

# CCSA CONNECTIONS

ISSUE TWO | DECEMBER 2019

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Your **partner**  
in management



## Welcome to **ISSUE TWO**

Welcome to **Connections**; a publication specifically targeted to early childhood service providers working in rural and remote locations right across Australia.

This year CCSA celebrates 50 years of providing better learning outcomes for children through effectively managed and resources services. Originally established as the Country Children's Services Association, we have always had a focus on ensuring that all children can access quality early learning and care opportunities; wherever they live. Through our advocacy work, events like the Rural and Remote Forum, and this magazine, we continue to work towards accessible and equitable learning outcomes. We held a 50th anniversary event in Katoomba on the 15th November, sharing a day of learning, activities and celebration with CCSA staff, members and friends. Please go to <https://www.ccsa.org.au/50th/celebrating-50-years-of-ccsa/> to see highlights from the day, link to a photo gallery, and to watch our video on the history of CCSA.



**MEG MENDHAM**

CEO  
CCSA

It was a pleasure to meet delegates at the Rural and Remote Forum earlier this year, and hear from you directly about the issues that impact on services operating in these locations. Following on from the success of last year's event, we are busy working on the 2020 Forum that will offer even more opportunities for learning, networking and hearing all the latest in research and policy direction. We listened to your feedback, and are offering more facilitated discussions for sharing ideas and workshopping solutions to shared challenges. And, for the first time, we will be presenting a dedicated Forum stream for Administrators. This really is a special opportunity for Administration staff to meet and network with others facing the same unique issues. Our guest speakers have been carefully selected to not only share their expertise but to inspire and motivate you, and we also have some very special networking events.

Register now to join us at the 2020 Forum  
<https://www.ccsaruralandremoteforum.org.au/>

Enjoy reading **Connections**, and I hope that the stories and articles inspire ideas for you to bring along to the 2020 Forum! I look forward to sharing the 2020 Rural and Remote Forum with you.

Meg Mendham  
CEO, CCSA



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Together we acknowledge the contributions of the traditional custodians of this land. We acknowledge the contribution of Aboriginal Australians, Torres Strait Islander peoples, and non-Aboriginal Australians to the education and care of all children and people in this country in which we live in and share.



Show us your member stickers  
post your pics to our facebook page!



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Celebrating our Milestone



# R+R Forum REPORT

## ABOUT THE FORUM

The two-day Forum was an opportunity for ECEC services operating in rural and remote parts of Australia to engage with each other to share ideas, raise questions and concerns, celebrate successes and hear from sector experts and policy makers.

## AT A GLANCE

98%

of delegates said  
the forum was worthwhile

130

OVER  
delegates attended

## FORUM STRUCTURE

Over the two days, the Forum's program comprised a combination of:

- keynote speakers, including Stan Grant and Mem Fox
- presentations from government, including The Hon. Dan Tehan (Minister for Education), The Hon Sarah Mitchell (NSW Minister for Early Childhood Education), Tracy Mackey (NSW Department of Education) and Jane Hayden (Department of Education and Training)
- presentations from sector experts, including John Mason (ACECQA), Deborah Yates (Be You Initiative) and Prof Sandie Wong (Macquarie University)
- panel discussions with sector leaders and experts; and
- breakout sessions that focused on particular themes and different service types.

*THIS WAS DEFINITELY ONE OF THE BEST FORUMS I HAVE BEEN TO. THE PRESENTERS WERE INSPIRING. WE BOTH LOVED HOW ENGAGING AND PRACTICAL THE WORKSHOP BREAK OUT GROUPS WERE. THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING EVERYONE TO HAVE A VOICE.*

A number of common themes emerged from presentations and throughout discussions at the Forum.

