

2019

YEAR IN REVIEW

EARLY
START



Early Start would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of the land. As we share our knowledge, teaching, learning and research practices we pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal Custodianship of Country.

NAIDOC Week Dance Workshop with local Koori Creative Team Nin & Nate.

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ABOUT EARLY START

OUR MISSION

COMMUNITY

To enrich and support the environments in which children flourish by engaging with families and communities.

EDUCATION

To strengthen and support the ways people care for and work with children by increasing capacity and leadership.

RESEARCH

To influence policy and practice through interdisciplinary research and collaborations that improve knowledge and understanding of child development.

OUR FOUR PILLARS



DISCOVERY SPACE
An interactive children’s play space that stimulates curiosity, nurtures creativity, builds confidence, hands-on learning and provides opportunities for social connection, wellbeing and development.



ENGAGEMENT CENTRE
We support and collaborate with early childhood services in regional and remote areas to enrich professional practice and strengthen the outcomes for children.



RESEARCH
Our interdisciplinary researchers investigate areas of children’s learning, health and development. We develop and advocate for evidence-based policies and programs.



TRANSLATION
We aim to make a difference in the real world by turning our research into action. We do this at scale and in partnership with industry, government and the community.

OUR VALUES

LEADERSHIP

Demonstrating leadership in strengthening communities for children and their families.

INTEGRITY

Acting morally and ethically towards children, families and communities.

COURAGE

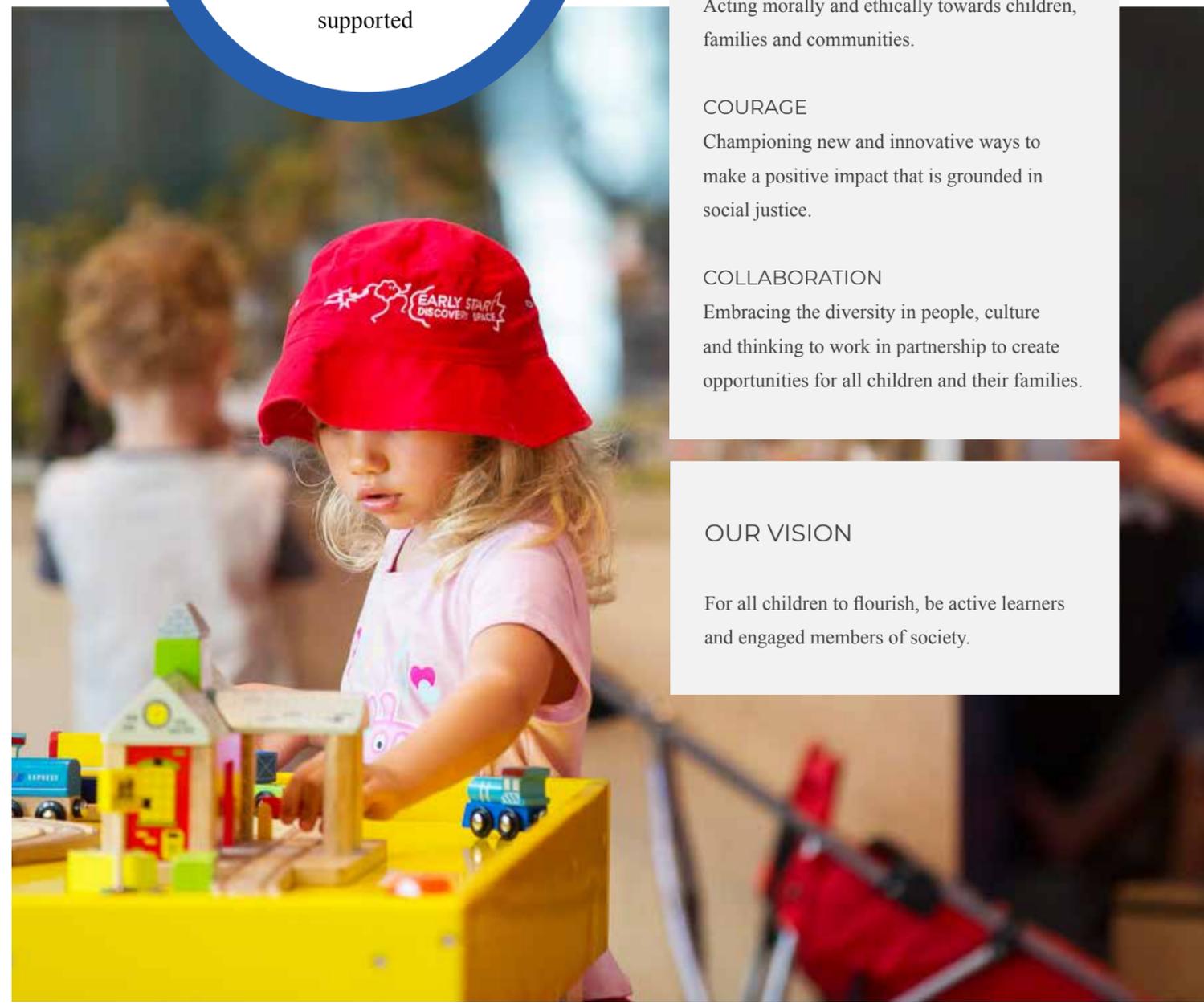
Championing new and innovative ways to make a positive impact that is grounded in social justice.

