

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS OF TASMANIA (ECET) – State Response to Commonwealth Early Years Discussion Paper April 2023

CONTEXT The area of the state of Tasmania is both regional and remote and families are more likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged (ABS, 2016). Early Years strategy pg. 10 & 11 These multiple types of vulnerability compound and make it harder for children and families to thrive without the right support. The role of Early Childhood Educators of Tasmania (ECET) is to provide support and professional development for early childhood educators who support children and their families from birth to 8 years, across all sectors and all areas of the state. The role of ECET is to provide support and professional development for early childhood educators who support children and their families from birth to 8 years. Our purpose is to share knowledge, experience, and innovative approaches to education so that we all grow as professionals to create better outcomes for the children and families we work with. We have a strong advocacy role for children’s rights to high quality, age-appropriate, engaging education informed by research. Our organisation promotes the rights of the child and advocates for quality pedagogy in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). The early years lay the foundation for future learning, health and wellbeing. Getting ECEC right in these years is critical. Australia has a responsibility to ensure the early years are a visible, high priority. To support this, we would like to discuss the child’s right to play, to play from birth, throughout childhood, indoors and outdoors as an integral and necessary mode of learning. Play has long been associated with children’s learning. In the words of the Real Play Coalition, Play is increasingly being recognised as the engine of optimal child development, future happiness and achievement. However, children’s opportunities to play are being eroded, particularly in the early years of schooling, including the kindergarten year in many Tasmanian schools. (As we are a Tasmanian organisation, we include the first year of school in our response, as children start in the school system at 4 here). It is evident from the Tasmanian Kindergarten Development Check (KDC) that something detrimental is occurring in the lives of children and the opportunities we are providing for them. In 2022, 40 % of children who undertook the second KDC check, (summative assessment) were “at risk”. Children need opportunities to participate and be recognised as active citizens in their communities and environments. When students are agents in their learning, when they play an active role in deciding what, where and how they will learn, they show greater motivation and are more likely to define objectives for their learning. These students are also more likely to have “learned how to learn” Response to Commonwealth Discussion Paper on the Early Years Strategy: Early Childhood Educators of Tasmania - State 2023 2 – an invaluable skill that they will use throughout their lives. In Reggio Emilia infant-toddler centres and preschools, children are regarded as active and participatory citizens from birth. These ideas are supported by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) EYLF-2022-V2.0.pdf (acecqa.gov.au) which states that ‘children recognise their agency, capacity to initiate and lead learning and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them.’ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) also explicitly states that ‘the child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child.’ (2019).

QUESTION 1. Do you have any comments on the proposed structure of the Strategy?

ECET is really pleased that there is to be a national early year’s strategy for all young Australians and their family’s ensuring recognition and acknowledgement of the child and the child's first critical point in development, their first 1000 days. The strategy provides cohesion and structure for policy development and practices across all states and territories. It aligns Australia with other nations, building capacity in and for our most valued resource enhancing Australia’s future prosperity.

QUESTION 2. What vision should our nation have for Australia’s youngest children? The vision should be underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Uluru Statement

from the Heart declaration [Home - Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\)](#)

The first five years of a child's life lays the foundation for their future and it's a period that can never be experienced again. Children have a right to be - as identified in the EYLF as Being. pg. 6. It's the only time in our lives that children just get to be, to develop their sense of curiosity, wonder and exploration and develop meaningful connections with the world and people around them without the constraints of imposed structures - benchmarks, Key performance indicators KPI.

Providing a strong foundation to build on for life, which does include transitioning to the next stage of their educational journey where in Tasmania, children enter formalised schooling settings from age four. Our goal is for a happy, healthy, safe and balanced childhood.

Children need to develop skills, dispositions and abilities that set them up for the future, but above all, they should be able to enjoy the few short years of happy childhood. Optimal cognitive, physical, linguistic, emotional, wellbeing, social, ecological, spiritual development in an equitable environment where all children from every family have access to services and support that meets their needs. Children are viewed as capable and competent and are connected to their community and have hope for a sustainable future.

