



## CONTENTS

- |    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|
| 3  | The Professional Conversation                   | 17 | Braving the Weather                               |
| 9  | Being Part of a Professional Support Network    | 19 | A Healthy and Active Start to Life                |
| 11 | Updates from the OECEC                          | 21 | The Workforce Council is Changing                 |
| 12 | New Professional Learning Program for EYLF      | 22 | Supporting Our Children, Supporting Our Community |
| 14 | Young Children's Active Community Participation |    |   |

# PSCQ Update

**Hello and welcome to the first edition of *In the LOOP* for 2011. I am sure many of you are feeling the same as we are here at the Workforce Council: a bit shell-shocked and weary from the start of the year we've had. In recognition that this has been a difficult time for many of you, we have included two articles in this issue to guide you to some helpful resources and websites. We hope these are helpful for you, your educators and the families you are supporting through the recovery stage that follows such traumatic experiences.**

The children's services sector also has much to work on and look forward to in 2011. For one, the looming implementation date of the new National Quality Framework of 1 January 2012. We realise that there is a lot of new information that we all need to grapple with, get our heads around and then be able to articulate in our practice in relation to these standards.

This issue of *In the LOOP* has a number of articles which will assist you with this. The first article discusses our Professional Conversation Project which provided an opportunity for children's services support personnel to explore the *Early Years Learning Framework* in depth. This article specifically describes how this learning process was structured and why it was structured this way. The second is an article on supporting children's active community participation that will help to guide you to support children's voices being heard as we develop a sense of being and belonging. Michelle Harrison's article on the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines provides tips for ensuring that we are supporting children's healthy development.

The Queensland Office for Early Childhood Education and Care has provided information about the regulation consultations where you can hear about the National Reform Agenda and how you can have your say about the new national regulations. There is also information about the Long Day Care approved Kindergarten funding program.

We here at the Workforce Council have also included information from one of the members of one of our Professional Support Networks about the value she gets from this experience and some information about our new structure and how we will be operating into the future.

All in all, I hope this provides some helpful information to begin your year.

**Julie Price**  
**Manager Workforce Partnerships**  
**Health and Community Services Workforce Council**



Health and Community Services Workforce Council Inc  
 Ground Floor, 303 Adelaide Street Brisbane Q 4000  
 Unit 1, Level 2 390 Flinders Street Townsville Q 4810  
 P: (07) 3234 0190 F: (07) 3234 0474  
 E: [info@workforce.org.au](mailto:info@workforce.org.au) W: [www.workforce.org.au](http://www.workforce.org.au)

The Professional Support Coordinator is an initiative funded by the Australian Government under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program. Feedback and queries should initially be directed to the professional Support Coordinator in your state. Further information can be sought by contacting the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

# The Professional Conversation

## A new approach to professional learning in Early Childhood Education and Care

Much is happening in early childhood education and care in Australia at present: universal kindergarten; a National Quality Framework; the *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* and the equivalent framework for school aged care, *My Time, Our Place*. It is not always easy to keep up to date with new information and initiatives, understand what they mean to us and apply new knowledge to strengthen our work with children, families and colleagues.

Acknowledging and responding to this challenge, PSCQ in collaboration with the Queensland Office for Early Childhood Education and Care (OECEC) are trialling a new approach to professional learning in Early Childhood Education and Care:

### The Professional Conversation.

Over the period August to November 2010, The Professional Conversations Trial saw fourteen groups of ECEC and related professionals coming together in various locations across the state to participate in a series of five professional conversations which focused on the EYLF.

Group sizes ranged from 6-30 participants and members were asked to commit to the full series of conversations. The conversations targeted people in management, policy and support roles in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), aiming to build individual knowledge and capacities and with the expectation that they would apply and share what they had learned. Participants included representatives from education and training organisations (e.g. universities, TAFE, other RTOs and professional development providers), multi-service providers, Inclusion Support Agencies, Queensland Health, PSCQ and OECEC. Working within the broad parameters of some desired learning outcomes (see Table 1), groups prioritised topics for conversation and committed time to explore these in depth, with a particular focus on practical application.

Table 1: Learning Outcomes for the Professional Conversations

Desired Learning Outcomes	
1	Increased knowledge and understanding of the EYLF and its practical implications for their role in ECEC.
2	Increased knowledge and connections with other support agencies in their region and greater understanding and appreciation of each other's roles.
3	Strengthened capacity to support services and educators to engage in shared inquiry and collaborative reflective practice to support implementation of the EYLF.
4	Strengthened capacity to use and promote the language of the EYLF.
5	Enhanced knowledge and understanding of the linkages between the EYLF, NQF and other curriculum documents.
6	Increased knowledge and capacity to apply a strengths-based approach to their work, and support services to adopt this approach to implementing the EYLF.



## The idea of a 'Professional Conversation' in Early Childhood Education and Care

There are other examples of 'conversation approaches' to professional development and learning. At the forefront is the World Café movement, promoting a simple yet powerful conversational process that can be used to support constructive dialogue on almost any topic. Similar approaches are being applied in workplaces for a range of purposes, including strategic planning, team building and business improvement. In 2009, PSCQ, the Indigenous Professional Support Unit and the Sunshine Coast and North West Queensland Inclusion Support Agencies collaborated on the Yarning Circles Project (see *In the LOOP* Autumn 2010 issue for an in-depth article on this project). This was a project funded by the Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations under the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Best Practice and Innovation Project. Inspired by the idea of yarning and the possibilities it affords to build relationships, insight and new understandings, this project gathered professionals together to yarn about practical implementation of the EYLF, with a particular focus on cultural competence and inclusion as part of our everyday work with children and families.