COLLABORATION

Embracing the diversity in people, culture and thinking to work in partnership to create opportunities for all children and their families.

OUR VISION

For all children to flourish, be active learners and engaged members of society.





DISCOVERY SPACE

WHERE CURIOUS MINDS PLAY

Early Start Discovery Space is the first dedicated children's museum in the world based within a university campus. It provides interactive Experiences and learn-through-play activities for children and their families to enjoy together.

UOW researchers and their findings guide and influence all educational aspects of the Discovery Space, ensuring our play-based experiences are grounded in evidence and beneficial to children's development.



11,113

individual active members

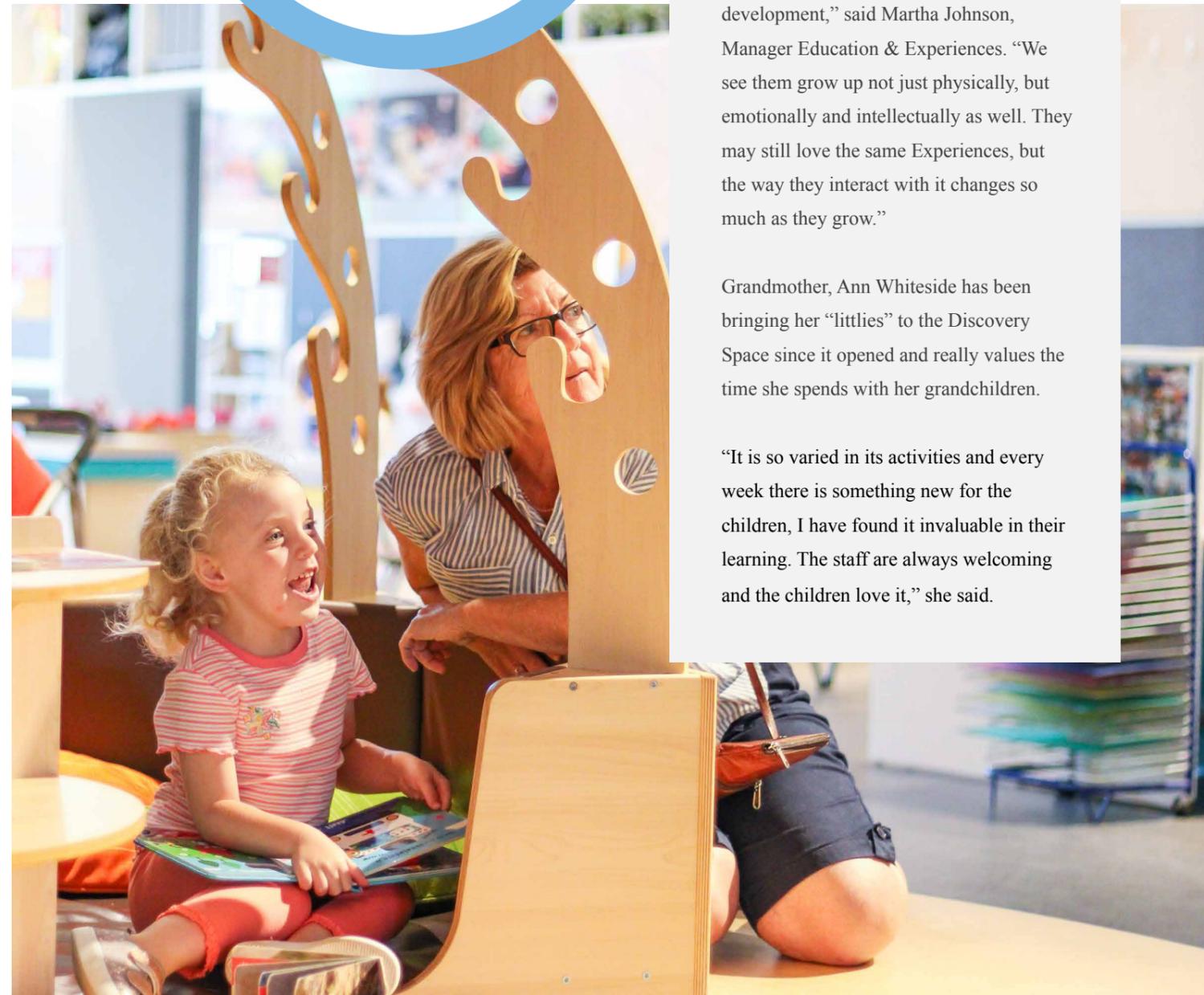


134,990

total visitors for 2019

"I love the ship because I get to climb up and honk the horn. But I also love the water river when my mum lets me get wet."