- **Participation and inclusion:** Right from the Welcome to Country and Aboriginal dancers, the concept of participation and bringing people together was a major theme of the Forum.
- **Long term outcomes:** The need to think about longer term solutions and making the 'right choices' that avoid quick fixes and strengthen the sector to make a difference for future generations.
- **Boldness and disruption:** Confronting the big questions about who we want to be as a nation, which is complex and requires systemic change.
- **Connectedness:** The notion of 'remoteness' and how we are connected is changing, providing new and different opportunities.
- **Equity:** The need to ensure availability and access to all children in rural and remote areas, particularly the most vulnerable children and families.
- **Story-telling:** The need to tell new stories to break cycles of intergenerational disadvantage and to celebrate the strengths and successes of the sector.
- **Innovation:** The passion, strength and resilience of the sector provides a unique ability to reflect and adapt to emerging and new challenges.

## ABOUT THE FORUM

Rural and remote services face unique challenges, these include:

- The correlation and interation between remoteness and socio-economic disadvantage, which correlates with higher levels of developmental vulnerability in children.
- Isolation experienced by staff.
- Inflexibility and inadequacy of funding models.
- Issues with infrastructure and appropriate facilities.
- The important role that ECEC services play in the broader community.



**2020  
Forum Tickets Available**

VISIT  
[ccsaruralandremoteforum.org.au](http://ccsaruralandremoteforum.org.au)

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



Growing up in  
**THREDBO.**

INTRODUCING THREDBO EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE



**Thredbo Early Childhood Centre operates in an unusual environment because it runs within a National Park, supports a highly seasonal population and its location is away from major centres. The service offers long day care and occasional care via a not for profit community-based model for local and visiting families.**

**Bianca Scott, the centre’s Director told Connections they have 29 places overall. “An average day during winter is 14 children and summer numbers may be under 10 per day. We have a core group of families that access us year-round and returning families each winter that are seasonal workers at the resort.”**

**Connections:** Tell us about the community you operate in?

**TECC:** We operate out of the Thredbo Memorial Community Building which we share with the locals and visitors, they use the building on weekends. We have a close knit, passionate community that supports the Early Childhood Centre and we are proudly part of that community with strong relationships with our families and extended families.

We operate as our own business, a small not for profit, within a ski resort, within a National Park. This presents some interesting challenges, but it also gives us access to a unique environment.

The small core community means that children are active within the community and our compact village layout means that we can take the children to visit local cafes, check the mail and even visit parents at work in the resort areas. We also hike and explore in the natural environment which includes walks in the snow.

“We are in a situation where our market is a captive audience yet also remote from the main centres.”

**BIANCA SCOTT**  
| DIRECTOR | THREDBO EARLY CHILDCARE

**Connections:** What was the biggest challenge for your service in the past two years and how did you overcome it?

**TECC:** Financial viability is an ongoing challenge due to our highly seasonal population base. We work weekly, monthly and yearly to ensure we are doing the best for our children, families and community. We are in a situation where our market is a captive audience yet also remote from the main centres. Parents have to be driving up to Thredbo for work or play to access the centre, otherwise they will use alternate care closer to town. There are only so many children in the area. We can only encourage families to have more babies.

To offset some of these challenges we are looking into alternate services such as a bush kindy program for visitors and locals.





**Connections:** If you could change one thing in our sector what would it be?

**TECC:** I took this question to our team and we got more than one answer.

Here is what they said:

- Lower staff ratios in all age groups to promote more one on one time.
- Better pay for education workers.
- Better funding for rural and remote services i.e. a lot of funding is directed at services being able to add more places where care is in high demand, we would be interested in funding that helps maintain the building and premises of places like ours with things like heating, flooring, paint and outdoor play area improvements.

**“OUR FAMILIES ARE RESOURCEFUL, PASSIONATE AND HARD WORKING.”**

**Connections:** What else makes your service different?

**TECC:** We are a small one room centre with a family atmosphere. We find that our older children become surrogate siblings for the younger children and become naturally mindful of having smaller children around.

We are lucky to have access to amazing scenery, and terrain.

For up to 16 weeks a year we have snow in our playground, and it can take up to an hour to dress everyone for outdoor play, which may last 20 mins, then another 40 mins to undress everyone! The children love to go and watch the chairlifts spin, and most of our 3-year olds know the number and location of our post box. The café owners know that the children love hash browns and hot chocolates and the resort workers that pass our centre stop and wave, chat and sometimes even include us in their projects.

