% of claimants for this category, and males 10%.

High average numbers of days off per claim

As well as experiencing high rates of physical injury compared to the national average, within this category the early childhood education sector averages the highest number of days off per claim – 46 days off work – for body stressing. Body stressing is defined by Safe Work Australia as 'muscular stress while lifting, carrying or putting down objects'; 'repetitive movement, low muscle loading' and 'conditions affecting the nervous system and sensory organs'.

The numbers of days off for psychological injuries and mental stress in the early childhood education sector are even higher. Claims for mental stress averaged 154 days off overall – over three times as many days reported as required for body stressing claims in the sector (46 days). However, the highest number of average days off per claim was for 'work pressure' (176 days off work).

Costs of workplace injury

Workplace injury is extremely costly, with estimates of the total costs of workplace injury and illness to the Australian economy at around \$62 billion per year (Safe Work Australia, 2015). Estimates of the cost of

mental health claims are \$146 million per year and reduced productivity due to poor mental health costs \$6.1 billion annually (PwC, 2014). These are significant costs for any industry, let alone one such as early childhood education, where increased business costs are most often recouped through increased fees to families.

Educators' and teachers' injury costs also impact on the early childhood education sector through high workers

compensation insurance premiums and the expense of recruiting casual and new permanent staff.

For example, the cost of replacing a teacher who is absent due to workplace injury is estimated to be 26 weeks of average wages, and training new staff costs around two and a half weeks of average wages (Safe Work Australia, 2015). Work Cover QLD also reports that the longer an employee in the early childhood education sector is off work, the less likely they are to return, potentially multiplying the cost of replacing staff. For example, if someone remains off work for 20 days, there is a 70% chance of them returning to work. However, if they remain off work for 70 days, there is only a 35% chance of them returning.

“Claims for the top three most serious physical injuries for educators are higher, or the same, as for those working in construction.”

Hidden costs of workplace injury

Far more hidden and more difficult to quantify are the ongoing effects of workplace injury and resulting days off work for the employee, other teachers, children and families. These effects include: social isolation of an employee who is absent due to workplace injury, low staff morale as team members leave, increased workload for existing staff, decreased quality of relationships and less than optimal experiences and learning outcomes for children and families.

While no breakdown by qualifications is included in the icare data, there does appear to be quite a lot of variation in rates of claim based on region. For example, a number of regions, across the city, coastal and western areas of the state record low or no instances of psychological claim, while others seem to have high rates per worker insured.

Similarly, some regions have higher numbers of days off required, and others less – for the same type of injury. These variations are hard to explain, but do suggest further enquiry is warranted to understand whether low rates are due, for example, to underreporting, stronger return to work support or better overall support for teacher wellbeing.

Also notable in the figures above are the high rates of physical injury for younger educators and teachers (41%), high rates of psychological injury/stress for older educators and teachers (37.5%), and the higher rate of claims for psychological injury/stress for male teachers and educators (10%) than males' claims for physical injury (7%). What might explain these particular rates of claim?

Perhaps the disproportionately high rate of claims for younger educators is due to their engagement in more physically demanding work tasks than their older colleagues; perhaps males' rates of claim for psychological injury/stress reflect other accounts of prejudice and discrimination experienced by males working in the early childhood sector.

Higher rates of claim for psychological injury/stress involving females 46-60 years (37.5%) is harder to explain. Assuming that older teachers might be more involved in management or educational leadership positions might explain some of the claims for 'work stress', but not for harassment and/or bullying. Or, do the higher rates reflect cumulative effects of longer tenure in the sector?

We do not know the answers to these questions, but given these high rates of claims, injuries and costs, it is clear that urgent attention needs to be given to addressing educator and teacher safety and wellbeing in the work environment.

The ECEWP team's research is well on the way to understanding more about this issue via a multi-disciplinary, holistic assessment approach. We already know from our pilot study that our participating educators had high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, and often continued to work regardless of ongoing work related pain from injury.

Findings such as these will be used to inform interventions which better sustain and support the early childhood education workforce. Otherwise, without focused attention, the costs to educators and teachers, their employers, children and families may become too high for Australians to bear.