Building on these examples of conversational learning approaches, the professional conversation represents a new and refreshing approach to professional learning in ECEC. Professional conversations are an approach to professional learning and quality improvement which values the practical knowledge and wisdom that early childhood professionals gain through years of education and experience. This form of professional learning also recognises our commitment and capacity for reflection and a growing interest in collaborative reflective practice (EYLF, 2009).



A professional conversation draws together a group of early childhood professionals to engage in a constructive dialogue on a topic of shared interest and importance. A broad overarching topic is identified in advance, priority content is then negotiated with the group and the conversation is led by a skilled facilitator. The facilitator is not positioned as the "teacher" or "expert" on the topic. Instead, the facilitator is responsible for promoting and supporting shared thinking and meaningful participation in the conversation and, thereby, drawing out the wisdom of the group. The process is reliant on providing participants with sufficient time and space to critically reflect, to form and share views and experiences, and to move from surface knowledge to deeper knowledge and understanding.

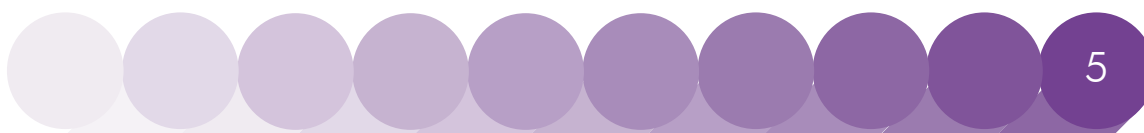
### Some key principles underpinning this approach to professional learning

To promote and support participation, learning and the best outcomes for all involved, the broad conversation approach is underpinned by the following key principles.

- Departing from more traditional “expert” models of teaching and learning, the idea of a professional conversation is based on the belief that ‘wisdom is present within the group’ (Stanfield, 2000). The idea is to design a conversation that draws out the breadth of knowledge and experience of group members to strengthen individual and collective knowledge and action. According to Tan and Brown (2005), the process is ‘built on the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges’ (p. 84). While applicable to a broad range of learning topics, this approach is particularly suited to the exploration of new ideas and initiatives such as the EYLF where few can claim independent expertise.
- Professional conversations address topics that are relevant and meaningful to participants. The conversation needs to matter to those involved, and make explicit the link between learning, improved practice and increased professional capacity. This provides the motivation to participate and ensures some shared expectations in terms of topic and outcomes. When this is achieved, it follows that the people in the conversation group are the “right” people to participate in conversation and thereby to generate new knowledge and understandings.

**Table 2: Topics prioritised by groups in the recent Professional Conversations on the EYLF**

Sessions	Conversation Topics
1 Full Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Introduction to the idea of a professional conversation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Personal reflections on the EYLF – enablers, challenges and priorities for future conversations and learning.</i></li> <li>• <i>Collaborative reflective practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>The central motifs of the Framework – Belonging, Being and Becoming.</i></li> <li>• <i>Establishment of a Working Agreement for the group.</i></li> </ul>
2 Half Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It’s not just about learning outcomes! Understanding and working with the elements of EYLF.</i></li> <li>• <i>Using the principles as the basis to change and improve professional practice: secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships and partnerships.</i></li> </ul>
3 Half Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Emergent curriculum – unpacking different perspectives on what constitutes emergent curriculum and the role of educators in planning, implementing, documenting and evaluating learning within this context.</i></li> <li>• <i>The place of intentional teaching in a play-based curriculum – reflecting on what we know about effective teaching and learning in the early years.</i></li> <li>• <i>Working with learning outcomes in a play-based curriculum – tension, challenges, strengths and opportunities to promote effective teaching and learning.</i></li> </ul>
4 Half Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Embedding respect for diversity in the everyday learning of children and educators.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identifying and understanding our own cultural frameworks and how these influence our work with children, families and educators.</i></li> <li>• <i>Strengthening the Indigenous cultural competence of educators.</i></li> </ul>
5 Half Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Linking the National Quality Framework and the EYLF</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluation of the effectiveness of a professional conversation approach to professional learning in ECEC.</i></li> </ul>



## The role of the facilitator

A skilled facilitator is integral to the success of the conversation. The task of the facilitator is 'to release the dammed-up genius, wisdom and experience of the group on a topic and guide it towards a considered conclusion' (Stanfield, 2000:30).

In this conversation approach it is important to remember that the facilitator is not the expert and has nothing to teach. The wisdom is in the group. However, as Hanson (2000) notes, 'Collective genius doesn't just happen. Method matters, (cited in Stanfield, 2000:30). Within this context, the key role of the facilitator is to establish a welcoming and supportive context for conversation, and to encourage and support all group members to participate and learn through the conversation.

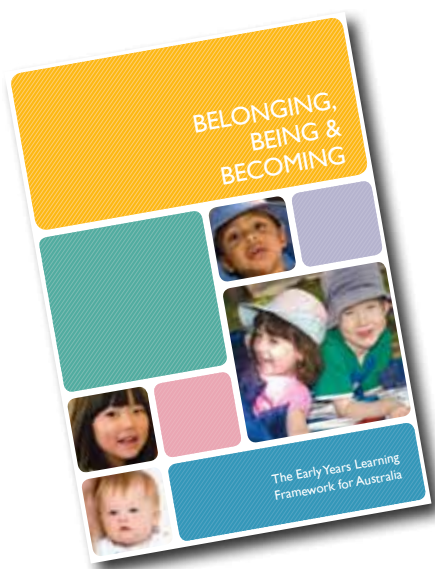
Although the conversation process is designed to be open, inclusive and responsive to different learning interests and needs, it also has a clear purpose, focus and plan, including a series of thoughtful pre-planned questions to promote and support a

'collaborative dialogue of discovery' (Howard and Barton, 1992:20; Casley and Cartmel, 2009).

