


BEDROCK

issue 1 | Vol 26 | 2021



**It's all
connected** p12

Video games: good or evil? p14



Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. *This is the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle*. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.



Independent Education Union of Australia

BEDROCK

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Thrive by Five

6

The IEU has recently become a campaign partner with Thrive by Five, which has the goal of bringing about funding reform for early childhood education at a national level

Upfront

News from your sector

Connecting with families using social media

4

8

Building trusted communication and collaboration between teachers, staff and families is essential. But what role should social media have?

Assessment and ratings

10

Two tools to help self-assessment and quality improvement process

It's all connected

12

What happens in the young brain has a big impact on the body

Using video games to teach preschool children empathy

14

Promising research shows specially designed video game helps kids develop empathic perception

From horse paddock to a garden for mates

17

An overgrown paddock has been transformed into Bermagui Preschool Moodji Cultural Garden through the hard work of the preschool and its surrounding community

Supporting students living with parental mental illness

18

Strategies to assist when working with children who have mentally ill parents

After fires, new life blossoms

21

Broulee Early Learning Centre was deeply affected by bushfires. Winning the IEU Environment Grant was a great boost

Your questions

22

Industrial advice. You ask, our organisers answer

Giveaways

23

Go into the draw to win a free book

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

With you every step of the way

Welcome to the first edition of *Bedrock* for 2021. We hope this year unfolds better than the last, but more uncertainty and change are still likely. No doubt early childhood teachers will be at the forefront of issues arising around COVID-19 vaccination. Whatever happens, the IEU is there to support you every step of the way. Your union continues to fight for improved status, pay and conditions for all of you.

In this edition we report on our involvement with a new initiative called Thrive by Five, which is pushing for reform of the early childhood sector at a national level (page 6). The IEU will ensure the voice of teachers remains at the forefront of this campaign.

In these uncertain times, communication is vital. Does social media provide an answer to communication blocks between staff and families? (see page 8).

We also provide the latest professional advice for an important and growing problem: that of dealing with families where one or both parents suffer from a mental illness. What do teachers need to know about this issue? For the latest findings turn to page 18.

How much are children influenced by video games, if at all? It is a perennial controversial topic. New research seems to indicate the effects of video games may not be all bad. In fact, when it comes to teaching empathy, a new app may be useful for teachers (page 14).

Young children who feel threatened, unsafe, live in poverty or experience systemic racism are more likely to experience long term health impacts. A Harvard study has found supporting teachers with good pay and conditions, thereby creating a stable early childhood environment with low staff turnover, is a key way of progressing this issue (page 12).

For teachers in NSW, tackling the Assessment and Rating process is a challenge. IEUA NSW/ACT Early Childhood Council member Marie Jacobsen provides some practical tips from the front line (page 10).

Engaging with the natural world is always a great antidote to troubling times for children. We explore two centres who have made the most of their environment (page 17 and 21).

Finally, we hope you enjoy our regular features, Upfront, Your Questions Answered and Giveaways. As always, we welcome your comments or questions, email bedrock@ieu.asn.au

Terry Burke
IEU-QNT Secretary

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IEUA NSW/ACT Secretary



Natural disaster, emergency and pandemic leave in Qld & NT

Where a natural disaster, emergency, and/or further outbreaks of COVID-19 occurs, our union is with our members every step of the way.

Fundamentally, where members have safety concerns in the event of a natural disaster or emergency, such as severe weather, they should follow the advice of emergency services and advise their workplace accordingly.

In Queensland and Northern Territory where a provision exists in your collective agreement, employees can access paid leave if they are prevented from attending their workplace due to natural disaster or emergency such as fire, flooding, cyclonic disturbance or severe storms.

This leave allows employees to ensure the safety of themselves, their family and their property and applies where employees are unable to travel to and from their home or workplace.

Pandemic leave should be available to Queensland and Northern Territory employees in the event an employee is unable to attend work due to implications of COVID-19.

Stringent health and safety precautions remain paramount for all workplaces and employers need to ensure that adequate protections, including PPE, soap and sanitisers are in place for staff and students.

It is essential your workplace has a COVID-19 response plan in place that is communicated clearly to all staff and families.

History has demonstrated the importance of up-to-date and appropriate natural disaster and emergency provisions in collective agreements and national awards.

Members experiencing issues accessing leave in these circumstances should contact your union branch immediately for advice and support.



Braver actions needed to achieve reconciliation

The positive findings of the recently released *2021 State of Reconciliation in Australia Report: Moving From Safe To Brave*, published by Reconciliation Australia, are welcomed by our union, but we know there is still much progress to be made.

Reconciliation Australia's inaugural chair Shelley Reys said Australians should "celebrate the progress outlined in the 2021 report and take action on the data and the crucial focus areas it illustrates".

"Let's take an unapologetic, brave stance on racism to propel us faster towards a reconciled nation," Reys said.

According to the report, action must be taken by individuals, workplaces and schools to consider how unconscious bias can function and how their role includes actively intervening, disrupting and challenging racism.

The report cited the early childhood education sector as being especially critical to achieving this change too, by maintaining Reconciliation Australia's *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education* program and other initiatives like The Healing Foundations' Stolen Generations Resource Kit for Teachers and Students.

In 2021, our union will continue to promote the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* to our members and advocate for a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament.

Read the full report at www.reconciliation.org.au



Free app to build young brains

The Bright Tomorrows app is a free parenting resource developed by the Bright Tomorrows organisation. It provides families with tailor-made tips (called moments) which will enhance their children's development of key life skills during everyday activities, such as attention and focus, responding to emotions, relationships and communications, planning and routines and taking on challenges.

Details: www.brighttomorrows.org.au

Free professional development for NSW & ACT members

One of the benefits of joining your union is access to free professional development.

IEUA NSW/ACT offer high quality online courses free to all NSW and ACT early childhood members. The 30 courses will be delivered through the union's partnership with the Teacher Learning Network (TLN).

Here is a selection of topics that might interest you:

- using technology to support storytelling in early childhood
- the importance of risky play in early childhood
- balancing structure and free play
- bush Kinder – bringing nature to children
- Reggio Emilia – developing a leadership philosophy, and
- mental health for children in early childhood.

NESA accreditation

TLN is working with NESA to meet the new NSW accreditation requirements. All current courses will count as elective professional development (previously teacher identified PD). As we learn more about the new accreditation requirement, TLN intends to have courses accredited against the new priority areas.

Courses are designed to support you with your work in the learning space with children. The courses are delivered by experienced early childhood teachers who have agreed to share their ideas and their practice with you. Courses have a practical focus. All courses are aligned with APST standards and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).



These professional development courses are available to you at no cost because your union has invested in your professional development. We encourage members to enrol – and also tell your colleagues who are not IEU members that this is another benefit of joining the union.

All existing IEUA NSW/ACT members may log in to the TLN professional development database at teacherlearning.member365.com. Once you have logged in, you can register for the 2021 live online courses and also complete the recorded on-demand sessions.

If you experience any problems, contact TLN at admin@tln.org.au or (03) 9418 4992

Email pd@ieu.asn.au to get added to the database for further details.

Every child deserves to thrive by five

The IEU has recently become a campaign partner with Thrive by Five, which has the goal of bringing about funding reform for early childhood education at a national level.

