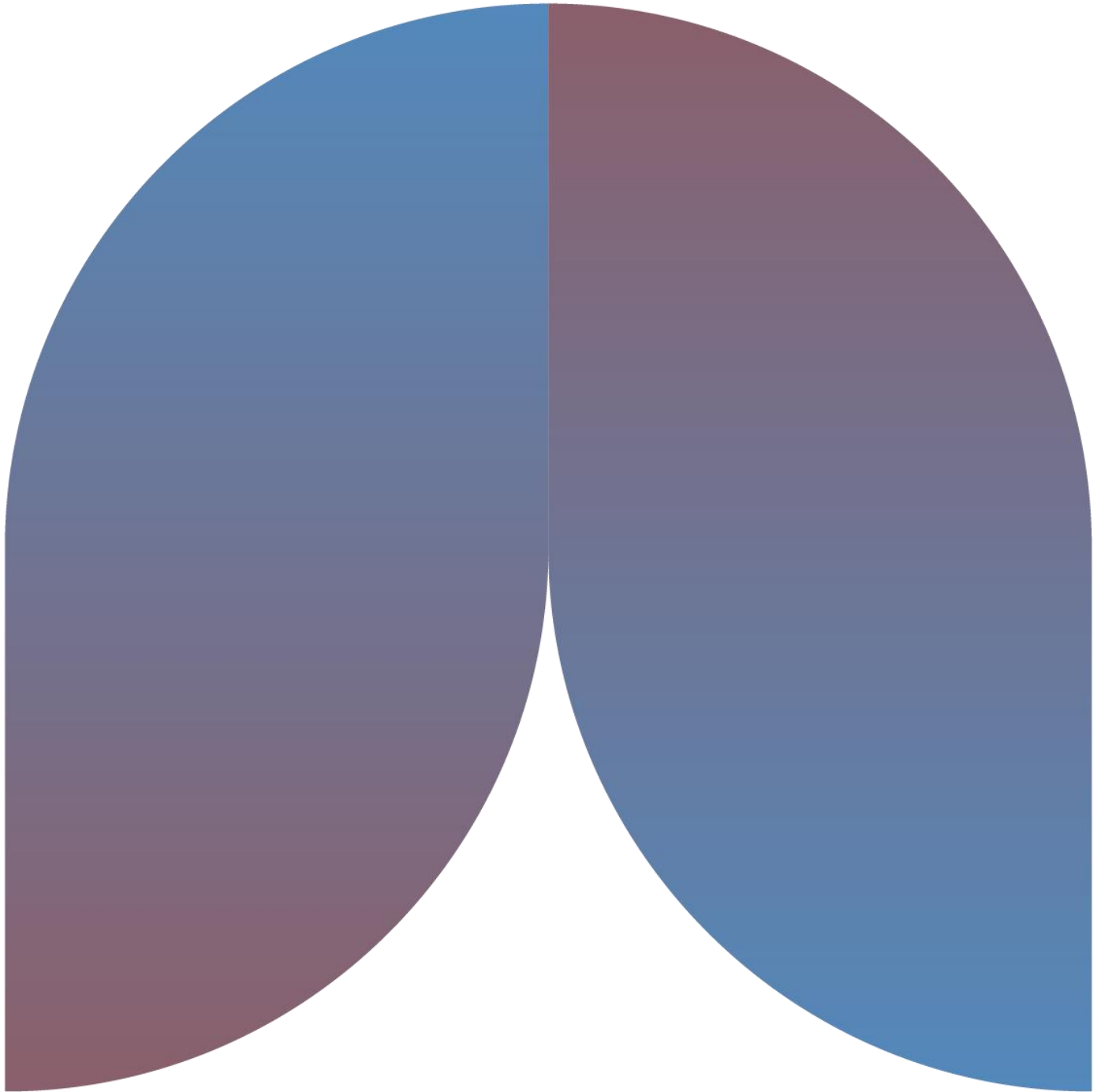


# AUDAX

(latin) bold, courageous, daring



Spring 2023

Journal of the Association of Graduates  
in Early Childhood Studies

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# AGECS



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies would like to acknowledge both the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung, and Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Custodians of the Lands on which we are located in Melbourne. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the Aboriginal language groups across all of Victoria, whose lands we provide funding for specific projects around Early Childhood Education. We acknowledge their history, their people, and their stories. As an Association we will work together for reconciliation, a process that starts with the acknowledgement of true Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures of Australia and will always value the contribution to our community and culture, the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their families, communities and their stories.

# From the President

**Welcome** to the spring edition of AUDAX. I hope this edition finds you all well in a year in which we have tried to get back to some normality in post Covid life. There are signs of Covid times still having effects on services and it has brought its own challenges with children showing high levels of need and families needing more support with parenting. I recently attended training with Robyn Papworth who really encouraged us to look at the impact of small screen time, lack of interaction and less physical play and how this would be manifesting in children's play. She had some wonderful ideas for programming that will support children's development. Robyn will be the keynote speaker at the AGECS AGM on the 20th November and I really encourage you to drop in and have a listen. (Please find the link on our website).

This AGM will also be a time of change for AGECS. Alannah Dore who is a past President will be stepping down as a council member allowing her to spend more time on her work and projects. Alannah worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that AGECS entered a new era. She played a key role in updating our branding, marketing and recruitment of contractors who now support us moving forward as a mainly volunteer organisation. I cannot fail to mention Alannah's commitment to developing an AGECS RAP, and building the resources in our reconciliation series. I am pleased to say that Alannah will be staying on our RAP Committee. We hope that we will continue to provide you with a range of resources that promote reconciliation and inclusion of all families in our services and Alannah is keen to lead the way with this.

This Edition of AUDAX will sadly be Wendy Grenfell's last time as Editor. Wendy has been with AGECS longer than she probably cares to remember and for much of that time she has been the editor of this well-resourced journal. I know Wendy has been grateful to all who have shared program strategies, ideas from services and of course the historical stories. A highlight for all of us was the 100 year edition of AUDAX. It was such a delight to read and a pleasure to be included. Wendy will not be

lost to AGECS though; she will continue to be on Council, a Trustee of the Foundation of Graduates and also sit on the Forest Hill committee and Fellowship selection panel.

Finally, this will be my last president's comments as I will also step down after two years. Taking on the presidency in AGECS 100th year was a huge honour, and I was so very grateful to be able to lead the celebrations, witness the outcomes of our 100 year grants which made such a difference for so many services and to lead the planning of, and completion of the Strategic plan. The plan will ensure that the organisations key values lead our decision making over the next few years, and that as a small volunteer group we are best able to meet the early childhood community's needs. As I write this, surveys are being conducted far and wide of early childhood educators to determine how best we can support their growth and development as professionals. If you have the opportunity, please complete the survey as it will help guide what we provide to you, as our members. We are so very aware of how busy our educators are so it is brief and easy to complete.