To optimise participation and shared learning, the design and sequencing of the questions is important. The intent is to take group members through a series of reflective questions 'to elicit responses that take a group from the surface of a topic to its depth implications for their life and work' (Stanfield, 2000:17). Drawing on the work of Stanfield (2000), these conversations applied four types or levels of questions: *objective* questions; *reflective* questions, *interpretive* questions and *decisional* questions.

The table below provides further detail about the function of each layer of questions and some examples of questions drawn from the first conversation entitled *Personal Reflections on the Early Years Learning Framework*. In terms of context, the aim of this conversation was to establish what participants already knew, how they felt about the Framework, and priority topics for the series of professional conversations.

Type of Question	Function	Example
Objective	To establish the nature and scope of the topic of conversation and, most importantly, to ensure a shared focus for discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflecting on your current knowledge and experience of the EYLF, what words and images stand out for you?</li> </ul>
Reflective	To elicit emotional responses (e.g. hopes, expectations, fears and challenges), recognising the impact of personal values, beliefs and experiences on how we approach our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What aspects of the EYLF appeal to you most?</li> <li>Which parts are you concerned about?</li> </ul>
Interpretive	To build on previous questions to take the conversation to a deeper level, drawing out meaning, values, significance and implications of the topic for individuals and the group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the EYLF fit with your current views and experience of ECEC?</li> </ul>
Decisional	To draw out practice implications and directions; where to next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What challenges you most?</li> <li>What do you want to know more about?</li> </ul>



### The role of conversation participants

While a skilled facilitator is vital, the ultimate success of the conversation rests with the full membership of the group. Participants must be willing and able to engage with the topic, to share their views and experiences and to listen and reflect upon the views and experiences of others.

To set the groundwork for success, it is a good idea to establish a Working Agreement for the group. This is developed and documented during the first conversation, revisited as necessary, and sets a frame for how members of the group will work together to get the most out of the conversation. Seeking to nurture a 'shared culture of inquiry' (EYLF, 2009), this may draw out topics relating to trust and collegiality, respect for different viewpoint, providing opportunity for everyone to contribute to the conversation, listening and reflecting on the views and experiences of others; and privacy and confidentiality (Draft Educator's Guide, 2009:8).

### Conclusion

A formal evaluation is underway; however, early feedback suggests that the professional conversation approach is well suited to the exploration of pedagogy and practice in ECEC. Supporting this is the application of effective teaching and learning principles and practices, many of which are promoted in the *Early Years Learning Framework*. For example, the conversation approach applies the central motifs of belonging, being and becoming to the work and professional learning of participants. The approach seeks to:

- strengthen connections and professional relationships
- recognise the individuality of participants – their beliefs, values, interests, knowledge and experience
- promote learning and understanding through critical inquiry and collaborative reflective practice (adapted from the Draft Educator's Guide, 2009:5).

The conversations also embed the *Early Years Learning Framework* principles. Purposeful strategies and activities are used to nurture secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships and collaboration between group members. The conversation is inclusive and sets high expectations for engagement and outcomes, with a particular focus on supporting change and improved practice. The approach is predicated on respect for different ways of living, being and knowing, and promotes and supports critical inquiry and collaborative reflective practice. On this basis, participants in the recent professional conversations on the *Early Years Learning Framework* not only explored elements of the Framework, they applied them in their learning.



In terms of practice, conversations are designed to be responsive to the strengths, interests and needs of participants, and seek to build on prior learning, connecting current and new ways of thinking and working. While the conversation emerges and can take different directions in the group and across groups, there is also some intentionality in the overarching design, expressed in the aim of the conversation and focus questions. As in ECEC, documentation plays an important role in making learning visible and supporting changes in thinking and practice.

Recognising different learning styles and preferences, this approach to professional learning will not be for everyone. It requires a significant investment of time over an extended period, a degree of personal confidence, and willingness to engage in critical inquiry. It does not lead toward “one right way” of working nor does it offer a “recipe” for success. While generating new knowledge and understanding, the focus is also on higher order learning dispositions, including strengthened capacity to articulate practice, to engage in critical inquiry and collaborative reflective practice, to lead and support change and improved ways of working with children, families and colleagues in ECEC.

**Dr Susan Irvine**  
QUT School of Early Childhood

**Melalie Collie**  
Health and Community Services Workforce Council

## References

- Australian Government, (2009). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government.
- Australian Government, (Draft 2009). *Educators Belonging, Being and Becoming: Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government.
- Casley, M., and Cartmel, J., (2009). *Dialogue of Discovery*. Brisbane: Early Childhood Australia (Queensland Branch).
- Health and Community Services Workforce Council Inc. (2009). *Final Report: Yarning Circles Project. Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Best Practice and Innovation Project*. Brisbane: Health and Community Services Workforce Council.
- Howard, V.A. and Barton, J.H., (1992). *Thinking together: Making meetings work*. New York: William Morrow and Co.
- Irvine, S., (2010). *The idea of a professional conversation in ECEC*. Information paper for facilitators in the PSCQ and OECEC series of professional conversations on the *Early Years Learning Framework*. Brisbane: Health and Community Services Workforce Council.
- Stanfield, R.B., (Ed). (2000). *The art of focused conversation: 100 ways to access group wisdom in the workplace*. Toronto Canada: Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs.
- Tan, S. and Brown, J., (2005). The World Café in Singapore: Creating a learning culture through dialogue. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 41 (1), pp. 83-90.

# Being Part of a Professional Support Network

**The role of PSCQ's Professional Support Networks (PSNs) is to identify the professional development and support needs of educators across all types of children's services settings within our regions. We then make decisions relating to these for PSCQ.**

The Brisbane North PSN meets every four to six weeks and meetings are planned in advance to afford people the chance to schedule their other work commitments. If a member is unable to make the meeting they can still voice their opinions relating to our progress using our minutes as a tool.