We are opposite the Chapel and some of the girls have been known to yell "you look like a princess" to the brides getting married at the Chapel.

Our families are resourceful, passionate and hard working. They are an amazing group of people raising wonderful little humans and we are lucky that they have chosen us to be part of their journey.

**Connections:** What are the things you took away from the Rural and Remote Forum?

**TECC:** That the forum brought together a room full of passionate people from a broad-spectrum of locations and different perspectives. We realised that collectively we are not alone, we are all facing challenges and we have a voice. We have influence and together we can make change, there is hope. Finally, Mem Fox is awesome!

**Connections:** What would you say to someone considering attending the next forum?

**TECC:** Please come, you have a voice, you will be heard. The networking is invaluable.



**CONNECT WITH THREDBO EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE**

1 Crackenback Drive  
Thredbo NSW 2625

**Phone:** (02) 6457 6044

[facebook.com/thredboearlychildhoodcentre](https://facebook.com/thredboearlychildhoodcentre)



## GOOD MANAGEMENT:

The Heart of Early Childhood Education

FOCUS ON GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT




**The difference between a good service and a great service is good governance.**

We love governance and we have a team of experts who know exactly what to do to take your service on the journey to good governance. Because we exist only for the children's education sector, we can take the worry and uncertainty out of that journey for your service. There are lots of flexible ways we can help including:



**Support**

Telephone Support for Members



**Practical Guides**

Governance and Management Guides



**Training**

Group Training  
Tailored Training  
Committee Spotlight Webinars

**Talk to CCSA today.**

**1800 991 602 or (02) 4782 1470**

[ccsa.org.au](http://ccsa.org.au)

# State Regulated Education and Care Services

## Transition Support PROJECT

In May 2019, the Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Regulation became law. This new legislation applies to NSW State Regulated Education and Care Services (Mobile Services, Occasional Care Services and Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services), and further aligns NSW State-regulated services with the national system.



CCSA has been funded by the Department of Education to support services with this transition.

Phase 1 has seen us support 94 services to transition to the new regulations; including support with the Assessment and Rating process, and the development of a Quality Improvement Plan. We have conducted a series of 7 face to face workshops, 8 webinars and are providing phone line support.

A dedicated SRECS landing page on the CCSA website has also been developed to provide access to newsletters, information and resources.

The alignment of these services with the national system means that all families and children in NSW will benefit from the same safeguards and quality benchmarks, ensuring quality early education outcomes.



In 2017 CCSA worked with the NSW Department of Education on the Start Strong Community Safety Net Program pilot program. Weilmoringle was the first community to receive the benefits of this program, and the Gidgee Preschool opened in August 2018. We are now working on our second project at Louth.

The success of any community development program depends on engagement with the community and key stakeholders, and CCSA has been working hard doing this to establish a preschool at Louth.

To date CCSA has visited Louth five times, hosted many working group meetings via phone and face to face, and met with five potential organisations who provide children's services.

We are pleased to announce that Cobar Shire Council has agreed to be the Approved Provider for the Preschool.

We are now working with Bourke Shire Council to determine a suitable venue. As soon as a venue is confirmed, we can lodge an application for a service approval.

- CCSA continues to
- facilitate the funding contract and operational support
  - collaborate with parents and the approved provider with the service design, hours, and days
  - assist with projecting staffing strategies so that they are compliant and take into account minimum staffing numbers and qualifications, travel, rostering.

Watch this space in 2020 for more announcements and progress as we work to the goal of a new Preschool at Louth !



# The Community Child Care Fund

- helping child care providers

The Community Child Care Fund helps child care services, particularly in disadvantaged, regional and remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to improve their sustainability, increase local child care participation, and create more child care places.

One of the grants available under the Community Child Care Fund is the Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity ([education.gov.au/ccfspecialcircs](http://education.gov.au/ccfspecialcircs)). It is designed to support continuity of child care where the viability of a service is affected by, for example:

- a natural disaster or weather event (eg drought)
- another unforeseen event that would lead to the closure of a service and a lack of suitable child care for the community.