This will enable alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to ensure optimal conditions for learning:

1: No Poverty

2: Zero Hunger

3: Good health and wellbeing

4: Quality Education – the right to a quality education supports the Statement from the Heart. To empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny, our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country [UluruStatementfromtheHeartPLAINTEXT.pdf \(wpenine.com\)](#) and United Nations The Convention on the Rights of the Child of which Australia is a signatory.

**QUESTION 3. What mix of outcomes are the most important to include in the Strategy:**

That all policies pertaining to children and families remain child and family centred and honour the diversity of different families, communities, and cultures. It is crucial that policies address and promote that all children have the right to:

- be physically and emotionally healthy,
- learn and develop in ways that gives them agency,
- have choice and options in playful and inquiring environments

All of which bring happiness and enhances their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their world.

Children also have the right to:

- feel safe and loved,

- to be nurtured in safe and enriching environments, where the conditions for learning have been met.

a positive sense of identity and opportunities to participate in social, environmental and community activities, acknowledging culture.

All the above ensure the early years are inclusive of different families and their needs and communities. Play is the vehicle for such experiences and for optimal development and wellbeing as supported by Harvard's Project Zero Pedagogy of Play research. Mardell, B., Ryan, J., Krechevsky, M., Baker, M., Schulz, T. S., and Liu Constant, Y. (2023). A pedagogy of play: Supporting playful learning in classrooms and schools. Cambridge, MA: Project Zero

- *play offers a motivating and efficient place to learn* p 40
- *Children who participate in play orientated early childhood classrooms show long term academic gains*

p 40 "70" Marcon 2002; Lillard & Else-Quest 2006; Weiland & Yoshikawa 2013

Childhood trauma and stress is of increasing concern. Play is not frivolous in relation to mental health: it enhances brain structure and function and promotes executive function (i.e., the process of learning, rather than the content), which allow us to pursue goals and ignore distractions.

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/142/3/e20182058.full.pdf>

The mental health of our children is significantly enhanced when playing in nature.

<https://das.bluestaronline.com.au/api/prism/document?token=BL/0541>

Feelings of peace arising from nature play are apparent long after returning indoors. Children who have frequent, authentic connection to playing and learning in nature have been shown to be healthier, happier and to perform better cognitively. Researchers (Elliott & Davis, 2009; Haas & 4 Ashman, 2014; Kaplan, 1995; Korpela, 1992; Strife & Downey, 2001) The Australian Department of Health recommends that children 5 – 12 years old have at least an hour a day of physical activity, preferably several hours a day while many Paediatric Occupational Therapists recommend three hours of outdoor play daily. [Angela Hanscom: The REAL reason children fidget — and what we can do about it | TED Talk](#)

The Harvard research suggests there is an optimal need every day for young children to be engaged in play. Children have better emotional regulation with frequent nature contact. The skills that help us plan, prioritize, troubleshoot, negotiate, and multitask must be learned and practiced and to do this, children need ample, daily unstructured time. When play and safe, stable, nurturing relationships are missing in a child's life, toxic stress can disrupt the development of mental health and pro-social behaviour. In the presence of childhood adversity, nature play becomes even more important.

Support and training of educators for the provision of nature play/learning in early learning settings is also essential. We recommend that the provision of outdoor play be explicitly supported in the early years and that families be offered more opportunities for Nature Play programs such as that provided by Tasmania's Sustainability Learning Centre

<https://sustainabilitylc.education.tas.edu.au/programs/> This Nature Play/ Bush

Kindergarten/Learning on Country program is booked out every week and cannot meet the demands of families.

**QUESTIONS (POLICY) 4. What specific areas/policy priorities should be included in the Strategy and why?**

Focus on building value in, of and for Australia’s young children through nation-wide adoption, usage of the Early Years Learning Framework supporting learning from birth to five years and the transition to school:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity.