So, as I sign off ready to hand over to the next president, I say thank you for your continued involvement with our organisation. Throughout all the reforms and changes, we need to support and be kind to each other more than ever. We need to challenge ourselves to maintain a work, life balance and at the same, keep learning and looking for ways to support the children and families. To achieve this we need to be practical and resourceful. Maybe we go back to the basics - we don't need to be perfect; just collaborate and share ideas. Who knows, maybe there will be an idea in this edition that may spark an idea for you, one you could share with us! Go gently with yourselves over the last term of the year. I hope that in the coming year, as we unveil more of our plans, I will see you -even online in my role as Past President.

**Sarah O'Donnell**  
**President**

# From the Editor

I am saying farewell as Editor of AUDAX. I have had the privilege of compiling this amazing journal since October 2011. This Edition will be my 24<sup>th</sup> and I have absolutely enjoyed sharing ECE stories, resources, ideas and photos with you and paying tribute to all the caring, knowledgeable and dedicated Educators past and present. AUDAX was the only form of written communication to members for many years until social media provided us with a multitude of communication platforms. AUDAX was in A5 size to comply with affordable postage. Many AGECS volunteers compiled this very important journal over time, then the internet arrived and it became a shared task. When I joined AGECS in 2011, I offered to become a permanent Editor. We went digital and began sending it out via email. Much cheaper and

more content could be included. (Some members chose to have it sent by post, as not everyone had access to emails).

We then moved it to an A4 size for easier reading on a device with an historical picture of Mooroolbeek on its cover.

Recently the re-branding of AGECS initiated further change to the journal in line with the colours and shapes of all AGECS images.

AGECS now has several platforms for communication, so AUDAX is evolving more as a journal for member's stories and shared ideas.

I look forward to reading the next AUDAX with enjoyment from a member's perspective.

Thank you,

Wendy Grenfell (IECD grad 1976, B.Sp Ed Monash 1986)

# Our members' activities

Congratulations to all of the AGECS Academic Award winners, from the graduating class of 2022.

Professor Bridie Raban is a member of AGECS Council, and she attended the Academic Awards nights at Monash University and Melbourne Graduate School of Education.



Above: Bridie with winner Wenxin Yang at the University of Melbourne's MGSE.



Above: is a photo of Bridie with award recipients Verena Lan (Master of Teaching in Early Years and Primary Education), Janelle Kenny (Master of Teaching in Early Childhood Education), Jacinta Drew (Bachelor of Education Honours in Early Years and Primary Education) and Professor Marilyn Flier.

AGECS offers academic awards to all universities. If you work for a university and don't see any of your students pictured here, please let Alex at [engagement@agecs.org.au](mailto:engagement@agecs.org.au) know the appropriate contact details to confer with your school.



# Our members' remarkable stories

## Nancy Robertson's Early Childhood Teaching experiences (1918 – 2015)

As noted by AUDAX in 2016, Nancy is no longer with us, but here I am (her daughter) putting down some of her anecdotes as requested, to give some insights into kindergarten teaching in the first half of last century. In many ways Nancy was ahead of her time. She often met quite a bit of opposition, but this just made her more determined.

Nancy Robertson née Broadhead graduated from the Kindergarten Training College in Kew as a teacher of children up to 8 years and worked in a variety of places before 1950, including Ware Holiday Home (later known as "Warrawong") and deprived areas of Melbourne and Sydney, as well as better-off suburbs. She used to say that regardless of background, the needs of children were the same.



Ware Holiday Home. 1942. Mary Butler, Pat Austin, Jean Stillwell, Nancy Robertson. Child unknown.

At one time Nancy took care of the youngest boarders at a private school. She said many were there due to difficult family circumstances and were too young to have left home. They cried themselves to sleep in a cold veranda dormitory. She was supposed to take away the glass bottles of hot water they smuggled into their beds, but sometimes she could not do it. In one inner suburban Melbourne kindergarten, Nancy noticed many children had just black stumps for teeth and put it down to the constant diet of cheap sugar biscuits that their mothers gave them. Nancy had herself

been sent to school with white bread jam sandwiches for lunch and rebelled even then, trying to swap with other children for fruit. She set about making changes. It was not easy, because in

those days most parents believed strongly in white bread as best, and that crusts must be removed because bread was not wrapped. The mothers reasoned someone may have touched the bread, and frightened children about germs on crusts. Together with her dietician colleague and friend Gwynne Duigan, who came daily from her college while a student to make lunches for children at the Peel Street kindergarten, Nancy decided on a compromise. They would accept the white bread but leave the crusts on as chewing was "good for their little mouths" as Gwynne put it. This was a very small step but the start of an interest in child health, which gradually extended from diet to healthy painting materials and the children's physical environment generally. From a book of newspaper cuttings Nancy during her final year, you can see the lunch they would have liked to serve. The "Oslo" lunch had whole grain bread, not just brown bread and was so much of an innovation that trials had to be financed by donations.



1940 newspaper clippings from Nancy's collection.

Heather Robertson

## Joan Water's influence on Early Childhood (1928 – 2023)

Joan Waters trained as a Kindergarten teacher and taught in suburban Melbourne, rural Victoria and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, before becoming a Pre-School Adviser in the Health department of Victoria in 1972. When she was awarded the VSB scholarship in 1973, she had begun post-diploma study at La Trobe University, but she transferred to the University of Pittsburgh, USA, where she completed a BSc (Education). In the report on the course and her teaching experiences, she wrote:

"While I attended lectures and gained practical experience at three city school placements, our two children attended schools near our home in the outer suburb of Natrona Heights. From these I was able to learn something about the diversity of educational services in the State of Pennsylvania. Of particular value was my time at the Arsenal Nursery School, opened in 1953 by Benjamin Spock and continuing as a centre for study of the normal child."

From other courses and experiences Joan developed an abiding interest in two aspects of integration – of handicapped children into mainstream education, and of education into child care programs. This formed the basis of much of her later work. Joan was awarded a Graduate Fellowship to enable her to begin work on the Master's program. She took two courses: 'Current Issues in American Education' and 'Innovative Programs in Early Childhood Education', before returning to Australia.

