

FREE

connected caregiving

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD MAGAZINE



SUMMER 2023

hey there!

Welcome to the third edition of Connected Caregiving. We wanted to start by saying, thanks for being here!

So, you might be wondering, who's behind Connected Caregiving?

Kerra-Lee Wescombe: Publisher / Editor / Sales

Kerra-Lee is a Mama, first and foremost. In her spare time (LOL), she is also the Director at Connect.Ed. Having worked with children for 10+ years, she has had a broad range of experience; initially providing therapeutic residential care for children and young people within the child protection system. She has since worked in a consulting role, supporting various early childhood education and care (ECEC) and Out of Hours School Care (OSHC) services to better understand children's behaviours, with a particular focus on implementing trauma-informed practice. After completing a handful of degrees in child development (including Psychology, Education and Therapeutic Child Play), the idea for Connected Caregiving magazine was born shortly after her son, Harlem. When speaking with other new parents, Kerra-Lee became aware that they were overwhelmed with (often conflicting) information on parenting. The idea was to bridge the gap (ahem, *connect*) parents and the ECEC sector.

Enter Connected Caregiving magazine ... a FREE, reliable source of evidence-based information.

Nicola Vozzo: Content Manager / Designer

Nicola currently works alongside Kerra-Lee at Connect.Ed. She is a jack-of-all-trades, working as a Child Development Practitioner, as well as overseeing graphic design and resource development.

Nicola's background is in Psychology, where she specialised in Infant Mental Health. She has been working with parents, families, ECEC Educators and teachers for almost a decade, sharing her knowledge on child development, child protection as well as the importance of play and inclusion.

Her design background is somewhat new; born out of necessity while living overseas during the pandemic (and a very long lockdown). A second-hand iPad and YouTube tutorials meant a self-taught artist could find a creative outlet in a chaotic world. She began selling digital commissions to pay her rent (where there's a will, there's a way, right?) and the rest is history!

We started this magazine because we wanted a space that connected, supported, validated and educated caregivers of all different types all over South Australia. We hope between these pages you feel inspired, curious and rejuvenated, ready to get back out there and keep doing all the amazing work you've been doing, day in and day out. Every child needs a champion and we're so happy they've got you.

Kerra-Lee & Nicola xxx





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We acknowledge and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of our land. We acknowledge the Kurna people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage and beliefs. We also acknowledge their stories, traditions and relationship with this land. We are committed to building a brighter future together for children who are the leaders of the future.



who are caregivers?



Parents, Guardians,
Educators, Teachers,
Support Workers.
..or any adult in a
caregiving role!

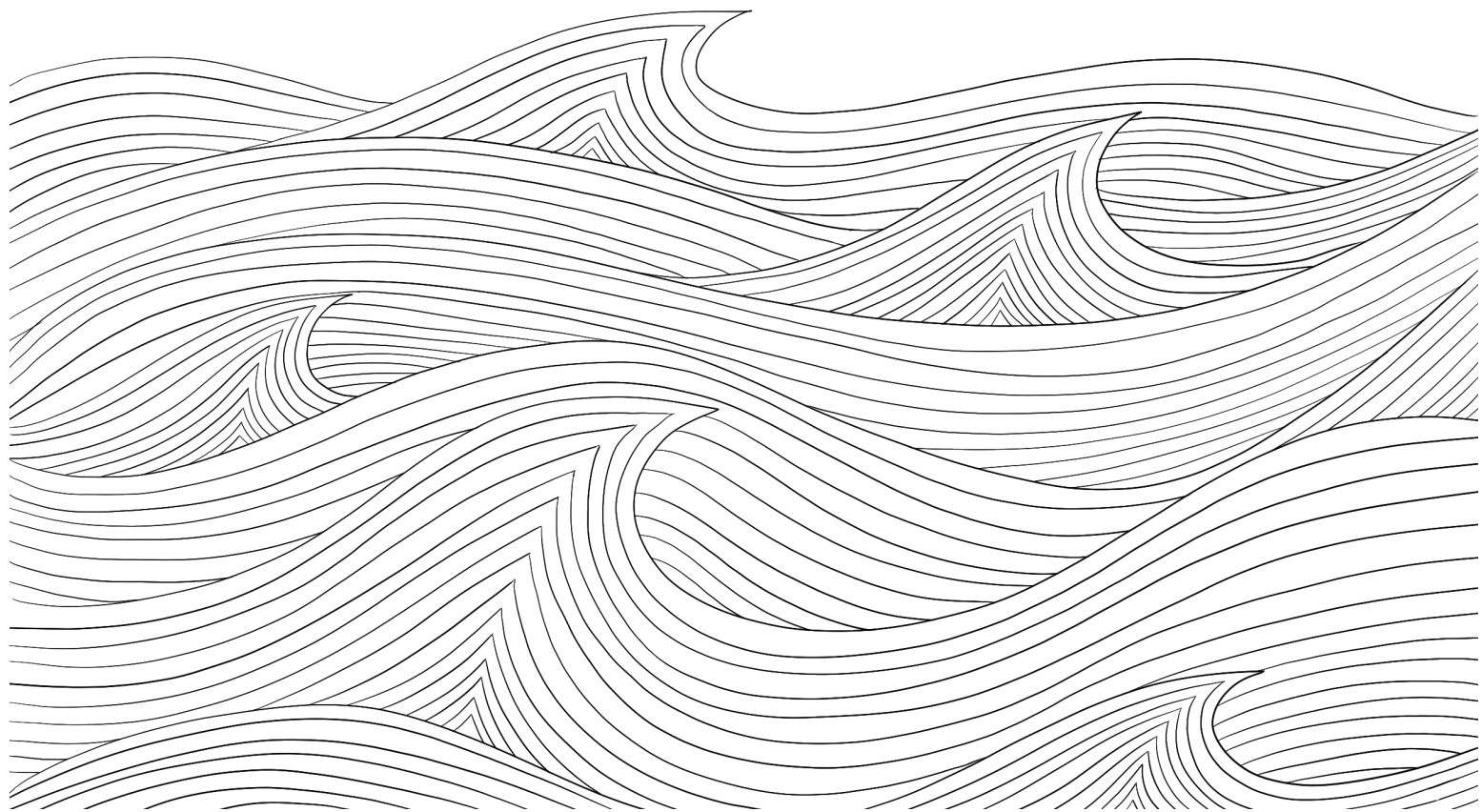
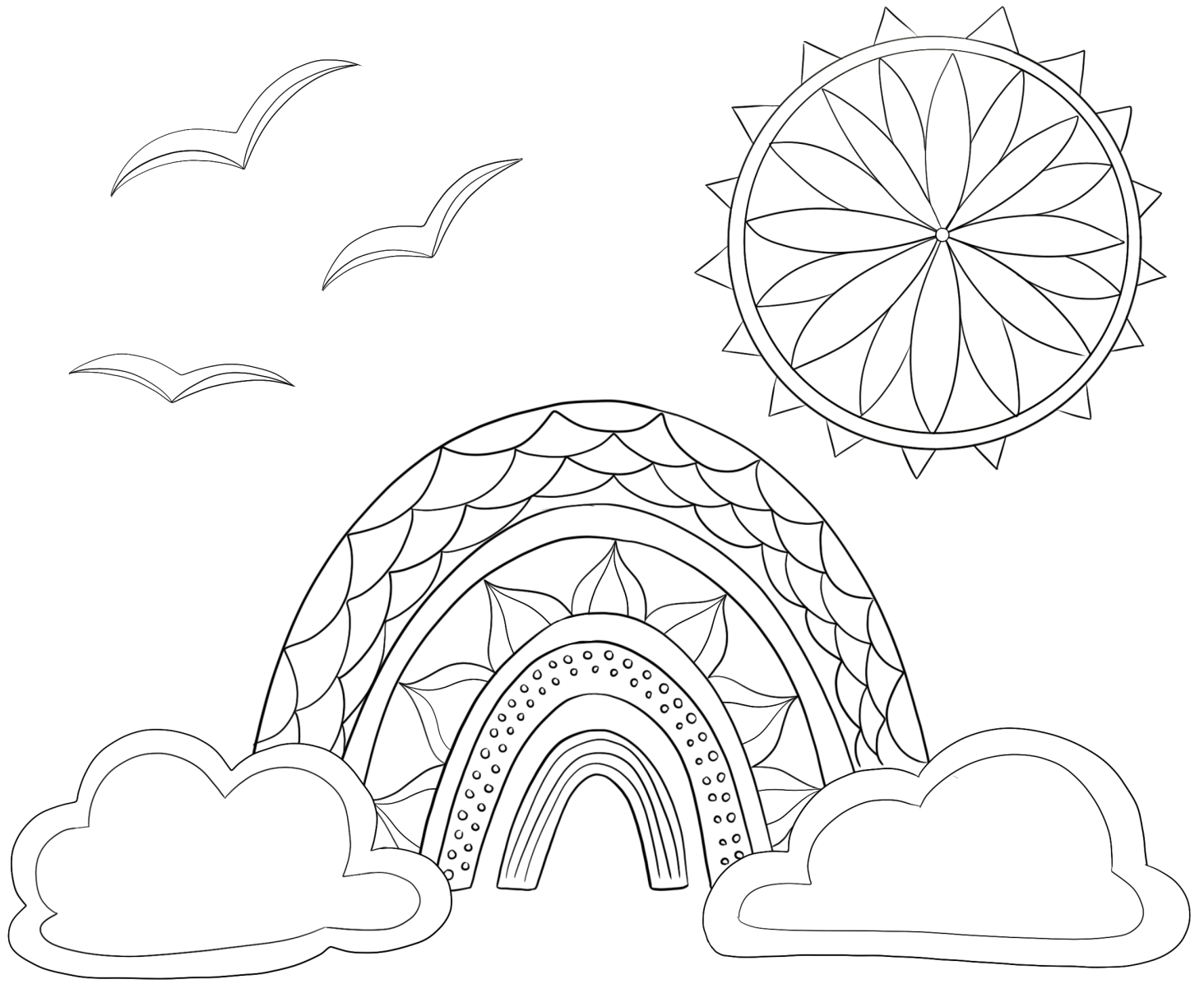


Connected Caregiving
Magazine recognises that
our readers are unique.