There can be up to fourteen representatives on each PSN; currently we have eight active members. A vital part of the team is the Workforce Consultant (formerly Project Officer) whose role is to facilitate our meetings and action and develop the plans created by the team. There is a level of commitment that needs to be given to the group upon signing up including:

- Attending our whole day meetings which are based in Brisbane City
- Attending a two day orientation/planning workshop
- Supporting the identification of the regional professional support needs
- Creating networks in the community and bringing people together
- Promoting PSCQ and hosting events held within our region

## Who are we?

Our particular network consists of passionate educators with a varied range of experiences working

in children's services. We have representatives from family day care, private long day care and outside school hours care. As a team we aspire to support the multiple voices from within our region. We have the responsibility to prioritise the professional support needs of those based within our regions.

## Process of creating an event

We then plan learning opportunities asking questions such as:

- Who will gain most from attending?
- Who are we targeting for this professional support?
- What are the core components that we need to cover?
- What would be the best method of delivery?
- What should we title the activity in order to attract interest?
- How many people can attend from each service to ensure we are equitable?
- Which venue should we use and will we serve food?
- What is the time frame or specific time of day?
- What are some possible limiting factors for people attending?
- Are we meeting a range of learning styles?

## Our environment and vision

I believe that during this process we show how efficiently we work as a network. We have our own vision which we take time to reflect on and ensure is still an honest reflection of what we do and strive for. It paints a picture of what it is like to be a part of this group of dedicated practitioners.

I believe our meetings provide a shared space where we can talk openly and honestly about what we believe the stepping stones are to ensuring high quality professional development and practice within our sector. It is a positive environment where respectful communication exchanges are made. As a group we acknowledge one another's voices by being active listeners and valuing the perspectives of others. The trust component cannot be underestimated. We trust that we all have the benefit of the region as our focus and not the needs of our own centres. We do not always agree on each and every point, however we always come to an agreement swiftly and fairly without needing to vote on items or flit away precious time.

My personal PSN journey has led me to feel that the longer I have been a part of the PSN the more I feel a responsibility to the PSN, PSCQ and educators from our region and profession. When I started, the group was still in its infancy and PSN members would attend the professional support activities and generally sit together, attend another meeting and share their findings. This is not the case anymore. Now we make a concerted effort to sit separately in order to glean more information from the participants. What interested them about the course? Were there more people from their service that wanted to attend but could not? Was this as a result of the time or day their rosters, etc? We then use this firsthand knowledge and the information collated from our feedback sheets to critique the opportunities we are making available to our region.

### How being on the PSN has changed for me

The role as a PSN member is evolving. In the past we were asked the questions by our facilitator; now we say what needs to be completed and carried out, and ask if it will be possible. We have a lot of ownership of the events. Total control of the financial side of the events as well as the planning is carried out with

our input. We are always consulted in a transparent fashion when deciding if pools of funding are to be made available for use for regional and statewide initiatives and learning experiences. The process is a very gratifying one where you really are part of a community of educators who value everyone's input and thoughts.

### What I gain from being a PSN member

Attending the meetings gives me a spring in my step when I return to daily life. I feel confident that we are fostering more knowledge for those who want it. I always learn something about the ever-changing world of children's services. It may be that the new Framework for School Aged Care has been released for feedback or that there is a second round of applications for Early Childhood Teaching Scholarships.



**SJ Cliff**  
Brisbane North PSN

For more information about Professional Support Networks please visit:  
<http://www.workforce.org.au/our-workforce-initiatives/professional-support-coordinator-queensland/networks-regions.aspx>

# Updates from the OECEC

## Have your say on early childhood reform

Services, educators, families, stakeholders and the broader community will have the opportunity to have their say on the reform of the early childhood sector in March 2011. A series of face-to-face and video conference consultation forums will be held across Queensland to discuss the detailed National Regulations for the National Quality Framework (NQF) and proposed regulation of licensed services outside the scope of the NQF, such as occasional care.

The NQF will introduce a new quality assessment and rating system for long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and kindergarten services and new national standards that will include increased numbers of staff to educate and care for children and requirements for enhanced educator qualifications. Consultation sessions are free and you are asked to register prior to attending.

Visit [www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood](http://www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood) and follow the links for information on session dates and times. Papers providing further detail about the changes proposed for the early childhood education and care sector are also available on this website.

## Long day care services are invited to apply now for state funding to support their delivery of an approved kindergarten program in 2011.

Last year more than 340 long day care services became approved kindergarten program providers, creating up to 9,700 additional funded kindergarten places. The Queensland Government is calling on more long day care services to become approved kindergarten program providers to ensure all pre-Prep children attending long day care also enjoy the lifelong benefits kindergarten programs provide.

The application and administration processes for kindergarten funding have been improved to ensure more services can access kindergarten funding support.

In addition, to help identify the eligible teachers needed to deliver kindergarten programs in long day care, an improved teacher qualification recognition process has been introduced. While services can continue to apply on behalf of their teachers at the time of applying for funding, teachers can now also apply at any time to be recognised as suitably qualified to deliver a kindergarten program in Queensland. This new process will help long day care services find teachers and help teachers find jobs.

All services, including previously unsuccessful applicants, are encouraged to review the new application process for kindergarten funding for long day care services at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/kindergarten/longdaycare.html>

Applications close 31 March 2011, with applications to be prioritised based on the date the completed application is received. Services that meet the requirements can also apply prior to the nominated closing date to increase their opportunity of receiving the full 40 weeks' subsidy in 2011.

Long day care services affected by the recent floods that are not able to apply by the deadline should contact the Department for further information on options for applying at a later date. To discuss the options available to your service please call Kindy Hotline on 1800 4 KINDY (1800 454 639) or email [ecec@deta.qld.gov.au](mailto:ecec@deta.qld.gov.au) (please include a contact phone number).