Back at the Pre-school Department of the Victorian education Department in 1976, Joan was appointed Senior Pre-school Adviser. Her role became that of 'adviser to advisers', arranging monthly in-service for the departmental staff, writing a weekly bulletin, and speaking at meetings, workshops and conferences in the regions. She also initiated the *Preschool News*, a small monthly leaflet for Victoria's 2000 kindergarten teachers and

caregivers, and began writing a curriculum series of leaflets.

In 1981, Joan became Director of Early Childhood Services for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, a position she held for 11 years. During this time she was responsible for the oversight of the 60 kindergartens in Diocesan buildings and, as community needs changed, for the establishment of child care facilities.

Joan sought funding from various philanthropic organizations for three special programs – the Parent Education Project (PEP) in 11 kindergartens, the Project High Rise Education and Development (PHRED) in five inner urban centres, and the Under Six and Over Sixty Program. This program aimed to introduce elderly volunteers into kindergarten groups for the benefit of both adults and children.

"I have been a member of a number of professional and community organisations contributing to the well-being of children and at various times I've held office and edited the Newsletters of most of them. These include the Australian Institute of Early Childhood Educators, the Australian Early Childhood Association, the Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital, the National Action against War Toys, and the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education (OMEPE). OMEPE's bi-annual congresses have been a source of great stimulation and pleasure; friendships with colleagues in many countries have grown over the years. During my time as Vice-President (Asia Pacific Region), I was able to coordinate a worldwide appeal for funds to rebuild programs for children in Indonesia and Sri Lanka after the tsunami which destroyed so many communities across the region."

Joan became Director of the Lady Gowrie Resource Centre in 1993. In this bookshop and library she continued mentoring teachers and caregivers through discussions, conference presentations and publications. For the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Centre, she wrote a history,

*The Lady Gowrie Child Centre; the place, the people, the program.* Retiring from full-time work in 2000, Joan continued writing: *With Passion, Perseverance and Practicality: 100 women who influenced Australian Children's Services 1841-2001* (2002); *Their Rightful Heritage: the story of early childhood services in the Uniting Church, Victoria* (2003); *Sowing Seeds of Peace; and Australia and the world Organisation for Early Childhood Education* (2007).

This is an excerpt from **'Changing Minds, Changing Lives. The legacy of the Vera Scantlebury Brown Memorial Trust 1946 – 2004'**

**By Joan Waters**



# 100 Years of Excellence Stories

We continue to share the exceptional success stories of the mini-grants awarded to ECEC centres in 2022. Here are more of the innovative projects. We hope they will inspire you.

## [Diamond Creek OC – A fresh approach to caring for infants.](#)

*Anne Luttick and Leilani Bartolo*

For some time the educators in our Babies Room and those working with our youngest toddlers have been critically reflecting on the importance of the first 1000 days, and how the work we undertake with children in their earliest years is a truly significant opportunity to change children's long term outcomes. This had been a source of reflection for us since initially attending the AGECS presentation in 2017 by Dr Sandhya Ramrakha, who spoke about findings of the Dunedin Study. We decided to take it further.

The goal of our grant was to access funding for a team of educators to undertake comprehensive training to improve understandings and practices, and build professional knowledge around the immense capability of infants, babies and toddlers. Magda Gerber the founder of RIE (Resources for Infant Educarers) calls upon us to view infants with 'new eyes', and to challenge ourselves to review our perceptions of the youngest of children. RIE is a philosophy. It is based on the authentic self of the infant, and the importance of respect and empowerment of the child. It ties in strongly with consent, participation and child's voice. Components which are also emphasised throughout the Child Safe Standards.

We connected with RIE Associate Sharon Smith, who is based in New Zealand. Our initial project included intensive 8-day training called *RIE Foundations*, for a key staff member, and was to be followed by online training *Introduction to Educaring*, with the entire team of infant educators and select educators working in the Under Three's program. Due to cancellation and unavailability of training in Australia, we reorganised the training program which in the end, was largely more beneficial to our team. We were able to work with Sharon to enable a greater number of educators to benefit from her teaching through online meetings to be followed by series of on-site visits.

We launched the training in March with two interactive Zoom Meetings presented by Sharon Smith. Eight staff members participated in these meetings. Educators developed a more intricate understanding of infant development which was focused more on the capable child than on the developmental milestones. Educators reflected on current processes and practices and discussed how we could facilitate an environment that would allow all infants to learn and develop at their own pace and in their own space.

The next step in the training included three on-site visits by Sharon to our service in Diamond Creek, where she would observe how the learning and development of new processes garnered in online training were applied 'in action'. Sharon spent this time closely watching, jotting and recording 'a day in the life' of both the Babies and Under 3's rooms. She was able to spend time with each group of educators to drill down to common practices and processes and how

children could benefit further from the RIE approach. This drove deep critical reflection and gave educators opportunities to deconstruct some of the ways we have been engaging with our babies and young children. Traversing care which had been more a tendency or habit - although extremely caring - to a consistent and thoughtful response attuned to the unique needs of each individual.

These sessions exhausted our grant monies but we were not ready to continue unguided. Since these sessions, we have continued to meet with Sharon monthly. At each meeting our team takes the opportunity to focus on a fresh aspect of understanding infant development and how we can better our practices. We have reflected on how we, as educators, intentionally interact and communicate with infants, and the processes of 'actively listening'. We have reflected on our ability to slow down and be present in the moment, taking the time to sit back and tune in directly to the individual needs of the children. We are learning to allow our babies and young children to manage their own emotional responses and behaviours in a timely way, prior to interrupting and 'helping'. As the regular carers of very young children we have developed strong attachments with them that enable us to know when to interject and when to hold off. Through actively listening, we can respond to each child's needs in intentional, respectful ways.

We have also been working with the concept of the 'key educator', which Sharon highly recommends. This approach, where one sole educator is responsible for care moments with the same group of children is intended to further foster a deep connection with the children, and assist in creating a respectful, safe and familiar

environment. In line with our centre's philosophy, we strive for children to feel safe and respected by ALL educators within their environment. We are fostering those special, individual relationships that have been built with the children, and have used this to guide our interactions. In this way, we are taking the child's lead and respecting both their autonomy and their choices in how, or who, they interact with. This is particularly notable during personal care or comfort moments.

This has been a fantastic opportunity for critical reflection and learning for us, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with RIE for the remainder of this year. We are entirely grateful to the Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies for granting us such possibilities.

[Braybrook ELC - A culturally safe and welcoming space.](#)

*Annie Wormald, EC Teacher and Learner*

This grant has assisted us in building staff relationships with our local Wurundjeri community. This supports positioning Braybrook Kindergarten as a culturally safe and welcoming space for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the diverse cultural and linguistical (CALD) families in our community, building a strong sense of belonging across cultures.