Thrive by Five wants to see early childhood education placed at the top of the national agenda, leading to meaningful reform. It is gathering partners from all pillars of the community, including key players in the early childhood development sector, academic and health research experts, child and family welfare organisations, women's organisations, unions and business.

As a key player in early childhood education reform, with its Equal Remuneration Order Case before the Fair Work Commission to be resolved soon, the IEU can play a significant role in the Thrive by Five agenda.

Here, CEO **Jay Weatherill** outlines Thrive by Five's vision, which gels with the IEU's long held goals for the early childhood sector.

As teachers and educators have long understood, the first five years influence lifetime learning, health, and wellbeing trajectories.

Neuroscientific developments have shown us that skills and behaviours developed in the early years are fundamental to a child's lifelong learning. Children learn social, interpersonal and cognitive skills that will help them lead healthy, productive lives.

Learning starts long before school, with almost all brain development happening before the age of five. Early

education and care is therefore an important opportunity for children to develop to their potential and become equipped with everything they need for future success. The importance of early learning is too significant to be ignored by politicians and key decision makers.

The current national early learning system needs improvement. Originally designed as a child-minding service, it is outdated. The pandemic has also highlighted how important the system is to children, teachers and educators, parents and the economy.

Teachers and educators have been fundamental frontline workers during the crisis, holding the community together by nurturing children and ensuring their continued development so their parents can perform other essential jobs.

Teachers and educators are essential workers. Their commitment allowed other critical workers such as doctors, nurses and teachers, to continue their efforts.

Reward for sacrifice

Now it's time to reward teachers and educators for their sacrifice and effort. We need a universally accessible, high quality early learning system that reflects the professionalism of teachers and educators, children and parents.

That's why Minderoo Foundation's Thrive by Five initiative is advocating for a new system of early learning to benefit all. (Minderoo Foundation is a philanthropic organisation: www.Minderoo.org)

“This project can help heal some of the trauma and recreate a positive relationship and respect for the land and environment around us.”



Thrive by Five is campaigning to reform the early learning system, to build better futures for our children. This, in turn, means better educational outcomes, better job prospects, a more productive economy and reduced costs of late intervention in social welfare, the justice system and the health system. After all, early learning and care is the foundation of lifelong development. Essentially, Thrive by Five is asking for:

1. universal access to early learning
2. integrated services with children at the centre
3. quality early learning delivery standards
4. place-based, community-driven centres, and
5. early childhood development system connected to the public education system.

This cannot be achieved without appropriate remunerated, qualified teachers and educators who have secure jobs. They are critical to a child's lifelong development and, more than anyone, understand the value of early learning.

Thrive by Five is advocating for early childhood teachers and educators to develop the skills and knowledge they need, receive proper pay and have the necessary resources to ensure every child gets a head start to life. Early learning centres should nurture development and anyone who works there should be adequately trained and resourced to provide unlimited early learning opportunities.

Too often, early childhood teachers and educators are undervalued. Too often, they are underpaid, which leads to high staff turnover, placing undue pressure on teachers and educators. Play-based learning is foundational to early childhood education. Teachers and educators are skilled in deploying concepts that align with a child's specific interests and view of the world. They deserve to be treated with professional respect and appropriate pay and working conditions.

Bridge to science

Not only will a high quality and universally accessible early learning system benefit teachers and educators, it will also

benefit parents, and particularly mothers. Early teachers and educators are the bridge between parents and the science of early learning. They also allow parents to return to the workforce, safe in the knowledge their children are in a learning environment.

Reform is critical if we are to address the lifelong economic disadvantage faced by women in Australia. The current system provides a disincentive to full-time work for mothers. A better system would enhance workforce participation, creating an incredible economic advantage that would benefit all Australians, as well as addressing gender gaps across the workforce.

Early learning and care are unaffordable for too many Australians. Costs for early learning are rising at twice the inflation rate for all other goods and services, and faster than other costs of living, such as electricity. A system that saves household budgets hundreds of dollars a week will make a real difference. Better financial support for parents leads to a context more conducive to early learning and should lead to better conditions for teachers and educators.

Australia's out-dated and expensive early learning system is failing children, teachers and educators, women, families, and the economy. It needs reform, now.

This is reform that is good for children, for teachers and educators, for families, and for the economy – all critical considerations in the design of our post-COVID economic and social recovery.

Top of the agenda

Early learning needs to be at the top of the agenda because the future of our children is the future of our country. It's an issue that brings business, parents, teachers and educators and unions together – now it's time for it to be a priority for both state and federal governments.

There's still a lot of work to be done and the stronger the campaign gets, the louder its voice. Become a supporter and join the campaign today if you haven't already by signing up www.thrivebyfive.org.au.

Connecting with families using social media

Building trusted communication and collaboration between teachers, staff and families is essential in early childhood education. In fact, it is part of the National Quality Framework (NQF) due to its significant impact on children's emotional and physical development. But what role should social media have in this space? IEU journalist Jessica Willis investigates.

Research shows there are more challenges to forming and maintaining connections with families in early childhood education than ever before (Fan and Yost, 2019).

At the same time there has been a steady decrease in family involvement in their children's early learning (Fan and Yost, 2019).

Traditional means of communicating with families such as face-to-face interactions, phone calls, emails and newsletters, can be sporadic and ineffective with increasingly busy parent and carer schedules. These forms of communication can also add to the workload pressures of staff.

Some employers have started experimenting with the use of social media tools to overcome this. Meanwhile, a slowly growing body of academic research is looking into the benefits and complications of using these tools in the early childhood education sector.

Is adapting to widespread use of social media resolving this issue or does it present more complications than benefits?

Is social media the solution?

'Social media' is any form of electronic communication, such as websites for social networking, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content. (Mirriam-Webster, 2021).

Major social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Phone or computer-based applications (apps) and software such as Storypark and ClassDojo can also be considered 'social media' as they connect teachers, students and families in an online school community.

A recent study from the University of Tasmania explored the willingness of families and early childhood education staff to use social media for building better collaborative relationships and more open and effective communication (Fan and Yost, 2019).

It found that while there was an overall interest in adopting social media tools by both groups, concerns were raised over issues such as privacy, confidentiality and time constraints.

The findings reinforced the value of open, trusted and effective communication between staff and families and confirmed the barriers hindering family interactions with staff.

According to two staff members who participated in the study, "some working parents spent little time at the centre during child drop off and collection times" and "due to parents' busy work schedules they might not be able to make and receive telephone calls, or reply to emails during working hours". (Fan and Yost, 2019, p136.)

This observation is one many of our members likely relate to.

Participants acknowledged that social media, which offers both instant and flexible communication, could have benefits in building and maintaining engagement with families in their child's learning.

Apps built for early childhood pedagogy

In recent years, the development and introduction of apps for digital pedagogical documentation has occurred in many early childhood education workplaces – allowing student learnings to be recorded and shared directly with families through platforms such as Storypark.

These platforms have been shown to foster communication and trust between teachers, staff and families when the platform has been designed specifically with early childhood pedagogy in mind (Lucas, 2019).

This, in turn, facilitates better outcomes in young students – not only in their learning but general

wellbeing with families better understanding what and why their child is learning and how it is connected to the curriculum.