We also recognise that all
families are unique.







paid parental leave.

Paid parental leave is profoundly important. Bringing a baby home is life-changing and paid leave enables parents to recover from childbirth, bond with their baby and adjust to their new life. The caring pattern set in the early years persists over the course of a child's life so the way that parents use that time has a huge impact longer term.

It is fantastic to see the Albanese government recognise the case for improving support for children and parents in Australia - but there is more to be done.

The Federal government's commitment to expand paid parental leave from 18 to 26 weeks by 2026 represents overdue and welcome reform that will positively impact children, parents and families.

By 2026, every family with a new baby will be able to access a total of 6 months paid leave, shared between parents. Single parents will be able to access all 26 weeks.

For 11 years there's been no meaningful change to the policy so increasing the entitlement from 18 to 26 weeks is a significant improvement. But, what's even

more significant, is the Prime Minister himself has specifically stated that this is the baseline - a national minimum standard. This is good news because Australia has a way to go to catch up. In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD), the average length of paid parental leave available to families is more than 50 weeks. Getting to 26 weeks is welcome but we need to go further. Ensuring that some paid parental leave is specifically available to dads represents a big step towards a more gender equal society where work and care can be more equitably shared.

Reforming paid parental leave is one of the key levers in a government's toolkit to influence caring patterns set in homes and families.

By supporting parents to share the responsibilities of caregiving in the first year of a child's life, an equitable paid parental leave policy is a gamechanger for mums, dads and children. It gives parents the ability to truly share the care. Recognising the important role that men can play as caregivers is key to dismantling one very stubborn barrier to women's workforce participation. At the risk of oversimplifying, men sharing the load at home means women can share the load at work.

Increasing paid parental leave to adequate levels enables more women to re-enter the workforce after having children and contribute to the nation's economic growth.

Extended paid parental leave will enhance gender equality through the redistribution of unpaid care and increase women's workforce participation. The benefits of paid parental leave are wide-spanning - for children, mums and dads.

Caring patterns set in the first year of a child's life persist, so supporting parents to share the care early leads to more equitable division of unpaid and paid work.

Currently, Australia offers parental leave pay of up to 18 weeks and Dad and Partner Pay of up to 2 weeks at the minimum wage. The average among developed nations is more than 50 weeks of paid parental leave.

Australian dads take less than 20 percent of the parental leave that dads take globally which increases isolation for new mothers and perpetuates the expectation that mums will assume the responsibility for caring. It creates and perpetuates the situation where mums are considered primarily responsible for raising children, while dads are primarily responsible for breadwinning.

Men taking more parental leave is terrific for child development, improves the mental health of mums and the strength of relationships and reduces the 'motherhood penalty'.

Expanding paid parental leave from 18 to 26 weeks by 2026 is a huge win for children, parents and families - but it is still short of the 50+ weeks that families in the OECD have access to. Creating policy - and shifting attitudes - to ensure mums and dads in Australia have the opportunity to access extended paid parental leave is critical.

More affordable early learning is another part of the challenge: ensuring that every child - regardless of their postcode or their family's socioeconomic status - has access to quality, inclusive early childhood education and care is our ultimate end goal. That's going to take a stack more campaigning!

So will making sure families have access to quality, affordable outside school hours care and to ensure all parents and carers can work in a family friendly environment.

These are the policy changes necessary to make Australia the best place in the world to be a parent and raise a child. It's an audacious goal - but it's worth fighting for.

We refuse to believe Australia cannot be world leading in setting children - and families - up to thrive. But it's going to take more advocacy, more research, more campaigning and more organising.

If you want to help us keep pushing for more affordable early childhood education, better paid parental leave and more family-friendly working conditions, please join our community of over 75,000 supporters - we are stronger together!

Words: **Georgie Dent**

Georgie is the Executive Director at The Parenthood. You can find out more about their work at theparenthood.org.au or on their socials.



CHILD ABUSE IN AUSTRALIA:

A community responsibility

Australia. The lucky country, right? That is unless you're one of the 174,000 children who needed child protection services last year.

In 2019–20, one in every 32 Australian children aged 0-17 required some form of intervention for abuse or neglect. Regardless of race, age, ethnicity, or economic status, child abuse doesn't discriminate.

Many individuals think of child neglect and abuse as happening in some other family, somewhere far away. But, in reality, some form of neglect or physical, emotional, or sexual abuse occurs to a child in every neighbourhood, in every community across the country. It is a confronting truth that in an affluent and developed country such as Australia, some children are not afforded the basic rights of a safe, caring and supportive environment.

The deeply embedded societal attitudes about children in both institutions and the wider community plays a pivotal role in the prevalence of child abuse in Australia. Although an uncomfortable topic for many adults to broach, Valuing Children Initiative (VCI) Development Executive, Maddie McLeod, said it is something that needs to be spoken about more openly.

"Talking about child abuse and neglect isn't easy because it's a topic that is inherently upsetting," Ms McLeod said. "However, it's crucial that we do talk about it because too many people are unaware of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in our society; we must raise awareness to keep kids safe."

"Most people don't know that 1 in 6 girls and 1 in 9 boys have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15, but that is the reality in Australia. If we are to reduce these alarming numbers, we need more people to understand that most children are abused by people they know and trust; we need people to recognise signs of abuse in children and to teach protective behaviours from infancy."

While some children who report abuse are supported, many children who speak up are often no match for the deeply embedded culture of protecting institutions and adults over believing the word of a child.

Mental health advocate, Ming Johanson, endured 17 years of domestic violence and child abuse at the hands of her father. Ms Johanson recalls such a culture that she believes failed her as a child. "Kids that I grew up with who are now adults, who knew what was going on for me even when I didn't know what was going on for me, went to the teachers of the school at the time and the teachers told them to mind their own business," she said. "Even when other kids were going in and reporting ... nothing was done. What do these kids learn, who are now adults? That nothing will be done. Best to just leave it alone."

In 2016, VCI research into adult attitudes towards children revealed that 63 percent of respondents said a child's word is less likely to be believed than that of an adult. "In the context of child protection this is a very concerning finding," Ms McLeod said.

"There are many historical examples of children not being believed when they disclosed abuse and neglect and this is unacceptable."

"I think organisations working with children today are more likely to believe children when they speak up and there are better policies and processes in place to protect children now. However, many children are still not believed when they speak up, or they don't speak up at all because they fear they won't be believed."

"Put aside the stigma we already have with mental health, the stigma of child abuse is a little bit more because it's this pervasive thing where you think you've done something wrong to deserve to be treated that way."

- Ms Johanson



Australia is a wealthy country with the capacity to ensure that all children have the support and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. However, children cannot develop coping skills and be emotionally healthy in abusive or neglectful environments.

“Child safety is a community responsibility, not just the responsibility of parents,” Ms McLeod said. “This means raising awareness by having public conversations about an uncomfortable topic, by listening to the voices of children and young people, by supporting families, by collaborating with others working to keep children safe, by developing and distributing free resources for children, parents and teachers related to child safety and by contributing to policy and research related to child safety and wellbeing.”

An attitudinal shift that sees more adults considering what they can do to keep not only their own children but all children safe, has the potential to help to prevent future child abuse and neglect.

Director of Centrecare and Co-Founder of the VCI Adunct. Professor, Tony Pietropiccolo, concedes it is a long road but believes this attitudinal shift – combined with institutional change – will have long-lasting benefits in creating a culture where all children thrive.

“Generally, people are understandably concerned for their own children. They believe that there are societal structures to keep the children of others safe,” he said. “However, the reality is that Australian children will only experience a safe and supportive community when we see the wellbeing of all children as our collective responsibility.”

“When we commit ourselves to creating a society where all children thrive, then children will not only be safer but able to maximise their potential. A society that values children is invariably a successful one.”

“The consequences of child abuse and associated trauma are severe and last a lifetime.”

The Valuing Children Initiative is an organisation driven by a passion for children’s wellbeing. They work to ensure that all children in Australia experience the caring, safe, and supported childhood they deserve. To see how you can help, visit their website: valuingchildreninitiative.com.au



Viewing Children's Behaviour through the Lens of Neuroscience

Children's brains are still developing, which is why they often find it difficult to manage their 'big feelings'. It's, therefore, normal for them to behave in ways that challenge us.