It has also enabled us to broaden family understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and offer access to ceremonies usually inaccessible. This has increased visibility of First Nations perspectives, culture and traditions in our program, curriculum and more broadly in the community. Our Staff have had an opportunity to engage directly with Wurundjeri elders, seeking advice and

knowledge on various programs such as our launch of a bush kinder program (May 2023) and developing a Kindergarten Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Children have had the opportunity to experience\* a Wurundjeri cultural education incursion and deepen their understandings about this rich culture and cross-cultural understandings (\*this is currently booked in for the coming months, has not yet been experienced).

We are so grateful for the opportunity to connect with Wurundjeri elders and offer the incredible experience of thousand-year-old ceremonies and traditions to our community. We have had many family members thank us for organising these opportunities, stating they had no idea about Australia's history or that they had never experienced one before. It has promoted great discussions and education opportunities with families around the upcoming First Nations voice referendum vote. Thank you for supporting us with this opportunity!

[Meruka Child Care Co-operative - Extending learning in the Outdoor Environment](#)

*Elisabeth Jordan, EC Kinder Teacher.*

Our project was created and designed after deep and thoughtful reflection on our outdoor environment at our centre which has children from 6 months to 5 years.

We have successfully supported outdoor play with the very important focus being on the children's physical health, active physical play and wellbeing. Over the last few years, we continued to spend more time outdoors, including during the covid pandemic where we were guided to spend as much time as possible outdoors. This

highlighted the need for us to reflect more critically on other types of learning that we can support in the outdoor environment. We also wanted to support meal times and rest times to comfortably take place outdoors.

We are grateful to AGECS for supporting us towards this vision and assist us in removing barriers to uplift and enhance our outdoor program. We used the funding received from AGECS to purchase the following resources:

- High quality outdoor STEM building resources – giant polygons and hexagons
- Loose Parts trolley and Recycled Art truck membership
- Outdoor waterproof Indigenous designed mats
- Outdoor weatherproof table and benches
- Portable art board and portable art trolley

Now whenever we plan to do a learning experience with the children, we think about how we can do it outside or how we can support the extension of the learning in the outdoor environment.

We have offered outdoor art to the children at times over many years; however it has not been something that was offered daily. Now with the art board and the art trolley, we are able to have this outside every day and the children can freely access it. In the art trolley are a variety of art mediums including chalk, charcoal, paint, textas, crayons, different types of paper. We have also been able to use the art board, which is an acrylic sheet as a sensory play support and have used shaving cream and other sensory materials on it. The children have also enjoyed using white board markers on it as they trace each other's faces and learn

more about themselves and each other in the process.

Using all the new equipment in different ways outdoors has supported the Educators to enhance learning by being close by to assist the children in walking through the steps of problem solving and experimentation and hypothesising.

Another outcome of our process of reflecting on the outdoor learning environment has also moved us towards reflecting on gender equity in the outdoor play and we have created processes of gathering research on how the different genders play outdoors and we have highlighted areas where exclusion does take place and/or an imbalance or unfair play takes place. This has been invaluable research and observation that we have done and we are now able to make change where needed.

#### [Western Sydney University ELC Parramatta – Robotic Technologies](#)

*Christine Zahra and Kayla Dowling*

This grant allowed WSU Early Learning Parramatta to access resources that would have otherwise not be purchased and for children to be involved in STEAM learning. Robotic technology was used to support children's interest in coding, robotics and engineering, digital literacy and coding.

The project began with such excitement amongst the children. They had already demonstrated interest in robots which facilitated the robotics entry into their play.

We introduced the experience to the children in small groups. Then expanded them to work in larger groups with the

Robots. The children increased their sequencing skills with the robots, they used the coding tiles to plan the path and use the robots to verify that it works. They were able to demonstrate coding skills such as critical thinking; persistence; problem-solving, mathematical skills.

Expanding the pre-planning, they used the sequencing cards to plan the direction they wanted the Robots to travel and were able to execute the functions on the buttons.

The planning and evaluation of how the Robots moved and if the children had planned the functions appropriately allowed them to reflect on how they planned the sequencing.

Revisiting this across the different mats allowed the children to challenge themselves as they did this. The children then used literacy skills to send the Bee bots across the mat to their peers and used the letter mat as target points that they had to cross. This challenged their letter identification as we discussed the shapes of the letters, sounds and directions as we did this.

After a couple of weeks, the children could independently use coding to operate and guide the Bee bots. The more confident children then supported their peers and shared their knowledge in how to operate and code the Bee bots.

## Goodstart Grovedale Torquay Road – Street pantry and Library

Connie Goh – Educational Leader

The grant that we received from AGECS has helped us to further support and engage with people who live within our community. With the new Street Library and Street Pantry installed just outside of our service, our children, families, neighbourhood, and the local community will be able to access books and food at any time that is convenient for them; besides the food pantry that we already have offered inside of our service.

The intention of setting up a **Street Library** and **Street Pantry** serves a few purposes that enhance the quality practices in our service.

### Street Library

We like to share our love for reading not only with our children but also with the local community. Creating a space to share books will provide numerous opportunities for language and literacy learning and allows children to develop their emergent literacy skills.

### Street Pantry

The addition of our Street Pantry will encourage people to 'give what you can and take what you need'. We recognise the diverse socio-economic status of our community and so we aim to develop a space that provides vulnerable community members with resources, whilst enhancing our contributions to the space by funding continued provisions.

Our Centre Leadership Team have brainstormed and planned about what we could use the grant for and how we could further support our children, families and



communities. We decided that by providing and sharing books and food to/with our children, families and neighbourhood on an ongoing basis, we will support engagement of families in our service, as well as build collaborative partnerships with the community through this endeavour. We believe this will increase the quality of our service as it aligns with the Quality Area 6 in the National Quality Standards.

## Rye Preschool – Connecting with a local Elder, Aunty Fay.

Julie Irvine – Teacher

I was so nervous to reach out to an Elder and especially one as amazing and well known as Aunty Fay. But within minutes of that first phone call I felt increasingly comfortable and I was able to listen to Auntie Fay's ideas and arrange for her to visit our kinder. A visit to our 2 groups literally cost the same as the grant. It was meant to be.

Aunty Fay's visits consisted of a group (2 groups) discussion with the children. The children could ask as many questions as they wanted and we all learnt some Bunarong words. The discussion was hands on with touching and looking at a possum skin and other artefacts.