## Office for Early Childhood Education and Care

# New Professional Learning Program for the EYLF

Since the *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* was distributed to early childhood education and care services in 2009, early childhood educators in vastly different contexts have been examining what the EYLF means for them and their work with children and families.

With funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Early Childhood Australia has designed the EYLF Professional Learning Program (EYLF PLP).

The EYLF PLP consists of the following elements:

- A series of 65 EYLF Professional Learning Workshops in urban and regional locations across Australia, from March through to July, 2011.
- An online EYLF PLP Forum where members of the early childhood community can talk about the EYLF and issues in early education and care.
- An EYLF PLP Facebook community, where people can talk about early childhood matters in an informal setting.
- Regular EYLF PLP e-Newsletters about practitioners' experiences as they engage with the EYLF.
- Online EYLF PLP 'Talking about practice' series of e-Learning videos.
- A series of online Vignettes (short 30-second films), which capture effective practice in relation to the EYLF and provide stimulus for staff discussion.

## EYLF PLP Workshops

The Professional Learning Workshops are full-day workshops, delivered by facilitators with early childhood experience and expertise. These will take place from March until July, 2011.

Workshops aim to increase educators' understanding about the EYLF, promote reflection on practice and build a sense of belonging to an early childhood professional community.

The Workshops are designed for educators who have the responsibility to implement the EYLF—as teachers, team leaders or educational leaders in services.

While Workshops will be adapted to suit the needs of participants and the style of facilitators, they will include some common components. Film vignettes will provide a vehicle for interpreting children's learning. A Learning Circle model will be employed to guide questioning and collaborative reflection.

The EYLF PLP Workshops will also provide participants with a valuable occasion to establish new contacts with other people implementing the EYLF. These networks will play a valuable role in providing ongoing support for individuals. The EYLF PLP Facebook community and the EYLF PLP Forum have been specifically designed to provide a platform for the continuation of these support networks and professional conversations.

Participants at the workshops will receive copies of the six Early Childhood Australia EYLF publications, the ECA Code of Ethics and copy of a document titled: *Thinking about practice: Working with the*

*EYLF*. The total value of these resources is \$90. These will provide tangible ongoing support for the implementation of the *Early Years Learning Framework*.

For more information about the Workshops, or to access any of the EYLF Professional Learning Program resources please visit:  
[\*http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/eylfp/\*](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/eylfp/)

### **Early Childhood Australia**

**Professional Support Coordinator Queensland** also provides activities to support services in their exploration and application of the pedagogy, principles, practice and learning outcomes of the *Early Years Learning Framework*. To find resources please go to:

[\*http://www.noahsark.net.au/EYLF.html\*](http://www.noahsark.net.au/EYLF.html)

And to search for an activity near you please enter Professional Support Coordinator Queensland and your region into the activity search fields here:

[\*http://www.workforce.org.au/workforce-innovation/find-activity.aspx\*](http://www.workforce.org.au/workforce-innovation/find-activity.aspx)



# Young Children's Active Community Participation

The *Early Years Learning Framework* indicates that early childhood programs aim to build children's skills and knowledge in active community participation. Outcome 2 (Children are connected with and contribute to their world), in particular, addresses children's active community participation.

## What does active community participation mean for young children and what can it be?

In 2010, I completed doctoral study into the possibilities for young children's active citizenship. In the study I told social justice stories with a class of children aged five and six years, to notice what active community participation the stories might provoke.

I found philosopher Hannah Arendt's definition of action useful in framing the possibilities for young children's community participation. To Arendt, action is about beginning something new with others in the public sphere. This definition offers scope to include children, because as I observed in the study, children suggest and initiate new ideas and actions to address social issues with their classmates, families, friends and other community members.

Examples included:

- One child made a list of people he knew who wanted to stop the hunting of birds
- Another child suggested that we plant seedlings of the food source for the Coxen's fig-parrot, a critically endangered bird in South-East Queensland

- Another child wrote and copied notes home for each child in the class requesting that they donate toys for a girls' school in Pakistan

Many of the children told others about the issues of social concern that they came to know through the stories that I told. This is an act of concern for public good — concern for community. The drawing below by Denmark (self-selected pseudonym) shows one way that Denmark chose to tell others about his concern for the plight of the Coxen's fig-parrot. Telling others is a significant act of community participation, as it spreads awareness and motivation to take action.



'Some people saved this bird [Coxen's fig-parrot] from a flood and it went straight to its nest. My map will help my mummy and daddy find where the birds live.' Denmark (aged 6)

Storytelling can be an evocative way to cultivate young children's interest and awareness of social issues and build a strong sense of community in the learning environment. Through reflection of my practice as a storytelling teacher I identified four recurring themes that framed my practice.

1. *Tailor* stories for the group of children: notice what their interests and concerns are and source stories that explore these issues.
2. Through story children can be taken for a *walk in the shoes of another*: tell the stories of others' experiences so that the listeners feel as if it could be happening to them.
3. Welcome children's *freedom of expression*: see children as active participants in the learning community; honour their suggestions and choices.
4. *Spin and weave* connections between stories and actions: acknowledge what the stories set in motion; what do the stories motivate the children to say and do?



I told folktales, biographical stories and stories that I wrote to explore issues that the children were interested and concerned about. Storytelling captivated the children's interest and spoke to their hearts and minds. By telling with carefully expressed words, gesture, pace and pauses the children experienced the stories with all their senses. They became affected by the stories, wanted to talk about them, tell others and do something.

Through examination of how the children responded to the stories as active citizens I learnt the following about possibilities for young children's active community participation:

1. Different ways of viewing children influences young children's community participation. Barriers and limitations can arise when engaging in community participation with young children due to widespread views of children as innocent and developing, which produce practices of overprotection and limitation as children are deemed insufficiently experienced and knowledgeable.

