



# Early Childhood Educators' Wellbeing Project (ECEWP)

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*We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners, past and present, of the lands where we live and work.*

## Introduction

Welcome to our latest newsletter reporting on our research into early childhood (EC) educators' wellbeing in Australia.

Highlights in this issue include:

- Wellbeing initiative profiles
- Expression of interest for Project Thrive
- Prioritising educator wellbeing in challenging times
- Measuring physiological stress in the workplace
- Work safety research

We recognise it has been a difficult season and wish you rest, care and renewal.



## Wellbeing initiative profiles

Following our 2024 co-design workshop to seek expert input on wellbeing initiatives for Australian EC educators, we have been working on ways to support services and organisations who are considering, developing or using wellbeing initiatives. We are currently setting up a repository of existing wellbeing initiatives on our website to share with the sector.

## Why is this important?

Educator wellbeing includes psychological, physiological and professional factors interacting between individual, organisational, sociocultural and political levels. It is now widely recognised that educator wellbeing impacts not only educators themselves, but their families, the children and families in their care, and their employers and society more broadly.

Many organisations have implemented initiatives to support educator wellbeing. However, we have very little evidence of how services and organisations can best support educator wellbeing. It is important, therefore, that we critically reflect on what initiatives are currently being implemented in EC services to support educator wellbeing.

## Contribute a wellbeing initiative profile

Our goal is to **gather and share real-world examples** of practical strategies that can be implemented and used by service leaders to support their own and their team's wellbeing. These practical strategies will be collated and made accessible to the sector through Professional Wellbeing Profiles that we will make available on our website.

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

To contribute a wellbeing initiative profile, please visit [our website](#) where you can download the invitation and profile submission form. A sample profile is also available. You can contact us for more information at [ecewp@mq.edu.au](mailto:ecewp@mq.edu.au)

## Expression of interest: Project Thrive

Kinex Health are developing a 24-month research project – the first of its kind in Australia – to rigorously test a tiered wellbeing program for EC educators.

Project Thrive will use a randomised controlled trial across 32 centres to measure how different levels of support (digital resources, leadership supervision and individual health consultations) affect educator wellbeing, service quality, absenteeism, retention and workforce stability. The findings will provide credible evidence to guide the future of wellbeing initiatives and funding in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

### Why should your centre be involved?

- **Direct benefits for educators:** practical support for stress, resilience and day-to-day wellbeing challenges that affect attendance, engagement, burnout and retention.
- **Support for leaders:** structured supervision and upskilling, to better support teams, reduce conflict and improve workplace culture – leading to improved staff stability and satisfaction.
- **Professional development:** the interventions count as professional development, aligning with the National Quality Standard and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

### How to participate

Only 32 centres will be included. You'll be part of a select group shaping how the sector addresses educator wellbeing. Kinex Health are now taking expressions of interest for the study that will start in mid-2026. If you're interested, please fill in [this form](#) to register your interest or email [engage@kinexhealth.com.au](mailto:engage@kinexhealth.com.au) for more information.

## Wellbeing in challenging times

Tamara Cumming was recently interviewed for Community Early Learning Australia's *Amplify!* blog, on [how to prioritise wellbeing during challenging times](#). The weight of recent news events, combined with the day-to-day demands of working in the ECEC sector, can take their toll on teams and individuals.

*"Looking after yourself is not a luxury – it's a professional imperative and it also supports good experiences and outcomes for children."*

Tamara Cumming

The article provides practical and timely tips on how to spot the early signs of dysregulation and where to seek support. It includes:

- how to nurture yourself to nurture others
- how to recognise distress, burnout and overwhelm
- how to navigate overload and advocate for support
- a wellbeing checklist for individuals and for leaders and teams
- additional resources.

## Meet our research intern



We would like to introduce you to our research intern, **Youchi (Yolanda) Ai**. Yolanda is undertaking a research program at Macquarie University while also managing several EC services.

Yolanda's research internship with

Sandie Wong and the ECEWP team focuses on analysing qualitative data from our original educator wellbeing project.

In particular, she is working with survey responses from educators to explore how they define wellbeing, what factors positively or negatively impact their wellbeing, and the implications for workforce retention and quality in EC education.

Yolanda finds this project to be a valuable opportunity to develop her qualitative research skills (using NVivo) and to contribute insights that may inform both practice and policy in supporting EC educator wellbeing.

## Measuring physiological stress

Our article on EC educators' wellbeing and physiological stress in the workplace has been published in the *International Journal of Stress Management*. Despite recent increased interest in investigating educator wellbeing, gaps remain in our knowledge and much of the research is focused on measuring (subjective) psychological rather than (objective) physiological stress.

The article presents findings from our study with 100 EC educators in Australia, using wearable technology to measure physiological wellbeing. The article is freely available via open access, and you can [access it here](#).

## Wellbeing research in China



ECEWP researchers are collaborating with **Dr JinJin (Helen) Lu**, a member of our international research network, on a new project. Dr Lu is Senior Associate Professor at the

Academy of Future Education at Xi'an Jiatong-Liverpool University in China.

She has received funding from the Academy for her project *Early Childhood Teachers' Wellbeing and Home-School Collaboration in China*. This project will use a holistic framework – [conceptualised by Tamara and Sandie in 2018](#) – to examine the wellbeing of EC teachers in the Chinese sociocultural context. Wellbeing programs for EC teachers and home-preschool collaborative programs will be developed to enhance the quality of EC education.

Dr Lu's research interests include language and literacy in the early years, developmental psychology, and social media technology in EC education. She is actively supervising PhD and EdD students and encourages international students to join her team. If you are interested, you are welcome to [contact her](#).

## Work safety in EC education

ECEWP members are working with the Early Learning Association Australia on research into Victorian educators' experiences of occupational health and safety (OHS) representation.

The project, *Championing Work Safety in Early Childhood Education*, is funded by WorkSafe Victoria. It is important that educators have staff representatives who can work with management – at the centre and service provider levels – to ensure concerns and needs for a healthy and safe work environment are heard and actioned. Very little is known though about how OHS representation works in ECEC services.

In this study, six services in Victoria are participating in action research, questionnaires and interviews over the next year. We hope to share findings at ECA Australia's 2026 conference and through practitioner and academic publications.

## Recent presentations

In July, Sandie Wong presented at the Pacific Early Childhood, Education Research Association Conference in Shanghai, China. Her paper was titled "Researching the Early Childhood Education Workforce: A Focus on Co-Design".

Sandie shared how the use of collaborative, co-design approaches with educators, providers and policymakers, in ECEWP and other workforce studies, have been useful for gathering evidence and generating practice and policy solutions for ECEC workforce challenges.



## MORE INFORMATION ON ECEWP

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