We then ventured outside into our new play space. (A starting-blocks grant) and Auntie Fay explained the importance of a smoking ceremony and each child was able to walk through the smoke and experience this spiritual time.

It felt like Auntie Fay's smoking ceremony was a way of blessing the land on which our play space was built. An added bonus.

The children couldn't stop talking about Auntie Fay and the smoke in our kinder. A total success. This experience felt real. Just like having a very special visitor of our family come to visit. We were able to share our experiences with parents and the wider community through social media and we began to use the Bunerong language daily.

The smoking on country was a new beginning for our kinder, creating a deeper respect and understanding in a practical, hand on way. Together with the Elder visit it gave staff an opportunity to learn language, cultural understandings and inspiration and encouragement.

The project enabled us to meet a number of RAP actions.

### [Killarney Vale Preschool – Installation of an UV indicator for the community.](#)

*Kelli Shackleton (Teacher) and Rebecca Thompson (Director)*

Growing up in Australia and even more so in our local coastal community where our children and families spend a lot of time outdoors, it's important that we advocate and educate about sun safe practices. Current evidence from Cancer council suggests that childhood sun exposure makes an important contribution to the risk of skin cancer.

Staff were checking UV levels on smart devices to determine the level of sun protection needed, then inform and direct children each day to sunscreen.

Were children only associating sun protection, needing sunscreen or hat, based on weather – “Sunny” or “Hot”? We realised the importance of explaining and helping children understand the impacts of UV radiation in sunlight and the link to sun protection.

How could we better support children's involvement and independence with making informed decisions about sun safe practices?

An interactive visual UV chart was developed with the children and introduced into both rooms. This interactive



resource was adapted from the NSW Cancer Councils 'Weather & UV chart' and was an extension of the children's

sun safety understanding. Creating visual links between UV radiation levels and the type of sun protection needed.

During the first month we already noticed the high level of interest and eagerness in the children to be involved in the chart. It empowered the children as competent communicators as they engaged with visuals and text to make informed decisions about how to protect their skin.

Where to next? What more could we do? How could we encourage even more



autonomy in the children's routine, facilitating self-sufficiency with access to accurate UV information? How can we further advocate for sun safe practices within children's home life and the broader community?

We found a company trialling a digital UV meter at a school in WA as part of a sun protection awareness study. The idea was of a solar meter display at the front of the preschool which could be easily viewed by the staff and children inside, as well as visible for families arriving, passers-by, and all members of the community.

We are on a street with two major sporting fields, Scouts, and Girl Guides Halls. The solar UV meter would be a valuable sun safety awareness feature for a great deal of the community who spend time outdoors. Advocating and raising awareness of the link between UV and sun protection practices, not to be based just on weather. It's important to be sun safe not only in summer but throughout the year, UV rays can be strong here on the central coast even through the cooler months. This is a great way to connect with the community, sharing information, and promoting more informed sun safe practices.

### [Goodstart Rosebud Kindergarten – A Sensory Room](#)

*Kathy Schreiber*

We at Goodstart Rosebud Boneo Rd kindergarten will be forever thankful for the grant we received from AGECS.

Our service supports many vulnerable families and children within our community for whom sensory regulation can be challenging in their daily lives.

With the grant funding we received we have begun the creation of a sensory room for our children to access in times of stress. We have been able to purchase a sensory box with accompanying manipulative toys. These are to assist in self-calming and emotional regulation stability. We have purchased plants that give calming scents to the space, lighting to again support the space and some more tactile boards to again allow for regulation exercises. We also managed to sneak in some soft cushioning with the funds.



The room is an ongoing project and we are hoping to extend it to a community library of sensory equipment in the future.

Thank you AGECS for all of your support.

### [Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre – Workshops for 23 Staff](#)

*Linda Price and Sue Bullock*

Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre was able to run a conference with the support provided by the AGES 100 Years of Excellence Grant. We were able to provide training around Phoenix Cups framework, Child Safe standards, Vestibular and Proprioception systems of the body and Team building exercises. 23 team members were able to attend over 2 days. Closing the entire service for one day to make a Friday-Saturday conference possible was a big decision which paid off. Firstly, commitment to spend this important investment on the team confirmed the importance and value the service places on their team. This is

critical in a time when, across the sector, educator and teacher wellbeing has been highly impacted. Research confirms that educator and teacher wellbeing is known to have direct impact on child outcomes, team cohesion and positive organisational culture.

Having dedicated and focussed training for all of our team, meant we were able to

- address knowledge gaps within our team
- embed evidence-based practices throughout the entire service.

KRCC families value our approaches to including Indigenous perspectives, supporting risk taking and our connections to nature. The AEDC data shows our contemporary approaches are having significant positive effect on our children who now rate above state and national averages for school readiness. This conference closed the gaps in educator knowledge, to ensure our evidenced based practices are embedded throughout the service for the benefit of all children.

Our Goal was to rate as Exceeding in all areas on our next Assessment and Rating and we achieved this in January 2023.

[Early Childhood Management Services – Coaching the Coach Unlocking Potential.](#)  
*Leonie Hede and Melissa Dann – Practice coaches*

Research affirms that relationships, interactions and environments have a profound influence on the learning outcomes of young children. Our EYM-Early Childhood Management Services has invested in Practice Coaching to support the growth and capability of educators.

Through partial funding from the AGECS 100 Years of Excellence grant our team of five Practice Coaches participated in *Leading with Courage* professional learning and a reflective coaching workshop with Kelly Goodsir from KG Learning. These opportunities called upon us to be open and dig deeper into our thinking, and enabled us to strengthen our team relationships, and grow our collective approach to coaching. Building on the collective knowledge attained through this professional learning we discovered that when coaching honours relationships first, it lays a stronger, more sustainable foundation to improve practice, with greater impact for child, family, and community outcomes. By slowly and intentionally building trust we can leap into new learning with educators, stepping in with vulnerability and courage.

Recognising threshold conditions for educators, our coaching now highlights the importance of self-care and compassion by meeting educators and leaders 'where they are,' fostering curiosity and wonder, calling us to challenge what we do.

We model a way of being and doing through intentional deep listening, reflection and review to refine and strengthen our coaching framework and program design. The impact of our approach is seen through educators' engagement with our coaching and the growth in their practice. Educators are entering into coaching conversations where they are willing to challenge their thinking and what they do. They are looking at alternatives to explore in practice.

## Glenroy Memorial Preschool – Sensory Resources.

*Maha Mikhail – EC Teacher*

Sensory Resources to support children's concentration skills, gross & fine motor skills, communication & language skills, and expressing their emotions.

