ARE SQUEEZY FOODS A GOOD CHOICE FOR CHILDREN?

RETHINKING PLAY AND LEARNING SPACES
CREATING WELCOME
WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN
EFFECTIVE HR PRACTICES
IN THIS ISSUE

RE - Definition of re- in English:
A prefix, used with the meaning “again” or “again and again” to indicate repetition, or with the meaning “back” or “backward” to indicate withdrawal or backward motion.

We REcommend this last edition of The Loop for 2015, we’ve incorporated a range of topics to be responsive to your practice, REplace old thinking and REsource your teaching and learning. In preparation for the New Year we thought we would present you with a raft of information to assist you to reflect on your practice and focus on REworking ways of being as an educator.

As we mentioned in our previous magazine, the Australian Government announced that the current Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) will transition to the new Inclusion Support Programme by June 2016. This means no more Professional Support Coordinator in Queensland - though you will still be able to access Workforce Council’s expert advice and workshops for your learning and development needs - just keep an eye on our website and calendar or give us a call about how we can tailor something for your organisation.

One of the most significant contributors to quality ECEC service provision is an educated and skilled workforce.

The Queensland Government’s new Queensland’s Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan 2016-2019 (WAP) is responding to the changes in the sector and REsourcing to enhance the value and the profession accordingly.

As a leader in a service let’s not assume that ‘Just because working with little people is your business, working with your people is easy’. This article gives an overview of the components of an ‘employee life cycle’ and responsibilities within that which require skills, knowledge and expertise to do it well. We acknowledge that management responsibilities are not easy and that quality recruitment and retention strategies should not be underestimated.

Part of the role of Leadership and Management in a service is to get everyone on the ‘same page’ for RE-assessment and rating and this article highlights that understanding your service philosophy and being able to articulate how this is reflected in practice is key to preparing for RE-assessment.

Family Day Care (FDC) Queensland have launched Get it together! – It’s all about Family Day Care to REsource Family Day Care educators. The essence of the REsource is to recognise quality practice and to be able to articulate this within the FDC context.

Further articles showcase quality practice ideas from Caroline Fewster in From Home Corner to Contemporary Living – Caroline suggests the repositioning of a popular space to spark new interests with children.

Vivien Eddy from MDA writes about Creating Welcome for newcomers to your service through including some prompts and ideas for engagement with all families to encourage respectful and reciprocal relationships.

Nuturing relationships was identified as the key to connecting Family Day Care (FDC) educators in Childers with the local Butchulla people. Realising the history of the community in relation to colonisation was an integral element in this specific Yarn Up Tok Blo Yumi in Family Day Care program.

Dr Prasanna Srinivasan takes relationships to the next level by asking: Are we colonised: our post-colonial “(free) dominating truths” – this article will challenge the readers world views and REconceptualise what it is to be Australian through questioning the historical underpinnings. REimagining a world where multiplicity nourishes without labels that discriminate what is Australian and what is not.

Understanding the substantial inequalities that continue to exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, particularly in relation to infant health is presented in ‘Strong Hearing to yarn, Learn and Play. This Deadly Ears program raises awareness of the poor health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants with otitis media (middle ear infection).

Health and good nutrition are important to enhance the development of infants and all children. The question of whether squeezy foods are a good choice for children is raised by NAQ Nutrition. REplacing whole foods with squeezy foods may not give children the required development necessary for speech development and this could impact other areas.

REengage with Action Research through the North West Sustainability in Action – An outback Bus Tour. This will be an opportunity that will literally transport you through a reflective practice process, on the road gaining new perspectives.

REcommencing in 2016 there continues to be a range of resources available to you through the National IPSP Online Library www.ipsplibrary.net.au and our state based IPSP providers Noah’s Ark with the Specialist Equipment service and the Bicultural Support available through MDA

Tara Lee Franks
Health and Community Services Workforce Council
When a team isn’t on the same page, it really shows. Everything the service does stems from the philosophy – from recruitment of team members to engagement with community, and everything between.

It is satisfying to work in a meaningful way, and when teams know they are working together in their approach the environment is cohesive. This doesn’t mean your team cannot have differing views on many different things, but it does mean they are working together for a collective purpose.

“I know why we do it, but the Assessor didn’t see/hear/understand”.

It’s crucial that educators are confident in articulating their practice. This is important during assessment, but it’s also an important skill to be armed with for critical reflection, team discussions, and conversations with families.

Talk about the key words in your philosophy and what they mean, then stretch a little further and use some provocations for healthy team debate at your next team meeting or professional development session.

Practice telling each other what you’re doing and why, and then tell families. The more you talk about practice the easier it becomes, and educators will be well versed by the time your service is assessed.

We know that staff turnover remains a challenge in the sector. Consequently, some services who have worked very hard on improvement after their last assessment find themselves in the same position when they are re-assessed, because good practices haven’t transferred during the induction and settling in period of new team members.

Additionally, some teams are excited about changes for improvement at the beginning of their journey (particularly when they’ve had some intensive support), but find it difficult to sustain long-term change, and fall back into old practices.

Robust leadership practices that include involving the whole team in continuous improvement can assist to maintain momentum, and ensures that everyone is on the same page when settling in new team members.

Remember, the intent of the assessment visit is to observe the typical practice at your service. Don’t go to great lengths to be seen doing impressive (yet irregular) things just for the duration of the visit – this is unsustainable, and your report won’t give you valuable feedback on your everyday practice.

The Workforce Council are equipped to work with you no matter your rating. If you met the standards and would like to extend on the work you are already doing you may like to consider some of our HR professional development or coaching (pg. 6), or engage in some of our learning festivals across the state (go to the last page for more information).
LIFE AFTER ASSESSMENT AND RATING - WHEN YOU’RE RATED AS “WORKING TOWARDS THE NQS”

The bar has been set high, and for good reason. We have spoken to services through Proactive Support that are “Working Towards the NQS”, it is clear that your assessment and consequential rating does not define everything your service is, however, it will give you an indication of what to work on from here, to make your service one of growth, both for your team and the children who attend. So, where to from here?

The Workforce Council have a Proactive Support initiative specifically for services who have not met the National Quality Standard when assessed. Regardless of service type, you can contact us to see what your eligibility is for particular support at any time.

Avenues for support through the Workforce Council include:

- Participation in a regional Learning Hub (specifically for services working towards the NQS)
- In-service professional development
- Advice and support via our 1800 number
- Assistance in completing the PSCA Self-Assessment Tool (available on our website)
- A two hour consultation
- Innovative Projects
- Learning Through Sharing

When you are disappointed by your rating it can be difficult to approach the idea of preparing for re-assessment. However, there are a few things you can get started on straight away that can make the process a valuable learning experience for the entire service. We can assist you to prioritise some actions and get started.

FOR DETAILS ABOUT YOUR REGIONAL LEARNING HUB, PLEASE CONTACT US ON 1800 112 585 FOR THE FLYER AND REGISTRATION FORM.

The Workforce Council Learning Hubs are free for services working towards the NQS, the hubs are a great opportunity to bring your entire team along to help everyone to get on the same page. The learning hubs focus on a different Quality Area each month.
I remember entering one of my first management roles with the gusto I thought was required to energise a team and motivate them to do great work. I had worked in the sector for more than 10 years, I knew what the work involved and what it meant to do it well. I had supervised trainees and had been told by colleagues that I inspired them – wasn’t that enough? Apparently it wasn’t.

Within the first month it became obvious that three of the team had significant performance issues. As I would later find out, they were performance and behaviour issues that two managers before me had failed to address. Issues that overtime compounded to the point where there was a pattern of the service losing a lot of really great staff, but these three staff remained. There were no notes of what had been done to address the concerns, just gossip. There was no clear HR procedures and policies in place to guide what needed to be done, just dusty policies that had no real application to what I faced. There was no wise experienced boss to guide and support, just unprepared, unskilled little ‘ol me.
Think about how much time you spend undertaking Human Resource activities in your working week? 10%, 20%, 50%...or is it much more?

