CRECE was formed in January 2022, and expanded its numbers from 11 to 15 members and 8 Graduate Research Students in July. Over the course of the year, CRECE members submitted 10 funding applications, yielding external research funding and MQ internal research funds. Collectively, CRECE members published over 55 peer reviewed publications and research reports and members also disseminated research findings through ECEC sector publications, 6 invited / keynote addresses and 17 conference presentations. Members have featured frequently in the MQ Lighthouse and wider media with timely and informed responses to the ECEC workforce challenges and State and Federally announced policy initiatives. CRECE members also successfully supported two undergraduate research interns from the School of Education merit scholar scheme.

CRECE has spent the year establishing our profile and forming a clear and coherent vision, mission and directions. Two key events supported these foundational activities:

**Initial Stakeholder Meeting – May 2022:** A zoom meeting was held with Centre members and invited executives from ten early childhood organisations to discuss the draft CRECE vision, mission and aims. The outcome of these discussions was the finalisation of these guiding principles and a strong stakeholder commitment to support the CRECE activities.
CRECE Launch – 26th July: CRECE was formally launched in July 2022, with an attendance of 65 (in person) and 100 (online) guests from ECE stakeholder, advocacy and research bodies as well as undergraduate and graduate students. The launch was opened with addresses from DVCR Sakkie Pretorius and Deputy Dean: Research – Professor Louise D’Arcens, who both spoke about the importance of early childhood education and the research work that we are doing in CRECE. Following an overview of CRECE’s vision, mission and aims, the Inaugural June Wangmann Memorial Lecture was delivered by Honorary Professor Manjula Waniganayake who spoke about the importance of strong policy leadership in the Australian context. The evening concluded with an interactive session in which attendees were invited to ask questions about CRECE’s approaches and direction.

Of particular note in 2023 was the completion, by the team lead by A/Professor Fay Hadley and Professor Linda Harrison, of the Australian Learning Frameworks Update project. With findings and recommendations derived from extensive sector consultation and research, the updated Early Years Learning Framework and ‘My Time, Our Place’ out-of-school hours framework were reviewed by all Education ministers in December 2022, with the launch of the updated Frameworks in early 2023. This work is a clear demonstration of the impact that CRECE researchers are having in the ECEC community.

Finally, CRECE leaders, Professors Sheila Degotardi, Sandie Wong and Linda Harrison have contributed towards the upcoming Cooperative Research Centre – Care Economy funding bid, with Sheila appointed as a deputy research theme leader in the CRC leadership team.

1. Notable Achievements

Collaborations
CRECE’s mission is to work collaboratively with the ECEC community to conduct impactful research. In 2022, CRECE members were involved in a range of successful collaborative projects currently being implemented. Examples of projects CRECE members are currently involved are below:

- The ‘Harnessing the Health communication of the Early Childhood Sector brought together range of experts from early childhood education, inclusivity and diversity, public health, medicine and health communication investigate and form recommendations to strengthen COVID-19 health communication to and within the ECE sector.
- In the Early Childhood Educators’ Well-being Project, teams from four universities, have conducted a range of projects in Australia, and with partners Internationally.
- CRECE members were also part of a team of 42 early childhood academics, practitioners, health academics and key policy stakeholders across Australia, working on updating the two national frameworks, the Early Years Learning Framework and My Tine Our Place (ACECQA).
• The NSW Department of Education has funded a team from Early Childhood, Primary Education and Linguistics, to research bilingual education in the early years and how to enhance the learning of children from diverse language backgrounds, with up to six NSW primary schools. In a 4-year project upholding the right to cultural connection, a team of early childhood and social work academics, are working with 8 stakeholder partners to investigate cultural connections for children in out of home care.

• The Exemplary Early Childhood Educators at Work research project is a five-year project funded and supported by 8 industry partners. The aim of this project is to investigate the work, skills, professional knowledge, dispositions, and organisational conditions that support educators in high quality centres.

• A mentoring program for Early Childhood Scholarship Holders funded by the NSW Department of Education and supported those who awarded the Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Scholarships and Early Childhood Education Scholarships Program.

• In a project investigating building resilience in young children, researchers from CRECE and Western Sydney University will engage with local Elders to ensure appreciation and understanding of Country and the sacredness of water for sustaining life. Children will collaborate with educators and document their own learning through creative arts - drawings, paintings, literacy.

Applications for research funding
CRECE members submitted 8 applications for external funding in 2023. Three grants were successful, yielding around $650,000 in external research funding. One ARC grant is pending, two grants were unsuccessful. In total, these grant applications included over 12 external stakeholder organisations, 12 Australian cross-institutional and 3 International academic collaborators.

Graduate Research Student Involvement
CRECE was joined by 8 Graduate Research Student members in July 2022. The members met in August and November. Collectively, the Graduate Research Students group have 1) regular Graduate Research Student CRECE meetings, 2) provided feedback on each member’s PhD or Master of Research, 3) planned co-authored publications, 4) have completed the first stage of developing a data catalogue, 5) commenced planning of one Graduate Research Student CRECE event in 2023, and 6) developed a strategy how they will contribute to CRECE events in 2023. The inclusion of Graduate Research Students will be discussed at our 2023 planning meeting, scheduled for early February 2023, when Graduate Research Students members will be invited to contribute to CRECE planning.

Research Centre Profile
CRECE has made significant progress towards becoming a visible and high-profile research centre. Attendance at the successful stakeholder meeting plus the launch demonstrated a strong commitment by the early childhood education and care community towards the vision and mission of CRECE. We have established a website that identifies our vision, mission, researchers and current programs (https://www.mq.edu.au/research/crece) and have a growing following on Twitter. A video, attached to our website, provides an excellent overview of CRECE’s approach.

Scholarly Publications
2022 has seen a strong year for co-authored publications, demonstrating a strong commitment of CRECE members to collaborate and co-publish. CRECE members have co-authored 3 book chapters, and over 20 co-authored journal articles have been either published or submitted for review. Four publications have been led by Graduate Research Student members.
2. Centre Membership

Centre Leadership
Professor Sheila Degotardi – CRECE Director
Professor Sandie Wong – CRECE Deputy Co-Director
A/Professor Fay Hadley – CRECE Deputy Co-director
Professor Linda Harrison – CRECE Co-leader / Advisor
Professor Rebecca Bull – CRECE Co-leader / Advisor

Full members
Dr Rebecca Andrews
Dr Natalie Brand
Dr Tamara Cumming
Dr Belinda Davis
Dr Emilia Djonov
Dr Catherine Jones
Dr Sarah Powell
Dr Shirley Wyver
Dr Fiona Zheng
Dr Helen Little

Higher Degree Research members
Mairi Baker
Bhumika Bhatia
Tanya Burr
Lynette Cheng
Anna Grogan
Sarah Jacobson
Meg Liang
Tracy Redman

Signature of Centre Director:

[Signature]