The following items have been utilised during every session: Weighted Lap Bag, Howda Hug, Sand Timer, Spinning wheel and Drop Timer are all part of our resources to support children's concentration skills and their learning. Children are very familiar with the items, independently accessing them when needed.

We have been using My Emotions - Book and Flash Cards to support children's emotional regulation and expressing their emotions verbally.

Twist'N'Write Pencils have been a great tool to enhance children's fine motor skills as well as encouraged them to explore drawing more often.

## Connie Benn ELC – Supporting children with their emotional wellbeing.

*Rachel Dike – Coordinator*

The Project was to purchase sensory based resources to support children with their emotional wellbeing. These resources play a positive role in supporting children within our community who are: experiencing trauma (current and intergenerational), of CALD backgrounds, Aboriginal background, or with a high level of domestic violence. This grant enabled us to provide children with resources and experiences to help them calm, regulate and play. We understand that initially, engaging in

sensory play alongside children helps them to learn to self soothe and self-regulate; a valuable life skill. We were able to deliver high quality practice of trauma informed strategies within our service to support children's play, learning and development.

We are very appreciative of the AGECS 100 years of Excellence grant program.

## ECIA Vic/Tas – Translation of 2 postcards into 7 languages.

*Sarah Riches and Trish McIvor*

The postcards are to inform families from various CALD backgrounds of best practices in early childhood intervention (ECI) for themselves and their children with disability and developmental delay.

The translated material has enabled us to resource families from various CALD backgrounds in a simple to read format. It provides easy to access information about 'Best Practice in ECI' and 'The Role of the Key Worker in ECI'. Such information will assist families in understanding how high-quality early intervention services should be delivered and assist them with making decisions about the provision of supports for their children and family. The languages include are: Arabic, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), Dari, Greek, Hindi and Vietnamese.

The links to these resources are:

<https://www.eciavic.org.au/resources/postcards-best-practice-in-eci>

<https://www.eciavic.org.au/resources/postcards-the-role-of-the-key-worker-in-eci>

Since uploading the postcards for public access on our website (December 2022) there have been over 600 downloads of the

postcards in various languages and over 800 views. These have been utilised by families as well as early childhood intervention service providers.

Many thanks to AGECS for the provision of this grant and for the ease of accessing and applying this.

### [WSU Early Learning Blacktown – creating a rest and relaxation space](#)

*Simone Price and Melissa Long*

With the funding that was provided to the service by AGECS 100 years of Excellence grant, we were able to purchase learning materials and furniture to create a rest and relaxation safe space for children. One of the pieces of furniture we were able to purchase was a large bamboo playhouse with clear plastic walls for easy supervision for the educators. We also purchased soft pillows made from a variety of textures, fabrics and colours to create a learning space that would not only be calming but visually appealing and stimulating for the children. Initially when we first introduced our new furniture and materials to the learning environment, children were not quite sure how to engage with or in it. But then as children spent more time in (what we like to call the 'Calm Down Cave'); we observed children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development improving. Whenever children are feeling big emotions such as the feeling of being overwhelmed or anxious, they know there is a welcoming space in the room that they can escape to find a quiet place where they can spend some time on their own away from other children. During our journey of creating this space for the children, the educators and children developed some

rules for the safe use of our calm down cave and one of those rules is that only four children are allowed at any one time. Whenever there is more than one child in the calm down cave, the educators always overhear children engaging in quiet conversation with each other as this space creates an environment where children feel comfortable interacting with their friends. Some children that would normally be very shy become very outspoken when they are in this learning space as they have a sense of comfort being themselves amongst their friends.

This project acknowledges the importance of physical and psychological aspects that are central to children's learning and development. The learning area created a safe space where children could go whenever they needed to feel an extra sense of comfort and security.

### [Cawongla Playhouse – A teacher action research project.](#)

*Stephen Gallen – Director/ECT*

The project explored the idea of 'community' and how it is generated, enabled and engaged within curriculum, pedagogy and ECEC settings. It was impacted on and subsequently informed by the 2022 NSW Northern Rivers natural disaster.

The project helped us identify some key questions that supported critical reflection on our practices. More substantially we identified key processes, practices and understandings which supported our capacity to enable the conditions which strengthen and grow relationships and participation. Key insights included the dynamic nature of community, the need for constant renewal through daily practice, and factors which build our capacity to respond to adversity. Through the project



we had the opportunity to present our journey and learnings at a national ECEC and have been invited to present at another upcoming conference in July. These opportunities have allowed us to share the challenges we are facing more widely within the sector, resulting in further professional learning as well as material support - donations etc - which have helped us support children and families in the face of the natural disasters.

[Explore & Develop Lilyfield LDC - Soulful Art: The courage to listen to children.](#)

Susan Franco



What we have observed is that many children living in a post COVID world has not been easy. For many children the COVID pandemic has identified that they have experienced unprecedented disruption, and this has been demonstrated through varying degrees of emotional regulation, increased clinginess, anxiety, levels of stress and worsening behaviour and moods.

*But how do you go about creating stability and connection when many families are still experiencing stress and that children will require additional support as they readjust to changing routines?*

Through weekly (10 week) Soulful art class we engaged an Art Therapist to support our educators with creative and inviting ways to support our children to identify big and small emotions, communicating their world using their potential, strengths and languages to overcome any obstacle presented, be this from home, community or within their learning environment.

It became an opportunity to strengthen our relationships with children. To think a little differently, to engage our own hands, hearts and minds and provide a restorative foundation within our curriculum.

Sparked by Nick Ortner's book "My Magic Breath", our pre-schoolers were introduced to breath work, mindfulness, self-awareness, and balance and how we can deal with big and small emotions throughout the day: important concepts even for adults.

Soulful art involved self-portraits, colour exploration, music and more. This became a deliberate and sustained part of our curriculum as a way of honouring children's voices. Our weekly soulful art classes were planned within our curriculum with the aim of slowing things down - connecting children with their minds, bodies, emotions, and their breath.



This experience transformed our preschool room. From a room that demonstrated a high level of emotional stress to a calm and serene space where children became more engaged and more capable in explaining and sharing their feelings.

This project captured our children's imagination. It also reminded us to slow our pedagogy and practice.

"Children bring their whole world into our care each day, their experiences, their feelings, their happiness, their sadness, their hope, and their pleasure" (Malaguzzi, 1994)  
As a privately owned long day care service we are often ineligible for many grants. This was a project that we really wanted to explore with our preschool children and it

involved working with an Art Therapist over a 10 week project. It has proven to be an invaluable project supporting not only the children but also our team of educators in terms of finding ways to engage all children in creative art as a way of self-expression.