Often when we enter leadership or management roles, dealing with Human Resource (HR) matters seems like it will be such a small part of our everyday work. Those taking on management responsibilities often have minimal expertise and experience in areas such as recruitment, retention, performance management, pay and working conditions.

As many of you would have experienced, this component of your work can become the biggest part of what you do, both time wise and emotionally. Finding ways to develop skills, knowledge and understanding of HR matters that allow you to support and lead your staff well, is essential to anyone in leadership.

**IT IS HARD AND IT DOES TAKE SKILL**

The skills needed to recruit and select the right people; to induct them and offer a quality probation process; to keep them motivated and professionally developed; address performance issues as they arise; and farewell staff with appropriate levels of celebration should not be underestimated. The reality is that when things are going well in your service, delivering on these stages of the employee life cycle can happen with a great deal of ease and so not much attention is paid until things start to go pear shaped. When there is a clear understanding of where each employee is at and strategic responses to their needs are implemented, the skills needed for quality HR become your greatest asset. They allow you to minimise risk to your organisation, they act as an effective workload management tool for leaders and they open up new ways for you to connect with your staff and build high functioning teams.

**KNOW YOUR BOUNDARIES AND BE IN THE DISCOMFORT**

It’s important when fulfilling a HR function that you are clear from the outset of where your boundaries lie, both in terms of your responsibilities and your capabilities. For example your Service’s existing policies and procedures in relation to matters like recruitment and selection need to be adhered to, but in examining them you may be able to find opportunities to engage in different interview questioning and models that still allow you to adhere to the policy. When boundaries are clear, you are more likely to get things right the first time and you are more likely to act ethically. The important distinction to make is that having clear boundaries is not about avoiding the parts of the work that are uncomfortable. For example, if you do not feel you have the skills to have a performance management conversation but it is a requirement of your role, you need to take steps to expand your skills or call in appropriate support in order for you to get it done. Feeling a level of discomfort is normal, particularly when conducting performance management processes or informing others of a decision that is not in their favour. Learning to balance your boundaries with your individual tolerance for uncomfortable situations is of great importance in fulfilling HR functions.

**YOU CAN USE CREATIVITY AND STILL WORK WITH THE PROCEDURE**

When walking through the different stages of the employee life cycle we often think that we have to do everything as per a step by step procedure. This means that some interactions around HR become dry and boring when they don’t need to be. When it comes to tasks like interviewing, building job descriptions, coaching and mentoring, conducting appraisals and doing exit interviewing there is a lot of opportunity to get creative and think outside of the box. Using art, group processes, strengths cards, critical reflection processes, external facilitators, action research and stakeholder engagement you can find that HR processes can also add value to many other parts of your service’s growth and development. For example asking a staff member to pick from a range of picture cards ones that represent: where they were 12 months ago in their role; where they are at now; and where they hope to be in 12 months, stimulates conversation that feeds easily into the appraisal process. This more creative questioning and exploration can prompt reflections and ideas that would otherwise remain untapped in a simple tick box, form filling out type of meeting.

**QUALITY MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE AND GET A BAT PHONE**

There are many benefits to engaging in HR focused professional development and training. Improving the quality of your HR processes, filters through to all other aspects of your organisation and most importantly can promote good overall team functioning. Team morale increases when HR processes are clear, consistent and of a high quality. There is also a need to acknowledge that you cannot be all things, to all people, all of the time and therefore identifying a person, consultant or organisation who has a higher level of expertise in HR matters than you is essential to doing this part of your job well. There is great benefit in having someone on the bat phone that you can connect with at times of challenge.

If you are interested in expanding and improving the way you go about your HR functions then feel free to connect with us here at Workforce Council. Or come along to Totally HR: Right People, Right Skills, Right Workforce on SATURDAY 23RD JANUARY 2016. We would love to see you there.
Imagine the possibilities for children when educators and children rethink the design of early childhood environments together. Drawing on our service philosophy, our observations and conversations with children, and learning outcomes we have in mind for children, we can create spaces and places that reflect and extend children’s interests and ideas.

Contemporary living is a concept that challenges the traditional notion of a fixed space for Home Corner, where children of all ages are invited to create and connect with others, using imagined and reflected scenes of everyday life.

From Home Corner to Contemporary Living is a process that is purposeful, collaborative in nature, carefully planned to ensure all children have access to the many opportunities for living and learning.

A number of children indicated that they were not able to play in the Home Corner because “too many children were already there”.

‘It’s squashy’ in there.

Children in general highlighted the need for more space so that more children could be in the space.

Educators and children decided to take the kitchen outdoors!
Our observations of children’s interests, developmental themes, family life and culture can guide our selection of materials. Recently a toddler group, keen to pick up and transport learning materials were busy with suitcases.

Provisioning the learning space to extend children’s interests demonstrates toddler’s point of view.

If we take their point of view, planning and children’s exploration and learning may be more joyful!

Materials that are open-ended and that can be transformed have the potential to prompt children’s imagination in multiple ways.

EXAMINING AREAS OF CONCERN THAT MAY BE ABLE TO BE IMPROVED

In early childhood settings, sometimes on a regular basis, educators experience ‘a moment in time’. No matter how well we have coached children in the use of a play and learning space, or how expertly we have labelled our resources, there comes a point where we look up from what we are doing to find that in a short time the learning space has gone from a well organised opportunity to a sea of resources on the floor!

‘Moments in time’ often provide opportunities to reflect on how we might keep traditional play and learning spaces alive!

When materials are offered in matching containers, it allows children to see the items and communicates respect for the materials in the learning space.

Children each day make fresh orange juice for all of the children in the group!

REFERENCES:

CREATING WELCOME

By Vivien Eddy

Creating welcome is a concept that is crucial when considering relationships with families, children and their colleagues. So, how can educators do this in a meaningful and respectful way when they are catering for many diverse and varied needs?

REFLECTION: When you see the word “Welcome”, what does it mean to you? What thoughts and memories does it evoke? How do you make your service welcoming? How do you embed welcome as a daily practice? How does welcome look and feel? Why do you think welcome is so important?

Creating welcome can come from a range of areas within the centre - from learning words in a home language, setting the environment to include familiar items, having photos of children and families, sharing stories from a recent family holiday, reviewing the menu to ensure a greater diversity of food and making the menus visual. These are all areas of consideration when a service is looking for a starting point to create a warm, friendly and culturally welcoming environment.

In this article, we will explore some ideas about creating welcome in your service for families, children, community members and for staff.
FAMILIES

Developing relationships with families is a fundamental aspect of creating welcome and it is important this happens from the first moment of contact with a family and child/ren.

Smiling and making eye contact, along with using some key words in a family’s home language, will make a wonderfully memorable impression and will clearly demonstrate your commitment to creating welcome. Taking the time to communicate clearly, whether with the added assistance of a cultural support worker or the telephone interpreting service, will further cement the feeling that the service and the educators are willing to embrace families of all cultural backgrounds.

For most families, choosing an ECEC service is a daunting task, making a choice about leaving a child or children with relative strangers. Consider this dilemma for families whose first language is not English and who may have no knowledge or experience with early childhood services. In many countries around the world, early learning centres do not exist. Children are raised by family members or are fortunate enough to live in a culture where child rearing is viewed as ‘being raised by a village’ with elders or other community members naturally stepping into child rearing support roles.

Creating welcome for families can take considerable thought and planning. Researchers a family’s country of origin, traditions, social etiquettes and common child rearing practices is an ideal way to start. Understanding that touch can be taboo in some cultures but is highly regarded in others is one social etiquette that is imperative to learn prior to the child’s first day.

“Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children’s learning”1.