Often, Educators see challenging behaviour as a 'choice'. But, when we view children's behaviours through the lens of neuroscience, we can respond appropriately.

Whilst neuroscience can seem complex and overwhelming, having a basic understanding of the various structures and functions within the brain can equip Educators with the knowledge and skills to better understand children's behaviours and support them during the most challenging times.

Neuroscience is the scientific study of the nervous system and its functions. It's a multidisciplinary science that combines anatomy, biology, chemistry and physics to help us better understand the biological basis of learning, memory and behaviour. We certainly don't all need to become neuroscientists to work with children, but having a basic understanding can be helpful!

Children's brains develop 'neurosequentially' (which is a fancy way of saying that they develop from the bottom up).

The Three Part Brain

Neuroscientist, Paul McLean developed the concept of the 'triune brain' to conceptualise brain development and function. The triune brain is an evolutionary theory of brain development that emphasises three key brain regions, including the brain stem, limbic system and the cortex.

The first part of the brain to develop is the **brain stem** which is responsible for basic life functions, such as breathing, sucking, swallowing and regulating our body temperature. The **limbic system** is known as the 'emotional centre' as it's involved in emotional responses, memory and attachment. The **cortex** is known as the 'thinking brain' and is involved in cognition and executive functions (such as planning, reasoning and judgement).

Whilst triune brain theory emphasises that these regions function relatively independently in coping with stress, more recent neuroscience research demonstrates interdependent brain networks whereby emotion and cognition work together.



The Stress Response

The 'stress response' is the emergency reaction system of the body and exists to keep us safe. It's a physiological reaction that occurs in response to **perceived** danger that prepares the body to handle the challenges presented by an internal or external environmental stressor.

When all of these parts of our brain are connected and working together, we can remain calm and connected with others but, when the lower parts of the brain feel overwhelmed, they take over and we can 'flip our lid' (Siegel, 2012).

The 'hand model of the brain' shows that, when this happens, the cortex is no longer touching the limbic system, so it can't help us remain regulated. Essentially, we lose the ability to think clearly and control our emotions (which means we cannot reason or learn). In situations such as this, children can display behaviour that we view as 'challenging'.

Felt Safety

'Felt safety' is a subjective experience of safety, which means that it's different for everyone.

It's important to remember that safety isn't the absence of danger. It's also important to remember that being safe does not equal feeling safe. As Educators, we might think we've created a 'safe' space but children still don't experience felt safety. Why?

We use something called 'neuroception' to determine safety; it's determined by the subcortical regions of the brain (the lower parts of our brain which sit below conscious awareness). This essentially means the cortex (or 'thinking brain') doesn't have much of a say in telling us whether we're experiencing felt safety or not (so reasoning doesn't work).

We know that children who have experienced trauma are wired for survival, so this is particularly important in our work.

References:

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Words: **Kerra-Lee Wescombe**

Kerra-Lee is the Director of Connect.Ed.



Are you struggling to make sense of some of the behaviours you're seeing in your early learning setting?

Do you feel like you're constantly 'putting out spot fires'?

Join us online or in person for:

Understanding Children's Behaviour

In this session, we look at identifying early warning signs and working in a proactive (rather than a reactive) way when supporting children.

Scan here to learn more:





INCLUDED

A BOOK FOR ALL CHILDREN ABOUT INCLUSION,
DIVERSITY, DISABILITY, EQUALITY AND EMPATHY

BY JAYNEEN SANDERS ILLUSTRATED BY CAMILA CARROSSINE

Jayneen Sanders is an author, publisher, primary school teacher and a mother of three. She is also passionate about teaching children about body safety and respectful relationships. We spoke to her about how she wears SO many hats as well as her gorgeous new book, Included.

Can you tell us something we may not know about you?

I grew up on a farm in southern Queensland and spent a great deal of my childhood riding horses. They have always been my first love, and when I'm near a horse, I'm most at peace.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Seriously I have no idea! Although I do remember setting up a library in an old laundry outside our farmhouse and charging our neighbours' kids 2 cents each to read my books!

Now, you're a primary school teacher, editor, author and publisher AND a mother of three adult women. How do you find the time?

I do have time now that all our girls are adults and have lives and careers of their own. However, when they were younger it was definitely a juggle. Luckily, from the time

our oldest daughter was one, I have worked on and off from home. And we are a very gender-equal family, so my partner and I often tag-teamed when Mark got home from work. In saying that, most nights (once the girls were in bed) I would work until midnight. By the time our youngest daughter was 12, Mark worked from home also, so I was able to teach part-time and reconnect with kids and families. Before Mark and I started Educate2Empower Publishing in 2010, I wrote children's readers under the name of Jay Dale. I'm still writing these readers and I'm leader author for the children's reading series Engage Literacy.

What do you like to do when you're not writing?

These days I look after our horses — but sadly, I don't ride anymore since having a neck operation 12 years ago. I also walk our dogs everyday with Mark and absolutely love my daily yoga practice.

Can you tell us a bit about the process of writing a book? How long does it take you, from start to finish?

It always starts with a single idea. I might see something or hear about an issue and wonder how I could relay this key message to a child. Often a title will come to me before the internal content. Sometimes I am out

walking, or I wake up at night and I just have to write down a few key sentences straightaway. Once I have plotted out the main message I want the child to come away with, I start writing. I become very obsessed and don't let up until I have a general structure from beginning to end. I really can't focus on anything else. This takes a few days. I leave it for a day or so and then come back to the first draft time and time again over a number of weeks. But, funnily enough, I never stray too far away from my initial draft. Then the editing and design process begins and we engage an illustrator. I absolutely love this part and can't believe I am lucky enough to work with such wonderful creatives. Collaborating with designers and illustrators is a joy because it is actually them that bring the story to life. The whole process from conception to the printed book in the warehouse takes about 12 months.

You've written LOADS of books. Do you have a favourite?

They are all my favourites. But if I had to pick, I would choose *Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept* which was my very first book published under our own imprint Educate2Empower Publishing. But I certainly have soft spot for both *Hope* and *Included*.

I understand you began your teaching career in the 1980s. After working as an editor, author and publisher, you returned to teaching in 2008 and 2009, and also during 2014 and 2015. How has the role evolved, in your experience?

The one thing I've noticed, in particular, is children of the 80s could focus for far longer periods than children

currently. However, in saying that I really believe good teaching practice never changes. Teaching has always been about promoting curiosity, listening to children, engaging them in their learning and planning for different learning styles. So for me, I taught creatively using a hands-on approach in the 80s and would still do the same today. I do think teachers today have more pressure on them to assess their students formally. Whereas, in the 80s, we assessed in a more informal way and adapted our lesson plans accordingly. I think there was probably more flexibility with both assessment and planning 30 plus years ago!

Congratulations on your new book, *Included*. Can you tell us a bit about it?

The idea for *Included* was conceived after my youngest daughter, Isabelle, told me about a little boy she cares for who has cerebral palsy. On this particular day, she took him to the playground where he sat in his chair and watched the other kids running around and playing ball. No one included him in their game, and no one asked him if he would like to play. It really broke my heart and I thought to myself 'we need a kids book that demystifies disability and teaches children that including people from various backgrounds and abilities is as simple as asking them to join in'. *Included* centres around six kids with disability but its aim is to help all children understand that everyone wants to feel included and everyone wants to belong. The reader will also come away with the understanding that we are all unique in our own special way and that's what makes this world a colourful, exciting and diverse place.

You can find Jayneen's books at e2epublishing.info/jay



*'EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT. AND THAT'S OK
WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT EVERYONE FEELS INCLUDED.
BEING INCLUDED MAKES US FEEL LOVED
AND IT MAKES US FEEL SAFE'*



I CAN JUMP PUDDLES

Your friend in the NDIS

I Can Jump Puddles is a leading provider of Support Coordination, Behaviour Support, Therapeutic Support and Early Childhood Intervention services, across metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia.

Our aim is to offer innovative support and goal-based intervention to create truly accessible and inclusive communities where every human being has equal opportunities to live a fulfilled life.

We make this happen by supporting people to “jump puddles”, see the possibilities and feel empowered. Working collaboratively with our clients as they achieve their goals and aspirations is what makes us tick.

info@icanjump puddles.com.au

(08) 7085 3999

www.icanjump puddles.com.au

How can we support you?

Early Childhood Intervention

For children aged under 8 years, we offer a Key Worker model of support. This is a family-centred approach where an Early Childhood Intervention specialist works directly with you and your child to identify your child's needs and develop a framework of intervention strategies. We will talk with you, your child's carers and visit you and your child in a variety of settings – at home, preschool, school, a grandparent's home or anywhere in your local community.

Bursts of Learning

Bursts of Learning are designed to kick start a goal that you and your child have identified is important. This is a block of therapy sessions in a hub environment in your local community. The burst is designed to equip you and your child with the tools needed to implement the new skills into your daily life.

Training Packages

We offer a wide range of training packages designed by allied health professionals that can be tailored to your specific needs.