2. Young children respond with passion to injustices through suggestions of "payback" or "fight back", along with responsibility to remedy injustices.
3. Young children display diversity and complexity in their active community participation. For example, one child wanted the person who harmed others to learn what it feels like by experiencing the same harm; another child wanted participation in the adult or "real" world ("I want to do real things") and demonstrated responsibility to others by seeking their input on plans for active community participation; and another child autonomously completed tasks to support the class participation in a communitarian act.

The above understandings offer the following suggestions for encouraging young children's active community participation:

- Challenge accepted limitations to young children's active community participation by informing policies and practices how they act to exclude or limit children's active community participation.

- Engage in practices, such as making decisions with children, seriously listening and responding to children's ideas.
- Provide spaces for young children to express their affective responses to injustices, through such open-ended activities as dramatic play, drawing, painting, sculpting and block building.
- Pay attention to young children's ideas, and trust in their capacity and commitment to be responsible to others.
- Welcome and acknowledge the diversity and complexity of young children's active community participation.

Young children are capable of active community participation. Share stories with children about what is happening in their local community and beyond.

For example as I write this, much of Queensland is flooding. This is and will affect many Queensland children's lives. Tell stories of people's experiences of the flooding with the children you work with. Provide safe and comfortable spaces for their verbal, visual and dramatic responses. Listen to their suggestions for active community participation to aid those families who have lost family members and homes. Talk through and plan to enact their suggestions. See the children as valued members of their community with plenty to contribute.

**Dr Louise Phillips**  
University of Southern Queensland



# Braving the Weather

This summer has been one of the most climatically turbulent in Queensland's history, with severe weather, flooding and cyclones affecting much of the state. As a result many individuals, families and organisations have experienced great loss, and continue to face hardship as the recovery process slowly begins.

We join the thousands of affected Queenslanders in grieving the tragic loss of loved ones, homes and livelihoods, while applauding the determination and generosity of all who have offered assistance to those in need.

While the Workforce Council's Brisbane office was forced to close for almost a week as part of the evacuation of Brisbane's CBD during the flood, our building was fortunately spared from the floodwaters. Similarly our Townsville office was shut in preparation for cyclone Yasi, but sustained no damage. We are pleased to share that all offices are now open and available to offer support to our networks, member organisations and stakeholders.

If there is anything that we can do to assist organisations who are currently under-staffed or trying to re-open following impacts of the severe weather, please contact us directly by phone: (07) 3234 0190 or email: [admin@workforce.org.au](mailto:admin@workforce.org.au) for information or assistance.

You may also find the following organisations and programs helpful:

**Commonwealth Bank:** the Commonwealth Bank has made \$5 million available in \$20,000 grants to help not-for-profit groups that have been impacted by the flood.

[www.commbank.com.au/news/floods/default.aspx](http://www.commbank.com.au/news/floods/default.aspx)



**Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland:**

a wide range of information available for organisations affected by flooding including: Flood assistance packages for organisations; Finance; Workplace Health and Safety; Lease Obligations; Employee Management. Information can be accessed at [www.cciq.com.au/floods](http://www.cciq.com.au/floods) and you can call the CCIQ Employer Assistance Line on 1300 135 822 or for general flood related enquiries contact 1300 548 044.

[www.cciq.com.au/floods](http://www.cciq.com.au/floods)

**Queensland Government:** flood assistance for small business including: Financial assistance; Managing and paying your staff; Support and advice for small businesses; Flood Recovery; Planning for the future. [www.business.qld.gov.au/risk-management/flood-business-assistance.html](http://www.business.qld.gov.au/risk-management/flood-business-assistance.html)

**Fair Work Australia:** information on your responsibilities as an employer when: an employee cannot attend work due to the floods; managing organisation shut-downs; employees' eligibility to take Community Services Leave to assist with flood operations. [www.fairwork.gov.au/media-centre/latest-news/pages/20110105-Has-your-work-been-affected-by-floods-or-other-natural-disasters.aspx](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/media-centre/latest-news/pages/20110105-Has-your-work-been-affected-by-floods-or-other-natural-disasters.aspx)



### Australian Government Disaster Recovery

**Payment:** information on financial assistance available to individuals affected by the floods. [www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/emergency/qld\\_flooding\\_dec10\\_agdrp.htm](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/emergency/qld_flooding_dec10_agdrp.htm)

### Volunteering Queensland and Brisbane City

**Council:** information on how to volunteer to assist clean-up efforts. [www.emergencyvolunteering.com.au/](http://www.emergencyvolunteering.com.au/)  
[www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/#volunteer](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/#volunteer)

**Insurance:** Contact your insurance company as soon as possible or call the Insurance Council of Australia's Queensland Flood Hotline on 1300 728 228. Contact WorkCover to confirm if your insurance covers volunteers on 1300 362 128.

