



Early Childhood Educators' Wellbeing Project (ECEWP)

Professor Sandie Wong,¹ Associate Professor Tamara Cumming,² Professor Rebecca Bull,¹ Dr Laura McFarland³ & Dr Nicole Jamison¹

¹Macquarie University ²Charles Sturt University ³La Trobe University

Background

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. However, relatively little is known about EC educators' wellbeing.

Aim

The Early Childhood Educators' Wellbeing Project (ECEWP) takes a holistic approach to examining the psychological and physiological aspects of EC educators' wellbeing within the context of their work environments, and the broader socio-cultural-political environment.

What do we know about wellbeing?

Compromised educator wellbeing is costly - to educators themselves but also to the organisations that employ them. 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.

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 EC 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.

Conceptualising wellbeing

Taking the weaknesses of the body of research into account, along with findings from research concerning educators' wellbeing completed in the past 30 years, Tamara Cumming and Sandie Wong (2018) have developed a [holistic conceptualisation of educator wellbeing](#). The model takes into account the complex interactions of individual, organisational, and broader social and cultural factors, to understand wellbeing in EC professionals.



Holistic conceptualisation of early childhood educators' well-being ©

MORE INFORMATION ON ECEWP

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

ECEWP projects

CONCEPTUALISATION

This project conceptualised educator wellbeing (Cumming & Wong, 2019) and included a comprehensive literature review (Cumming, 2017). We also explored how educators understand wellbeing both in Australia and internationally (Cumming et al., 2024).

STATE OF WELLBEING

This ongoing project, supported by multiple EC organisations, measures educators' psychological and physiological wellbeing within an organisational context. We have collected data on over 100 educators and directors working in centre-based services across Australia. We have also examined issues such as workplace bullying and intention to leave (e.g., Cumming et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2022; Bull et al., 2024; Bull et al., 2025).

SOCIAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

We have explored educators' wellbeing in the context of COVID-19. Over 800 educators responded to an online survey about the state of their psychological and physical health and the role their workplace played in supporting wellbeing during the pandemic (McFarland et al., 2022).

ORGANISATIONS

We have explored how organisations support educator wellbeing (Logan et al., 2020), and how their approaches changed during COVID-19 (Logan et al., 2021). Interviews were conducted with workplace wellbeing managers (or equivalent) to identify their views, knowledge and understandings of educators' wellbeing, and to determine what supports were in place.

INITIATIVES

We are seeking to understand the impact of initiatives aimed at supporting educator wellbeing. We held a multidisciplinary workshop to seek expert input, and developed a program logic to help design, implement and evaluate initiatives. We are also building a collection of Wellbeing Initiative Profiles. We have worked with providers to evaluate the impact of clinical supervision on centre directors' wellbeing (Wong et al., 2024).

INTERACTIONS

We are exploring how educators' wellbeing impacts their interactions with children.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

We are working with partners from a range of countries to understand educator wellbeing in these contexts (Cumming et al., 2024).