These training packages can be delivered to early learning services, schools, support workers or your child's informal support network. Some of our training topics include:

- Manual handling
- Mealtime support
- Behaviour support
- Trauma informed support for children
- Understanding emotional regulation and its impacts on learning and play

Assistive Technology

We focus on you and your needs to determine the low-risk low cost assistive technology that will allow you to become more independent. We will work with you to identify and trial the appropriate equipment and complete the supporting documentation for NDIS to approve the purchase. We are able to offer trials for sensory equipment and other low risk low-cost assistive technology items. These can include items like crash mats, kloud sack, lycra tunnels, climbing equipment, adaptive cutlery, specialised high chairs and small sensory items.

Willow's Story

Our three year old daughter, Willow, is a bundle of energy, playfulness and imagination but she's not always an easy kid. She was diagnosed with Global Development Delay and struggles to communicate. This caused her to lash out and withdraw from engaging with others out of frustration that her little voice wasn't heard and she was misunderstood. Her early learning centre had labelled her as a 'bad kid' because she wouldn't socialise and would have tantrums, so we were worried about her transition to kindy and then school.

On gaining our NDIS plan, we were recommended to get an Occupational Therapist, Speech Pathologist and Developmental Educator on board. So, when we were allocated a 'Key Worker' with a background in speech pathology to cover all these areas we were a little hesitant. We thought the more services involved, the better it would be for her, but after working alongside our 'I Can Jump Puddles' Key Worker, there was no looking back.

It was great just having the one person to communicate with, and rather than have Willow going to multiple therapists a week (all of whom she would have to build relationships with), the Key Worker took an hour a week and knew their stuff.

The Key Worker came to our house and really got to know us and our routines. She was always focussed on our strengths and the things we did well – tapping into them, building on them and making us feel like we could do this.

After our initial meeting, the Key Worker connected with the ICJP Occupational Therapist and Developmental Educator to learn how to best support Willow. Then they passed that knowledge onto us and her early learning centre.

My husband and I felt that we wanted more support within the community, to be connected with others whose children didn't fit the mould. The Key Worker suggested a 'burst of learning' session which was run by a Social Worker and connected us to other families, gave us tips on how to manage NDIS and how to better connect with Willow. The burst of learning really helped us understand that we are not alone and we have made connections that we maintain today.

Willow and her Key Worker had an instant connection and their rapport only got stronger with the more 'wins' she had. We have felt so supported in our choices for Willow's kindergarten and have chosen a local small community kindy which can support Willow in a therapeutic way. The Key Worker is providing training to the kindy staff in how best to support Willow and transition visits have started – Willow can't wait to attend! She is even attending mainstream swimming lessons after two terms in the 1:1 'I Can Splash' Program and has access to visual symbols to minimise communication breakdowns.

Willow's world opened up and she can't wait to explore all it has to offer.



The Office for the Early Years

Every family wants to give their child the best start in life. A strong early years system and high-quality early childhood education and care helps them to do so, by supporting children to build the foundation to become creative, entrepreneurial, resilient and capable learners.

The Department for Education (department) recognises the vitally important role that families play in children's development and learning as we know that well-supported parents who are highly engaged with the children help them reach their full potential.

We know that the first 1000 days of a child's life are critical for their health, development and learning.

This is when the brain, physical, language, social, emotional and cognitive development is the fastest.

Playgroups are an important early childhood service during this crucial period as research demonstrates a consistent positive relationship between playgroup attendance and children's early development.

Playgroups provide an opportunity for children to interact with and engage in play with similar-aged children, and an opportunity for families to be connected to each other and their communities. They support children's development through sharing songs, rhymes, oral language, painting, drawing, writing, and sharing books. Playgroups can also facilitate referrals to other early childhood services as required.

The department's 'Learning Together Communities' program helps families to engage in their children's learning. It offers playgroups and parent education courses across South Australia, designed to support families in their role as their children's first teachers. This helps children's early literacy,

numeracy, development and engagement with learning. The program aims to support the development and wellbeing of children and their families, empower families to support their children's learning and development, provide access to quality information and resources, and promote and support positive relationships between families and early childhood services and schools.

We are also partnering with Playgroup SA to establish more playgroups as well as making it easier for families to find their local playgroup. Families are encouraged to visit the Playgroup SA's Find a Playgroup website to find their nearest playgroup.

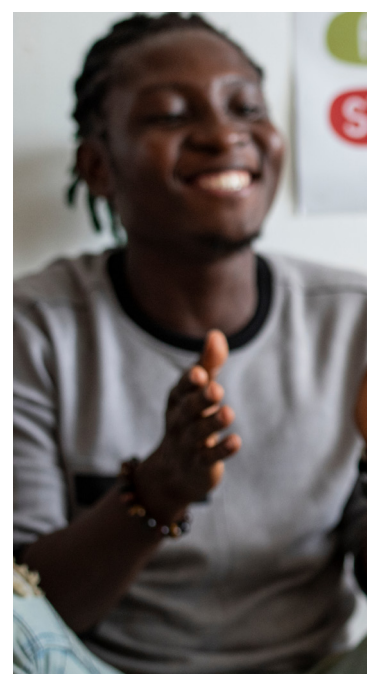
Through the department's Early Learning Strategy, the South Australian Government is funding the Raising Literacy Australia's Early Years Taskforce, promoting the importance of early childhood development through its 'Words Grow Minds' campaign; a campaign that gets straight to the heart of how families can help babies and young children thrive – through talking, reading, playing and singing together from birth.

Children have a right to education and care, a right to access to high-quality systems and services to support the best possible start in life – whatever their background, wherever they live.

Through leading reforms to provide local programs that support community priorities and provide strong foundations to families as their children's first teachers, and through partnering with key stakeholders in the early years space, we are working together to ensure South Australia is the best place to be born and grow up.

Words: **Jackie Bray**

Jackie is the Head of The Office for the Early Years in the Department of Education





The benefits of **Play Group**

All parents want to do what's best for their children. Research tells us that connection, belonging and safety provide a solid foundation for healthy development and life-long learning. From the first days of life, connecting with a newborn baby through skin-to-skin contact and feeding will kick start a secure attachment process. We know the more we talk and sing to our newborn baby, their language acquisition will benefit.

How we connect and be present with our children at home can have a profound influence on our children's development. Stepping outside our home and finding an activity that both your child and you can enjoy will provide early moments where children can find confidence in themselves.

Playgroup offers a unique opportunity for enhancing all domains of development.

The market is saturated with opportunities for community-based activities to support children's development. The number of options can be overwhelming, and parents can be left with many questions including "what is the best thing for my baby/child?" and "what is the best value for money as some of these activities are so expensive?".

Children are able to explore and navigate the environment around them in a safe space, with their parent/caregiver nearby. The magic of playgroup reveals itself to children with many opportunities to experiment through new and exciting activities for their development. From sensory play with gloop or playdough, to a range of arts and crafts, kicking a ball outside, or dressing up and pretending to be a character - children have so much fun at playgroup.


With so many products that come to our attention as parents, it can feel overwhelming and be easy to forget that the most important thing we can do to support our children's development is free; finding time to connect with our children. Being truly present and connected will create a sense of safety for children, and the rest will flow from there.

Playgroup offers the best opportunity for free, unstructured play, where children will find their identity in community and explore the wonder that is the world around them.