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

- confident and creative individuals
- successful lifelong learners
- active and informed members of the community

pg. 4 | BELONGING, BEING & BECOMING: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – V2.0, 2022

**FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVES**

Focus on First Nations children.

pg. 5&6. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, December 2019

recognises the power of education and the importance of play as a catalyst for learning. The Declaration recognises the connection between high quality early learning and positive outcomes throughout life. The Strategy, in its acknowledgement of traditional owners of country states “we pay our respects to their continuing connection to their culture, community, land, sea and water.” This connection needs to be realised for all Australian children, especially those raised with indigenous connections, by guaranteed, authentic time spent with culture, community, and the great outdoors. Investment in play resources and investment in naturally designed outdoor learning environments is crucial to facilitate this. Play is central in the EYLF and is mentioned no less than 70 times throughout the document.

**Child and Family Centred**

for the EYLF to be effective and impactful, it must be child and family centred, empowering children and families. The strategy must provide the flexibility to be responsive to the individual needs of each community, but at the same time needs to outline minimum expectations for children and families and ECEC providers. In Tasmania the kindergarten program, accessed by 98% of 4-year-olds, is delivered in school settings and currently does not fall under the National Quality Framework. This creates a discord among the Early Years Sector and does not always provide for consistent pedagogical practices, funding, and targeted professional learning in the Early Years. We are wondering whether this anomaly could be addressed through the introduction of a truly national system?

**Prioritised Access and Early Intervention**

Children and families are facing a crisis in their access to Allied Health Services and as a result children's learning and development is being significantly impacted. Classrooms are full of children who struggle to access the educational program, which impacts all children in the class. Children who have been identified in before school services as requiring additional support but are on waiting lists that reach beyond two years. Early Intervention makes a difference to educational outcomes, quality of life and Australia's future prosperity. Access to early intervention services is critical, we must address the crisis in Health Care and prioritise our children.

### **Robust, Professional Workforce**

Urgent efforts must be put into attracting and retaining Early Years Educators to the sector. Early Years Educators are central in children and family's lives. As a community we must raise the profile of the critical importance of the Early Years and those working within it. The "Shaping Our Future: A ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high-quality children's education and care workforce 2022–2031" outlines a 10-year plan of action for the Education and Care sector workforce. ECET endorses the strategy, however ECET is concerned Tasmania's preschools sit outside the strategy and sit with schools. As a consequence, Tasmania's four-year-olds are increasingly having the Australian Curriculum forced upon them and are more frequently being denied their right to play and to participate in evidence informed, quality programs. If The Early Years Strategy is truly to be a strategy for the first five years, the Australian Government must insist (legislate) all State and Territory Governments are responsive and implement strategies into the first year of school, including ensuring all early year's programs are delivered by appropriately qualified teachers and educators. This must also include provision for Early Years Leadership in all Education and Care settings, including schools where preschool programs are delivered. For the success of the proposed strategy, education leadership at all levels needs to value the skills and expertise of appropriately trained early years educators and the critical role they play in the development of young Australians. Smooth and supported transitions Many young Australian children experience fragmented education and care services. It can be typical for a preschool child in Tasmania to participate in a number of education and care settings in one day. From home to the prior to school Breakfast Club, then off to their preschool class most often unaccompanied by an adult, if they are lucky perhaps with an older sibling. In their Tasmanian Preschool Day, they may also have a specialist lesson or a two. At recess and lunch, they may head outside with the rest of the school. After school they may head off to after school care and from there they may go to sport or dancing before going home. This is a day full of transitions and many faces, for many of our children this is typical of their week, two to three days at kindergarten, days at an education and care service or in the care of grandparents and friends. For our most vulnerable children the navigation of these transitions can be fraught. Careful consideration and planning should be given to the continuity of care and education provided to our children, across the sectors and throughout children's days and years. Navigating allied health and support services for children with additional needs adds an additional layer of complexity. All families require support when negotiating transitions, but especially our most vulnerable. Policy that place children and families at the centre with consistent approaches to education and care, including pedagogy and practice and health services will support families and children as they transition between services and across jurisdictions.