The key for effective use of these platforms is ensuring:

- the purpose of the communication is clear (eg sharing and explaining learning outcomes of a specific student to their family)
- the mode is appropriate and accessible for all users
- the quality of the content is relevant and professional
- the frequency and proportion of communication is reasonable, and
- employees have the time and knowledge to use the platform.

IEU-QNT Organiser Caryl Rosser said while there can be positive outcomes, it should not mean workload is doubled or duplicated.

"It is important that employers ensure all staff receive quality professional development and training for the platform chosen, to be completed within their hours of duty.

"Communication and documentation should always occur during paid working hours and employers need to provide the necessary devices and accounts to employees.

"Some IEU members have had issues with the additional pressure that comes with the expectation of recording and uploading data throughout the day and ensuring each child receives 'equal' attention.

"We have also had cases with duplication of work adding to the workload burden – for example recording data in hard copy and digital portfolios, or repeating messages across different platforms because different families prefer different communication channels.

"Members should contact our union for any concerns over social media or software use, workload or hours of duty," she said.

Platforms blurring private and personal relationships.

If social media tools – such as a closed Facebook group or private group chat – are being used by



your workplace to communicate and collaborate with the school community, employers must have clear social media policies.

They must ensure all employees and family members understand and follow the policy.

Caryl said the policy must consider and protect staff, students and families.

“Employers have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent physical and psychological injury to those in their care and this includes providing appropriate support to employees who may be experiencing bullying and harassment online,” she said.

“The personal accounts or devices of employees should never be used for work purposes.

“Employees should also not be expected to communicate with families or share content to the chosen platform outside of their paid working hours,” Caryl said.

“Platforms such as Facebook carry a high privacy and confidentiality risk – even in closed community groups or ‘private’ chats.

“Members should remember that what is published online or messaged electronically, even with the strictest privacy guidelines, can readily be made public by a friend, follower or recipient.”

Our union would advise members to steer clear of these types of platforms for the purposes of professional communication and relationship building with students’ families.

For any concerns relating to social media use, workload or hours of duty, IEU members should contact their relevant union branch or organiser.

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Key issues

- Communication and documentation should occur during paid work hours and fit into your hours of duty.
- Employers need to have clear social media and digital platform policies.
- Employees should never use their own personal accounts or devices for work-related communication or documentation.
- Privacy and confidentiality should be a top priority in all communications, with clear policy in place which protects employees, students and families.
- Employers need to provide quality PD and training in any new platform or software being used in the workplace.
- Accessibility needs to be considered when choosing a platform or software.
- Contact our union if you have any concerns over social media or software use, workload or hours of duty.

Assessment and Rating in NSW: how to keep improving

Self-assessment against the National Quality Framework (NQS) drives continuous improvement and is essential to providing quality outcomes for children. NQS Element 7.2.1 requires an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process to be in place, IEUA NSW/ACT Early Childhood Council member Marie Jacobsen writes.

In NSW, there are two tools to consider: The first is the ACECQA self-assessment proforma, designed to inform the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). It allows you to:

- assess current practice
- identify service strengths, and
- identify areas for improvement.

It asks services to critically reflect on how they achieve quality outcomes for children and families.

There are sections to record strengths and then an opportunity to record further information under the three Exceeding themes.

Any areas or gaps would be added to the plan for continuous improvement for each of the seven Quality Areas.

The second is the NSW Department of Education proforma for self-assessment that may be used instead of the QIP. Centres in NSW currently have the option to use this document when they are called up for Assessment and Rating.

It requires services to provide evidence of the key practices for each standard of the NQS with up to five examples. There is no need to record compliance as this is an opportunity to showcase where the centre believes it has outstanding practices. If these practices align with the

Exceeding themes, then these form part of the five pieces of evidence.

How did this come about?

The new Assessment and Rating process started in 2016. Assessors worked with a more streamlined process, however there were still issues within the sector. Services believed that on the day of assessment they did not have an opportunity to really showcase their centres and the ratings did not accurately reflect the great work that was happening. After enduring the one to two days of assessment, the services waited and then received their draft report and rating.

Remember that? The disappointment of receiving a report following your Assessment and Rating visit that didn't truly reflect all the great work you have been doing. Perhaps the Assessor didn't ask for it or see it happening on the day, or you were so nervous you forgot to talk about it or you couldn't find the evidence on the day.

Services who felt disenfranchised often gathered whole reams of feedback, lots of paper, carefully annotated and sent back to the Assessor to prove they really were at an exceeding rating.

Consequently the Department was drowning under the weight of feedback and decided to come up with a better plan. The Department redesigned the documentation to make it easier. Now centres simply add evidence, five pieces for each standard, and there are examples on the ACECQA website to assist you.

(S) Sight (D) Discuss (E) Evidence

Sight Will the Assessor see this great practice on the day? Think relationships with children, parents, health and safety.

Discuss If it isn't going to happen on the day, on any day, then you need to be able to talk about it. So, be clear and concise and just answer the questions. Think staff induction, orientation for new families, transition from one room to the next.

Evidence find documentation and have it ready. This does not mean seven folders of photos and paper like we did in the bad old days – it means having information available – to showcase quality practice. As you add the evidence, code it as you go.

Thinking, reflecting and choosing the five pieces of evidence can be difficult and with a word limit you need to be precise and articulate. If that's not your strength ask someone to proof-read it for you. It's a process that requires participation and time. Evidence must be open and honest – if you can't find evidence then don't put it in.

Use terms like embedded, critical reflection and partnerships with families and communities to reference the three Exceeding themes in each key practice box. For example, 'the Circle of Security is embedded within our nursery, where educators are thoughtful and mindful of where children are and how and when they need reassurance or support entering and exiting play with peers'.

Be mindful of not wasting characters such as 'at XXX centre, we...'. Get straight to the evidence eg 'staff meetings Feb 2020 – evidences staff's critical reflection on child rights discussion'.

If you work through the self-assessment document, sitting it alongside the QIP you have worked on in the past, you will see the gaps as you add the evidence. This will be an opportunity for the team to discuss what has been missed, or what might need to become a goal for the year.

Don't forget to reference your previous Assessment and Rating report. What were the areas the previous Assessor identified as improvement areas? Read them. Note them. Make sure they are identified in the self-assessment and the follow-up. Have you addressed them or is there a plan of action?

No easy process

Completing the self-assessment document isn't an easy process. It's time-consuming but worthwhile and it creates reflective discussion and deeper thinking. There's an opportunity to think about what's happening and how teams can do it better/differently. In my centre it took 25 hours to prepare but as a result the day went much more smoothly and ultimately it gave my educators a deeper understanding of quality practices.

Prepare well and on the day of Assessment and Rating there will be no surprises. You've gathered your evidence and you can talk to all the great exciting learning experiences your children and families experience. There's nothing left to do except relax and enjoy the process.

The Department provides a dedicated quality support team to help services through the self-assessment process: eequalitysupport@det.nsw.edu.au



It's all connected



What happens in the young brain has a big impact on the body – and long-term health. Monica Crouch explores how early childhood teachers come into the picture.

A working paper released in 2020 by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University in the United States reveals, at granular level, how young children who experience poverty, violence or threats of violence, poor nutrition, housing instability and systemic racism are primed for chronic physical and mental health issues as adults.