Words: **Craig Bradbrook**

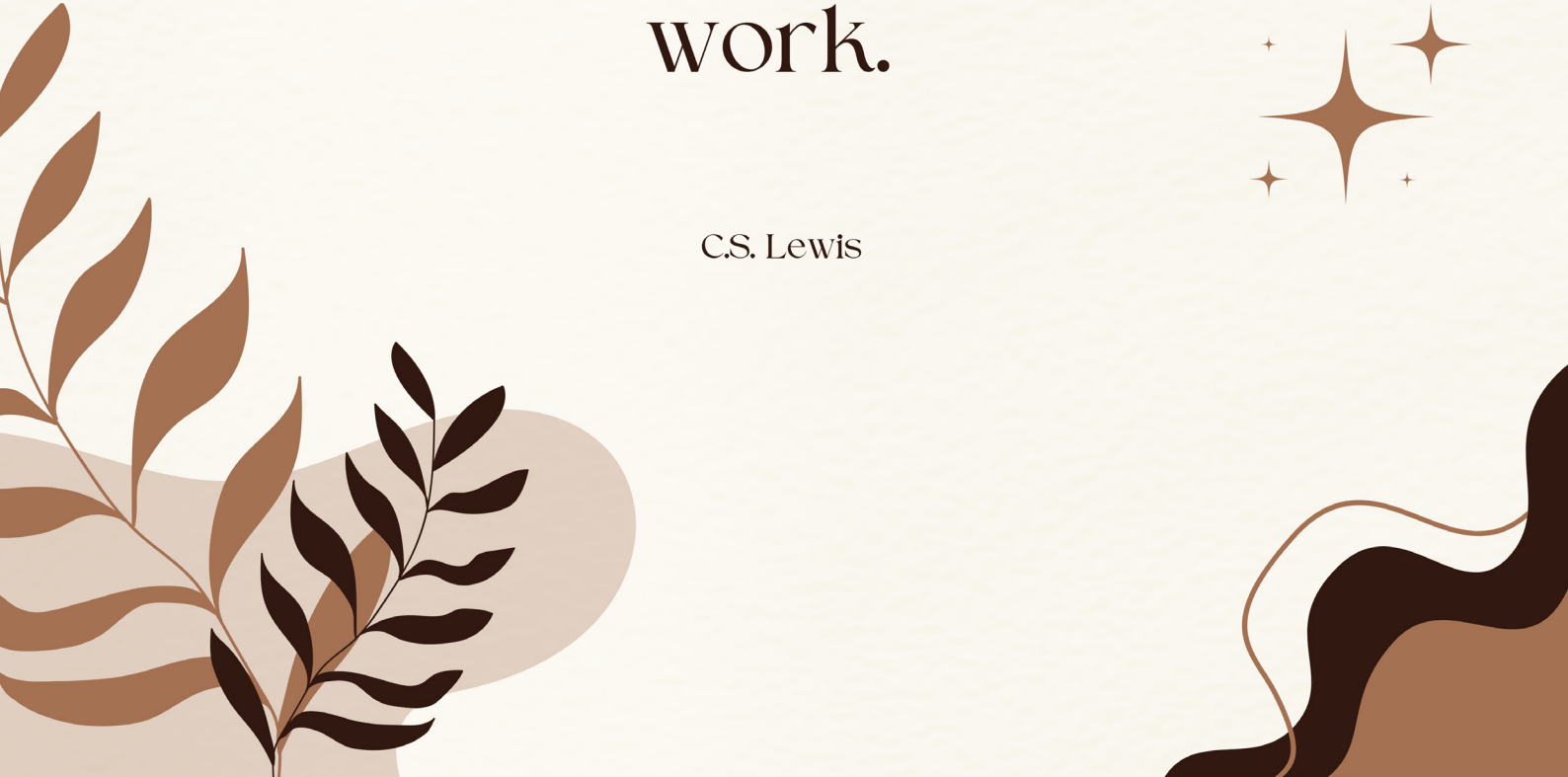
Craig is the CEO of Playgroup SA





Children are not
a distraction
from more
important work.

They are the
MOST important
work.



C.S. Lewis

SNAICC NEW COMMUNITY PARTNER FOR

Connected Beginnings

The Connected Beginnings early years program is making progress in closing the gap by assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families access culturally safe early childhood services and supports.

Connected Beginnings currently operates at 33 sites around the country and, under additional investment from the Commonwealth Government, will expand to a total of 50 sites by 2025.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, was appointed as Community Partner for the program by the Department of Education in June 2022.

Connected Beginnings is targeted to children from birth to school age, and pregnant women. It aims to give children the support needed to help them meet the learning and development milestones that ensure a smooth start to formal schooling.

It has a strong place-based approach and is community-led, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities having a direct say in how activities are determined and delivered. It is jointly funded with the Department of Health.

The program supports all Closing the Gap priority reforms and focuses on three targets:

Target 1

Children are born healthy and strong

Target 2

Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education

Target 3

Children thrive in their early years

SNAICC's role is to work with existing sites to determine what supports they need to improve outcomes for children in their region, facilitating transition to Aboriginal-community controlled backbone services where required.

SNAICC's team also works with identified communities to establish new Connected Beginnings sites, assessing and developing community readiness, guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and leadership.

A key focus of the Community Partner role is to facilitate ongoing networking and learning across the sites. To assist this, the first National Gathering with SNAICC as the Community Partner was held last month in Meanjin/Brisbane, with more than 150 people from Connected Beginnings sites across the country sharing experiences and developing knowledge.

South Australian sites include: Ceduna, Port Augusta and Salisbury/Playford.



SNAICC'S NATIONAL GATHERING, 2022

SNAICC is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. They work for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and well-being. For any inquiries about Connected Beginnings, please contact the team at SNAICC at connectedbeginnings@snaicc.org.au.



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- **HLTAID011** - Provide First Aid
- **HLTAID012** - Provide First Aid in an Education and Care Setting

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Rosemont House - Norwood - 8331 4020

Caring for children, their families and our community.



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Starting Now

The first steps to delivering the best early childhood system for Australia

Our investment in the early years should deliver a triple dividend to the nation – improving outcomes for children, supporting workforce participation and boosting the economy. Major new commitments from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments recognise that there is more work to be done if we are to fully realise the promise of this investment.

Recent Commonwealth and State announcements of significantly increased funding on the Child Care Subsidy, preschool programs, infrastructure and capacity increases as well as workforce sustainability, are important steps to address the affordability and accessibility of high-quality early childhood education and care. These commitments are critical building blocks to achieving the shared vision of universal provision.

Universal early childhood education and care should provide the backbone of an integrated early childhood development system. It is the much-needed starting point for long-term, nation building work to turn what is currently a complex and fragmented approach to the early years into a system that meets the needs of all children and families, regardless of where they live or their circumstances.

But the full benefit of these commitments won't be achieved if departments and governments act in isolation. To deliver a high quality system that is underpinned by a valued and highly skilled workforce, that brings together the range of services children and

families need and can respond to children who need additional support, Commonwealth, State and Territory governments must work in collaboration. Strong incentives must also ensure all relevant Commonwealth agencies work together to secure that triple dividend.

Now is the time for all governments to work in partnership, with the sector and communities, to put the foundations in place for a new approach to early childhood development in Australia – a high quality, universal system that delivers for all children, for all families and the economy.

The Commonwealth Government has committed to increased investment in the Child Care Subsidy combined with mechanisms to improve transparency and regulation of the price of child care and the relationship between service fees, profits, wages and conditions. These are important first steps to addressing the affordability and accessibility of early childhood education and care, and to achieving the Prime Minister's vision of universal child care.

A staged reform process enables this down payment investment to be made now, while the key features of high-quality, universal early childhood education and care that meets the needs of all children and families are put in place, in partnership with States and Territories. This work builds on previous national collaborative efforts and existing investments in the National Quality Framework and Early Years Learning Framework.



A staged approach also means governments can start now on the urgent action needed to build the strong workforce pipeline required to deliver a high quality, universal system.

This will enable universal early childhood education and care to be the backbone of a broader universal early childhood development system that delivers the holistic range of services and supports that help all young children and families to flourish regardless of where they live and their circumstances.

Following 2021's Starting Better report which provided a long-term vision for the best early childhood system for Australia, Starting Now gives leaders a roadmap with concrete achievable steps over the next 12 months.

“Investing in the early years is the smartest investment that we can make for children, women’s workforce participation and the economy.”

There are three key areas our leaders should focus on to take this opportunity:

- 1.** Action to give parents the confidence to balance work and home by ensuring education and care is available and affordable. This includes: Accelerated changes to subsidy arrangements, ensuring all families can access at least 3 days a week of care, measures that ensure public spending flows through to families, educators and teachers, and smarter spending coordination between governments.
- 2.** Action on rewarding, secure early childhood careers so children and families can work with early childhood professionals they know and trust. This includes appropriate valuation of early educators’ work, making early childhood careers a priority at the national Jobs and Skills summit, a tripartite dialogue between unions, employers and government, training incentives for early childhood careers, and lifelong learning for early childhood professionals
- 3.** A national mission for a universal early childhood system. This includes a formal agreement between First Ministers to work together on a universal early childhood system, a reform task force to implement it, a special commissioner to lead a Productivity Commission review into a universal early childhood education and care, and long-term funding agree

Now is the time to reap the triple dividend from our investment in the early years. There is significant momentum for change from families, business and early childhood services, which is matched by the priorities of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. This is the opportunity for governments to work together, with the sector and communities, to achieve ambitious, nation building reform – a universal, high-quality early childhood development system on which every family can rely.

Learn more:

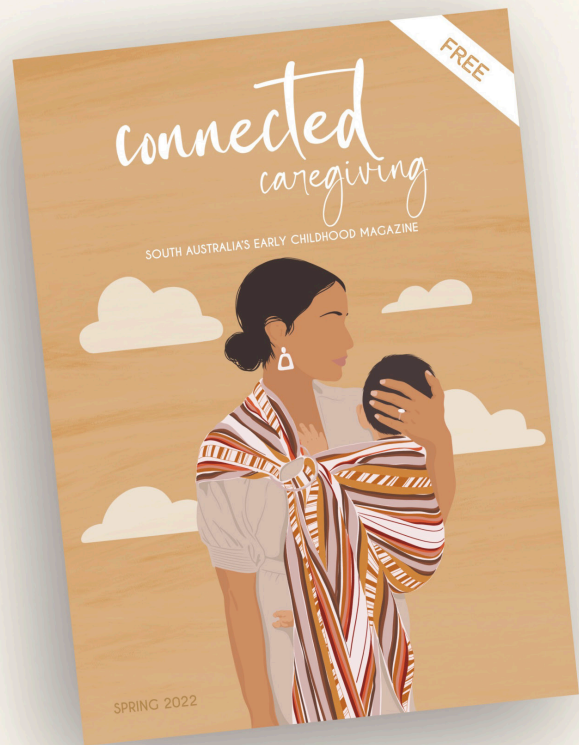
To read more about the decade-long reform that can put our nation on track for a brighter 21st century and make Australia the best place in the world to be, and raise, a child, visit cpd.org.au

Don't miss a thing!

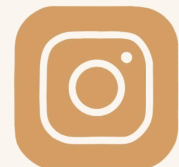
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Small Biz Spotlight



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Our resources are thoughtfully designed to encourage connection; between children and caregivers, children to their peers, and even a strong connection to self. Our resources were made to create an environment characterised by predictability and consistency, as well as to assist caregivers with teaching important skills, such as emotional literacy and regulation.

