



# Early Childhood Educators' Wellbeing Project (ECEWP)

## CAPABILITY STATEMENT

### SUMMARY

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Over 900,000 Australian children attend early childhood (EC) children's services each week. The 200,000 educators who work with these children need to be well in order to provide stable, stimulating, supportive, effective learning environments. Compromised educator wellbeing is costly – to educators themselves but also to the organisations that employ them. These costs are ultimately borne by society. Costs can relate to absenteeism due to illness or injury, meaning organisations must employ casual staff and/or pay higher workers' compensation premiums if claims are made. Absenteeism may also mean that children have unstable care arrangements and relationships with families may be compromised. However, relatively little is known about EC educators' wellbeing.

Through our research we are assessing:

- educators' **psychological wellbeing** through a range of psychometric assessments
- educators' **physiological wellbeing** through health screening; biometric measures of height, weight, flexibility and blood pressure; cortisol measures; and cardio-respiratory activity and physical effort using wearable technology
- the **impact of organisational and social factors** on educators' wellbeing
- the **impact of educators' wellbeing on their interactions with children**.

By taking this holistic view, the data we gather provides a comprehensive understanding of educators' wellbeing that can inform initiatives to better support and sustain the workforce. These initiatives will have benefits for educators themselves, the services and organisations they work for and, importantly, for children and their families.

### CAPABILITIES

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#### ✓ Innovative

- ECEWP is the only program of research using a holistic approach to examine the psychological and physiological aspects of EC educators' wellbeing within the context of their work environment.
- We are the first in the world to use [Hexoskin wearable technology](#) to monitor educators' cardio-respiratory activity and actigraphy.

#### ✓ Connected to the sector

- Our research is guided by our connections with EC sector partners. We held sector events in 2019, 2022 and 2024 to understand the priorities for educators' wellbeing, which were attended by policymakers, representatives from large and small EC organisations, unions, professional development organisations, educators and academics.
- We have published in sector publications and academic journals, presented at national and international conferences, made submissions to government, and been interviewed on *The Early Education Show* and on mainstream media. We also regularly provide updates via our Facebook page (to over 2,500 followers).
- We have conducted research with EC service providers to examine how they understand and support educators' wellbeing. Ten organisations have been involved in this research, with a combined responsibility for over 22,000 educators and 125,000 children, Australia wide.

#### ✓ Influential

- We were invited to advise the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) on their approach to educators' wellbeing.
- We lobbied state, federal and shadow ministers to increase support for the EC sector during COVID-19. We also shared a template on our Facebook page for others to use which reached almost 3,300 people and received a positive response from the sector and educators.
- We have been invited to provide workshops for service directors and managers on how to understand and support wellbeing, and the impact of organisational contexts.

#### ✓ Committed to improving wellbeing

- We have conducted our holistic assessment with over 100 educators and directors working in centre-based services in cities and regional areas of Qld, NSW, Vic, the ACT and WA.
- Our team has a long-term, ongoing concern with educators' wellbeing and we have a demonstrated capacity to conduct complex research.
- We have conducted contract research on practice issues, including evaluating the benefits of clinical supervision for centre directors, and compiling evidence of effective wellbeing initiatives.
- We are working with researchers from Canada, China and Hong Kong SAR, Finland, Iceland, Indonesia, South Korea, Macau, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore and the United States.

## Meet the ECEWP team



Early childhood researcher [Professor Sandie Wong](#) (Macquarie University) co-leads the multidisciplinary research team investigating early childhood educators' wellbeing and its links with educators' interactions with children. Sandie is responsible for the overall management of the project.



Co-leader [Associate Professor Tamara Cumming](#) (Charles Sturt University) researches the emotional demands of early childhood work and the politics of their impact on educators' wellbeing. Tamara is responsible for conceptual and theoretical aspects of the project, and leading the team's advocacy.



[Professor Rebecca Bull](#) (Macquarie University) is interested in factors that impact educator-child interactions and child development and learning. Rebecca is analysing data from the project and supporting the dissemination of findings.



[Dr Laura McFarland](#) (La Trobe University) is interested in researching the quality of educator-child interactions, as well as whole service approaches to supporting mental health in early childhood education services. Laura is focusing on the whole of service approach within the Australian policy context for this project.



[Dr Nicole Jamison](#) (Macquarie University) specialises in children's play, arts-informed and creative pedagogies and methodologies, and reconceptualist and intercultural practices in early childhood. She supports the team in interdisciplinary and co-design research processes.

## ECEWP projects



## We have worked with...

- **Early childhood education services**
  - Think Childcare
  - C&K (Qld)
  - Goodstart Early Learning
  - KU Children's Services
  - Northside Community Service (ACT)
- **Professional development services**
  - Community Early Learning Australia
  - Community Connections Solutions Australia
- **Regulatory bodies and unions**
  - ACECQA
  - Independent Education Union NSW

## Our research

We aim to build on and expand the knowledge and learnings from ECEWP to:

- co-design, implement and evaluate initiatives to support educator wellbeing
- provide insights into the nature and scope of compromises to Australian EC educators' wellbeing
- provide evidence of the impact of educator wellbeing on the provision of high-quality EC education needed to support children's learning and development
- use as evidence in advocacy for improved supports for educators' wellbeing.

## How can you be involved?

Your organisation can contribute to and support this valuable research endeavour by:

- collaborating on the design and implementation of wellbeing initiatives
- participating in data collection
- promoting and sharing research findings
- contributing both/either financial or in-kind support
- commissioning contract research or evaluation of wellbeing issues.

## How might involvement in our work benefit your organisation?

By partnering with us, you would be contributing to socially beneficial research that will enable people to thrive, grow and bring their best selves to work.

## Immediate benefits

We have an established reputation for high-quality, meaningful research with strong industry connections. As part of our partnership, communication with the sector (e.g., in practitioner and peer-reviewed publications, presentations at industry and academic conferences, media coverage, social media, letters) will mention our partners. These connections with our research will further develop your organisation's visibility and perceived commitment to the sector with decision-makers and educators. Collaborating with us ensures that partners' voices are heard and the initiatives we design are responsive to current sector needs.

## Medium-term benefits

Supporting this research will enable the production of sound evidence to inform the development of effective initiatives to support educators' wellbeing. Partner organisations are also invited to attend partner events, at which our progress and findings are shared. This allows partners to:

- learn about the evidence as we progress, not just when our findings are published, and then use this information to inform business decisions
- gain valuable insights into the motivations and actions of organisations involved in the sector, as well as educators themselves
- develop relationships with other industry partners supporting this project, potentially opening further opportunities for business development.

## Long-term benefits

When educators' wellbeing is improved, fewer reportable incidents and claims for compensation – as well as a reduction in attrition – are likely outcomes. Educators and teams would also be more stable, and able to provide the high-quality education and care to children and their families that is at the heart of EC practice.

### MORE INFORMATION

- Email [ecewp@mq.edu.au](mailto:ecewp@mq.edu.au)
- Web [ECEWP website](#)
- Facebook [ECEWP](#)
- Video <https://youtu.be/QqfNX7f4XnQ>