REFLECTION:

• Take a closer look at your parent information in the reception area. What does it tell you? Is the diversity of the families in your service reflected?
• How does this environment welcome each child’s family?

SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS:

• Create a family photo wall; you can include a world map, where the families come from, greetings in different languages representing those families and family holiday photos
• Invite the family members to share their stories; encourage them to bring some photos, story books, and culturally significant items to show and tell!
• Ask families to bring their favourite traditional family recipe, create your service’s very own “Cook book”

CHILDREN

We all know that children learn better when they are in a safe environment and when their families and their culture is accepted and welcomed.

Children first belong to their family and their community. Family is the most important measure of self-identification for young children; it shapes and informs their sense of self and who they are in the world. It is important for children to see their families reflected in the world around them, while at the same time seeing the diversity of families that also exists in their community.

The inclusion of familiar sounds, smells, and visuals will contribute enormously to a welcoming environment for children which in turn enhances their learning and wellbeing. As an educator, creating a welcoming in a respectful environment will go a long way to ensure children feel that their families, heritage, language, and community are acknowledged and valued now, and in the future.

“Educators welcome children and families sharing aspects of their culture and spiritual lives, and acknowledge that families are the child’s first and foremost teachers and influential people in their lives.”2

REFLECTION:

• Have a closer look to your environment, is it reflecting each child’s culture and heritage?
• Are their five senses engaged with these familiar markers?

SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS:

• Learn to pronounce a child’s name correctly. Try to avoid giving a child a nickname or an English name
• Learn to say ‘Good Morning’, and ‘Thank you’ in home languages
• Play music from the diverse backgrounds represented in your centre
• Read aloud books in different languages. Ask your bilingual educators to read or tap into resource technology available (YouTube)
• Buddy the new child up with another child
• Include familiar smells, toys, and items into the environment
• Learn a child’s favourite thing to do
• Allow a child to have a familiar toy /comfort item
Are you capturing the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce?

An ECEC service that fosters the value of its educators and creates a welcoming culture is more likely to have a welcoming culture towards families, children and other guests in the service. By starting with reflecting on ourselves, we can appreciate the value of others. This welcoming attitude will flow on to ensuring that all people are welcoming in your service.

Having educators from culturally diverse backgrounds also contributes to the culture in your workplace. Do you have a workplace culture that values each employee and understands their importance, their ideas and contributions? Do you greet your fellow educators every day and engage in meaningful conversation? Do you laugh together and celebrate each other’s successes?

SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS:

- Begin to make a start in creating a welcoming culture in your service. Start today by changing one thing, it could be to learn to say hello in a child’s home language, it could be researching some books that have a variety of cultures represented, or it could be remembering to smile and greet every family member you see today. Just make a start.

- Your staff members from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds could be your greatest resource. Ask them to share their culture in the service with educators, with children and with families.

- Show genuine interest, ask questions and encourage the sharing of culture and cultural practices. Acknowledge and celebrate significant international days/events/cultural celebrations in the service.

- Encourage families and your bicultural/bilingual educators to bring culturally significant food, music, and stories to the centre to share with the children. Children will grow accustomed to different accents, rhythms, tastes and smells. After all, it is our job to plant the seed in these children for a more harmonious, accepting, and multicultural society.

- You can also request Cultural Support Workers (CSW) via your Inclusion Support Agency or by calling MDA directly. CSWs will visit your centre to bring their culture and share cultural activities in your service.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE MORE INFORMATION OR GAIN MORE IDEAS?

The Bicultural Support Service at MDA work with ECEC services to help meet the specific needs of children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We provide mentoring, role modelling, cultural conversations and practical support, enabling educators to gain skills, knowledge and confidence to successfully include children and families from CALD backgrounds.

Phone: 07 3337 5427
Email: bsa@mdaltd.org.au

REFERENCES:
2015 is fast coming to an end with services looking forward to a well deserved break. It is this time of year that children are preparing to transition from one environment to another, be it within the service or onto school. This is a transition time for many educators having spent many years being a big part in the children’s development.

Educators play an important role in preparing children during this period of transition. Starting school or transitioning from one environment to another can be an exciting, yet anxious experience for young children and their families.

Noah’s Ark has a wide range of children’s books, professional books and resources to support the transitions and changes occurring for both educators and children. These resources include ideas and strategies for educators and children to ensure the transition is a smooth and positive experience. The resources presented include a varying range that support children’s individual learning style with hands on activities and stories for the teacher/educator to use.

**SECURE TRANSITIONS: SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO FEEL SECURE, CONFIDENT AND INCLUDED**


Transitions occur in children’s lives all the time. Be they from one activity to another or moving from one environment to another or to going off to school for the very first time. Positive transitions are based on relationships rather than procedures. This ECA journal focuses on a range of transition experiences as artefacts to reflect on when looking for strategies that may suit there context.

**SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS IN STUDENTS WITH AUTISM**

Autism Western Australia 2008

Some children with Autism may struggle with day to day communication and supporting a child transition from one environment to another or from early education and care into school can be a daunting experience. This resource outlines a variety of strategies and resources to use to support the child and family in that transition process.

**FIRST DAY**

Daddo A & Bentley J: First day at School, Harper Collins 2013

Children are often visual learners and relate to listening to stories to support their understanding of their nerves and anxieties about events that are happening in their lives. This Junior Fiction provides the opportunity for the child to safely explore the fears about starting school and first day nerves.

**MAGNETIC ACTIVITY BOARD**

© Comet

To assist children in their understanding about going into a new environment such as school this activity board helps children create their own stories about what they think school will be like which may help them work through any fears or concerns about going to school.

The activity board has opportunities for individual conversations and storytelling.

**PRIMARY CARDS SOCIAL SEQUENCES SET 2: AT SCHOOL**

LDA Primary Cards © Jo Donnelly and Hazel Knibbs

4 card sequences to support the language skills of young children about to start school. The cards depict school based activities. These cards support all levels of communication, including single words and phrases with an emphasis on social interaction. The picture cards also provide many opportunities for observation, discussions and thinking about what is familiar to the child and what is new.

**WOODEN PUZZLES – PLAYGROUND AND THE CLASSROOM**

Two 16 piece wooden puzzles depicting a school playground scene and school classroom room scene. These puzzles support fine motor development positioning, problem solving as well as opportunities to talk about school for children soon to be attending in the New Year.

**NOAH’S ARK ALSO HAS ONLINE BORROWING FOR SUBSCRIBERS.**

A PERL subscription allows you access to Noah’s Ark Resource Library at our new Yeronga site. To Find out more or enquire about a subscription, call 1300 497 437
What if everything you’ve ever learnt was not as it was taught to you? How would you respond to finding out that history was not as it seemed? Who do you turn to, to help you understand the view, once your worldview has changed forever?

This was exactly where Leanne Fuller, Manager of Isis and South Burnett Family Day Services, found herself after returning from a Hidden Histories workshop, which had whet her appetite for exploring and building connections with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in her local area. Her epiphany was realising that she had never actually thought about the local Butchulla people going through a different history to herself and all its implications.

This was a conversation that had to be had! And finding a tool that could support educators to experience their own epiphanies - knowing how much it would add to the inclusion practices within their day to day operating and how much depth it would give to their already brilliant services, adding context to their activities with the children in their care.

The other challenge with finding learning and development for her team, was fitting it into the busy timetables of educators. With days fully occupied, it was imperative that any ongoing learning should happen in the evenings to enable full attendance.
With a phone call on the outset, it was established that Yarn Up Tok Blo Yumi was exactly the workshop for Leanne’s team of Educators. Through the ongoing delivery of Yarn Up, educators could develop awareness of the need to be inclusive and begin to see pathways to establishing meaningful connections with the First Nation people right there in their very own local community. Workforce Council tailored the programme to ensure a clear Family Day Care focus, which resulted in educators being relate to the information more easily and be more inclined to implement new perspectives and practices into their services.