Tamara Cumming, Charles Sturt University (CSU); Elizabeth Wulff, CSU; Sandie Wong, Macquarie University; and Helen Logan, CSU

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch will assess ongoing research in this field, including advice on how to avoid workplace injury. This survey was of both teachers and educators in NSW





You are what you say you are

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch has recently completed the long running Equal Remuneration Orders (ERO) Case in the Fair Work Commission and is awaiting its decision, IEUA NSW/ACT Industrial Officer Michael Wright reports.

A review of the Educational Services (Teachers) and Children's Services Awards was also undertaken last year, which focused on the early childhood sector.

In both of these significant cases, the central focus was on the knowledge required of, the skills used and the functions undertaken by early childhood teachers (ECTs).

In the ERO case alone, the union provided evidence from 34 early childhood teachers and/or experts in the early childhood sector. Including the evidence from the employers, some 900,000 words were uttered

or written in the case, mostly about what you do on a day to day basis. What became apparent in both cases was the importance of the language used to describe the work of ECTs. The

“ECTs don't crowd out children with their own ego, unlike other (mainly male dominated) professions (and some for profit child care operators) who can't wait to tell you how fantastic they are.”

case also highlighted the capacity of some of the for profit operators to try and use language to devalue the

skills and role of ECTs, with a view to resisting any claims for equal (or even adequate) pay.

Different lenses

The skills utilised and the roles performed by ECTs are seen through many different lenses.

While the vital contributions of the ECT are slowly bubbling up into the public discourse, your average person does not have knowledge of the skills utilised and the roles performed by ECTs. They instead rely on broad descriptions such as 'that's such important work', 'you must be an angel', etc.

The hard graft and complexity of the role, including the intellectual endeavour and motivational skills required, are not fully appreciated. Partly, this is a function of the gendered nature of the work and its



classification as 'care', rather than education.

In some respects, the inability of the general public to understand the skills used and the roles performed by ECTs is a function of how ECTs talk about their work.

Throughout the case, ECTs talked in short hand about their work and remained unnecessarily modest about the complexity of their roles.

This is understandable – ECTs on the whole, day in, day out, don't crowd out children with their own ego, unlike other (mainly male dominated) professions (and some for profit child care operators) who can't wait to tell you how fantastic they are.

Also, the true intellectual multitasking that effective ECTs utilise becomes almost second nature – and is glibly described as 'being in the

room with the children'. Whereas a business analyst, aware of the role of an ECT 'being in the room' would describe it as:

- developing differentiated programs of learning (and adapting them in real time) for each child
- assessing the real time needs of each child, taking into account their short and long term needs
- documenting the development of each child, against statutory and self-determined benchmarks
- liaising with the child as to their physical, mental and social wellbeing, utilising their extensive knowledge of child development and taking into account a wide differentiation in terms of cognitive and verbal development of each child
- undertaking real time risk analysis, both in terms of the organisation and each child, whilst at the same time being cognisant of the importance of experiential learning, and
- being required, often in a time critical context, to liaise with parents, health professionals and government officials and agencies about the needs of the child.

This list is far from exhaustive. It also leaves out the caring role that ECTs undertake, which complicates an already complex and invariably challenging role.

ECTs need to think about how they describe their profession and be able to explain more readily the complexity of their work (without self aggrandising jargon). We all know that ECTs engage in critical professional reflection – when they share it with the wider community they can blow people's minds.

Part of exposing our professionalism to the world entails a discussion about the nomenclature of the industry. No doubt teams and teamwork are essential in a centre – but nonetheless, isn't it time for the descriptions of the roles played by different team members to be revisited?

In the ERO case, many for profit employers went to extraordinary lengths to portray the work of ECTs

as virtually identical to Cert III and diploma qualified educators and to devalue the skills and expertise of ECTs.

'They are all educators' was the catch-cry. In that context, perhaps it is time for the sector to have a thoughtful and respectful conversation on this issue – a conversation that ensures the labels that are applied to particular roles properly reflect the skills and responsibilities required of that role.

Extract from ERO case transcript

IEU barrister: The skills and knowledge that you learned as part of that degree were ones I take it that you found useful when you then became firstly a primary school teacher, you used that training in that role?

Employer: To be honest with you, no. I actually got nothing out of the bachelor degree. Yes, it was the hands on skills and experience that I learnt while doing early childhood that helped.