The paper, *Connecting the brain to the rest of the body: Early childhood development and lifelong health are deeply intertwined*, spells out what early childhood teachers have long known or strongly intuited: that when teachers are properly paid and staff-student ratios are manageable, there is lower staff turnover.

Low staff turnover in turn fosters stability. And stability fosters stronger, more supportive and responsive relationships between children and their teachers, leading not only to greater professional satisfaction for teachers, but also a far better chance of good physical and mental health for children as they progress into adulthood.

Adversity impacts health

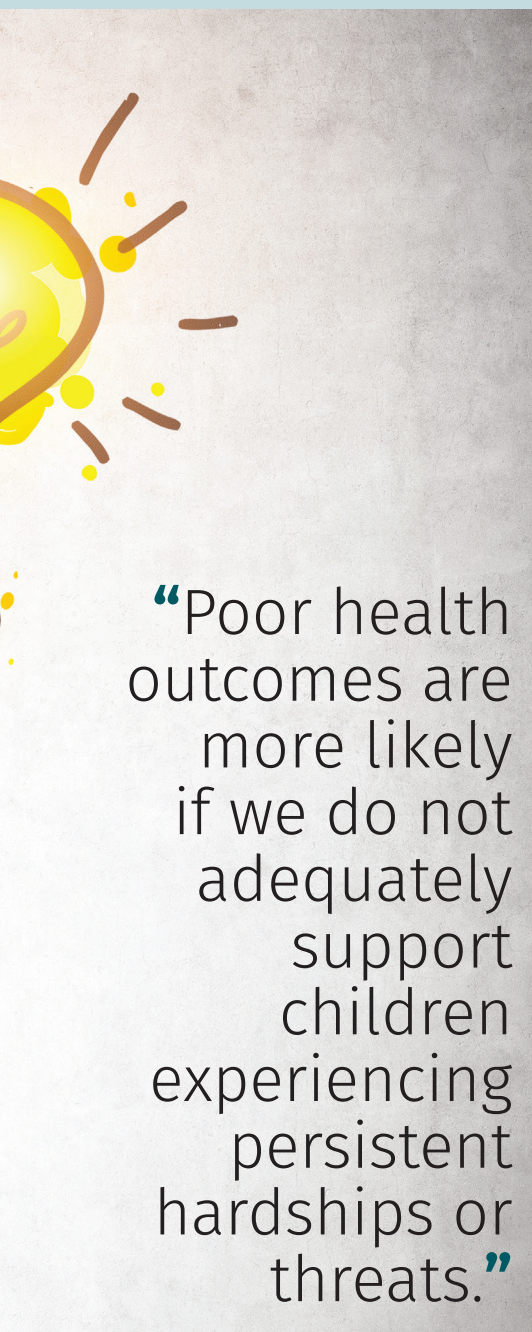
"The extreme challenges of 2020 have laid bare longstanding inequities that affect the lives of children and families, as well as the health of a nation," Jack P Shonkoff, Professor of Child Health and Development at Harvard said.

"Significant adversity in the lives of young children can disrupt the development of the brain and other biological systems. And these disruptions can undermine young

children's opportunities to achieve their full potential."

But it's not just reaching potential that's compromised, it's a child's long-term health. Cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory illnesses, obesity, addictions, anxiety and depression all have their roots in early childhood.

In releasing the paper, Professor Shonkoff drew attention to two key points: what happens in early childhood has a big impact on short-term and long-term outcomes in learning, behaviour and both physical and mental health; and all of this is interconnected and learning potential is strongly linked to physical and mental health. This, he said, means that when young children experience good primary health services and their families have a liveable income it affects both learning and health. Equally, early education and care also affect both learning and health.



“Poor health outcomes are more likely if we do not adequately support children experiencing persistent hardships or threats.”

All systems go

You may remember the old song that goes something like “your leg bone’s connected to your knee bone, your knee bone’s connected to your thigh bone, your thigh bone’s connected to your hip bone ...”. So is every system within our bodies – brain and nerves, heart and lungs, gut and digestion, energy production, fighting infection, hormones and physical growth – they’re all interconnected.

The white paper likens these systems to “a team of highly skilled athletes” – each system ‘reads’ its environment and responds to it, and shares information with the other systems.

When young children experience strong, responsive relationships with parents and teachers, their biological systems ‘read’ this and lay down solid foundations not only for social and emotional development, school

readiness and future learning but also for a lifetime of sound physical and mental health. Unfortunately, when these relationships and supportive experiences are lacking, the reverse is also true.

Relentless stress

If a child’s stress responses are activated frequently and intensively during early childhood, the child can become permanently set on high alert. “If the world is a dangerous place, the internal systems designed to protect us need to develop in a way that anticipates frequent threats,” Professor Shonkoff said.

Children who experience domestic violence or threats are particularly at risk. So are children in the grips of poverty, racism, unsupportive caregiving, overcrowding and excessive noise. Those who are less active because they lack safe playing spaces are prone to all these issues in their adult years.

A fearful or stressed child produces excessive amounts of the primary stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones are useful in a fight or flight situation: they increase the heart rate, elevate blood pressure and boost energy supply. At the same time, they temporarily suppress the immune and digestive systems. Once a threat has passed, all levels return to normal.

But if threats and fear are ever present, long-term activation of the stress response and overexposure to these hormones can lead to anxiety and depression, digestive problems and weight gain, sleep disturbances, diabetes, heart disease and immune disorders.

On the mental health side of the ledger, constantly elevated stress levels in early childhood can lead to problems with emotional regulation and memory, addictions, anxiety and depression.

“Poor health outcomes are not inevitable, but they are more likely if we do not adequately support children experiencing persistent hardships or threats, particularly in the face of structural inequities that impose enormous challenges,” Professor Shonkoff said.

Again, their teachers and centres can provide stability and a safe haven.

Shifting gear

Investing in early childhood education and care not only affects learning outcomes, it also positively influences children’s long-term health. Good outcomes are easier to achieve

with early intervention – it is far harder to rebuild faulty foundations in later life.

Investment in young children and the teachers who educate them is vital. When teachers are properly valued and supported, they are more inclined to reciprocate that support in their workplace, providing stability for children. When access to essential resources and these supportive relationships is secure, a child’s building blocks of resilience and wellness are strengthened.

“The time has arrived for a mindset shift for the early childhood field as part of a broader movement for social change,” Professor Shonkoff said. “The brain is indeed connected to the rest of the body, but health and education are separated in policy.”

An integrated approach that involves the expertise of early childhood teachers is essential to mapping a way forward for the early childhood education and care sector, for young children and, by extension, society as a whole.

Six key lessons from the Harvard report

- All biological systems interact with each other and the environment.
- Early childhood experiences impact physical and mental health in adulthood.
- Childhood adversity is associated with heart disease, diabetes and obesity.
- Poverty, homelessness and violence are often precursors to depressive disorders.
- Supportive relationships in stable environments help children build adaptive skills.
- Returns on science-informed investments in early education and care are clear.

Reference

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2020), Connecting the Brain to the Rest of the Body: Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Health Are Deeply Intertwined, Working Paper No 15, www.developingchild.harvard.edu



Using video games to teach preschool children empathy

IEU journalist Emily Campbell explores the findings of a recent study which found a specially designed video game helped preschool-aged children to experience and develop empathy.