Workforce Council found connections through drawing on everyone we knew in the community linking and - in some cases re-linking with community members. Our coordinator had worked in the area previously and had met community members and Traditional Owners. To make these first connections, we introduced ourselves through a phone call then made a plan to travel to meet in Childers to develop our relationship with the Traditional Owners and Community Members.

We met in a favourite cafe in the centre of town, a delightful beginning and great way to make a meaningful connection, keeping it light and genuine. When making initial contact, it’s crucial to be yourself and leave the business outcome persona either back at the office, or tell it to take a walk for an hour or two! Getting to know First Nation community members and Elders is a phase that can’t have a time set to it. After our cuppa and at the prompting of the Elders we got down to business and explained the support we were seeking to deliver Yarn Up. Once we were able to answer questions and concerns for cultural safety, Elders were very accommodating and happy to assist us.

While all sessions were thought provoking and motivating for the participants, none were more impactful than the Connecting to History sessions, where Traditional Owners shared personal stories of local history from their or their parents lived experiences. Walking through a timeline of significant events revealed a great portion of recent events. Hearing the re-telling of history of their immediate local area altered the worldviews of each person. What many found hard hitting, was that they had known Elders all their lives and yet had no idea of how white settlement affected them.

The second most impactful aspect of Yarn Up Tok Blo Yumi was the Connecting to Country, where the participants experience a walk on the local country, accompanied by the Elders. It is at this final point of the process, when relationships have been established and cultivated over many yarns and cups of tea, tears and laughter that Yarn Up participants have the opportunity to walk on country with Elders who have been sharing their knowledge during the Yarn Up days. This is a session that can only be organised with Elders, as it is Elders who will choose the walk and sites of significance depending on the group, the relationship and what is culturally appropriate to share.

The specialness of the Connecting to Country day is that the participants see country with new eyes. The trees they drive past daily to get to work may no longer be just trees, instead they might be Lemon Myrtle trees, where the leaves may be picked and used to flavour drinks or food. Or they might recognise sites of significance from times before white settlement, such as middens, where generations of First Nation Butchulla people sat with their families eating and feasting on the fruits of the sea. On this occasion, to top off the already spectacular walk on country, one of the Elders baked Bunya Nut biscuits and bought samples of Bunya Nuts in various styles of cooking for us to taste.

During this Yarn Up, like many ongoing learning opportunities, every participant had to personally face and overcome issues in order to attend each of the sessions. Some educators misunderstood the nature of the ongoing learning, and had planned for one workshop, rather than six sessions over approximately six months and others had to make bigger, life-changing decisions.

Another particular challenge faced by many participants was dealing with the emotions associated with the new information about history that participants hadn’t previously known. For some, this knowledge affected them deeply and they weren’t sure how to deal with their own feelings of guilt or, perhaps, no guilt, as the past was acknowledged. The only approach to help process the new information and new perspective was critical reflection - looking at yourself, your service, your home environment and having the courage to be vulnerable while steeling for the next steps into their future.

One of the big turning points was when there was a shared understanding and explicitness around the action learning model and how this participatory approach brought people out of their comfort zone, creating a deeper opportunity for learning. This sparked a collective insight that if we were not comfortable and confident yarning in this way, how could we ever be successful in creating a truly inclusive and culturally safe environment.

Another unexpected benefit was educators felt more connected as an early childhood education community, noticing changes in how they communicate and share with each other across organisations and centres.

Participant’s next steps were to run with the wonderful new connections they had made, which sees the Traditional Owners being regular guests at their services for cups of tea, and telling stories or sharing moments with the children. Participant’s families have also become involved in conversations about local history as newly acquired knowledge is shared around the dinner table. Which is exactly the kind of journey Yarn Up Tok Blo Yumi is, an ongoing journey that changes worldviews and changes lives in a personal and professional way.

**WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON WORKFORCE COUNCIL’S WEBSITE FOR UPCOMING DATES FOR YARN UP TOK BLO YUMI WORKSHOPS IN 2016!**
For some children, the ability to operate and interact with buttons on objects can be challenging and Noah’s Ark has a wide range of switches and adapted resources to support the development and assist the child to perform tasks that they had difficulty with or unable to accomplish on their own.

WHAT IS A SWITCH?
A switch is a piece of assistive technology equipment that allows a child to operate a range of electronic devices using a consistent and reliable body movement.

To independently use a switch a child must be able to voluntarily move any single body part (hand, finger, head) with large or small movements.

It is a great way to begin experiencing independent control, and provides opportunities to learn and participate. In addition, it can greatly contribute to a child’s sense of control over the environment and increase self-esteem and confidence.

WHAT ARE SWITCHES USED FOR?
Switches are used to support the development of play skills and provide the child with a sense of mastery. Switches also contribute to providing opportunities for the child to be engaged in an activity enjoyed by their peers. Switches support the development of motor skills, cognitive and language skills which leads to participation in social and emotional experiences. These skills combined provide a foundation for learning and for more complex technology use such as multiple switch use, computer interactions, communication, mobility devices and more extensive environmental control.

WHO USES SWITCHES?
Switches may be beneficial for people of all ages in assisting their interaction with daily tasks and participating in a world of increasing complex technology. Developing a mode of access required for this complex world in which we live starts with young children who may display one or more of the following characteristics:

• minimal movement of their limbs
• difficulties controlling the movement of their limbs
• sensory impairments, which affects the control of sources of sound, light and vibration
• cognitive impairments which affects the ability of following directions and require items which help interactions via a single button

Noah’s Ark Specialist Equipment provides a wide range of equipment and aids to support services in the inclusion of a child with a disability. Supporting children’s physical development includes the ability to develop strong fine motor muscles which support future independent skills including writing.

By Tina Millar and Anh Tu
NOAH’S ARK HAS A VARIETY OF SWITCHES AND SWITCH ADAPTED RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR TRIAL AND LOAN.

Like all Specialist Equipment and Aids, borrowing of switches and switch adapted toys requires a recommendation from the child’s therapist.

SELECTING A SWITCH

Switches come in all shapes, sizes and styles and must be matched to meet the needs of the child. Knowing the child’s abilities and preferences will help to find a match. Look for the child’s voluntary movement, one that is consistent and that can be controlled. The child should be able to initiate a movement to activate a switch and be able to sustain and/or release contact with the switch. The correct selection and positioning of a switch is extremely important. Contact the child’s health professional (occupational therapist) for assistance with switch selection.

Accessing toys for play and exploration is a critical component of childhood. Children with disabilities may have difficulty interacting with objects due to limited movement or control of their limbs. A switch connected to a switch adapted toy can provide a way for a child to independently participate in games and playing with their peers.

You can browse, search and view the range of specialised aids on our website via our Noah’s Ark Resource Library catalogues.

The Specialist Equipment Request Form and procedures can be downloaded from www.noahsark.net.au. Please ensure your application is complete prior to sending to Noah’s Ark, including all relevant documents i.e. section A and B of your Inclusion Improvement Plan (IIP), the confirmation letter stating the child’s medical diagnosis and a complete application with all signatures required.

SWITCH ADAPTED ALL-TURN-IT-SPINNER

This device provides opportunities for the child to interact with peers in a variety of group activities. For example, the dice overlay is useful with board games. Overlays can be customised to have random selections and basic concepts like numbers, colours, matching, sorting and sequencing.

SWITCH ADAPTED CD PLAYER

The CD player has a switch accessible play/pause button. One press of the switch will start the music and the next press will pause the CD. This may be used to play musical chairs – allowing a child to control the music, listen to music or listen to CD audio book.

SWITCH ADAPTED BATTERY OPERATED TOYS

Noah’s Ark has a wide range of switch operated toys such as bubble machines, pattern toys and soft toys to assist with the development of cause and effect and tactile, visual and auditory.