[Shaping Our Future: A ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high-quality children's education and care workforce 2022–2031 \(acecqa.gov.au\)](https://www.acecqa.gov.au)

**5. What could the Commonwealth do to improve outcomes for children, particularly those who are born or raised in more vulnerable and/or disadvantaged circumstances? –**

Change its funding model. The funding of ECEC needs a thorough overhaul. Commonwealth funding to non-government schools exceeds that to public schools by billions. This funding model is failing many children and prevents the interventions and staff to student ratios necessary for optimum development. \$126.9 billion to government schools, \$196.9 billion to private schools “Children from disadvantaged backgrounds ... are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on school entry.” P 9. More equitable funding to public schools to enable children’s intervention services to be available at the earliest possible time, in the areas of highest need. To reverse the impacts of early adverse experiences is expensive. The evidence for a return on investment in the early years is strong P8. Therefore, reduce spending on private schools. Economist Dr James Heckman has shown high quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children can yield returns of between \$4 and \$16 for every \$1 invested. From a Tasmanian (regional) perspective, we are faced with significant disadvantage and inequity in our capacity to provide adequate support to families with young children, particularly families with children who have additional needs. The AEDC data clearly shows the gaps are growing between children who are vulnerable and those who are not in Tasmania.

The Commonwealth Early Years Discussion Paper outlines the urgency of early and targeted interventions for children, stating on page 9 “As children get older it can become harder to reverse the impacts of early adverse experiences and improve their life trajectory. Gaps in early childhood continue throughout life. If a gap emerges and doesn’t close by the age of 5 it is likely to persist, especially for children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.” From a school perspective, more children are regularly arriving at Kindergarten with significant developmental delays, speech difficulties, incontinent, suspected diagnoses such as ASD, among other potential developmental issues. Concerningly, the first time some of these families are hearing that their child might need extra support is inside the kindergarten gate. This is too late. These children have already fallen through the gaps in the system. Kindergarten teachers refer to appropriate services, then families wait for 12-18 months, in most cases, to be seen. Meanwhile these children fall further behind their peers, it is difficult for them to ever catch up without significant intervention and support. Schools struggle to adequately provide this support given woefully inadequate funding of public schools and an inadequate, inequitable disability funding model. This model causes significant workload for schools yet fails to provide even half the support children require, causing significant financial burden on schools as they cut programs and support in other areas to support these children. In turn, children requiring support who do not present in a way which makes this support urgent, are missing out and falling behind in the heartbreaking juggle schools are doing to prioritise where they spend their meagre funds. Senior staff in schools are making decisions which often have detrimental consequences for children’s futures due to inadequate funding, it is unsustainable and ultimately, negligence on the part of the Government for not providing adequate public-school funding. In the early years, until children are diagnosed, they are unable to be moderated to receive anything more than around \$1000 in support after some initial support, in some cases, if children have been to the Early Childhood Intervention Service. The system is failing children and needs to be addressed URGENTLY. In the Tasmanian context children referred in Kindergarten or Prep are not being seen by paediatricians until late in Prep, or into Grade one and can’t be moderated until they have a diagnosis. This means there is no funding to put supports in place for these children until they get to Grade Two, the year they turn EIGHT. This impacts on ALL children in every class and accounts for the significant issues we see regarding school performance. Children, particularly those in small schools, are bearing the brunt of these funding shortfalls as they aren’t getting the time and attention they need and deserve, despite the best efforts of over worked, burnt out staff. Workforce capacity is a recognised, significant issue for Tasmanian children due to a severe shortage of

paediatricians, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, child psychologists, child safety staff, social workers – the list feels endless. There is a general feeling of despair and hopelessness amongst many early childhood professionals who, despite their best efforts, know that the system is failing our most vulnerable students. It is evident that we are losing teachers in Australia at an unsustainable rate due to workload and conditions. We are gravely concerned about the consequences of a lack of early years trained professionals working with children.