Video games and their effect on children's growth and development is a polarising topic, which has been subject to much debate in recent years as our world relies increasingly on digital technology.

Critics of video games are concerned the impact of increased screen time on young children can inhibit their social-emotional development, lead to increased aggression and promote anti-social behaviour.

However, the research team in a promising new study believe this is not necessarily the case, arguing "the solution is embedded in the problem when hybrid learning design blends real-life social interpersonal interactions with digital representations".

The Empathy World: a game to cultivate empathic perception

The Empathy World was designed and created by Ling Wu, an early childhood education teacher and Research Fellow at Monash University, along with colleagues Dr Minkang Kin and Professor Lina Markauskaite from The University of Sydney.

With a keen interest in child development and young children's social-emotional learning, specifically empathy, Ling decided to pursue this project as part of her PhD studies.

The trio of researchers used a bold and somewhat paradoxical approach to see how they could use technology to address the very issues technology is said to worsen.

Using theory-informed design principles backed by extensive research, the group created *The Empathy World*, a tablet game which aims to promote empathic perception in preschool-aged children, which the researchers describe

as "an essential building block for the ability to see, sense and understand the internal states of other humans" (Wu, Kim & Markauskaite, 2020).

As part of the study, 12 preschool students played *The Empathy World* regularly during their time at preschool over a period of three months.

The results are very promising, with the researchers finding that children who played *The Empathy World* were better able to pay attention to other people's feelings and direct selective attention towards making appropriate decisions by selecting empathy worthy social cues with increased efficiency.

The research team found a positive relation between playing the game and enhanced empathic perception, supported by a brain imaging study which showed enhanced empathic sensitivity to harmful social interactions and increased attention to others' feelings based on teachers' observations.

Playing the game

During play Ling said children were exposed to a variety of interactive social scenarios referred to as 'stories', with progressively more complex emotions and contexts for each story.

"Each scene in a story presents questions that prompt players to perceive social cues, perceive and understand emotions and perceive and analyse other perspectives in the context and engage in social-causal reasoning," Ling said.

"For example, early in the game there is a scene in a sand pit with two babies playing together, where baby A is throwing a shovel at baby B and baby B is crying.

"The child playing can contextualise the story, seeing that sadness occurred when the baby was hurt, then extend their learning to understand it's unkind to hurt others because the baby who was injured now feels sad," Ling said.



"This allows for another level of association because the children have at some point experienced sadness in their own life so they recognise it's not a pleasant thing to experience," Ling said.

The scenes and emotions in the game reflect familiar situations, settings and encounters young children are likely to have experienced themselves or been exposed to in their everyday lives at preschool and at home.

There is a balanced combination of positive and negative emotions used throughout the game, like happy, sad, angry and scared in the earlier stages, before increasingly complex emotions are introduced in later stages such as pride, frustration and disappointment.

"We embedded more and older characters in more nuanced social situations in the more difficult scenes, inviting children to perceive other people's emotional states and understand their perspective," the researchers wrote.

Deliberately distracting stimuli and images such as toys and brightly coloured food are present in the different scenes; however, the researchers observed that over time, children playing became better and more efficient at ignoring these interruptions, filtering out irrelevant distractions and demonstrating greater concern for emotions that warranted empathy.

Another interesting aspect of the game design is the inclusion of audio-visual feedback to enhance the educational value.

When children act on certain stimuli by touching or clicking the target item (the most empathetically valuable cue or appropriate answer), the selection is celebrated through positive, encouraging audio feedback, green lights and the awarding of stars.

If the child selects the distraction stimuli or an irrelevant cue, for example clicking on a toy rather than a frustrated parent, the audio-visual feedback will

trigger a feedback scene with orange colour and a voice which gently prompts the child to try again and look for something else.

Importance of teaching empathy

Ling explained that in a very general sense, early learning is a golden period for a child's development, particularly for social-emotional learning.

"Empathy is just as important for young children to learn about as language, literacy and numeracy," Ling said.

It is widely recognised that empathy plays a key role in interpersonal and emotional understanding, (Mafessona & Lachmann, 2019) motivates pro-social efforts and encourages generosity and caring behaviour (Devety, Bartal, Uzefovsky & Knafo-Noam, 2016).

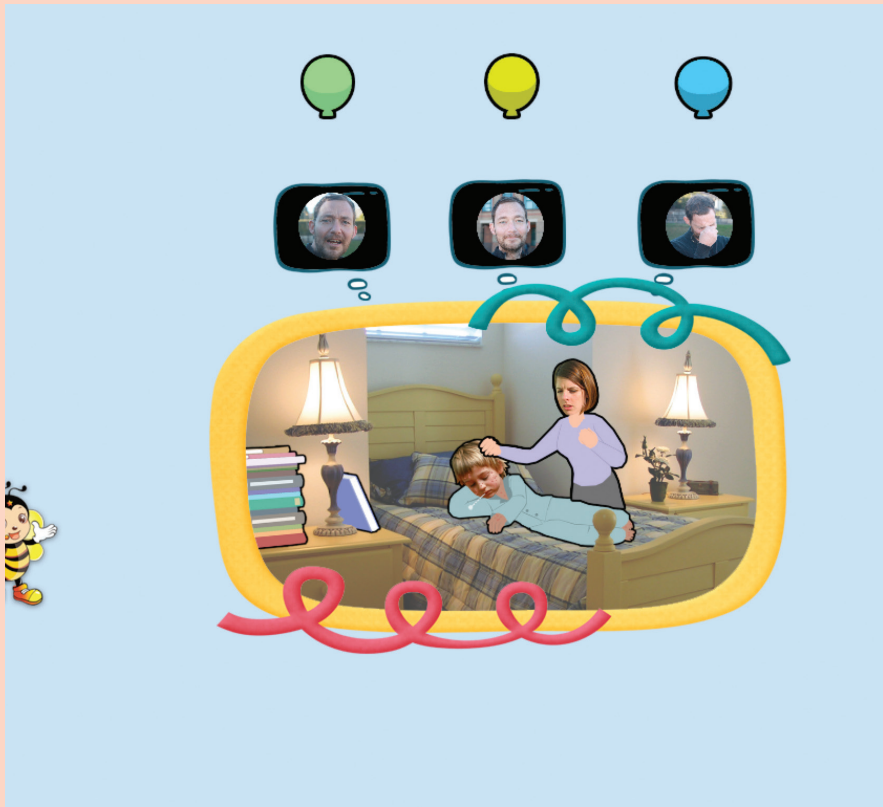
Furthermore, empathy functions as a regulative factor which can prevent emotional problems including aggression (Davis, 2018), depression and anxiety (Levy, Goldstein & Feldman, 2019).

"Our findings show the younger or early stage of empathy development is not so much about behaviour, for example 'you see this, do that,' but rather 'empathic perception,'" Ling said.

"When adults talk about needing to be empathetic and show our empathy, we are very much referring to it at a behavioural level, whereas for young children, it's the noticing, the seeing, the 'empathic perception' which they need to learn.

"It's not that young children aren't empathetic; they need to learn to notice and recognise something that is empathetically-valuable.

"If they have difficulties in noticing it's not because they're not empathetic or not being thoughtful, it's simply that they didn't notice empathetically-valuable cues, or they didn't register it in their own world.