The amount of funding is determined on a case-by-case basis, and is intended to be one off and short-term.

The Community Child Care Fund also offers Business Support ([education.gov.au/community-child-care-fund-business-support](http://education.gov.au/community-child-care-fund-business-support)), which is a free business review and advice service available to child care services experiencing financial viability and/or sustainability issues, particularly in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities.

For further information and resources to support providers and services, please visit [education.gov.au/new-child-care-package-information-resources-providers](http://education.gov.au/new-child-care-package-information-resources-providers).

Through the **Community Child Care Fund**, the Australian Government helps ensure child care providers can keep their doors open to be able to give more young children a stronger start in life.



Australian Government  
Department of Education

## Child Care Package

More support for more families

[www.education.gov.au/childcare](http://www.education.gov.au/childcare)

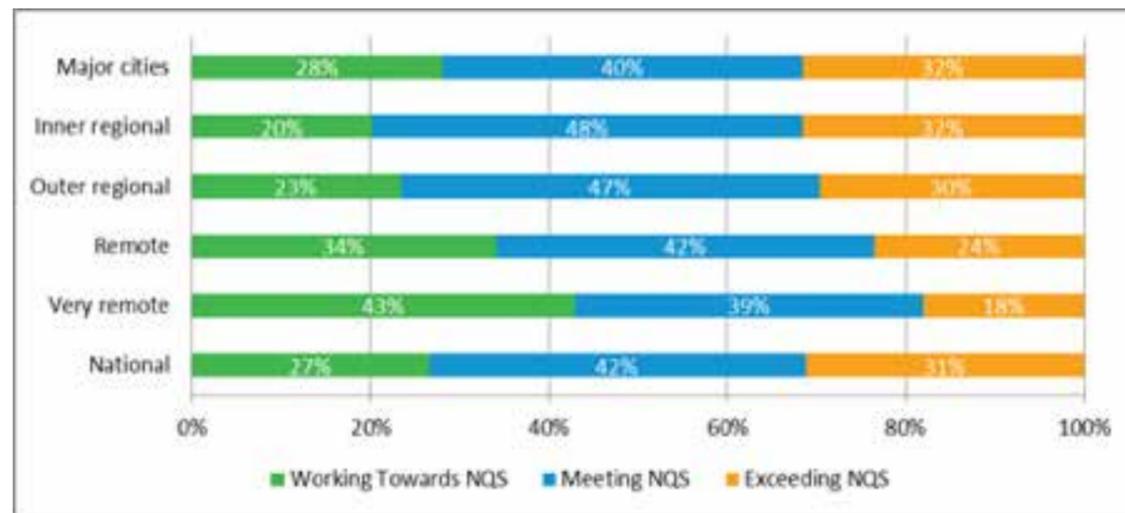
# ACECQA INSIGHTS.

A Summary of the 2019 CCSA Rural and Remote Forum Presentation by ACECQA

We were pleased to have ACECQA present a workshop at the 2019 Forum. This was an opportunity for them to talk about the data they collect, and what it shows about quality early childhood education and care in rural and remote areas.

As at January 2019, services in outer regional, remote and very remote areas

- are rating ahead of other services in Quality Area 6 – Family and Community Engagement
- have similar quality ratings across the most and least disadvantaged areas
- are progressively improving their quality ratings (30% of services rated Working Towards against 2018 NQS are only one or two elements away from being rated Meeting NQS).



Left: John Mason presenting findings from ACECQA at the Rural and Remote Forum



While these are encouraging figures, we also know that 44% of outer regional, remote and very remote services are located in the most disadvantaged SEIFA quintile. Research shows that children participating in early learning have half the rate of vulnerability as those who don't, and so while children from disadvantage backgrounds are most likely to benefit from early childhood education, they are also the least likely to attend.



Source: Early Learning Everyone Benefits Campaign

This means that more needs to be done to improve access to high quality early childhood education in rural and remote areas.