### Kangaroo Ground Preschool Inc – Wet weather gear for all!

*Tracey Woodford – Educational Director*



We used the 100 years of Excellence grant to purchase a classroom set of high-quality wet weather gear. It was our intention to remove any potential obstacles (including negative feelings) in children's attendance of our outside session. After all, "There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothes" Alfred Wainwright.

Being able to supply each child with suitable wet weather gear (jacket and pants) has removed any barriers of them accessing the outside space in ways that they want to. The children (and teaching staff) are now free to explore on their knees under trees, fly down mud slides on their bottoms and remain protected from the elements the Melbourne winter so kindly shares with us.

Each child has equal access to the rich learning available in the outdoors. Families are not burdened with the additional cost or washing of the equipment. Children are kept dry and warm.

Since introducing the wet weather gear, we have experienced less resistance from children and parents to attend our Explorers sessions, staff model suitable clothes with waterproof jackets and pants too.



We are incredibly grateful for AGECS ongoing financial contributions to Early Childhood Education and Care, we have accessed a range of grants over the years and it has without a doubt improved the teaching skills of our team and the service experience for children and families attending our Kindergarten.



*Measuring how deep this puddle is without feet – it is 1 gumboot deep!*

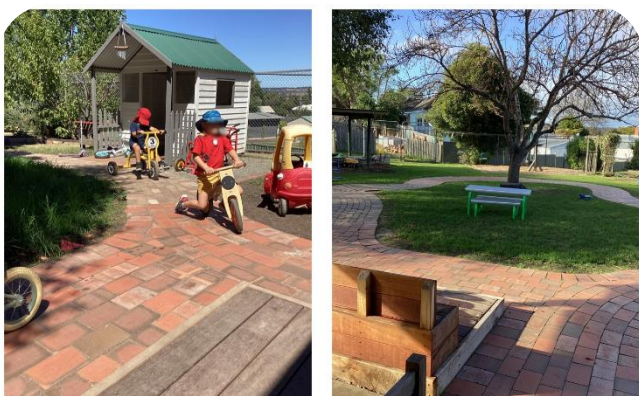


## Bruthen Uniting Kindergarten – Construction of a bike path.

*Yvonne Unthank – Teacher/Director*

The bike path has allowed the children to have somewhere to practice their bike and scooter riding skills. It has allowed the children to enhance their balance; increase problem solving skills; develop their large motor skills; learn turn taking and sharing; learn road rules and safe road use; and given the children somewhere to run and ride and use their abundant energy in a safe space.

The grant enabled us to finally do a project that we had wanted to do for a long time. The parents, children and educators are truly thankful to the AGECS for granting us the money.



## St Peter's Kindergarten – Embedding Aboriginal Perspectives and building local relationships

*Catherine Beckingham*

St Peter's Kindergarten applied for funding to facilitate the incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, through developing a relationship with the local Aboriginal community.

Staff underwent training on embedding Aboriginal perspectives into children's play experiences. The service connected with local Aboriginal community members, and have been engaging in conversations regarding the preparation and implementation of their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

St Peter's Kindergarten are grateful for the support from AGECS. The funding made a huge difference to the kindergarten community, and the application process was straightforward.

# Resources

## [Postcards for CALD families to communicate Best Practice in ECI and the role of a Key Worker](#)

According to the 2011 census, 26% of the Australian population were born overseas and a further 20% had at least one parent born overseas. Using data from the [ABS 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers \(SDAC\)](#) it is estimated around 7.4% of Australian children aged 0–14 had some level of disability.

As these figures have surely increased since 2011, it is important to provide information for all families of children with disabilities about the importance of early childhood intervention (ECI). Scientific evidence shows that early experiences literally shape our lives by affecting the way the young brain develops. What happens to us in the early years has a major effect on our health and social development right through to adulthood. We must ensure that all children's early experiences are positive, and that they have a secure foundation for development. With funding from the Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies (AGECS) we have translated our 'Best Practice in ECI' and 'The role of the Key Worker in ECI' postcard resources into seven common languages. Aimed at meeting the support needs of families and to assist ECI professionals communicate important information with families of CALD backgrounds, the postcards have been translated into: Arabic, Dari, Greek, Hindi, Chinese

(simplified), Chinese (traditional), Vietnamese

To access and download these postcards for use at your service or to pass on to families you work alongside, please click below:

[Best Practice in ECI postcards \(translated\)](#)

[The role of the Key Worker in ECI postcards \(translated\)](#)

## [The magic of movement still really matters in our digital world](#)

Without plenty of natural movement, babies and toddlers run the risk of experiencing developmental delays in all areas of their life. Movement is not just about the physical body; it is a very sophisticated necessity for developing healthy brains, healthy minds and nurturing the socio-cultural development of every human being. Some of the things that can occur if our children lack movement in the first two years of life are:

- delayed motor development
- poor co-ordination/ balance
- tendency to be easily distracted, lack concentration
- language problems
- emotional immaturity
- reading problems
- aggressive behaviour

For young kids (under 6) in order to master the incredibly important abilities of being able to listen, focus, manage their energy and learn to sit still for a period of time, they must develop both proprioception and vestibular sense.