IEU barrister: It was just a formal requirement that you had to get through?

Employer: That's right.

IEU barrister: Your inherent ability plus on the job experience is all that you relied upon when you were teaching as a primary school teacher?

Employer: When I look back that's all that I found useful, yes.

IEU barrister: Is that true also of your early childhood teaching, that you found the degree of no utility or added nothing to what you brought to it yourself?

Employer: That's right.

For complete access to all submissions, hearing transcripts and procedural decisions of the Fair Work Commission, go to this link:

<https://www.fwc.gov.au/cases-decisions-and-orders/major-cases/equal-remuneration-case-2013-14>

DROUGHT'S

heavy toll on teachers

Wendy Baldwin has children in her care who have no idea what rain is, Journalist Sue Osborne writes. She knows of toddlers living on farms who've outgrown mud boots that have never been worn.

"We were talking about Peppa Pig the other day, and jumping in puddles, and one of the children asked what that was," Wendy said.

"It sprinkled for a few moments the other day. A two and a half year old boy asked me 'what's that?'"

For 27 years, Wendy has been a teacher for Gwydir Mobile Children's Service, based in Moree.

She's part of a team of two teachers and nine educators who travel 1000kms in two Land Cruisers each week, taking the mobile preschool service to remote farming communities.

Family lifeline

Hosted in schools, community halls and tennis clubs, the preschool is a lifeline for isolated families struggling with drought and never ending dust storms.

But Wendy has concerns for the service's future.

As families give up and leave the land, attendance is dwindling, and she fears the Department of Education might cut funding.

This would be a mental health disaster, Wendy said, as the service is often the last port of call.

Wendy and her colleagues are obliged to watch out for the mental health of their families as well as their children.

Wendy had to call Beyond Blue to try and get help recently for a dad she had real concerns for.

Wendy said she has a number of families she is "watching very carefully" for suicide risk.

She has no specific training in dealing with such issues. "I have been through seven droughts, so I have some skills. But I worry about other teachers out there in mobile service.

"Early childhood teachers are part of the community; they are farmers themselves. Teachers often feel responsible for the whole family, they take on the worry, the guilt. My advice is not to try and take on everyone's problems."

Trauma support

Wendy would like to see the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch introduce more mental health support for its members in rural and regional areas, in the form of online training on self-care and mental health. In February, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch ran its inaugural dealing with trauma online course, following the bushfires.

Wendy said city based people have trouble understanding what it is like to live with years of drought and dust, and advice such as 'take a break' does not cut it.

"How do you take a break when you're hand feeding lambs? There is no escaping this. Every day you wake up and it hasn't rained. Everybody is just busted. They shrink into themselves, away from each other, their kids."

In order to get people reconnecting, the service has organised teddy bears' picnics, concerts, working bees and talks to try and get people off the farm. They organised journalist Peter Greste to give a talk recently.

"It was great because people started talking about politics and other countries instead of the drought for once," Wendy said.

"I worry about the toll it takes on early childhood teachers, but school teachers and principals as well. They wonder if their school's still going to be there in a few years."

Many families who have been on the land for several generations have left because of mental health pressures. Wendy said the physical and mental health problems from the current drought will resonate for years.

Hope remains

"We've been breathing in dust for two years. It's a fine layer on your skin, clothes, house. The Land Cruisers break down. The optician told me 50% of his work is clearing dust out of people's eyes. I reckon we'll be hearing about lung cancers in a few years' time.

"The mums are being broken apart losing their gardens. It's all they have. The plants are dying due to lack of water and starving kangaroos eat them. The school where we meet has a small garden, and it's covered in kangaroo droppings because they come in every night trying to find food and water.

"The kids are bathing in bore water which is bad for the skin. I was talking to one of the other mobile service early childhood teachers out west and she said that after years of teaching the kids healthy habits, they've had to start giving them cordial because the water tastes so bad.

"One day people are going to look back at this and fall over in a screaming heap."

Despite the tragedy, Wendy is optimistic about the future of her community, and believes it will bounce back.

"I get angry when I hear talk on the ABC about farmers needing to adapt. Farmers do nothing but adapt and have been adapting for 50 years. As soon as it rains we are ready, we know exactly what to plant and when.