*Hamish, 5
Discovery Space visitor*



EARLY START FROM THE START

Over the past five years, staff at the Discovery Space have seen many members grow up before their very eyes.

"It's amazing to see the children's development," said Martha Johnson, Manager Education & Experiences. "We see them grow up not just physically, but emotionally and intellectually as well. They may still love the same Experiences, but the way they interact with it changes so much as they grow."

Grandmother, Ann Whiteside has been bringing her "littlies" to the Discovery Space since it opened and really values the time she spends with her grandchildren.

"It is so varied in its activities and every week there is something new for the children, I have found it invaluable in their learning. The staff are always welcoming and the children love it," she said.



EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!

In November, the cutting of police tape marked the official opening of Emergency! Emergency! – a new Experience that lets visitors role-play as Police, Fire + Rescue, Ambulance and SES while learning how to stay safe in an emergency.

Built in direct consultation with emergency services, representatives attended the opening day to engage directly with families.

“It’s fantastic to see it completed,” said Kirsten Anglet, SES Community Engagement Coordinator. “SES is really hard to represent in the younger demographic. Early Start has done a great job.”

With natural disasters becoming more commonplace, visitor Emily Grose said the Experience will help her sons understand the role of emergency crews.

SUSTAINABLE SCULPTURE AWARDS

Fifteen preschools from the Illawarra entered the inaugural Early Start Sustainable Sculpture Awards for the chance to have their work displayed in the Discovery Space and win an excursion for their entire class.

The awards coincided with National Recycling Week with all sculptures made from at least 75 per cent recycled materials. Entries were designed around the theme of Community Heroes to align with the launch of the Emergency! Emergency! experience.

“We have seen some brilliant, well-thought-out and beautiful sculptures created,” said Sue Fletcher, Education and Experience Coordinator. “This experience has been so worthwhile, not only helping to teach children about sustainability, but building real connections with local preschools as well.”

More than 50 educators, preschoolers and parents attended the awards ceremony and all entries are now proudly on display in the CreARTivity Experience.

“Being able to play through different emergencies really helped their understanding. It prompted so many questions and conversations”

Emily Grose – Visitor



CULTURAL LEARNING

Koori art and dance workshops ran throughout 2019 with creative duo Nin & Nate. The four-week program booked out and we saw a number of families return for other workshops throughout the year. Our drop-in sessions of music, dance and art proved to be a great way of engaging a larger number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and families.

An ongoing program to share Aboriginal culture and knowledge has also been incorporated into our daily activities. This includes an Acknowledgement of Country each morning, sharing Aboriginal stories, playing Aboriginal games and inviting local Aboriginal people to lead activities, including weaving and bush tucker tours around campus.

“The workshop was a great way for us to learn about Aboriginal culture together. So welcoming and insightful.”

Parent – Weaving Workshop

THE CAMPSITE

In February, Early Start Discovery Space launched The Campsite – a new Experience that centres on an iconic native Illawarra predator, the spotted-tailed quoll. Partnering with Dr Katarina Mikac from UOW’s Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health, The Campsite immerses visitors in a local bush setting, complete with bird-hide, campfire, animal tracks and scat sorting. All activities were built to match those undertaken by field conservation biologists.

Painted by local artist Julie Bagnall, The Campsite also has a large mural of an Illawarra bush scene featuring Geera (Mt Keira) and an array of native flora and fauna to search for.