“How they learn that is very valuable because once they’ve learnt to pick up the cues then the appropriate behaviour follows,” she said.

Repetition essential

Traditional approaches to teaching preschoolers about empathy include programs like ‘spin off sessions’ where children are taken on excursions to farms so they can learn to practise being gentle, kind and caring toward animals.

However, Ling says these methods are not always practical for young children to learn about empathy, and that to recall in the long-term what they have learnt during that session and repeat it in everyday life can be difficult given how young children’s brains work.

“Their attention, memory and way of learning works very differently to adults, meaning that like learning the alphabet, phonics, language and numbers, long-term repetition is key,” she said.

This is one reason *The Empathy World* was designed in a longitudinal way, where exposure to stimuli is continuous over a longer period, rather than a one-off session.

“What the game is trying to achieve is to provide repetition in a contextualised way so while context of the story or scene changes, the learning mechanism is maintained and stable,” Ling said.

“In the study, the children settled into this almost habit-like process where they expected to see stories and to learn subtly different things from each story, filtering out irrelevant distractions.

“They’re making associations in their little brains to assign meaning to different situations and social interactions.

“They’re not simply being taught ‘this face means happy, this face means sad,’ which is important to a degree.

“Being able to recognise and label an emotion is important, but to do so in a contextualised environment teaches association and enhances their empathy development in a more holistic way,” Ling said.

Future plans

Given the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns experienced globally, the findings of this study

are particularly significant and emerge at a time when children are engaged in extra screen time and have their typical in-person social interactions limited.

The research team say while the current game is designed for and was used in formal educational settings, it has the potential for use in informal learning environments, such as within families.

“We are very encouraged by the positive results at a brain level and feedback from the preschool teachers involved in the study,” Ling said.

“They really see the potential given how easy it is to implement tablet games, such as during indoor play time, when staff can sit with children and join in play to prompt rich conversations with the children.”

Now based at the Monash University Action Lab, Ling and her team are working hard to refine *The Empathy World* and eventually release it as an open-source material accessible to teachers and families.

“This will immerse children in emotionally-laden conversations with their teachers and other adults, to further enhance their empathetic development,” Ling said.

“Not every parent is equipped with the knowledge to engage in emotional education or empathy parenting and they need a little bit of support to start a conversation or brainstorm ideas of an activity,” she said.

Ling hopes the design, technology, education, science and academic communities continue to unite and solve problems in a collaborative way.

“Having children’s learning and development at heart is essential to tackle these issues together using our established wealth of knowledge and a bit of creativity,” Ling said.

“We really hope to create impact early on to set children up for a healthier future and bring them benefit throughout their development.”

To read the study and learn more about *The Empathy World* visit www.monash.edu/it/about-us/news-and-events/latest/articles/2020/video-games-teach-children-empathy

From horse paddock to a garden for mates



An overgrown paddock that was once home to the local police station's horse has been transformed into Bermagui Preschool Moodji Cultural Garden through the hard work of the preschool and its surrounding community, IEU Journalist Sue Osborne writes.

"It's been the most amazing project. It started as this tiny little idea after a conversation with one of our neighbours. We had both just read *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe," Early Childhood Teacher/Director Narelle Myers said.

Dark Emu outlines the rich agricultural and aquacultural practices of First Nations people before white settlement.

"We thought wouldn't it be great to create this garden where we could teach agricultural farming practices that have been here for millennia and have the children growing up knowing such a deep and rich part of our culture. It's just grown and expanded, and we now have this amazing garden."

The garden includes an agricultural space where children can grow crops traditionally farmed in the region including yams, oat grass, native grains, native rice and bush tucker. Moodji means 'mate' and the garden is all about making connections.

The space includes examples of irrigation systems and game farming with opportunities to make and use traditional baskets and bags for

gathering bush tucker, use traditional tools to harvest crops and bake bread using traditional grains.

Narelle said the children have been exploring traditional fire practices, which has been particularly significant after the devastating bushfires at the start of the year.

"This has been a great way for our children to process their emotions, thoughts and feelings, especially with the bushfires affecting so many of our children and families," she said.

"We have been able to talk to the children about fire safety, how to cook with fire and about Indigenous fire management for our country. We are also looking forward to celebrating around our Moodji fire circle again next year."

Traditional housing, paths, meeting places, fire spaces, storage structures, shade shelters and totems will be installed, creating places where children can play and learn.

In consultation with Yuin elders, a focus on teaching Yuin language, law, trade systems, ceremonies and traditions will be encouraged.

"It keeps evolving and going off track a little bit, but in really good directions," Narelle said.

"We work with a lot of volunteers from the broader community. High school students are now partnering with us as well. Once a month we have a community workshop. It's a preschool project but educating the broader community as well.

"Banana plants are growing, there are butterflies flying everywhere, and goannas in the middle of town. It was one of our aims to repatriate the area with native flora and fauna."

Beehives have recently been introduced into the garden following research on the safety issues. Narelle said the learning potential for the children about ecosystems outweighs any risks.

She advises any preschool or long day care centre wishing to emulate Bermagui Preschool not to be dissuaded by a lack of space.

"The children have learned how to make wicking beds in a used coffee bag from our local café."

She also advises people not to be nervous about making connections with their local First Nations community.

"Just pick up the phone, go and have a cup of tea or yarn and make those connections because there's so much to learn from our local Aboriginal people."

"The garden will provide opportunities for children to play outdoors every day. We believe in the rights of children to be able to feel the land beneath their feet, the sun on their face, experience the natural rhythms of the seasons and breathe fresh air."

"The children are learning lifelong attitudes and knowledge about nature and our natural environments. It is our hope that these attitudes will lead to a deeper respect for our planet and lead to better outcomes for our future."

Supporting students living with parental mental illness

Journalist Emily Campbell explores a recent study by Monash University researchers into Parental Mental Illness and discusses strategies found to assist when working with children who have mentally ill parents.

Parental Mental Illness (PMI) and the repercussions for the children involved has gained increased attention over the past 20 years, with research aiming to uncover how children cope with having a mentally ill parent and how it affects them socially, emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally.

Young children who are preparing for their transition to school are at a critical stage in their social, cognitive and emotional development (Bayer et al. 2011, as cited in Laletas et al. 2020) with rapid growth and change occurring, and neural pathways for learning forming in their brains.

Unfortunately, children in this age bracket who are exposed to the risk factors associated with PMI are especially vulnerable and in danger of suffering from short-term and long-term adverse effects to their own mental health.

Given the huge changes occurring in children's brains during the ages of 4-6 years, many early childhood development and neuroscience researchers agree early intervention is

vital for supporting children enduring PMI and educational settings are an optimal environment for this (Laletas et al. 2020).

In recent years, there has been extensive research exploring the emotional, behavioural, and developmental impacts of PMI on parents and children, although very little has focused specifically on how teachers are affected, particularly those working in early childhood education.

This lack of understanding as to how kindergarten teachers are affected by PMI is surprising, given the consensus among many PMI experts that early childhood education teachers and staff are particularly well-placed to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable children living with PMI (Beardslee et al. 2010; Eismann et al. 2019; Kay-Lambkin et al. 2007; Rishel 2012 as cited in Laletas et al. 2020).

Revelatory research

A study published recently (Laletas et al. 2020) identified this gap in knowledge and so investigated the topic, seeking to examine how early childhood education teachers perceive their role teaching young children living with PMI and how it impacts their work and wellbeing.