"When it's a good season it makes you weep at how spectacular it is. You drive through paddocks of wheat knowing that will feed people in Iraq, England, Africa. It's a privilege to be part of that. When the sunflowers are high against the blue sky and the grass is up to the cattle's bellies, it's breathtaking. All we need is rain."

"Early childhood teachers are part of the community; they are farmers themselves. Teachers often feel responsible for the whole family, they take on the worry."



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



Danielle Wilson (left) is an industrial officer for IEUA-QNT and Lisa James (right) is an organiser for the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch. They answer your industrial and legal questions as they relate to state laws and regulations.



Flexible working arrangements

Dear Danielle

I am employed as a teacher/director in a centre and due to my own parental responsibilities, I am wanting to work part time, ideally in a job share situation, from the beginning of next term. I have floated the idea with our committee, but they do not want to engage an additional teacher as they say it will create too much instability for the children. I don't believe that is the case, and I can see lots of ways that it would be better for the children and the centre to have another teacher to rely on. What is the best way for me to approach this?

Lydia

Dear Lydia

Our members ask this question frequently. Committees find it hard to see how a job share arrangement can work within a kindy setting. However, we find that if you can look at the current arrangements and propose reasonable alternatives that are straightforward to implement, this might help your committee accept the idea more readily.

The National Employment Standards (NES) offers capacity for employees with family responsibilities, who have been working for at least 12 months with the employer to ask for flexible working arrangements. Such a request must be made in writing and set out the details as well as the reasons for the changes sought. Employers are required to respond within 21 days and they can only refuse on reasonable business grounds.

There are no rules about what can be agreed to in an arrangement like this. It may be that it is a temporary arrangement until you are ready to resume duty in your original position, or it may be that you want to ask

for a reduction in hours permanently. Whatever is agreed must be in writing and we encourage people to ensure that every aspect of what is agreed, including what will happen with your existing tenure, is written into the agreement. We regularly check agreements of this nature for our members to ensure they are not unwittingly relinquishing their substantive positions.

Some of our centres have guidelines set out either in their collective agreements or as a matter of policy for people who need to ask for some flexibility in their employment, so these should be referred to as needed.

We are aware that centres that do not have anything established often find it too hard to contemplate. Regardless of the circumstances, we would advise you to consider how your preferred arrangement can work in your workplace.

Think about the hours you need for yourself and how the remaining hours could be covered, whether that be with a part time teacher or a jobshare partner.

Consider how you will manage events such as open days, meetings with parents, professional development, set up days and clean up days. Consider also how you would accommodate your director duties, whether you could maintain full responsibility, whether these could be shared or whether you would prefer not to carry out the director role.

If this is the case, consider how the director duties can be done. The more questions you can answer about the things that are likely to concern the committee, the better chance you have of negotiating an arrangement that will suit both you and the centre.

Should your employer refuse to permit you to undertake a flexible work arrangement, contact our union for further advice to see if the decision can be challenged.

Danielle



Dear Lisa

I work in a long day care service and there are one to two afternoons each week when I am on early shift and I can't leave at the end of my shift as I need to ensure we are meeting staff/child ratios. Most days this is only 10 or 15 minutes but it's been as much as two hours on occasion.

My director says I am not entitled to be paid for working after my shift finishes. Does this sound right to you?

Sharon

Unpaid overtime

Dear Sharon

The Educational Services (Teachers) Award is very clear about this issue for teachers who are employed in long day care centres. Schedule B at the back of the Award contains the working conditions specific to teachers working in long day care

(as opposed to those who work in preschool). The relevant clauses are:

B.4.1 (a) An employee will be paid overtime for all authorised work performed outside of or in excess of the ordinary or rostered hours at the rate of time and a half for the first three hours and double time thereafter.

B.4.2 (a) An employee and an employer may agree in writing to the employee taking time off instead of being paid for a particular amount of overtime that has been worked by the employee.

If your service has an enterprise agreement check the relevant clause to find out the overtime provisions in your particular service. You can always phone the IEU if you need assistance with this.

In the first instance I recommend that you approach the director and show him or her the relevant clauses of the award or enterprise agreement. If the issue is not resolved, send the IEU copies of the sign in and out book on days you worked more than eight hours and copies of your payslips.