**How are these children, in a small, connected, community, falling through the cracks and what can be done about it? Some ideas to follow... ·**

An URGENT review into the disability funding model to make it equitable for all children and to recognise how critical it is for children to have interventions in place as early as possible. · Implementing a Family Partnership Model of service delivery which prioritises relationship building, trust and capacity building for parents and families. Crucial to this are nationwide services and systems which are connected, consistent and can share information in a case management model which monitors which services families are accessing and can identify where gaps may be. Alongside this, developing nationwide systems to monitor touch points for families (health, libraries etc) to enable identification of disconnected families to enable targeted outreach and services. The lack of support for children in out of home care in terms of mental health services is staggering. These are our most traumatised children, in many cases and they are not routinely given access to mental health support, which beggars belief. A direct pathway to sustained, mental health support would be life changing for these children and would more than likely increase school engagement and change the trajectory of their lives. Provision for play based therapies would be most appropriate in the early years. · Service based models, such as the Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs) in Tasmania, where families come to one service and providers are co-located there. Within these services, pursuing a collaborative, strengths-based way of working with families to build capacity for parents, rather than purely ‘servicing’ families. Tasmania’s highly successful, Child and Family Learning Centres CFLC’s Child and Family Learning Centres - [Child and Family Learning Centres - Department for Education, Children and Young People \(decyp.tas.gov.au\)](#) provide the villages for children and their families to thrive. In 2018, University of Technology Sydney researcher Nick Hopwood’s: [Hopwood CFC Report 2018 \(education.tas.gov.au\)](#) found that ; CFCs now known as Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLC’s) are achieving diverse outcomes with and for children, families and communities

CFLCs now known as Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLC’s) are achieving diverse outcomes with and for children, families and communities:

- Accessing services and support
- Promoting children’s development, wellbeing and readiness for school
- Enhancing parent-child relationships
- Fostering parent growth
- Changing family circumstances
- Strengthening communities.

[Launching into Learning \(LiL\) - Department for Education, Children and Young People \(decyp.tas.gov.au\)](#)

Prioritised, targeted, culturally inclusive resources which are responsive to community need, using relevant data to make decisions around programs and funding is how the Commonwealth could help raise outcomes for vulnerable children. · Increasing current funding of kindergarten (in the Tasmanian context) or revision of the service model to enable Kindergarten and Launching into Learning teachers to foster links with local childcare centres, CFLCs, Child Health and Parenting Service ((CHaPS) and families to build relationships and connections with children and their families prior to beginning school.

In Tasmania, ensuring CHaPS is regularly seeing ALL children for regular check-ups, rather than the current situation in Tasmania where many children are being regularly seen until they are one year old, but rarely after – due to workforce issues.

Key to these measures is attracting, training, supporting, and retaining staff who are qualified Early Years specialists in their fields. Offering reduced education fees or free study and assured employment is certainly worth considering before the gaps in workforce become even more dire. Fully funded scholarships with a reciprocal guarantee from the provider of employment and the recipient for an agreed period of employment.

## **6. What areas do you think the Commonwealth could focus on to improve coordination and collaboration in developing policies for children and families?**

Involving frontline staff from early education and care settings, kindergartens, health, and child safety in policy decisions to gain an accurate picture of the challenges faced is crucial. Involving a range of frontline staff in decision making, rather than heavier weighting on academics and leadership, will ensure that policies are authentic and provide prioritised and targeted programs which have been identified by those working directly with students and their families. It is important to develop a standard model for working with families that applies across the country to enable better monitoring, information sharing and most importantly, consistency for families if they move states. Services should be co-located so families are able to access everything in one place.