The information collected tells us that some of the barriers to services achieving this outcome include:

- attraction and retention of qualified staff
- limited professional development opportunities compared to metropolitan areas
- regional and cultural understanding
- difficulties integrating technology
- small size of services
- access to materials.

The Forum is a unique opportunity for rural and remote services to share ideas and work together to overcome these barriers, and advocate for better quality outcomes for children in these locations.



# DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The key to knowing **your** community.

**It's one thing to know your community through people, relationships, and local experience but to really know your community you need to look at it objectively and over time with a bit of statistical analysis. This is where demographic analysis comes in. So what is it and why should we use it?**

Demographic analysis is the on-going collection and analysis of data and evidence about the characteristics of communities, including population age, gender, income and ethnicity.

Knowing your community, through demographic analysis, helps to provide important information about the current and future characteristics of your community. This helps your service by giving better information to make decisions on things like allocating resources, insights into how you are serving your community and options for developing strategies and future plans. Children's education services can use demographic analysis to help predict future enrolment levels, give insights on the make-up of future enrolments and an understanding of the characteristics and needs of the families in the community.

The good news is that a lot of this data is already collected by the Australian Government and is freely available from sources, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), local schools (My School), the Australian Early Childhood Development Census (AEDC), local government, and several 'social health' agencies. However, knowing what to look for, how to analyse it, and how it relates to your service requires a few specialist skills and some structured processes.

A good demographic analysis builds a picture of a community and is usually incorporated in the **strategic analysis** section of a services **business plan**. This then forms the foundations for strategic and operational plans. At CCSA, we have developed expertise and a process tailored for our sector that helps guide services through making demographic analysis work for them. The process involves collecting



information such as the number and ages of young children the community, potential new parents, cultural background, location, level of geographic isolation, developmental capacity, household income and community economic status. This information is measured over time which gives the all important trends.

It is also useful to compare information about families and children who have used or are using your service (utilisation analysis) with information from the wider drawing area. You could discover some groups are under represented in your service or not represented at all.

Your business plan can then look at what you might do differently to be more inclusive in your community and attract these children to your service. This of course improves enrolments and therefore service funding.

It is important to understand that no single piece of demographic information will provide a magic formula to predict

enrolments, child characteristics or usage patterns, but good practices in demographic analysis will help you to know your community and give your service a much better chance of reaching its goals.

After all, good information makes for better decision making.



If you would like to learn more about the effective use of demographic analysis, get in touch with the CCSA team.



# TRANSGENERATIONAL Epigenetic Inheritance

**Stan Grant** talks on why it is important to indigenous children's education.

Stan Grant is a leading Indigenous Australian journalist, news presenter, reporter and author. Earlier this year he shared some of his insights with attendees at the Rural and Remote Children's Education Forum in Dubbo. Connections was there to see his keynote speech which covered a huge range of topics including the science of epigenetics.

# What is Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance ?



By the age of 12, Stan had attended a dozen different primary schools as his family lived a nomadic existence in far west NSW and he never imagined that he would end up where he is today.

Despite a background of adversity, a few basic opportunities changed his direction completely. In 1967, when Stan was 5 years old, 96% of Australians voted to include Aboriginal people in the Census. The right to vote and equal pay for Aborigines followed soon after. In the 1970's programs provided \$3.00 per fortnight to assist kids like Stan to go to school regularly. Stan cites this as the changing point. He was one of a very small number of his community who attended university and the cycle of change for him was well underway.

Although Stan's story is inspirational, we still see signs of significant disadvantage today. Indigenous Australians have the worst health and employment outcomes and despite being 3% of the population, they represent 25% of the prison population and a massive 50% of the juvenile detention population.

Perhaps transgenerational epigenetic inheritance might also influence these unacceptable outcomes.

The key for change Stan says, is early access to education. Childhood education can be a key enabler to reverse the trends of the past, lay the foundation for change and foster more Indigenous Australians to shake off inherited disadvantage created just a few generations ago.

Childhood educators can help close the gap by embracing and encouraging new stories, celebrating culture and "allowing the DNA in indigenous kids to fully express itself".