**BSA disaster Recovery:** to locate BSA-licenced contractors and suppliers to assist with cleaning up and/or re-building. [www.bsa.qld.gov.au/FormsPublicationsProducts/Contracts/Pages/Contracts.aspx](http://www.bsa.qld.gov.au/FormsPublicationsProducts/Contracts/Pages/Contracts.aspx)

**Queensland Health:** community health fact sheets and advice for recovery with the flood disaster. [www.health.qld.gov.au/floods/stress\\_well.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/floods/stress_well.asp)  
'Children in Crisis' resource: [www.health.qld.gov.au/floods/docs/MHFS2\\_ChildCrisis\\_2.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/floods/docs/MHFS2_ChildCrisis_2.pdf)

**Early Childhood Australia:** information on dealing with children and emotional stress. [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/early\\_childhood\\_news/eca\\_webwatch\\_issue\\_105\\_january\\_2011.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/early_childhood_news/eca_webwatch_issue_105_january_2011.html)

**What Happened to My World?:** Information on understanding confusion, fear, grief, and struggles in relation to inexplicable accidents or the forces of nature. <http://pademelonpress.com.au/pages/details2.php?id=496>

### Queensland Department of Education and Training, OECEC:

Information about how the OECEC is working collaboratively with eservices that have been affected by cyclonic activity. <http://education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/qld-floods.html>

**Education Queensland:** Natural disaster-related esources for parents and teachers. <http://education.qld.gov.au/student services/floods/>

### The Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma,

**Loss & Grief Network:** Australian and International resources providing information regarding children and disasters. [www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/resource\\_hubs/disasters\\_children/disaster\\_resources/](http://www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/resource_hubs/disasters_children/disaster_resources/)

**The Australian Psychological Society:** Guidelines for parents and caregivers about looking after children who have been affected by floods. [www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/Guidelines-for-parents-floods.pdf](http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/Guidelines-for-parents-floods.pdf)  
Follow the link below and select 'Brochures' to obtain the *Don't panic, be prepared: Cyclones* brochure and the *Preparing children for the threat of a cyclone* brochure. [www.psychology.org.au/publications/shop/](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/shop/)

If you have any information which may be of use to other organisations, please email them to: [admin@workforce.org.au](mailto:admin@workforce.org.au) so we can help to share it with others.

If there is any way in which the Workforce Council can be of assistance during this difficult time, please do not hesitate to contact us via your regular Workforce Council contact or by phone: (07) 3234 0190 or email: [admin@workforce.org.au](mailto:admin@workforce.org.au)

# A Healthy and Active Start to Life

## Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings

With one in five Queensland children in grade one either overweight or obese, it's clear that the early years are critical for establishing healthy eating and physical activity behaviours.

This was the rationale for developing the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings (*Get Up & Grow*) launched by the Commonwealth Government in October 2009. These guidelines are linked to the new National Quality Standard ([www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)) which now covers both nutrition and physical activity under the 2nd quality area: Children's Health and Safety.

### **Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood Guidelines**

#### **Physical Activity Recommendations**

**Recommendation:** For healthy development in infants (birth to 1 year), physical activity – particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments – should be encouraged from birth.

**Recommendation:** Toddlers (1 to 3 years) and pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years) should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.

**Recommendation:** Children younger than two years of age should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).

**Recommendation:** For children 2 to 5 years of age, sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.

**Recommendation:** Infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time – with the exception of sleeping.

#### **Healthy Eating Guidelines**

**Healthy eating guideline 1:** Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended, with positive support, for babies up to six months. Continued breastfeeding is recommended for at least 12 months – and longer if the mother and baby wish.

**Healthy eating guideline 2:** If an infant is not breastfed, is partially breastfed, or if breastfeeding is discontinued, use an infant formula until 12 months of age.

**Healthy eating guideline 3:** Introduce suitable solids at around six months.

**Healthy eating guideline 4:** Make sure that food offered to children is appropriate to the child's age and development, and includes a wide variety of nutritious foods consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia.

**Healthy eating guideline 5:** Provide water in addition to age-appropriate milk drinks. Infants under the age of six months who are not exclusively breastfed can be offered cooled boiled water in addition to infant formula.

**Healthy eating guideline 6:** Plan mealtimes to be positive, relaxed and social.

**Healthy eating guideline 7:** Encourage children to try different food types and textures in a positive eating environment.

**Healthy eating guideline 8:** Offer an appropriate amount of food, but allow children to decide themselves how much they will actually eat.

**Healthy eating guideline 9:** Offer meals and snacks at regular and predictable intervals.

**Healthy eating guideline 10:** Ensure that food is safely prepared for children to eat – from the preparation stages to consumption.



Given that lifelong habits are developed in the formative years of life, early years settings are a great opportunity to educate both children and families around the foundations of a healthy lifestyle.

The *Get Up & Grow* resources ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)) have been developed to assist services meeting the new quality standards while providing practical information for staff and families to support healthy behaviours in children attending centre based care, family day care and preschools.

The Queensland Government is currently developing additional *Get Up & Grow* resources for both the

sector and families and are working towards providing state-wide professional development on these guidelines for the sector.

- Children younger than 2 years of age should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) and for children 2 to 5 years of age these activities should be limited to less than one hour per day.
- Young children (1-5 years) don't need to do their three hours of physical activity all at once. It can be accumulated throughout the day and can include light activity like standing up, moving around and playing in addition to more vigorous activity like running and jumping. Active play is the best way for young children to be physically active.

Maintaining physical activity and healthy eating messages year round will help establish a healthy foundation for children and help prevent future health problems such as excess weight and obesity which can cause early development of future chronic health problems.

**Michelle Harrison & Damian O'Sullivan**  
Queensland Health

# The Workforce Council is Changing

You may have noticed some changes to your contact points for PSCQ and the Workforce Council towards the end of last year and the beginning of this year.

This is because we have recently changed the internal structure of the Workforce Council. This change will enable the Health and Community Services Workforce Council to better integrate our organisation and enhance our ability to provide services to our industries, sectors and stakeholders.

Please see below for a list of Workforce Consultants for your region.