All respondents had self-reported prior experience teaching children with PMI, with teachers either being told by a parent of their condition or informed by another family member, often in situations where a mentally ill parent was hospitalised.

Teachers involved in the study participated in semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility of discussion about their experiences.

Helpful strategies for preschool teachers

Three key enabling strategies were uncovered by the research.

All respondents demonstrated a thorough understanding that preschool children are shaped by their unique family circumstances and contexts, and that these factors influenced the child's world view.

They agreed family is critical in influencing a child's overall development and teachers working with these families required an understanding of individual family needs.

Collaboration and engagement with family members features centrally in early childhood education practice frameworks, like the national Early Years Learning Framework in Australia.





As one respondent identified, “...understanding where the child comes from will have some bearing on how that child understands the expectations or norms around them... Being aware that families operate differently; and having a sensitive and compassionate view about the families that enter our service... we need to have an understanding that there are other things that are impacting on this family and therefore the child.”

Building relationships and engaging with families

Participants all believed building “trusting and caring relationships” with children and their parents was vital, especially when working with families who might be experiencing difficulties due to PMI.

To build these relationships, the respondents said providing opportunities for interactions

between parents, teachers and other important adults in the children’s lives was vital to establishing and sustaining positive relationships.

“We invite the parents in as often as possible and try to be a welcoming place,” one respondent said.

“We try to have interactions with the family through functions that can help us develop the relationship between our families and our classroom,” they said.

Another respondent reflected on the case of a mother who struggled with bipolar disorder while her child attended kindergarten (preschool in NSW).

They reiterated the importance of providing a caring and safe environment for these parents to “just talk and have somewhere to interact with staff”.

“We have an adult space upstairs... this mother would sometimes come and sit in the space,” they said.

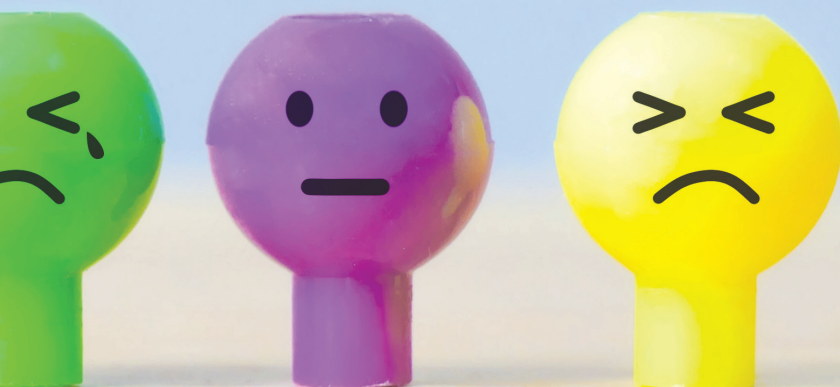
“We’d have a chat and she’d just debrief one of us about where she was up to with her medication or her personal management.”

Identifying children at risk

Recognising when children are at risk of failing to meet developmental outcomes is an important part of an early childhood education teacher’s role, particularly when dealing with PMI. All study participants were confidently able to describe the way teachers might identify potentially vulnerable children in their programs.

Key indicators of concern described by the respondents included language delays, children’s emotional and behavioural responses during play and the ways they interacted with other children.

“We are able to pick up on little cues – language, play, just even the way a child presents, the way they hold their body can tell you a lot. One



little girl rarely showed any affection. Other children are almost like they've got a protective bubble around them, not even acknowledging any kind of awareness that somebody else is even near them," said one participant in the study.

Transitioning to school in general is a challenging time for all children, but even more difficult for children living with PMI.

Respondents all expressed concern for children exhibiting these behaviours and signs of developmental delay, highlighting the difficulties they may encounter when transitioning to school.

According to one participant, "...there's a huge jump between us and school... if the child hasn't met the developmental milestones for their particular age..."

Respondents also reflected on the importance of building trusting relationships as a strategy to support children's social-emotional development to prepare them for school.

As well as literacy and numeracy development, two participants emphasised the importance of providing opportunities for vulnerable children to practice and enhance their social and emotional skill development.

One said the emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their academic development, if not more.

"...If children are unhappy, they're not going to be able to learn numeracy and literacy," they said.

What the profession needs

The experiences recounted by preschool teachers in this study highlight the workforce needs of early childhood education teachers who are teaching and supporting children living with PMI.

Several key recommendations were made by the authors and

other relevant literature as to how employers, communities and governments can support and empower early childhood education teachers dealing with PMI.

Recommendations include:

- Providing specific training and professional development to pre-service and in-service teachers to target mental health literacy, raise awareness of stigma and to build knowledge, skill and confidence in dealing with PMI.
- Building community partnership programs designed to facilitate collaborative partnerships between early childhood education teachers and vulnerable families (Beardslee et al. 2010 as cited in Laletas et al. 2020).
- Promoting school-based mental health initiatives to improve mental health literacy of staff, families and the wider community (Aylward and O'Neil 2009 as cited in Laletas et al. 2020).
- Encouraging multi-disciplinary team approaches to encourage collaborative and professional partnerships between educational services and the mental health sector (MacFarlane 2011 as cited in Laletas et al. 2020).
- Providing networking opportunities for staff to share knowledge about available resources and services for families needing support (Whitham et al. 2009 as cited in Laletas et al. 2020).
- Establishing resources including accessible websites, apps and e-learning programs for teachers, parents and children should be widely available to help early childhood education teachers create a supportive and welcoming environment for parents.

To access the full study visit <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-020-01131-8>

Stigma sadly still strong

Despite how common mental illness is, an unfortunate stigma still exists for those suffering from mental health conditions.

According to the Black Dog Institute, one in five Australians aged between 16-85 experience a mental illness in any year, with the most common afflictions being depression, anxiety and substance abuse disorders.

Different mental illnesses can frequently occur in combination, meaning a person who has an anxiety disorder may also develop depression, or misuse drugs and alcohol to self-medicate in an attempt to ease symptoms.

Of the 20% of Australians with a mental illness in any one year, 11.5% have one disorder and 8.5% have two or more disorders.

The Black Dog Institute reports that almost half of all Australians will experience a mental illness during their lifetime.

Alarmingly, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that depression will be the number one health concern in both the developed and developing nations by 2030.

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After the fires, new life blossoms

Children, staff and parents at Broulee Early Learning Centre were deeply affected by the devastating bushfires that swept through the south coast of NSW last Christmas, with several losing homes, IEU Journalist Sue Osborne writes.

Winning the IEU Environment Grant was a great boost to their efforts to rejuvenate their damaged centre and reconnect with nature in a positive way.

"We were so thrilled, it's all part of a healing process we're going through," Teacher Claire Drake said.

The \$3000 grant will be used to plant natives such as *Daviesia* (bitter peas) and *Gompholobium* (glory peas) that will enhance sustainability and attract the non-stinging bees that will be housed in 'bee hotels' on the roof of the playground equipment, a structure that will be purpose built and located near the back fence, backing onto bush.

The large purpose built centre, which services nearly 100 0-5-year-olds, is only seven years old but during the fires it lost many of the native trees along its fence line and a storage shed for playground equipment. Combined with a sandy, drought affected soil, the centre's exterior areas were in need of some 'TLC'.