Put simply **Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance** is the memory of significant trauma or environmental change being passed on to the offspring of plants, animals and humans.

Studies have shown that the DNA of subsequent generations can be changed when parents are subjected to significant change or trauma, even though the offspring did not directly experience that trauma or change.

First discovered in the plant world, there is now strong evidence that epigenetic transmission of trauma occurs in animals and humans. Stan says that some studies have directly linked instances of heart disease and anxiety to this phenomenon.

Stan, points out that the discovery of Mungo Man and Mungo Woman in Lake Mungo, provides evidence that Australia has been inhabited for around 65,000 years yet, only a few generations ago, the oldest known society today had no rights, were not recognised and were made to feel ashamed of their culture.

He tells how his Great Grandfather was arrested and put in gaol for speaking his native Wiradjuri language, yet it was only one generation later that his father would help write the first Wiradjuri dictionary.

**Together  
we have a  
stronger voice**

**Join SNAICC –  
National Voice for  
our Children**



**By becoming a SNAICC member you join the chorus of Australians speaking up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The more members we have, the louder our voice can be!**

## Why be a member?

As a national peak body, we provide a platform for our members to have a stronger voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

By joining the SNAICC community, you have access to best practice through our policy briefs, resources, communications tools and sector development processes.

We value expertise from our services and supporters, including knowledge of pressing community needs and community-led strategies that see our children grow up healthy and strong.

## You'll receive:

- Voting rights at our AGM (Aboriginal-controlled orgs only)
- Regular news on policy developments
- Participation in training and policy research
- Promoting your organisation through our events and communications
- Joining our national advocacy to make real policy change
- Networking opportunities online and face-to-face
- Membership certificate and Welcome Pack
- Members-only newsletter
- Annual Report
- Discount tickets to the bi-annual SNAICC National Conference
- Special offers for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day



Sign up online at  
[www.snaicc.org.au/about/membership](http://www.snaicc.org.au/about/membership)

Call 03 9419 1921 or email us at  
[membership@snaicc.org.au](mailto:membership@snaicc.org.au)

Our membership year runs from 1 July to 30 June and costs \$200 per year (includes GST). New members pay pro-rata



# EVALUATION READINESS TOOLKIT

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family services

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children has developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family services evaluation readiness toolkit with the objective of empowering services to better monitor, evaluate and articulate the positive outcomes they are achieving for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC's purpose is to see that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up healthy, happy and safe. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child and family services play a vital role in addressing the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Too often, locally designed approaches driven by organisations working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child

and family services sector are under-valued due to a lack of documented evidence. This can result in programs being implemented with an international evidence base that are ineffective in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The evaluation readiness toolkit will enable organisations to highlight the value of locally designed and driven approaches and build their own evidence base to prove and improve the effectiveness of their programs.

**Download the toolkit at:**  
[www.snaicc.org.au/sector-development/monitoring-and-evaluation](http://www.snaicc.org.au/sector-development/monitoring-and-evaluation)

**For more resources visit:**  
[www.snaicc.org.au/resources](http://www.snaicc.org.au/resources)



# LEADERSHIP

WHEN IT IS NEEDED.

*a reflection on the recent bushfire emergency.*

Fires have been burning since the first week of Spring and Australian communities face many more months of risk this summer. Even the authorities needed a new category—catastrophic—to express the heightened level of urgency and decision-making needed.

At Early Childhood Australia (ECA) we too found that something more was needed for early childhood services. Most emergency information addresses households and individuals. Schools have instructions from NSW educational authorities about closures, larger providers have networks and head offices. Early childhood services are complex and vulnerable entities, responsible for young children, families, educators and other staff.

ECA resources focus on educator skills in supporting children and families dealing with trauma, identifying stress, managing

wellbeing and responding to children's anxiety even where not directly affected by the events. So we were struck by the immediate, practical and governance-focused response of Community Connections Solutions Australia (CCSA). When many social media posts were sharing fire alerts or wishes for safety, CCSA understood that many smaller early learning services, dotted among affected communities, needed to make crucial decisions as events evolved.