Provided the IEU is able to substantiate your unpaid overtime and with your permission, we will write to your employer to request that you are paid for the overtime you have worked. If this does not resolve the issue the union can make an underpayment claim for the unpaid overtime.

Lisa

Dear Lisa

I work 24 hours a week. Last week the owner of the centre told me to go home at lunch time and I would not be paid for the afternoon because we were over ratio. I said okay and left early but this week she told me that she expects numbers will be down over the next few weeks. I have the feeling she's going to cut down my hours even more and she's going to do this every time we're over ratio. I can't afford for my pay to go down all of a sudden. Can you help?

Bel

The award states:

10.4(d) An employer cannot vary a part-time employee's teaching load or days of attendance unless:

(i) The employee consents; or

(ii) Where such a variation is required as a result of a change in funding, enrolment or curriculum, the employer provides ... four weeks' notice in the case of an early childhood teacher, or where the change would result in a reduction in salary, the salary of the teacher is maintained for a period of ... four weeks in the case of an early childhood teacher.

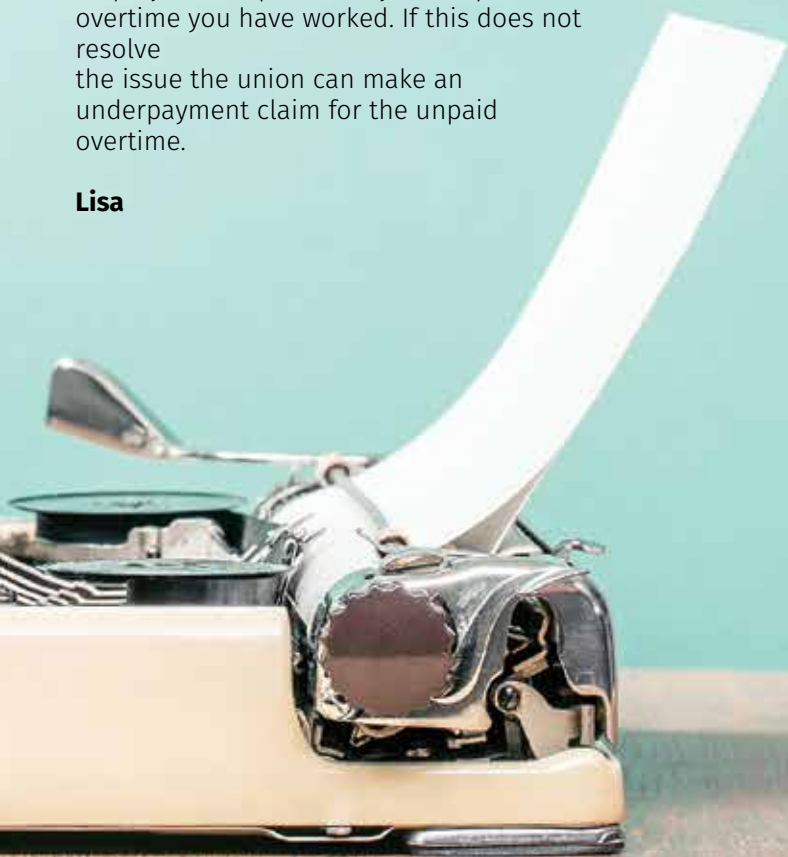
I suggest you give your employer a copy of this email along with a copy of the award. The IEU can pursue an underpayment claim if your employer does not pay you for your permanent 24 hours per week.

Lisa

Hours cut

Dear Bel

According to the Educational Services (Teachers) Award clause 10.4(d) it is unlawful for your employer to reduce the hours of a part time teacher without giving you four weeks' written notice unless you agree to the change.



WE'LL COME AND MEET YOU AT YOUR WORKPLACE.



Making your super work hard shouldn't be hard work for you.

When you need advice on how to achieve financial security and plan for your future, our local Customer Relationship Managers can come to you.

For more information and to book our free, no-obligation workplace services, please visit ngssuper.com.au/crm.

**ngs
Super**

Incorporating **qiecsuper** division



SuperRatings does not issue, sell, guarantee or underwrite this product.

Go to superratings.com.au for details of its ratings criteria.

For further information about the methodology used by Chant West, see chantwest.com.au

ngssuper.com.au
1300 133 177