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THE MINISTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

One of the key things we can do to help Australian children thrive, and something the Albanese Government has already taken important steps to achieve, is to improve access to early childhood education and care.

Children who participate in high-quality early learning programs have better educational outcomes, including improved literacy and numeracy skills, greater school retention and higher graduation rates.

They are also more likely to find employment and earn higher incomes as adults.

Every child deserves the opportunity to become the best they can be, and this starts with early learning.

We know, 90 per cent of children's brain development occurs in the first five years—providing the building blocks for things like self-regulation, problem solving, communication and self-esteem.

This is why it's crucial we invest in our children over the early years, ensuring we get the foundations right to avoid more costly interventions later in life.

We know children who experience disadvantage in their early years are less likely to meet developmental milestones.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds who start school developmentally vulnerable are also less likely to 'catch up' and unfortunately are less likely to reach their full education potential.

However, we can rectify this. Studies show that learning outcomes for children in Year 3 are significantly better among those that attended high-quality preschool, and this is more pronounced in children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The benefits of attending high-quality early childhood education and care can be seen throughout a child's life. ***It is literally life changing.***

That is why I'm particularly proud of our initiatives to make early childhood education and care more affordable and accessible for around 1.26 million Australian families.

Our measures will make early childhood education and care more affordable, easing financial strain on households by reducing out-of-pocket costs while also better supporting families to increase their workforce participation should they wish to do so.

But perhaps most importantly, it will allow more children to engage more often with life-changing early learning opportunities.

Our landmark reform will also provide a base level of 36 hours per fortnight of subsidised early education for First Nations children.

These changes will benefit around 6600 First Nations families and represent a positive step in our efforts to Close the Gap.

Because a child's education and career opportunities should not be dictated by where they are born or the colour of their skin.

Our Government is ensuring every Australian child with the best possible education opportunities, and that begins with enabling access to high-quality early childhood education and care during the crucial first five years of life.

Words: **Dr Anne Aly**

Anne is the Minister for Early Childhood Education





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Government of South Australia



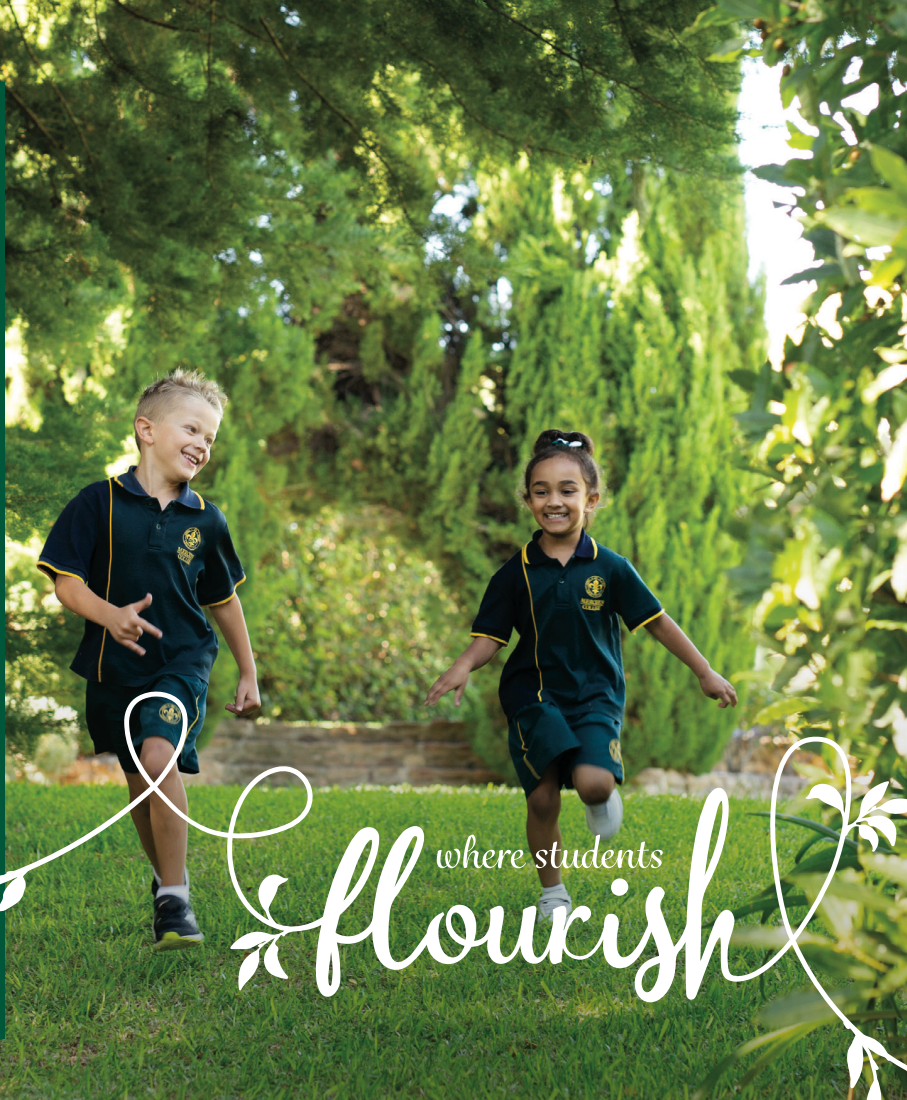
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Keeping Children Safe Online

Keeping children safe online is critical in our technological climate. The rapid rise of children using social media, particularly amid COVID-19, further increases online risks and provides greater opportunities for predators to access and exploit our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Predators use these social networks, including gaming chat, to approach children for the purpose of exploiting them sexually. The globalisation of the internet and the continuous increase in internet access have seen a corresponding upwards trend in online child sexual exploitation cases by police.

We know that child sexual abuse is most commonly perpetrated by people known to the children, however online child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation is rapidly increasing and is frequently perpetrated by strangers. Despite child protection efforts so far, children continue to fall victim to predators. New research from the University of South Australia is working to protect children from potential online sexual perpetrators by investigating the language and behaviours that online predators use to develop relationships, gain trust and secure secrecy during opening chat sequences. The research will focus on initial online contact and preliminary nonsexual interactions to better understand strategies used by online predators.

Funded by Westpac Australia's Safer Children, Safer Communities grants, the research team will work with police to source data comprising online conversations between children and convicted predators. Many predators go straight to the point and immediately engage in sexually-oriented interaction, as highlighted by the research of Powell and Rouse (2021). However, the more deceptive predators, those who start out pretending to be children and/or friends, use 'getting to know you' behaviours which appear to be normal, non-predatory conversations. They talk about what they might have in common, through discussion of shared experiences, preferred leisure activities, and personal interests. To an unsuspecting child, these conversations seem perfectly innocent, but the child may inadvertently provide information which may lead to the predator locating them or manipulating them.

Research also shows that for perpetrators to extract personal information from their victim, they may reveal personal information about themselves, for example, their football club, the school they go to, and so on. Children often reciprocate, which is socially expected when engaging in a conversation.





The danger is that the manipulation strategies perpetrators use often initiate children to engage in 'wrong' behaviours and children are often in way too deep before they realise what is actually happening. For example, once a child has shared images of themselves with no shirt on or in their underwear, the perpetrator has power.

Once an evidence base is obtained, the project aims to raise community awareness and educate children, parents and protective adults on specific chat sequences and language and behaviours perpetrators use during initial interactions. By presenting them with a mirror of their own interactions, it is expected that children will be more cognisant to online risks and more responsive to child protection efforts. UniSA researchers, Dr Enza Tudini, and Dr Lesley-Anne Ey say that the findings will also deliver new linguistic indicators to help better monitor, identify and apprehend suspects.

"Child online exploitation is an ever-increasing concern. While previous studies have focussed on establishing offender profiles based on case file

information, this research will help identify how predators gain children's trust in the very early stages of online interaction" Dr Tudini says.

"For example, we may find that predators are using specific grooming language and behaviours to encourage children to move to 'safer' online spaces such as Snapchat, where their conversation leaves no record.

"By tracking and examining these online conversations, we will deliver evidence-based information that can inform child protection authorities and contribute to educate children and protective adults on this type of online abuse."

Words: **Dr Enza Tudini & Dr Lesley-Anne Ey**

Dr Enza Tudini (PhD; BA (hons)) is the Program Director in Languages at Education Futures, University of South Australia. Dr Enza specialised in applied linguistics and online interaction. She is a member of Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion

Dr Lesley-anne Ey (PhD; BECE (hons)) is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher at Education Futures, University of South Australia. Dr Lesley-anne Ey specialises in harmful sexual behaviour, sexualisation of children (media), child protection, and bullying in early childhood. She is a member of Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion and an affiliate member of the Australian Centre for Child Protection.

Data from eSafety – Australia's national independent regulator for online safety – shows that one in four children (aged 8-12 years) and one in two teenagers (aged 13-17 years) have talked to a stranger online, with around 25 per cent of all young people having made friends with someone they met on the internet in the past year.



The best thing we could have done as a centre.

Kerra-Lee, Chloe and Connect.Ed have provided training and insight that has improved all areas of communicating and responding to the children in our care. You can hear and see the effect this learning has had on our centre. I really hope to continue our relationship with Connect.Ed and engage in further professional development. So worth it!