On 10 November a simple CCSA post without claiming to be comprehensive, urged friends and members to think ahead and posed questions to trigger realistic action and planning.

ECA contacted CCSA CEO Meg Mendham to discuss the approach and later adapted CCSA's social media post for a blog on ECA's The Spoke ([thespoke.earlychildhood.org.au](http://thespoke.earlychildhood.org.au)). Meg explained it was part of a budding

campaign—Think Ahead—that CCSA is developing to assist members with planning for operations over a summer that is going to test everyone's capacity.

The aim is to foster deeper thinking, long-range preparation and a cool-headed governance response to crises. How will you pay your team if power and systems are down? Even if your immediate location is safe, are team members able to travel safely to work? What are your plans for evacuation in a burning community? How will you keep families and staff informed?

CCSA was demonstrating its own leadership as it celebrated a 50th birthday (in a fire-affected zone!) with a call to lead rather than wait for someone else to instruct. This is something all of us need to consider this summer.

You can find ECA professional learning resources at [learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au) and more resources, publications and blogs at [www.earlychildhood.org.au](http://www.earlychildhood.org.au).

### CCSA's Think Ahead (Bushfire Emergency) Considerations

- What is the advice from local authorities and emergency services?
- Have you consulted with your approved provider/management committees?
- What is your services emergency policy and procedure?
- If you need to evacuate children in an emergency from your service are roads safe for parents to be traveling on, is there only one road access?
- Is your local school operating?
- Are bus runs operating?
- Is your service potentially in a dangerous situation with the fire predictions?
- Can your staff leave their homes?
- Can staff leave their family if they are facing their own fire threats?
- Does your community have access to electricity and water?



**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children

## ECA Learning Hub

### Professional learning—anytime, anywhere

Quality-assured, self-directed and accredited online professional learning courses for educators, teachers and other professionals working with young children.

#### Over 50 modules and webinars including:

- STEM Inquiry: Co-constructed environments for curious minds
- Managing challenging exchanges: Responding professionally
- Introduction to the *National Quality Framework*
- Supporting children's self-regulation
- Music in early childhood

Sign up or find more information at  
**[www.ecalearninghub.org.au](http://www.ecalearninghub.org.au)**  
 or call us on **1800 356 900** (free call in Australia)





# LONG DISTANCE LITTLE LEARNERS

*Can distance learning work for children aged three to five?*

## **Can distance learning work for children aged three to five? The Brisbane School of Distance Education thinks it can.**

Since its inception in 2013, over 1,800 rural, remote, medical, travelling and overseas Queensland children have had the opportunity to participate in eKindy.

eKindy is a unique distance kindergarten program guided by the Queensland Department of Education Office of Early Childhood and Care and funded by the federal government.

The service offers three programs, the eKindy 'at home' program provides online sessions to children in their homes wherever they are, there are also sessions provided to children at the Queensland Children's Hospital who are too sick to attend traditional classroom sessions and they also have eKindy Pods hosted by various small remote Queensland state primary schools.

The eKindy materials are aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework which is accredited across Australia and under the Queensland Curriculum Learning Guideline The 'at home' Kindergarten program is designed for children in the year prior to formal education, (known as Prep in Queensland). The program is supported



*The opportunities to play and learn with others help children learn ways to build positive relationships.*

by a qualified early childhood teacher and is designed so that children living in rural or remote areas, travelling or medically unable to attend a local early childhood service can engage in a quality Kindergarten experience. During the year eKindy children participate in online sessions with an early childhood teacher.

These sessions individualise the program and are designed to support ongoing learning and development. Opportunities to attend scheduled regional face-to-face sessions are also provided.

The program helps build the foundation skills, understanding and positive approaches to learning that are needed for future success. Overall eight eKindy learning areas have been identified using current early years research and curriculum documents. These have been developed into structured units and combined with scheduled regional face-to-face sessions where possible.

eKindy Program Manager Teedie Glynn told Connections the opportunities to play and learn with others help children learn ways to build positive relationships.