POWERLINK AC CONTROL UNIT

As children develop these skills they can be used for everyday tasks and the Powerlink AC Control unit can be used to control electrical devices such as radios, fans, blenders and televisions. For example, a child can take part in a cooking session by using a switch to turn on and off a food processor.

Contact our friendly staff at Noah’s Ark to discuss your inclusion needs. Noah’s Ark employs an Occupational Therapist to provide suggestions and ideas in selecting the equipment you need. They are also able to liaise with the child’s therapist to ensure the equipment chosen is inclusive. Our Occupational Therapist does not diagnose or assess a child.

www.noahsark.net.au or contact Noah’s Ark on 1300 497 437.
Australia and its peoples, including the then colonised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the colonial settlers, migrants and refugees now share this land and space. This land, its peoples and this socio-political space that we share is said to be postcolonial, which is defined by some as an era that comes after the colonial past. From being given an identity and ways of belonging in this land by the colonisers, we, the colonised and the colonisers can now choose our identity and therefore choose our ways of being and belonging in this postcolonial land and space.

Identity choices can be intricate for both the coloniser and the colonised because, such undiluted freedom of choosing who one is can be linked to ideological "truths". I use the term ideological "truths" to signify our identity categories that determine how we label ourselves and belong, be and become that labelled selves. The labels linked to the language used to classify us in terms of our gender, age, class, ‘race’ and ethno-linguistic have become highly significant in modern societies (Taylor, 2004). The period after the political demise of the “White Australia Policy” (Government of Australia, 1901) in the 1970s in Australia is seen as postcolonial by many historians, and Australia overtly opened its doors to allow multiculturalism into its borders (Arber, 1999; Tavan, 2004).
WHO ARE WE, BELONG, BE AND BECOME: OUR “(FREE) DOMINATING TRUTH”

Our identity labels and how we perform our identity categories in our daily day to day life has become quite central in most societies, including Australia. Our identity performances under these labels, especially national boundaries are usually established by the socio-political institutions of those societies, and are then attributed to the individuals to bind them within and outside those boundaries (Srinivasan, 2014).

In Australia, ‘race’ boundaries were made significant historically by its political institutions quite overtly through the “White Australia Policy” (Government of Australia, 1901). Colonisation ‘whitened’ the identity of Australia with overt ‘race’ based institutional policies. This resulted in the White Anglo-Saxon image being attached to the identity performances of those who are seen as being, belonging and becoming Australians to White Anglo-Saxon image.

However, this policy was overthrown later during early 1970s politically when Australia adopted multiculturalism, and yet the identity of this nation and the national subjects are still governed by the same White Anglo-Saxon image (Arber, 1999; Tavan, 2004). This was very much realised during the recent episodes of racial taunts that Adam Goodes endured and how these events were arbitrated in the media.

Despite the political demise of the “White Australia Policy”, the freedom of belonging, being and becoming as Australians still seems to reside within the boundaries of ‘whiteness’. The fact that the cultural performance of Adam Goodes was repeatedly questioned against what it is to be and belong as Australian, reaffirms that the society of Australia is still influenced by that policy (see, www.smh.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/adam-goodes-should-admit-he-was-wrong-says-andrew-bolt-20150730-gioa1o.html; www.newmatilda.com/2015/06/02/aamer-rahman-what-adam-goodes-invisible-spear-shows-us/; www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/27/supporting-adam-goodes-is-easy-hes-the-acceptable-face-of-indigenous-australia).

Ladson-Billings (2004) defines the term ‘whiteness’ as those everyday practices attached to ‘white’ culture. Here ‘whiteness’ signifies not just the skin colour; it is the cultural boundary performances attached to ‘whiteness’ (Srinivasan, 2014), and ‘whiteness’ determined why Adam Goodes cultural performance sat outside being Australian, and it supposedly divided the nation.

Thus, ‘whiteness’ was and still is the “(free)dominating truth” of ‘belonging, being and becoming’ who we are as Australians in postcolonial Australia that is seemingly liberated from the clutches of colonisation.

Yet, it is believed that how we label ourselves and perform those labelled national identities is seen as individual choice. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), build on this tenet of free choice, ‘Belonging, Being, and becoming’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). EYLF recommends that we, as early childhood educators support young children to belong, be and become strong in their identity choices.

HENCE, WE NEED TO ASK OURSELVES,

- Are we still colonised, is this the “(free) dominating truth” of ‘whiteness’ in Australia?
- What identity choices do we have as educators of and with young children from indigenous and non-indigenous families in Australia?

KEY TERMS:

DISCOURSES
Are like mind maps that guide our everyday thinking, being and acting our identities and roles (Gee, 2010).

ETHNO-LINGUISTIC
Pertains to geographic, cultural and language connections of individuals and groups. The term cultural identity is sometimes interchangeably used with ethno-linguistic identity.

INTERPELLATION, ISA
Interpellation is the process of repeated bombardment of particular ideologies through Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), the institutional bodies (Althusser, 2008). The process of interpellation is critical in mobilising and making ideologies, which are mere floating ideas very real and ‘true’ for individuals and groups (Srinivasan, 2014).

SOCIO-POLITICAL
These relate to factors, institutions and structures that are social and political (For example: central and local government; health and educational settings; religious institutions; media; families). It is believed in modern states, what is political becomes social, and is also represented by individuals overtly and covertly. Hence, it becomes very difficult to distinguish what is political, social and individual.
CAN WE BELONG, BE AND BECOME:
OUR POSTCOLONIAL 
"(FREE)DOMINATING CHOICES"

We, as educators of young children and families can choose to practice either to reinforce one unified way of belonging, being and becoming Australian, and thereby distinguish what is Australian and Unaustralian; Or, we can enable ourselves and the children and families with whom we teach and learn to choose to become multiple by engaging with our past and our present, to move to an equitable future. We need to first and foremost understand how colonisation as an act of dominance affects us beyond dualistic divisions such as coloniser/colonised and black/white, to recognise what are those "(free)dominating choices".

WHO CAN WE BELONG, BE AND BECOME: OUR "(FREE)DOMINATING CHOICES"

If colonisation is any act of dominance that occupies and oppresses an individual or group by another (Loomba, 2005), we were colonised by identity ideas that linked ‘whiteness’ with being Australian. Althusser (2008) coined the term “ideology” for a set of ideas that dictate and determine our everyday categorical behaviour, and he further added that such ideas are propagated or interpellated by “Ideological State Apparatuses” (ISA). The interpellated subjects now colonised by this identity ideology internalise these ideas and act accordingly. Thus, when colonised by identity ideology of Australia that associates ‘whiteness’ with this nation and national identity, we situate ourselves in and out of belonging, being and becoming Australian. The image of ‘white Australian’ not only taints the vision of those within Australia, but it also does those who live outside this nation.

I recently travelled to Austria and visited one of the universities there. The teacher/educator, who greeted me there immediately asked me, “Where are you from" and continued by saying, “You must be from India, Malaysia”. And as I shook my head, he named many other South Asian countries but Australia. When I did say that I was from Australia, the look of disbelief and embarrassment was obvious. Thus, the ‘whiteness’ ideology dominates and controls us, in and out of Australia, and determines who is Australian or not, and our cultural performances. These “(free)dominating choices” not just colonise and dictate the identity behaviours of adults. Children as young as 3 years of age classify and their cultural performances associated with varied cultural groups in their setting. The educators hope that such practices that showcase and embrace many cultures will automatically result in children’s acceptance of cultures regarded as being different. And yet, till recently Australia and Australians remain divided, and therefore it is worthwhile to unpack our “(free) dominating choices” of supporting children’s cultural identity.

I unpack those educational practices by locating these within three broad “(free)dominating choices” of "Infused and integrated"; “Situated and segregated” and “(Re)visited and (re)generated”.