Working with playground designers, Claire and the team researched what kind of flowers would bring their centre back to life.

"This project can help heal some of the trauma and recreate a positive relationship and respect for the land and environment around us."

"This project can help heal some of the trauma and recreate a positive relationship and respect for the land and environment around us.

"Some of the kids have had to mature a lot with what they've experienced, it's not been an easy thing, even for the adults," Claire said.

The environment plays a strong role in everyone's life in Broulee, with the beach walking distance from the centre.

As part of their Kinder Bush Program, the children learn how the bush changes and how bees pollinate plants and they are allowed to get into bushland, climb logs, explore and play. The grant project provides a springboard for learning opportunities.

"We have an apple tree that's only produced one apple so far, so we'll be talking about how the bees will pollinate plants, generate food and regenerate the bush."

Claire said there have been no concerns from the family body about

the non-stinging bee hotels.

"The children will be monitoring the whole project as it develops. We will invite input from children to choose plants that produce flowers to attract the type of bees that we want."

"The children are bringing their awareness to nature and the marvellous things it can do."

YOUR QUESTIONS

ANSWERED

FAQ

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

Dear Tina

My employer has told me that when the COVID-19 vaccine is rolled out all employees in our centre will need to be vaccinated. Can my employer make me get a COVID-19 vaccination?

Merina



Tina Smith

Dear Merina

Early learning and care employers have an incentive to want employees vaccinated, to protect children,

parents and colleagues, and to avoid any legal liabilities of potential workplace COVID-19 transmissions. Can an employer insist on COVID-19 vaccination as a

condition of employment? The answer for any workplace should be based on medical evidence. The ACTU has called for the Federal Government to clarify this issue by making public health orders which identify workplaces where COVID-19 vaccination will be mandatory.

There have been two unfair dismissal cases taken to the federal Fair Work Commission recently. One was an educator working in a large not-for-profit centre and the other an employee in aged care. Both involved employers in 2020 making an influenza vaccination a condition of employment. In both cases the employees lost their jobs for refusing vaccination.

The Fair Work Commission has not yet made a definitive ruling on the issue – a key principle will be whether or not an employee who does not wish to be vaccinated has refused to follow a lawful and reasonable direction in all the circumstances of the particular case.

Tina

References

<https://theconversation.com>

Cecilia Anthony Das Lecturer, Edith Cowan University

Kenneth Yin, Lecturer in Law, Edith Cowan University

Dear Danielle

I am an assistant working in a community kindergarten and I am worried as student numbers have been reducing over the last two years. If our kindergarten withdraws one of our groups, it means that only half of the staff will be able to stay. What things should we be looking out for if management decide they want to restructure our kindy?

Kumi



Danielle Wilson

Dear Kumi

2020 was a difficult year for the early childhood education sector.

This has had serious implications for the ongoing employment of our members.

Whenever change occurs in a workplace, an employer is obligated to ensure genuine consultation takes place prior to any final

decision being made. There are consultation provisions in all collective agreements and also in the applicable awards that must be complied with. The employer needs to give everyone the opportunity to provide feedback and give genuine consideration to that feedback.

We have seen some kindergartens take advantage of employees during restructuring processes. In a recent dispute, an employer tried to merge the tasks of different roles to avoid employing the full complement of staff. While members may be

prepared to be flexible, it is essential that the demarcation of duties between each role remains clear.

When we look at matters involving structural change, we want to know a number of things:

- Can the employer demonstrate a genuine need for these changes?
- What alternatives has the employer explored?
- Has genuine consultation with staff and our union taken place and has their feedback been taken on board?
- What processes are proposed to introduce the changes? Are these processes equitable?
- If redundancies are offered, are they genuine? Is there really no alternative?

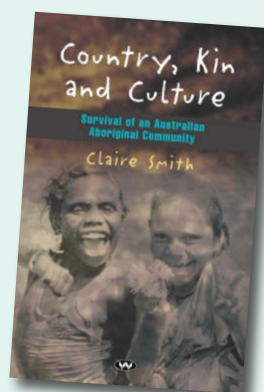
Where members are made redundant by changes in their workplace, they must be given all entitlements. Our members working in kindergartens can get caught by the small business exemptions in the Fair Work Act (fewer than 15 employees). One of the significant benefits of having a collective agreement in place is to ensure employees have access to clauses about genuine consultation, reasonable change management and adequate redundancy entitlements.

If you have experienced change in your workplace or have concerns about what your kindy or centre may be doing to manage change, contact our union office for further advice.

Danielle



GIVEAWAYS



Country, Kin and Culture

Author: Claire Smith | Publisher: Wakefield Press

When Captain Cook landed on Australian shores he came into contact with one of the most dynamic, culturally rich and socially sophisticated societies that had ever existed. This book documents how one such community drew upon their sense of country, kin and culture to survive the incursions of British colonisation. It outlines their histories from before contact to the present, through protectionism and assimilation, to self-determination and reconciliation. It presents the direct voices of Aboriginal people and government authorities through interviews and archival documents. This is a history not just of colonisation and resistance, but of cultural, social and political survival, even in the present day.

Claire Smith is Professor in Archaeology at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia. Accompanied by her husband, Gary Jackson, and son, Jimmy Smith, she has worked closely with the Barunga, Manyallaluk and Wugularr communities every year since 1990.

Monster Party

Authors: Alison Lester and Jane Goodwin | Publisher: Magabala Books

Monster Party is an explosion of fun and pure joy. Children will love the hilarious, naughty desert monsters who come out of the ground to have a party on Dora Lake. Eating chips and monster cake, they go 'galumphing' all over the place with a drum and a bass! Of all shapes and sizes, these monsters create havoc for the children at Rawa Community School who live on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert – 'dancing and stomping', 'crashing and crunching', 'prowling and growling', 'happy and smiling! Jeepers creepers! The monster cut-out illustrations created by the students are delightful. *Monster Party* will capture the hearts of the very young and the young at heart.



Moonlight Mums

Author and illustrator: Laura Stitzel | Publisher: Puffin Books

Mums can be busy . . . but they'll always be home to kiss you goodnight!

A heartwarming hug of a bedtime story for every Australian family with a busy mum.
Mums with many things to do
All miss their little ones, like you,
But every night the moon shines bright
And guides them home to say goodnight.

Email entries to giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the title of the book you would like to receive in the subject line. Write your name, membership number and postal address in the body of your email. All entries must be received by 3 May 2021.

WHY CHOOSE NGS SUPER?

Benefits at a glance



NGS Super is a fund for everyone, at every lifestage — now and into retirement.

As an award-winning Industry SuperFund, we're run only to benefit our members. We don't pay commissions to financial planners or dividends to shareholders, so all our profits go back into securing our members' financial futures. **As an NGS Super member, you'll benefit from:**

- **award-winning insurance**
- **low fees and charges**
- **competitive long-term returns** on our investments[^]
- our longstanding **commitment to non-government education and community organisations**
- **ongoing support, financial education and tailored advice**
- **complimentary meetings** with a Customer Relationship Manager
- a fund that is **committed to environmental, social and governance principles**.

[^] The 10-year return for the Diversified (MySuper) option was 7.39% p.a. at 30 June 2020.

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