Information sharing between services using a Family Partnership lens provides for a holistic view of the family, strengthens relationships, and ensures that professionals can identify gaps, or families who are not accessing services. Staff to offer outreach services to disengaged families will be crucial and again, need to offer services through a family partnership lens and, when necessary, a case management model. Much like the CLFCs in Tasmania, these services should have an Early Years Qualified teacher on staff to offer targeted, authentic, culturally responsive, inclusive play programs for families to attend with their children. This service should offer and support parents to engage with relevant parenting courses, offer targeted programs such as Dad's groups, assist with transportation to services, a social worker and culturally sensitive and inclusive programs. These centres should have the flexibility to be responsive to the needs of their community.

It would be advantageous for local councils to have a dedicated early years role within council to connect families to services, liaise with child safety, provide a location point for meetings and 10 appointments as well as support outreach efforts of centres as mentioned above. This role could drive the development of a council strategy to celebrate and support families and children and make children and their voices more visible in the community as seen in the city of Reggio Emilia in Italy. Crucially the person in this role should liaise with stakeholders to uplift the role of play in society, particularly with regards to young children. Their role could encompass consulting on planning

decisions with regards to council spaces with a play lens, offering opportunities to connect families with others in play. Identify priority areas where governments can collaborate to eliminate silos and support better outcomes across the ECEC system. Better implementation of the current frameworks for ECEC. Train, supervise and regulate the many good frameworks that already exist.

The need to improve quality in education and care has been established through the National Quality Framework, which aims to lift process and structural quality across all EC settings to support young children to learn and develop through inquiry and play-based learning. The Mparntwe Education Declaration, the NQF and the EYLF, are all great but many of these frameworks are not applied as required. However, stronger regulation focused on ensuring that the frameworks are being implemented is needed. A clearly articulated professional development model led by highly skilled and knowledgeable lead educators to support educators of children is needed, based on best practice including spaced learning, mentoring, opportunities for workplace and cross sector collaboration needs to be provided for educators, teachers, teacher assistants and senior staff/management to ensure a full understanding of early years education. must ensure all children have equal access to quality, developmentally appropriate, play-and-nature based, inquiry model, programs underpinned by the Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes from the EYLF. Not just ECEC centres but also schools need to be audited for their facilities and financially supported to meet the requirements of the NQS. Regulators visit centres to ensure that the principles and practices of the EYLF are embedded and that play-based, inquiry pedagogies are integrated into the early years.

The Strategy needs to ensure that children have the right to unstructured, genuine play. Scientific research shows that play is fundamental to children's physical, emotional and cognitive development. There is an urgent need for us to empower our children to succeed in this ever-changing world – and learning through play is one of the most meaningful, enjoyable ways of developing the resilient, flexible, collaborative, and creative skills they need now and into the future. In the first years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections can be formed every second. We draw your attention to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, particularly: Article 31: Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities. <https://www.unicef.org.au/our-work/information-for-children/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child> Unfortunately, play is at risk! Increasing schoolification (especially in the states where children start kindergarten in schools at age 4) is replacing play in the early years. Systems characterised by teaching tailored to pass standardised tests tell us nothing about our children's true potential and hinders them from reaching it. In ECEC and Kindergarten settings there is increased focus on knowledge acquisition and age-inappropriate phonics drills. These didactic pedagogies have been shown to be ineffective, particularly for children at risk and are taking up time that should be dedicated to intentional play, designed by qualified early childhood educators trained to create enticing environments to maximise development. Young children begin their literacy journey creating meaning by combining multimodal symbolic system or modes such as talking, drawing, singing and role-playing, long before they engage in the mature written linguistic forms of their culture (Kress and Bezemer, 2008). Rich natural environments engage the senses and stimulate the imagination and thus lead greater development. The benefits of free play to oral language development, which is a foundational literacy skill, highlight the importance of maintaining this context in early care and education settings (Saracho, 2012). Finland, the world's most literate nation, in recognising the importance of these language foundations provided by play, postpones structured literacy lessons till children reach age seven. Unfortunately, too many Australian children are being cooped up indoors sitting at too many sedentary, adult-led activities or at screens instead

of being offered experiential, hands-on, holistic, active learning that benefits them across all the developmental domains. Sitting is now considered the new smoking in its risk to health.