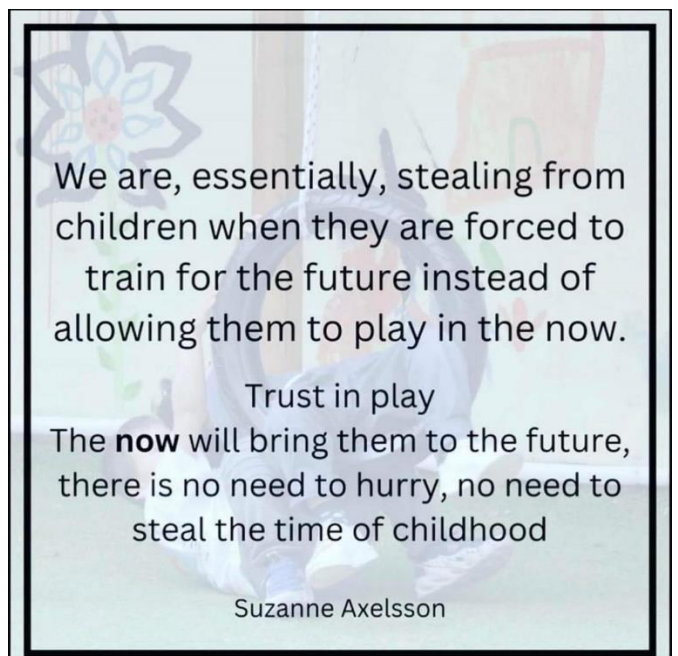
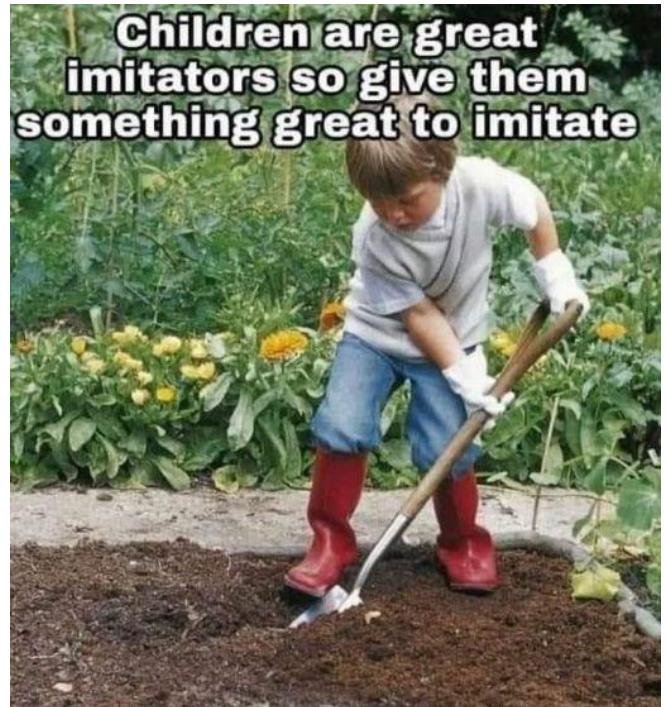
# Noticeboard Ideas

Each child has a built-in timetable that dictates just when s/he will crawl, sit up and start to walk; and given a safe environment, their development will flow naturally. 'Active Bodies and Brains' is a program designed to support parents and teachers in ensuring our children keep moving for their mental, emotional and brain health.



WA government and Playgroup WA launched the series of free resources, videos and activities designed by Occupational therapists.

[www.playgroupwa.com.au/bodiesandbrains](http://www.playgroupwa.com.au/bodiesandbrains)





# Team Discussion

## How Educators can support friendships

[www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/sep-2023/how-educators-can-support-friendships](http://www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/sep-2023/how-educators-can-support-friendships)

The role of teachers and educators in supporting peer relationships in the first three years of life has increased in importance as more children spend time in early childhood settings. Our understanding of children and their capacity to notice and bond with other children from a young age has evolved over time. Early views of infants were of solitary beings that were incapable of sharing or forming friendships. There was



a widespread view that infants engaged in solitary or parallel play and do not communicate with other

children.

### Questions to ponder include:

- Are children placed together in the same position in highchairs to encourage bonding?
- Do you notice children looking at each other, reaching for and touching each other's food?

Physical structures can include opportunities for infants and toddlers to move together and use shared equipment such as ladders, large balls and play areas.

## Ways to focus on friendships

Educators observe and reflect on children's development regularly. You can reflect upon the following areas to put a focus on friendships:

- Where children are at in their social and emotional development and what are their strengths.
- How their relationships are building and with which children, then plan activities that will enable children to work close to, or with, friends.
- Supporting children to understand social situations and developing their confidence to respond to conflict.

## Encouraging positive social interactions

Caregivers can engage children in discussions about how to understand the feelings of others, how their behaviours affect others, and can provide help for children to express their own feelings.

Another intervention is 'igniting peer interaction', to encourage children to



approach peers as well as educators.

Example: When a toddler approaches an educator excited at his success

with a painting, she can share his excitement and at the same time model how to approach a peer and show him the painting.

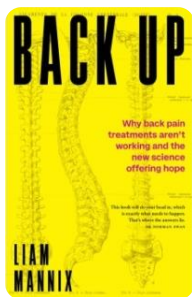
# Activities

## Books

**Chinongwa** by Lucy Mushita is a riveting and emotional portrait of conditions in rural Zimbabwe during the 1920s. This novel follows the terrible misfortunes of a brave and likable young girl as she grows to womanhood.



Lucy Mushita is a novelist and speaker. Born in Zimbabwe, she grew up in a traditional village before going to France at the end of apartheid.



Back pain is the leading cause of disability in Australia and this book argues that this need not be the case. When the biggest predictor of chronic back pain is job satisfaction, something is wrong with our

anatomic, mechanistic understanding of this common condition. **Back Up** by Liam Mannix, sets the record straight by confronting our current understanding of pain and chronic pain in particular.'

## Film

**While the men are away** – SBS on demand. An Italian immigrant enlists two women's land army recruits, a draft dodger and her indigenous farmhand to help run the family farm. Broadly, this story is about life in Australia



in the 1940s, but it is a revisionist history rather than one that is historically accurate. The societal hierarchy is still dictated by race, gender, and sexuality but people have the liberty to respond or push back in ways they probably could not in reality.

## Theatre

**Fantastic Mr Fox** will be performed at the Comedy Theatre in the January school holidays. Mr Fox needs to save his family and friends from the farmers Boggis, Bunce and Bean.



## Music and Movement

**Rekindled Systems** is the song Yorta Yorta artist Allara sang that called in the spirit of Ukrainian Canadian artist Olenka Toroshenko, Their tour across Victoria from Warrnambool, Traralgon, Shepparton, Bendigo and Melbourne will bring First nations music and cultural cross-pollination together.

From November 11<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>.

[www.rekindledsystems.com](http://www.rekindledsystems.com)

Come along to **Stompers** at Southbank Library for an energetic 30 minutes of stories, songs, rhymes, music and most of all, fun. Ages 18 months to 3 years; no bookings necessary.

Programs run Term 4: Monday 2 October to Friday 15 December

<https://whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au/things-to-do/stompers>

[Joy Lillian Humphries](#) passed away January 2023.

[Winifred Irene Leslie](#), Port Fairy, passed away 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 aged 96. Win was actively involved in a variety of community groups and committees.

[Joan Waters](#) April 1928 to Sept 2023.

Joan was well known for her work with kindergartens, OMEP, the Uniting Church and social justice.

See Joan's story in 'Our members' section.





# Council 2023

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Nicole Talarico

## Thank you for reading.

This edition of AUDAX has been compiled and edited by AGECS Council Member Wendy Grenfell.

This edition of AUDAX has been designed and formatted by AGECS contractor Alexandra Heard.

## AGECS Members

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Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in AUDAX do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies. Articles are published to provide a forum to share news and provide opportunities for discussion.

Spring 2023 (27)