The choice, “Infused and integrated” believes that all children and families can be different and yet be committed to unified Australian identity. The practices aim to differentiate cultural practices to distinguish against what is propagated and believed as being Australian. In order to inculcate a sense of belonging in all children and families, the practices amass and integrate all groups, their differences and commitment to Australia and Australians. This is done without questioning the historical underpinnings and the current socio-political contestations of Australian and Unaustralian values. For example: Singing, ‘We are one but we are many’ or celebrating NAIDOC and Multicultural week are believed to be practices that build a sense of acceptance and tolerance of cultural differences of each other. The ideologically framed Australian and the power attributed to ‘whiteness’ in Australia remains unspoken and undisrupted.

The second choice, “Situated and segregated” are pedagogical practices that make individuals and groups become acutely aware of those differences that set them apart from the ideologically constructed Australian. The educational practices aim to differentiate cultural practices by openly recognising and naming these against what is Australian.
A sense of belonging and loyalty to their own cultural groups and associated practices are embedded strongly. Children and families belonging to the same cultural groups are encouraged to come together and celebrate their cultures.

For example: Cultural differences and images of varied groups are always presented in the environment to inform and acknowledge the varied ways of practising one’s culture. The basic premise of this choice is, when educators role model acceptance of diversity openly, children and families will automatically feel they can belong, be and become whoever they want to be. Although socio-politically circulated notions of what is Australian and UnAustralian is not openly debated, many ways of belonging and becoming Australian is presented. However, the political power that is held by ‘whiteness’, and the realities that arise due to socio-politically mediated discourses of discrimination and exclusion remains silenced.

The choice “(Re)visited and (re)generated” is also available for us as educators with children and families. The desire that propels this choice is an aspiration to disrupt the ideological myth associated with the identity of Australian and Australian values. It does so by naming the culture of Australia’s politics, its identity ideology that dominated the past and therefore the present. It moves beyond the dichotomous divisions of coloniser vs. colonised; black versus white and Australian vs. UnAustralian. The political power held by ‘whiteness’ is challenged by engaging with the history of ‘blackness’ in precolonial Australia. This history was and still is multicultural and multilingual and diverse, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were and are culturally and linguistically diverse in this land. The owners of this land lived and still live without an ideology that positions any one group’s culture or language in the centre. Thus, we share with children and families that we were multiple and yet united, but not unified by one ideology, one identity, one culture and one language. We were many and we want to belong, be and become as many.

The above are the choices in practising support for cultures in postcolonial Australia for us, as educators of young children and families. Again, it seems like there is freedom from domination and hence, we need to ask,

? How do we choose the one that can liberate us without (free)dominating?
? How do we choose to belong, be and become free(dom)?

WE CAN BELONG, BE AND BECOME: OUR CHOICE TO FREE(DOM)

Liberation from dominance is possible only through our conscious and critical engagement with the injustice and the oppression of the past. This is done not with an aim to seek vengeance or to accuse particular individuals and groups, but with a commitment to contest and address the realities faced due to historical discrimination and dispossession of land, cultural roots and values. Such critical recognition that includes the acknowledgement of how the image of this nation was dictated and dominated by ‘whiteness’ can then awaken our consciousness that has been put to sleep by “whitening” ideology. Having recognised the colonising propensity of the image of ‘whiteness’ in current societies, the educator challenges this “(free)dominating truth” of this image with narratives of the marginalised and the oppressed. The aim is to revisit histories to claim what once belonged and been, and to become (re)generated in this very same space with cultural co-habitation as many and multiple.

Freedom from ideological “(free)dominating truth” that centralises ‘whiteness’ with being Australian is immensely difficult to achieve, as it has dominated the minds of Australia’s colonial and postcolonial subjects for many years. ‘Whiteness’ is after all a colonial dominance, and as alerted by Young (2001) and Loomba (2005) in postcolonial spaces one needs to challenge covert forms of colonial dominance. If we, as early childhood educators do want to create a space that is free(dom), multiplicity needs to flourish without narrow dichotomous labels that discriminates what is Australian and what is not. Through our choice we can, and enable all children and families to belong, be and become, and liberate ourselves from “(free)dominating truth” to “free(dom)ing truths”. And I ask you,

? What is your choice in practising to belong, be and become as many in postcolonial Australia?
? Are you attached to “(free)dominating truths” or “free(dom)”

REFERENCES:
Educators today need to be able to not only have good practice but also articulate it. It is important for educators to recognise good quality practice and to be able to talk about why it is good.

Being articulate will help family day care educators to be more effective advocates for children, children’s learning, good practice and family day care with families, colleagues and the broader community.

Family Day Care Association of Queensland (FDCAQ) has recognised this and championed Anne Stonehouse and Catharine Hydon along with an FDC Advisory group to create a suite of resources that will support FDC Educators and Practice Mentors (also known as Coordinators and Field workers) to explore the Early Years Learning Framework core themes, principles, practices and outcomes as they relate to the family day care context.

“Get it together! – It’s all about Family Day Care” is part of FDCAQ’s new professional resources which demonstrates our commitment to leading from within.
WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE ABOUT?

The main aim of the Get it Together! resource is to encourage educators and coordination unit staff to engage with the Frameworks in a deeper and more thoughtful way.

It is FDCAQ’s hope that the Practice Guide and the other parts of the resources will support educators to continue to learn, to question, and to be critically reflective about all aspects of their work, and to work continually to improve in their efforts to support children’s learning.

FDCAQ Get it together! Box set includes:

• Get it Together! The Practice Guide for Family Day Care
• Get it Together! – Planning for Learning Poster (adaptation of the Planning Cycle)
• Get it Together! – Implementation handbook
• Get it Together! – FDC Program and Practice (Curriculum) Visual Guide

One of the tools created in the ‘Get it together!’ resource suite is the Planning for Learning: the Whole Child Experience (the Planning Cycle). This resource has been designed to support educators to gain a deeper understanding of the planning cycle. The planning cycle diagram (at left) represents the way educators plan for children’s learning and work on an ongoing basis. To achieve this outcome family day care requires educators who:

• are thoughtful,
• observe carefully and notice what children are experiencing,
• are learning all the time from children, their peers and ongoing, professional learning and development, and
• reflect on and want to improve their practice.

The planning and documenting of children’s learning reflects the professional relationship educators have with children. The five elements of the planning cycle provide a guide for educators to consider how they will promote, review and support learning and development for children within their home-based setting. Spending time unpacking the five key elements of the planning cycle will assist educators to engage with these elements in a more purposeful and thoughtful way.

THE 5 INTERCONNECTED AND INTERRELATED CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING ELEMENTS OF THE PLANNING CYCLE:

1. Collect information
2. Question/analyse
3. Plan
4. Act/Do
5. Reflect/Review

Knowing children well is fundamental to good quality practice in any education and care service.

Educators aim to know each child as a unique human being, including their strengths, temperament, personality as well as what they know, can do and understand. Knowing children well also includes knowing about the family, cultural and community contexts of their lives.

Educators are encouraged to be mindful of the lens they use and any bias they may bring when analysing and making judgement of children’s learning. It is important to gain multiple perspectives to ensure an informed, holistic view of the child is gathered.

While the process is known as a planning cycle, meaning moving in a circular manner, this is actually not a true reflection of the process. In fact educators will move in and out of each part of the planning cycle, at times planning for experiences where educators had one outcome in mind only to see children take this experience in a different direction with an equally valuable outcome. When this occurs educators may need to make changes, reflect and review their role, and contribute in totally different ways (act/do). This requires the educator to be flexible and show confidence in documenting the curriculum decision making process as it emerges and in the process of developing a proposed plan. It is important to note that each individual element of the planning cycle requires educators to think deeply about the intent of the element.

When educators understand the why, what and how of each element of the planning cycle they will begin to recognise the importance of each element and build confidence in how they will document the planned experiences and record the assessment of learning for each child. Each element is as important in the process of planning as the next, meaning attention to each element is necessary to fully engage with the planning cycle process.