- Ash, Early Childhood Educator

Early Childhood Education and Care

Service Spotlight

NIDO EARLY SCHOOL PENNINGTON

At Nido Early School, Pennington, we've been fortunate enough to have received some incredible mentoring and training from Connect.Ed throughout 2022. The support was aimed at educating our team to better understand children's behaviours and specifically, understanding the impact that developmental trauma can have.

We chose to enlist the support of Connect.Ed for a variety of reasons. All educators in our team said that, despite their lack of confidence in this area, they were committed to learning more so that they could support all children in our care. With this commitment and passion for learning in mind, we used the Innovative Solutions Support funding stream (provided by IDFM) to enlist the help of the amazing services that Connect.Ed could provide. Whilst creating our application for the Innovative Solutions Support funding, it showed us exactly why some of our staff were struggling and wanted to further their understanding. As a centre we have

a high proportion of children who have experienced developmental trauma, a high percentage of educators working in their first 2 years within the early childhood sector, and a very culturally diverse centre, with many families and educators having experienced significantly different ways of supporting children through behavioural challenges.

As a centre, we became united in becoming pro-active with the hurdles that we were facing, and together, with the help of educators and leaders within the service, our Innovative Solutions Support funding was granted. Before we knew it, it was time to begin the project and the Connect.Ed team came to observe our existing practice across the rooms and to develop a training and mentoring program that was tailored to the unique needs of our centre.

As quickly as the project began, our educators soon became experts in brain development. They were

equipped with strategies for behavioural support, they were confident in co-regulation, and they held an understanding of the complexities of developmental trauma.

In front of our eyes, educator practice was evolving. Previously we had seen educators become flustered in challenging situations, but now, educators stated that they were “more confident approaching children with challenging behaviours” than they were before the Connect.Ed program, and it’s clear that this newfound confidence is shining through the centre as a whole.

There were many take away moments that have now become embedded here at Nido Pennington. One specifically is the phrasing that educators use when supporting children through challenging moments. Connect.Ed refer to this as ‘Limit Setting’ (Landreth, 2002), which involves the following 3 steps: acknowledge the child’s feelings, communicate the limit and target acceptable alternatives. This 3 step approach has not only been shared amongst the team, but with families too, and the feedback from families has likewise been fantastic, with one parent stating that “I have taken on new language and find myself using it more confidently at home with my children...and it works!”

With all of this said, without doubt our most beautiful learning has come through developing the art of ‘co-regulation’ between educators and children. We all know that, when children become distressed or frustrated, it can be hard on adults too. Connect.Ed taught us so many strategies to use in these moments; from “Hot Chocolate Breathing” and “Five Finger Breathing” to “Wall Push-Ups” and practicing the “Butterfly Pose”, there really has been a strategy given to meet each child’s needs. Our Mindful Moments have become focus points within our day, which has meant that our children are more in tune with their own feelings and emotions. In our Kinder 2 Room, our children ask to have mindfulness time when they can feel they’re becoming overwhelmed. It’s truly been a beautiful journey to witness.

As stated by our Leadership Team, accessing this training and mentoring has been “the best thing we could have done” and, knowing that we’re better connected to our children in these challenging times is such a rewarding feeling. It’s changed the whole dynamic of the centre, and we’re so proud of how far we’ve come as a community. We can not thank Connect.Ed enough for the impact this training has had on our centre.

Words: **Katharine Pearson**

Katharine is the Centre Director at Nido Early School Pennington

It has given me deeper information about the starting development of children and how this affects children in different ways. I feel I better understand some of the challenging behaviours that I have come across and have different ideas on how to approach these. I enjoyed the discussions we all had as groups and teams.

- Michelle, Early Childhood Educator

The strategies shared by the speaker and our colleagues were very practical. I learned how to always think from the children's or families' perspective before making decisions or judgement.

- Gloria, Early Childhood Educator

It has made me more aware of looking more into the reasoning behind the children's behaviours and using the 3 step method to redirect their behaviour. I like the language that is used and would like to try and get in the habit of using this.

- Kirsty, Early Childhood Educator

"I loved our Connect.Ed project as I felt like my practice has been improved since starting. Understanding attachments and brain development has helped me support children better and understand their needs."

- Kate, Early Childhood Educator

The Innovative Solutions Support (ISS) funding is available through the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) to assist eligible early childhood education and care services to fund innovative, flexible and responsive solutions to barriers to inclusion and embed inclusive practices.

Innovative Solutions Support provides flexible funding to empower services to carefully consider their inclusion challenges and take on an active role in finding solutions and build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs.

For more information about the funding, please contact the South Australia Inclusion Agency inclusion@gowriesa.org.au

Connect.Ed can support early childhood education and care services to implement trauma-informed practice, using a regulatory and relationship-based approach. This approach is different to a 'traditional' behaviour-management approach and, instead, focuses on supporting children to regulate their emotional experiences using their emotional connection with Educators.

For more information about accessing support from Connect.Ed, please contact admin@connectededucation.info

Car Safety

BEFORE YOU HEAD
OUT THIS SUMMER...



Did you know... transport accidents are the number one cause of injury-related deaths in children aged up to 14 years?

Kidsafe SA recommends having your child car restraint fitted by a professional to ensure that it is correctly installed. Kidsafe SA can help you with this – call them on (08) 7089 8554.

WHICH RESTRAINT DO I USE FOR MY CHILD?

0-6 MONTHS

Must use a rearward facing restraint that is properly fitted to the vehicle and adjusted to fit the child's body correctly.

Best Practice Recommendations

Keep your baby in a rearward-facing child car restraint until they have reached the maximum size limits (shoulder markers).

Why? Infants have relatively large heads and weak necks which put them at particularly high risk of serious injuries. Rear-facing restraints provide the required head and neck support that a child needs.

6 MONTHS-4 YEARS

Use either a rearward-facing restraint OR a forward-facing child restraint with an inbuilt harness, that is properly fitted to the vehicle and adjusted to fit the child's body correctly.

Best Practice Recommendation

Keep your child in a forward-facing child restraint with an inbuilt harness until the child reaches the maximum size limit of the restraint before progressing to the next stage.

4-7 YEARS

Use either a forward-facing child restraint with inbuilt harness OR a booster seat with a properly fastened and adjusted seatbelt.

Best Practice Recommendation

Keep your child in a child car restraint until they reach the maximum size limit of the restraint.

OVER 7 YEARS

Use either a booster seat with a properly fastened and adjusted adult seatbelt OR an adult seat with an adult seatbelt.

Best Practice Recommendation

Check to see if they can safely use an adult seatbelt or if a booster seat is still needed, even if they have turned 7 years of age.

If your child has outgrown the child car restraint with the inbuilt harness or the dedicated booster seat, please carry out the 'five step test' to ensure your child is ready to comfortably sit with an adult seatbelt.

Where to find help:

- Kidsafe SA can fit your baby's seat and teach you how to use it (fees apply)
- Kidsafe SA also hire baby capsules for your new baby (fees apply)
- Call us on (08) 7089 8554 or visit www.kidsafesa.com.au
- Visit our Kidsafe Centre – 6/69 Sir Donald Bradman Drive, Hilton SA



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To empower Educators to deliver exceeding quality education. As a community, giving children a voice and the opportunity to lead wonderful, fulfilling lives.

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- ✓ Wholesome, delicious food from our Cucina
- ✓ State-of-the-art creative spaces and beautiful nature inspired environments
- ✓ An inclusive village-style approach, which engages child, parent and community

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Knowledge

leads to
understanding, connection
and support

Early Childhood Outreach is run by Andrea Broughton. Andrea has a background as an Early Childhood and Primary teacher, and also has over ten years' experience as an Early Intervention Professional, working with families of children with developmental delays and disabilities.

Early Childhood Outreach's suite of training presentations develops the theme 'The more we know, the better we can offer support'. Each presentation helps us to get to know the child through focussed observations, and through building our skills in looking at the world from their perspective.

Each presentation focusses on a different area:

Supporting Communication

Once we have a good understanding of how a child is communicating – whether verbally, with gestures, or using communication supports, such as visuals – then we can match our style and complexity of language to theirs to maximise engagement and understanding.

Sensory Processing and the 'A SECRET' Framework & Autism - Seeing the Big Picture

Once we understand the way different people experience information from their senses, and some of the cognitive and social challenges faced by Autistic people, we can build in adaptations to our environments so that ALL people can participate without feeling overwhelmed by the challenges of the space.

Observing and Supporting Play

Once we observe how children are engaging with the play experiences in our Early Childhood settings and at home, and understand the different skills needed for each different play level, we can add supports and extension opportunities so that ALL children can engage with the program at the level which best suits their abilities and interests.

Understand the Child, Understand the Challenging Behaviour

Only once we have a good base of information about the child can we consider how best to support challenging behaviour. The question 'Why does the child throw things across the room?' could have many different answers, which might include:

- They are unable to verbally communicate frustration,
- They are seeking deep proprioception through their joints and muscles,
- They are unable to cope emotionally when something has not happened in the way they expected it to, or
- They have worked out that this is a sure-fire way of getting an adult to come over and help them.

Collecting as much information from our observations, discussions with family, support from therapists and input from the child is key to success.