“They develop important social skills, such as learning to initiate and play positively, being fair and taking turns,” she said. “Our teachers have been delighted to observe their children’s increasing self-confidence and their ability to self-regulate their thinking and actions which is important for formal learning.”

She also pointed out some of the challenges facing their clients “Apart from all the usual challenges of isolated living and the inability to attend a regular kindergarten program, our families just don’t have viable access therapy services.

Often there are long waiting lists, or no services available for children not in formal schooling. eKindy Queensland recognises that early intervention is important for

children’s future learning success and provides access to speech pathology, occupational therapy and psychological support. We have partnered with Therapy Connect to provide online services for families who can’t normally access these services”.

Users of the program seem happy with the service too, feedback received from surveying participating parents and feeder schools indicated more than 90 per cent of respondents said they highly value the materials, teacher support, web sessions and eKindy program as a whole. They also said the eKindy experience has significantly assisted their child’s transition to Prep and afforded them a firm foundation for ongoing learning. One parent, Sarah Lomas from Banchory Station in Clermont Queensland said eKindy is a great platform which allowed her to access early childhood education material for her son Kip. “We found it flexible and easy to adapt and implement its lessons into everyday life without being restricted to a classroom,” she said.

eKindy children have opportunities to meet their friends and teachers via play days, cluster musters, outreach or activity days which provide language-based group sessions, indoor and outdoor learning experiences, music and movement, intentional teaching and includes time to relax and socialise during meal breaks.

To keep all these services operating, eKindy has a team of 30 staff comprising a Director, Head of Program, 22 Teachers (based around Queensland), a Materials Development Manager, 3 Administration staff and 2 casual teacher aides.



eKindy Queensland  
(07) 3727 2860

# Everybody BELONGS

**Forbes Preschool has received a national award acknowledging its "everybody belongs" culture winning the Narragunawali Award.**

The awards have been designed to recognise and celebrate educational environments – across the Government, Catholic and Independent sectors – that have implemented outstanding reconciliation initiatives.

These schools and early learning services will be acknowledged for the ways in which they are strengthening relationships, building respect, and providing meaningful opportunities in the classroom, around the school or early learning service, and with the community.

Director Amy Shine travelled to Canberra for the gala presentation night with educators Codie Smith, Tahlia Horvat and Shirley Duke to receive the Award.

Reconciliation Australia Chief Executive Officer Karen Mundine said the judges applauded Forbes Preschool for its approach to reconciliation.

"We are so inspired by the contributions that students, teachers and broader communities are making to progress reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians," she said.

"Courageous conversations are being had not only in the classroom, but also with families and community members." She added, "Our programs here at Forbes Preschool are designed to truly reflect and include our entire community and encourage meaningful relationships to take our students through their whole lives. The earlier we start these conversations and educate our children, respect and unity will be a perfectly acceptable and normal part of every child's life."

"It is a great honour for Forbes Preschool. To be recognised nationally shows how committed our team and our community are to being the most outstanding learning centre we can possibly be, for now and for our future," Ms Shine said.



**Amy will be speaking at the Rural and Remote Forum about the practical ways you can embed reconciliation practice into your services education program**

## HEADS, SHOULDERS, KNEES AND TOES

(Wiradjuri)

Balang, gaanha,  
bungangbu, burrami



**What is the Narragunawali Awards?**

Reconciliation Australia launched the Narragunawali Awards 2019 for exceptional commitment to reconciliation in education. Held biennially, the Narragunawali Awards represent Australia's first national awards program for reconciliation in schools and early learning services.

To learn more visit:  
[reconciliation.org.au/narragunawali/](http://reconciliation.org.au/narragunawali/)







**I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of CCSA. I note your ongoing commitment over the past 50 years to ensure better learning outcomes for children through effective managed services.**

**I recognise the importance of ensuring compliance and the need to have a balance between compliance, innovation and quality practise. CCSA supports services to achieve this balance, freeing up staff and borads to focus on the 'real work' with children and families.**

**Trish Doyle MP**  
 Member for Blue Mountains  
 Shadow Minister for Emergency Services  
 Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence  
 Shadow Minister for Women





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