The collection of information about children’s learning and development is an important foundation to developing a meaningful program for children’ learning.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on this resource contact
Family Day Care Association Queensland
P: 07 3399 3737
W: www.fdcqld.org
E: fdcqld@fdcqld.org

REFERENCES:
The new Workforce Action Plan (WAP) 2016-2019 was launched in Parliament on 13 October 2015 by the Honourable Kate Jones, MP, Minister for Education. The WAP forms part of the Queensland Government’s Working Queensland Jobs Plan that will create more jobs for Queenslanders.

The WAP 2016-19 sets a clear ‘roadmap’ to improve the capacity of Queensland’s ECEC workforce over the next three years. The WAP contains a range of programs that will contribute to building the skills, qualifications and experience of the ECEC workforce and promote quality outcomes for children.

The new WAP builds on the success of the previous WAP (2011-2014) and has been informed by extensive consultations with the ECEC sector. Participants in the consultations stressed the need for qualifications and skills development, but also the importance of ECEC ‘being valued’ as a profession and as a sector.
THE WAP 2016-19 DELIVERS A SHARED VISION OF AN ECEC WORKFORCE THAT IS ‘PROFESSIONAL, QUALIFIED AND VALUED’ AND FOCUSES ON THE FOLLOWING THREE ACTION AREAS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEING VALUED</th>
<th>QUALIFICATIONS</th>
<th>SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This action area aims to promote the value of a career in early education and care. A key initiative is the launch of the ‘Inspire the future. Choose a career in early childhood’ careers campaign. This campaign is the first of its kind for the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET). The careers campaign will use modern multimedia approaches to reach new entrants, career changers and existing ECEC staff to highlight the ways early childhood careers offer opportunities to make a difference during the most critical time in a child’s development. Another ‘Being valued’ initiative will involve consultation with the ECEC sector and other key stakeholders to explore options for professional registration for early childhood teachers (ECTs), to further support the recognition of the early childhood teaching profession.</td>
<td>Under this action area, the new WAP will aim to ensure that an ongoing supply of suitably qualified educators is available to meet the demands of the growing workforce. Subsidies for approved certificate and diploma qualifications will be available to eligible students, and a range of targeted initiatives will also provide additional support for educators, particularly Indigenous educators, studying for their qualifications in rural and remote services. Access to the diploma subsidy will also be widened to enable registered primary teachers to gain an approved early childhood teaching qualification through the successful Early Childhood Teacher Bridging Program.</td>
<td>The new WAP will provide targeted skills development, professional development and networking to support educators to respond to the demands of their roles and to address identified skills gaps. Strategies within this priority area will include state-wide face-to-face professional development and networking programs, with a focus on leadership skills especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. The ‘Early Years Connect’ Project will provide a ‘one-stop shop’ of online resources for educators working with children with additional needs, including children with disability and complex emotional and social behaviours. This interactive online resource will be complemented with a statewide program of face-to-face professional development. Three new targeted and industry-endorsed skill sets will also be subsidised under the Higher Levels Skills Program to respond to priority skills development needs: • team leader skills set • supporting children and families with complex needs skills set • building inclusive practices skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

The issues impacting on the ECEC workforce are continually changing. The WAP will aim to adapt and respond to such changes, and new initiatives will continue to be announced over the life of the plan. This continuing process of development will involve:

• ongoing consultation and engagement with all relevant stakeholders;
• working with stakeholders to track and report on annual progress; and
• analysing relevant workforce data to inform the WAP review process.

MORE INFORMATION

To read more or download a copy of the Workforce Action Plan 2016-2019, visit www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/WAP
For information about training courses, subsidies and eligibility criteria, visit www.skillsgateway.training.qld.gov.au
Squeezey pureed food pouches with their built-in feeding tips, provide convenience and have become a ‘lifesaver’ for busy parents as they don’t require refrigeration, heating or utensils.

Mealtimes for young children are important for both nourishment and for learning what food looks, smells, tastes and feels like. When squeezey food replaces nutritious shared meals, part of this learning is lost.

Frequent use of squeezey foods results in children missing opportunities to experiment with different food textures and develop fine motor skills associated with using utensils. Eating different textures strengthens children’s tongue and mouth muscles promoting jaw and speech development.

The act of sucking food can impact negatively on oral health. To decrease tooth decay risk, dentists recommend parents ensure infants avoid squeezey foods and sippy cups and go straight from the breast or bottle to an age-appropriate cup by 12-15 months of age.

As an alternative to lunchboxes of squeezey foods, encourage parents to provide younger children (aged 6-8 months) with different coloured pureed or mashed food and a spoon, and provide older children (aged over 8 months) with a selection of healthy finger foods1.

But are they a healthy choice for children?

What to encourage instead?
HEALTHY LUNCHBOX IDEAS FOR CHILDREN AT DIFFERENT AGES AND STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Puereed/Mashed Food Combinations:
GREEN – Avocado, pea, chicken, rice
ORANGE – Carrot, pumpkin, beef, pasta
YELLOW – Corn, sweet potato, tuna, cheese
PURPLE – Beetroot, potato, red lentils, yoghurt

Finger Food Ideas:
• Diced/sliced fruit (often more appealing to children than whole fruit)
  ■ Kiwi fruit, pear, watermelon, rockmelon, pineapple, mango, orange
• Sandwich quarters:
  ■ Tuna and cream cheese; mashed egg; cheese and tomato; leftover roast meat, grated carrot/beetroot; chicken and avocado.
• Mini pizzas on English muffins (make ahead and freeze)
• Hard-boiled egg
• Tub of yoghurt
• Slice of vegetable frittata
• Meatballs –beef/chicken (recipe below)
• Roast vegies (potato, sweet potato, pumpkin, carrot)
• Vegie sticks (carrot, celery, capsicum, snow peas) and cream cheese dip

To keep food cool and safe to eat, place in a lunchbox (preferably insulated) and accompany with an ice brick in an esky.

FRUITY CHICKEN BALLS

2 chicken breasts, cubed
1 green apple, cored and quartered
1 slice wholemeal bread, torn into quarters
1 salt-reduced chicken stock cube, crumbled
1 teaspoon dried parsley (or 1 tablespoon fresh)
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
oil spray

METHOD:
1. Pre-heat oven to 180°C and line baking tray with baking paper.
2. Place all ingredients into a food processor. Blend until combined.
3. Roll into small balls. Place on baking tray.
4. Spray balls with oil spray.
5. Bake 15-20 minutes or until golden and chicken is cooked.
6. Serve warm or cold from the fridge.

‘Fruity Chicken Balls’ can also be frozen.

THE VERDICT ON SQUEEZY FOODS
Squeezy foods are okay for occasional use e.g. when travelling. However, they should not be used to replace nutritious shared meals. On rare occasions, when ‘squeezy’ foods are used, squeeze a small amount onto a spoon first, so children can self-feed and develop their fine motor skills.

LEAPS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
‘Squeezy foods’ is one of many topics covered in the LEAPS Professional Development (PD) Program. During LEAPS PD, participants learn practical strategies to encourage and promote healthy nutrition in infants and children, as well as how to address common early childhood nutrition and physical activity challenges.