<https://www.openculture.com/2015/08/why-sitting-is-the-new-smoking-an-animated-explanation.html>

### **Play as a strategy for learning**

Cognitive scientist Marc Malmdorf Andersen has formulated a provocative hypothesis: Play is not just rewarding behaviour in itself; the underlying goal in play is gaining new information about the world. Children experience play as enjoyable because it allows them to seek out or create the ideal circumstances for information gain—it allows them to learn.

Andersen et al. 2022, Schulz et al. 2022 Andersen, Marc Malmdorf. 2022. Play. Translated by Heidi Flegal. 1st ed. Baltimore MD Aarhus Denmark: Johns Hopkins University Press; Aarhus University Press.

### **QUESTION 7. What principles should be included in the Strategy?**

The EYLF principles and practices are good guides i.e., secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships, partnerships, high expectations and equity, respect for and knowledge of diversity, responsiveness to children’s voice, learning through play in naturalistic, engaging environments. Systemic re-evaluation and investment in Early Years Professional learning for both ECEC and Kindergarten educators with the provision of dedicated, pedagogically current early years degrees with a strong emphasis on practical (practicums) building contextualised learning within a ECEC and/or school over a sustained period i.e., a year.

Plus, ongoing early years targeted professional learning that fosters child centred learning built around play. Improved workforce conditions and remuneration which will help facilitate the elevation and heightened value of ECEC & kindergarten educators within the Australian community.

### **QUESTION 8. Are there gaps in existing frameworks or other research or evidence that need to be considered for the development of the Strategy?**

The importance of connection to social communities is well recognised but Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory overlooks the domain of natural environments – overly human-centric to the detriment of future sustainability of the world that today’s children will grow into. Another nest is needed to bring it into the Anthropocene – that of ecological identity. To be holistic, a connection to the natural world which underpins children’s lives, health and happiness needs to be emphasised. “The Strategy will value the cultural and social contexts of children and their families” p 6 EYLF.

Furthermore, the EYLF Outcome 1.4 requires that; Children learn to interact in relation to others and the natural world with care, empathy and respect. These dispositions of care, empathy and respect must be taught holistically in contact with nature and the real world outside of ECEC settings. When children walk together and play together and soak up the world together, abstract concepts gain real meaning and language and a sense of wellbeing blossoms. Tasmania’s highly successful, Child and Family Learning Centres CFLC’s Child and Family Learning Centres - The Department for Education, Children and Young People Tasmania ([decyp.tas.gov.au](http://decyp.tas.gov.au)) Model provides the villages for children and their families to be supported and nurtured. Hopwood CFC Report 2018 ([education.tas.gov.au](http://education.tas.gov.au)) As does the Tasmanian DECYP Launching in to Learning model Launching into Learning (LiL) - The Department for Education, Children and Young People Tasmania ([decyp.tas.gov.au](http://decyp.tas.gov.au)) Which supports children from birth to 5 years and their primary care givers and provides connections to professional

support networks and online resources. ECET favours these two models as the support and education provision is free, provided by appropriately trained early years educators and the learning experience is shared by the child and their parent/caregiver enhancing the benefit, and building support networks for both the child and their parent/care giver.

#### Additional Reading/Viewing

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/play-vital-childrens-mental-health-wellbeing-2/>

<https://earlychildhoodoutdoorlearning.weebly.com/literacy-learning-outdoors.html>

<https://www.brainbalancecenters.com/blog/brain-body-benefits-outdoor-play>

<https://www.legofoundation.com/en/why-play/why-learning-through-play-is-important/>

[https://www.legofoundation.com/media/1062/learningthroughplay\\_leaflet\\_june2017.pdf](https://www.legofoundation.com/media/1062/learningthroughplay_leaflet_june2017.pdf)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gobae4UsKZQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmsTIID7DRM>

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