Workforce Council Region	PSCQ Region/Network	Workforce Consultant
Brisbane	Brisbane North	John Turrisi
Brisbane	Brisbane South	John Turrisi
Brisbane	Logan/Redlands	John Turrisi
Brisbane	Ipswich	John Turrisi
North Queensland	Far North Queensland	Isla Swan
North Queensland	Mackay	Tara Franks (temp)
North Queensland	North Queensland	Peter Demopoulos
North Queensland	North West Queensland	Peter Demopoulos
Gold Coast	Gold Coast	Louise Villanova
South West	South West Darling Downs	Kitrina Edwards
Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast	Sunshine Coast	Fran Griffiths
Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast	Wide Bay Burnett	Fran Griffiths
Central	Central West Fitzroy	Jan Ungerer
Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast	Moreton Bay	Mary Russell

Please call 1800 112 585 or email [admin@workforce.org.au](mailto:admin@workforce.org.au) if you have any enquiries. If you are enquiring about a current activity or registration you will be transferred to a member of our Activities Administration team: Karen Coombs, Kaitlyn Sandona, Maret Leesi, Bernadine Bennett, Sandy Brown and Nicole Smith.

If you have any suggestions for upcoming professional support events or would like to discuss the needs in your region, please ask for the Workforce Consultant for your region.

Don't forget to go to [www.workforce.org.au](http://www.workforce.org.au) and search all the activities in your region for any other events that you or your colleagues may wish to attend or share with others.

# Supporting Our Children, Supporting Our Community

Noah's Ark children's Services Resource Unit would like to acknowledge and take a moment to think about the challenges Queensland has faced these past few months. As communities clean up it is often hard to know where to start, particularly in terms of how to support children and adults around us while we try to make sense of what is happening in our world.

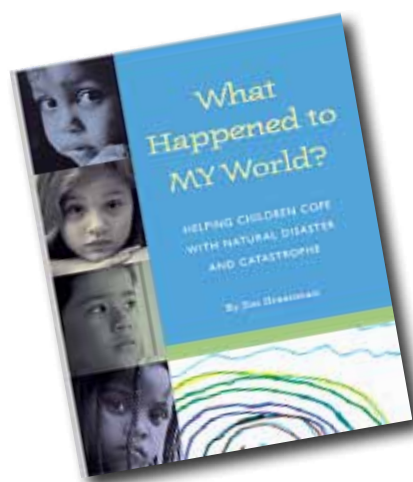
The resource library has been gathering a number of resources to help those in services needing some ideas, guidance and reassurance. If we can help families feel supported and educators feel united then we have achieved much.

The following resources are available for services to support the recovery and development of affected communities.



Immediately after a serious disaster, a person may experience a range of thoughts, feelings and behaviour that can be intense, confusing and

frightening. *Looking After Yourself After a Disaster* is designed to help adults understand the reactions they — or someone they know — may be experiencing. It contains practical advice, numbers to call and websites to visit if you need extra support. This booklet is available free to services. Noah's Ark can post these out on request.



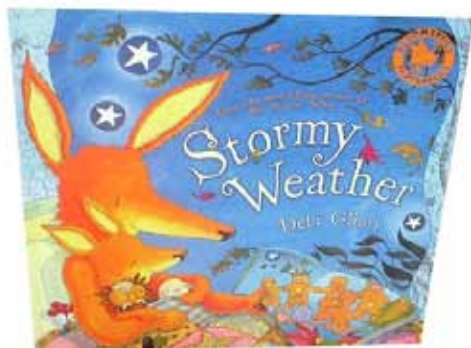
*What Happened to MY World?* was written by Jim Greenman after Hurricane Katrina to assist parents and educators to provide children with the support, reassurance and understanding they need to understand the forces of nature that can disrupt and devastate the world as they know it.

The library has a limited number of these books to give to disaster affected services. We also have copies for loan in the library. It is also available to download on the following website:

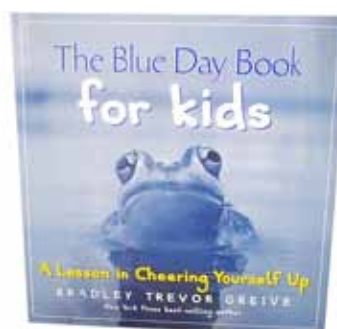
[www.brighthorizons.com/talktochildren/docs/What\\_Happened\\_to\\_MY\\_world.pdf](http://www.brighthorizons.com/talktochildren/docs/What_Happened_to_MY_world.pdf)



We have also identified a selection of children's story books that assists educators to support children who have experienced traumatic episodes, which helps children to understand and manage feelings. Additional suggestions are provided for educators and parents.



*Weather Watchers: Weather* by Adrian Vidliano and Rebecca Rissman, and *Storms* by Miriam Busch Goin both enable young children the opportunity to understand about our weather and how things occur. These two books provide opportunities for the educator to initiate discussion on our weather and what has been occurring in Queensland these past months. *Stormy Weather* provides readers with gentle rolling text and comforting art to settle and calm children frightened by the storms.



*The Blue Day Book for Kids* by Bradley Trevor Greive contains selected photos and texts to enable children find the right words about how they are feeling and bring laughter and a positive approach to their world.

**Tina Millar**  
Noah's Ark Children's Services Resource Unit



## REGISTRATIONS NOW OPEN

The second annual Health and Community Services Workforce Innovation Conference & Awards will take place on 19-20 May 2011 at Brisbane's Sebel & Citigate Hotel.

It will include keynote addresses from former Australian Democrats leader **Natasha Stott Despoja** (pictured), renowned social entrepreneur **Nic Frances**, and emotional intelligence author **Amanda Gore**.

The conference will incorporate a gala evening on 19 May 2011 to recognise those leading workforce practice within our industries through the presentation of the Health and Community Services Workforce Innovation Awards.



Nominations for the Awards are open until 5pm Friday 25 March.

For more information, to register for the conference, or to submit a nomination form, visit the Conference & Awards website at:

[www.workforceinnovation.org.au](http://www.workforceinnovation.org.au)

Proudly presented by:



For current sponsors please visit [www.workforceinnovation.org.au](http://www.workforceinnovation.org.au)