The LEAPS PD Program helps educators implement the National Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines (Get Up & Grow). The free PD Program is available as a face-to-face training day or online and will be available at no cost until mid-2016. To find out more about LEAPS go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=glHq6w01McM

FREE LEAPS FACT SHEETS
Throughout November we are providing all educators (even if you haven’t yet completed LEAPS) with our top 3 downloaded LEAPS fact sheets:

1. Snacks – including Healthy Snack Bars and Vegetable Pikelets recipes
2. Physical Activity for 1-5 year olds
3. Daily Meal Plan Recipe – Tuna Pasta with Vegetables

Just email the LEAPS team requesting the fact sheets and we will email them to you. E: leaps@naqld.org

For more information on LEAPS or to register visit: www.naqld.org/leaps-2/

Encourage parents to visit our “Quick guide to squeezy foods” on NAQ Nutrition’s ‘Healthy-at-Home’ webpage: www.naqld.org/resource/are-squeezy-foods-a-good-choice-for-children/

Or view our Squeezy Foods video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8eOjbxQfF1

The Deadly Ears program is a statewide ear and hearing health service aiming to reduce the high rates of conductive hearing loss attributable to middle ear disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and reduce the impact this has on children’s health and educational outcomes.

The program does this by providing outreach services to 11 partner communities across the state as well as working with health, early years and education sectors to enhance policy and practice to prioritise the hearing health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Queensland.
The program is comprised of three operational teams – Primary Health team, Allied Health team and Ear Nose and Throat team, who lead this work through multidisciplinary, multi-strategy and collaborative approaches.

Middle ear disease is the medical term for middle ear infections and it occurs when there is an inflammation in the middle ear. It is caused by respiratory bacteria and viruses that have moved up the Eustachian tube from the back of the nose. The infection results in inflammation of the middle ear, fluid accumulation in the middle ear space, bulging of the ear drum and sometimes perforation of the ear drum (Wiertsema and Leach 2009).

Middle ear disease can lead to a fluctuating or conductive hearing loss if the problem is not treated or if the problem continues and this can have a significant impact on a child’s ability to listen, learn and play.

All children are more susceptible than adults to develop middle ear disease but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience it earlier, more frequently, more severely and more persistently than other children. It is important to remember that middle ear disease is preventable and treatable and everyone has a role in achieving this.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO YOU?

What happens in the years before a child starts school shapes a child’s brain. As early educators you know how critical the early years are for setting children on their best trajectory to participate and achieve across their lifetimes. Higher cognitive functions (e.g. thinking and problem solving) peak before children begin school, at around two years of age.

A child’s sensing and language pathways (those that underpin vision, hearing, touch and language abilities) develop before birth and peak in the first year of life and are largely finished by the time a child is four years old.

While the occurrence of middle ear disease is a medical issue, the associated hearing loss has the potential to adversely affect cognitive development, and ultimately, educational achievement (Williams and Jacobs 2009). The area of cognition perceived as most likely to be affected by hearing loss associated with middle ear disease are auditory processing skills, attention, behaviour, speech and language. If these areas are affected in the critical early years’ time period, there is potential for children to have difficulty processing information in noisy environments, difficulties in reading and spelling and reading comprehension.

Early educators have a role in supporting children to achieve the best hearing and developmental outcomes possible to set children up on a strong trajectory for learning and participation in life. They can do this by evaluating and improving their listening and learning environments (QA3, 6), play and language learning opportunities (QA1) and language learning interactions (QA1, 5).

By providing lots of opportunities through daily routines, children can be supported to acquire and practice skills for developing independence (e.g. self-care), communication (e.g. developing and extending oral language and listening skills in English and home language), and emergent literacy (e.g. access to a range of print and emergent literacy mediums evident in children’s portfolios).

Regular and routine opportunities to develop children’s abilities to take increasing responsibility for their own health and wellbeing is also significantly important in supporting children who may have middle ear disease and associated conductive hearing loss. Creating a supportive environment where nose blowing and hand hygiene is routine will help achieve this, as well as go a long way in preventing middle ear disease from impacting on children’s abilities and opportunities to yarn, learn and play.

If you’d like to know more about the Deadly Ears program please visit www.health.qld.gov.au/deadly_ears
or like our facebook page www.facebook.com/DeadlyEars
For resources and more information on middle ear disease, please visit the Care for Kids’ Ears website:
www.careforkidsears.health.gov.au

REFERENCES:
Join Workforce Council, Professional Support Coordinator in partnership with Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network (QECSN) and Nature Play Queensland in a truly unique and exciting opportunity.

Over 3 days we will be acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land that we pass across and will be welcomed on to Kalkadoon Country by Traditional Owners. We will explore early childhood education in North West Queensland through the challenges and successes of 12 remote children’s services on their Action Research journey.

Come and discover how these services have fostered a sense of team identity, looked at innovative practices to induct new educators, created inspiring environments that provoke children’s play and learning or focussed on relationships with children, families and communities. These services have faced the challenges head on and made distinctive strides not only in transforming environments but transforming thinking and practices in the face of many challenges.

While many challenges faced in remote services are not unique, they are sometimes compounded by remoteness and the innovative solutions for overcoming these challenges provide real learning opportunities for us all.

Over the 3 days we will not only visit many of these remote services and hear all about their learnings, we will also be inspired and informed by the expertise of our partners from Nature Play Queensland and QECSN. As well you will hear from Dr Rachael Sharman on play opportunities that facilitate optimal neurological and psychological development; have an opportunity for an individual consultation with Angela Wright, a natural play space specialist; and be introduced to the principle and practices of Forest Kindy by Anya Perkins, a level 3 Forest School Leader. These and a range of other workshops, designed to challenge your thinking and support your practices, will be delivered while on the road.

You will not get another chance like this, there will be service visits, professional development and ongoing opportunities to engage in reflective conversations with like-minded professionals. You will visit the Australian Age of Dinosaurs and have the opportunity to cruise along the Thompson River or drop into the Stockman’s hall of fame.

So put your LDCPDP money to work for you and your team or access the ‘Learning through Sharing’ conference subsidies (STRICTLY for subsidised services only) and come along for a learning experience that will literally transport you.
This page contains information about a vocational education and training (VET) program. The CHC Community Services Training Package has recently been reviewed. The current training package contains both Certificate III and Diploma qualifications as follows:

- **CHC30113** - Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- **CHC50113** - Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care

If you have any questions regarding changes to the training package, or regarding VET in general, please contact the Workforce Council on 07 3234 0190.
FESTIVALS OF LEARNING

TOTALLY HR - RIGHT PEOPLE, RIGHT SKILLS, RIGHT WORKFORCE
Date: Saturday 23 January 2016
Location: Chermside, Brisbane
Presented by: Rob Redenbach, Workforce Council Team, Sharon Stocker and Betty Taylor

WHO ARE WE? TOWARDS A CLEAR SERVICE PHILOSOPHY
Date: Saturday 19 March 2016
Location: Toowoomba
Presented by: Alma Fleet, Wendy Shepherd, Lee Gane and Caroline Fewster

CREATIVE APPROACHES – TO GROW THE MIND AND HEAL THE HEART
Date: Saturday 5 March 2016
Location: Airlie Beach
Date: Saturday 16 April 2016
Location: Hervey Bay
Date: Saturday 23 April 2016
Location: Caboolture
Presented by: Lyn Bryant, Sue Southey, Lil Fi, Thania and Christina from Little Window and Tim and Judy Sharp

OPERATION DELIGHTFUL – SETTING THE SCENE FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR
Date: Saturday 12 March 2016
Location: Gold Coast
Date: Saturday 4 June 2016
Location: Cairns
Presented by: Margie Carter, Sandi Barrett, Penny Gordon, Lil Fi, Peter Melrose and Trent Savill

NEIGHBOUR RAINBOW: CREATING DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE ORGANISATIONS
Date: Saturday 30 April 2016
Location: Logan
Presented by: Various presenters TBC

EDUCATOR UNCHAINED
Date: Wednesday 4 May 2016
Location: Brisbane
Presented by: Tara Moss, Penny Gordon, Rhonda Livingstone and Red Ruby Scarlet

Travel and accommodation support subsidies will be offered for state funded kindergartens, family day care and outside school hours care providers.

Details will be provided when each event is promoted.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FURTHER DETAILS OR CALL CHRISTINE OR STACEY ON 1800 112 585 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.