Difficult Conversations - Finding Ways to Collaborate with Families

Building connections between families, therapists and educators is so important for the wellbeing of all. Sharing information about successful strategies, using consistent approaches and working together as a team to learn more; leads to increased confidence and happiness for everyone involved, especially the child.

All of Early Childhood Outreach's training is available as on-demand pre-recorded content. There are also webinars available for live sessions and an opportunity to ask questions.



Join us face to face:

for two of our most popular presentations together on one day!

'A SECRET' and Understanding Challenging Behaviour

What's included:

4 hours of training, a delicious lunch, and an opportunity to network with others from across your region. Suitable for educators, carers / parents, MCH nurses, Allied Health Professionals or anyone working with children of Preschool or Primary school ages.

Events will be held on Saturdays to allow multiple educators from one centre to attend without concerns for backfill; and so those who travel big distances can do so safely.

Price:

\$200 per person +GST (tickets are limited)

When:

25th February 2023 - Warrnambool
4th March 2023 - Mildura

Join us online:

Sensory Processing and the 'A SECRET' Framework

Monday 6th February 2023 (6-8.30pm AEDST)

\$50 per person +GST

Difficult Conversations - Finding Ways to Collaborate with Families

Wednesday 22 February 2023 (6-7.30pm AEDST)

\$40 per person +GST

Autism - Seeing the Big Picture

Thursday 23rd March 2023 (6-8pm AEDST)

\$50 per person +GST

Understand the Child, Understand the Challenging Behaviour

Tuesday 7th March 2023 (6-7.30pm AEDST)

\$40 per person +GST

Words: **Andrea Broughton**

Andrea is the founder and Senior Inclusion Consultant of Early Childhood Outreach. Early Childhood Outreach supports inclusion of children with neurodivergence, developmental delays or disabilities in Early Childhood settings through building the knowledge and capacity of the Educators, and everyone around the child. Early Childhood Outreach was born out of a realisation that many Early Childhood Educators in regional and rural areas were unable to access training and coaching as easily as their city counterparts, due to the barrier of distance.

Using a range of strategies including encouraging services to work together, Early Childhood Outreach is successfully supporting Educators with cost effective solutions.

As an organisation, Early Childhood Outreach uses a flexible approach, tailoring support to the strengths and challenges of each individual centre and group of educators.

In 2023, Early Childhood Outreach will be *returning to*

face to face large events.

Some dates have already been announced. If you would like to see any of these presentations live in your area, please contact us directly. Coaching support for teams of educators are also available. Visit our website and click the 'Services' tab for more information.

Anyone in SA booking a presentation in their centre in the week beginning 27th February 2023 will only be charged travel from the SA-Vic border, a saving of over \$400

Scan here to book your tickets



Help us in the fight against

Childhood Dementia



Childhood dementia are two words we would not expect to sit sidebyside. Sadly though, childhood dementia is a real, devastating and currently incurable disease. South Australian mum, Renee, like many of us, had never heard of the disorder until she recently discovered that all three of her children are living with it. For parents, the diagnosis usually comes as a total shock. They may have noticed some minor developmental delays, but do not expect to hear that their child is terminally ill, or that there is no cure for the illness. To make matters worse for these families, childhood dementia is currently drastically underfunded and overlooked, meaning that there has been little government funding for research to find treatments and cures. It also means that there is little care and support offered to those affected.

The Childhood Dementia Initiative (CDI) states that recent analysis of federal government research funding in Australia has revealed significant inequity between child illnesses. **According to the analysis, we lose nearly as many children to childhood dementia as we do to cancer.** And yet, the disease is reported to receive 20 times less funding than childhood cancer.

Without a cure, and still little acknowledgement of the disease, parents like Renee are forced to grapple with the reality that their children will gradually deteriorate as a result of progressive brain damage. Children with the disease gradually lose skills such as the ability to write, read, talk, walk and play. Their brains also lose the ability to keep the body functioning properly and, eventually, to keep the body alive. Unfairly, with the state of current research funding and support, these children may not live beyond 18.

With the support from people like you, we are hoping to make a difference in the life of Renee and her three beautiful children, as well as other families affected by the disease. To do so, we are currently hosting a GoFundraise campaign, where you can make a donation with just a few simple clicks. We encourage you to please donate to this campaign and we urge you to do so today. This is an incredibly worthy cause, surrounding a health issue that has been overlooked for far too long now.



Supporting children's physical and mental health



Little Heroes Foundation is a South Australian-based not for profit organisation that supports the physical and mental health of children.

Little Heroes Foundation have been supporting seriously ill children for 26 years. They have contributed close to \$40 million towards new equipment and facilities mainly at Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH), which has funded major pieces of equipment and refurbishments.

Recently, Little Heroes Foundation have partnered with Breakthrough Mental Health Research Foundation and together with support from Flinders University's Professor Philip Slee and Dr. Grace Skrzypiec, they have developed the Big Talks for Little People campaign – an online mental health module for primary school age students (7-12 years) within South Australia and the Northern Territory. The program focuses on prevention through early and meaningful education, covering topics on; conflict resolution, resilience, relationship building, problem-solving, optimism and mental health literacy. The Foundation has also seen the installation of Friendship Benches in many schools, providing children with a physical space where they can have conversations with each other about mental health.

Little Heroes Foundation is a not-for-profit and relies heavily on the support of the community and their Corporate Sponsors. It is everyday people like you that help us make a difference in the lives of children and their families who need it most.

Any donation - whether big or small - is hugely appreciated and will directly impact Renee's family and others affected by childhood dementia.

**Scan
here to
donate**



Service Spotlight

Imagine Childcare and Kindergarten



Imagine Childcare & Kindergarten Blakeview is an 84-place childcare centre located in Blakeview, South Australia. The centre has been operating for two years. We currently have 174 children enrolled and employ thirty-seven staff.

Whilst the Connect.Ed Training was a centre wide initiative, I will be discussing the effects of the training from the perspective of the Kindergarten Classroom. Our Kindergarten Team consists of two Educators who have recently completed their Certificate 3 qualifications, and myself, an Early Childhood Teacher with over 35 years of experience.

When I arrived at the centre in September 2021, the Kindergarten Classroom was experiencing challenges with some of the children's behaviour. This had begun to leave team members feeling downhearted and frustrated. Some of the behaviours displayed, included aggression toward peers and staff and a lack of resilience.

After implementing more structure by incorporating a routine and some non-negotiable guidelines, we did see some improvement. However, we still felt that we could be better meeting the needs of the children. When we heard that we would be undertaking Connect.Ed Training, staff were apprehensive at first, unsure if another behaviour management program was the answer that was needed.

Chloe was the Child Development Practitioner allocated to our service. Chloe has a background in childcare, so immediately many of the staff felt a connection with her, feeling that she understood what we were all experiencing. Chloe always showed empathy and encouragement. She would point out the positive rather than the negative. Chloe's passion and enthusiasm helped staff to embrace the support from Connect.Ed.

The Kindergarten Classroom Educators then consciously set out to form solid connections between themselves and the children. We got down on the children's level and listened intently to them. We gave more hugs or a gentle reassuring hand on a shoulder or back. We started to observe interactions more closely. We started to notice patterns in behaviour leading up to the disruptive behaviour. And, as the Educators fostered relationships with the children, they in turn began to seek connection with the Educators in productive and positive, rather than disruptive, ways.

We designed a Calm Corner consisting of cushions, throws, cuddly toys, sensory toys, and books. We draped a large piece of material from the ceiling and softened the fabric with netting and fairy lights. We added a diffuser to add calming aromas to the space. We also placed pastel inspirational posters, including deep breathing techniques, which we implemented with the children using their fingers to trace while breathing in and out.

After reducing 'visual noise', we discovered that we were able to hear and observe the needs of the children. For some children it was obvious what was needed.



The centre's new 'calm corner' which they created with support from Connect.Ed



However, some children took a little longer, and some children we are still discovering the strategies needed.

I would never wish to imply it was as easy as setting up a calm corner and spending some more time talking with each child. It was the time taken examining our own beliefs regarding behaviour, trauma, and connection, which promoted us to question, reflect, and address our own belief system. This is challenging, as we all have a wide and diverse series of events which has embedded these beliefs in us. The Connect.Ed Project challenged our belief systems and asked us to open ourselves to look a little deeper. We discovered it was well worth the effort to undertake the Connect.Ed Training, for the children in our Kindergarten Classroom and our Kindergarten Team too.

Words: **Sue Mellier**

Sue is an Early Childhood Teacher at Imagine Childcare and Kindergarten.

The Innovative Solutions Support (ISS) funding is available through the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) to assist eligible early childhood education and care services to fund innovative, flexible and responsive solutions to barriers to inclusion and embed inclusive practices.

Innovative Solutions Support provides flexible funding to empower services to carefully consider their inclusion challenges and take on an active role in finding solutions and build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs.

For more information about the funding, please contact the South Australia Inclusion Agency inclusion@gowriesa.org.au

Connect.Ed can support early childhood education and care services to implement trauma-informed practice, using a regulatory and relationship-based approach. This approach is different to a 'traditional' behaviour-management approach and, instead, focuses on supporting children to regulate their emotional experiences using their emotional connection with Educators.

For more information about accessing support from Connect.Ed, please contact admin@connectededucation.info

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