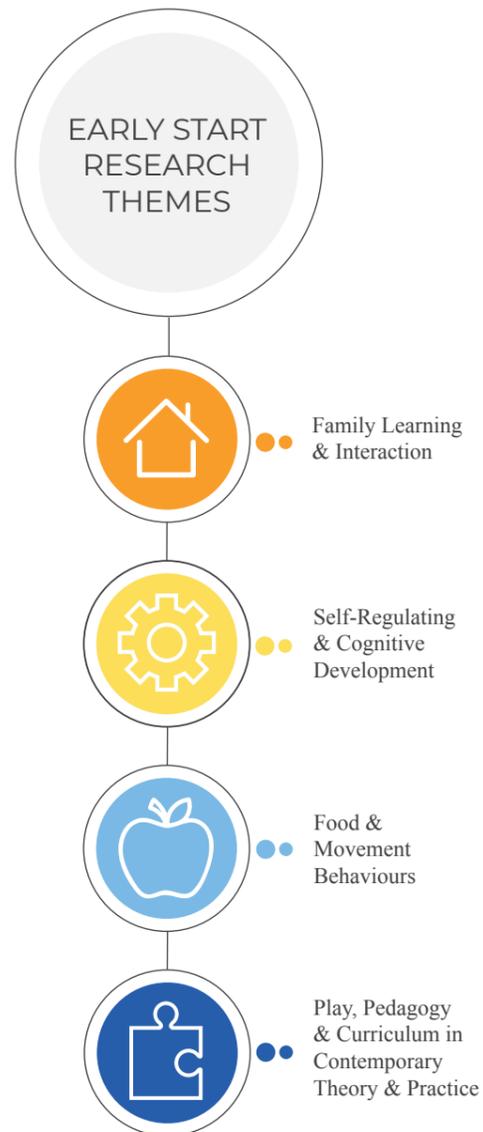


RESEARCH

THE BRIGHTEST MINDS

Early Start continues to build a global reputation for leading research that addresses community needs, improves understanding of child development and influences policy and practice – especially in regional and remote communities.

Our research brings together a team of the best academics, practitioners, professionals and research students to advance the learning, development and health of children and those who work with, and care for, them.



“My research program will understand how social, physical and policy environments influence the health and development of young children.”
Professor Anthony Okely

PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

In many countries, including Australia, children’s right to a healthy future is being compromised by increased pollution, lack of access to green space and parks, and by children spending more time indoors and using electronic media.

Early Start’s Director of Research, Senior Professor Anthony Okely was awarded \$2 million for a program of research to understand and promote physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour in young children.

The project has been funded through the newly established National Health and Medical Research Council Investigator Grant scheme.

“My ultimate aim is for young children – wherever they may live – to be able to grow up with the opportunity to participate in appropriate levels of active play and sedentary behaviour,” Professor Okely said.



RESEARCH
INCOME

 **\$2.54M**

 **114** peer-reviewed
publications

Category 1 grant applications
submitted as the Lead CI – 15.

59

HDR enrolments and 14 Completions

7075

citations in 2019

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
FOR THE DIGITAL CHILD

Early Start is heavily involved in better understanding the impact of digital technology on Australian children.

In September, the federal government announced \$34.9 million for the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child, based at Queensland University of Technology and backed by Early Start researchers.

Chief investigators include Professor Lisa Kervin, who will co-lead a strand on education, Associate Professor Steven Howard and Dr Dylan Cliff. Associate Investigators are Professor Paul Chandler and Associate Professors Irina Verenikina, Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett, and Jessica Mantei.

“The Centre will build on and connect with all units of Early Start and with our undergraduate program in early years education,” said Professor Sue Bennett, Deputy Director of the new Centre.

The centre’s research will benefit parents and inform health and education policy.



EARLY YEARS TOOLBOX EXPANDS

The Early Years Toolbox is a set of playful tools – along with professional development to support effective use – that provide early childhood educators with actionable information about children’s progress in key areas of learning and development.

In 2019, the focus for the Early Years Toolbox was on the development, implementation and evaluation of the self-regulation program to support pre-school educators in fostering their children’s self-regulation.

50 early childhood education and care services participated, with results showing benefits for both educators and their children’s development in as little as six months.

The program is now freely available online, with more than 1,300 educators and caregivers engaging with the program.

“I can really see the value of self-regulation and how this program has enhanced my skills as an educator”

Early Years Participant



“They had heaps of fun and fell asleep before we left the University”

*Parent,
Wollongong Infant Learning Lab*

WOLLONGONG INFANT
LEARNING LAB

The quality of parent-child interaction has long been recognised as critical in children’s development during the early years. Early Start’s Wollongong Infant Learning Lab (WILL) is researching how these interactions in the home environment contribute to the emergence of early learning, literacy and numeracy and socio-emotional wellbeing.

In 2019 WILL had more than 100 lab visits from parents and their babies aged birth to 18-month. As well as the serious science of understanding how crawling babies communicate and how parents read with their busy babies, there was plenty of time for fun.





ENGAGEMENT CENTRE

BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

In 2019 we collaborated with 41 early childhood education and care centres throughout regional and remote NSW and ACT to inspire innovation in the early years. All nine Aboriginal Child and Family Centres in NSW – that were established under the Indigenous Early Childhood National partnership Agreement managed by the Department of Family and Community Services – are part of our network.

The partnership provides a portal into these communities to enrich development and redress the effects of geographic, social and educational isolation through leadership, support and professional development.



3,500

Children supported

“It has already led us to approach children in a different way, especially children that are feeling angry. It has helped us to support children’s needs.”

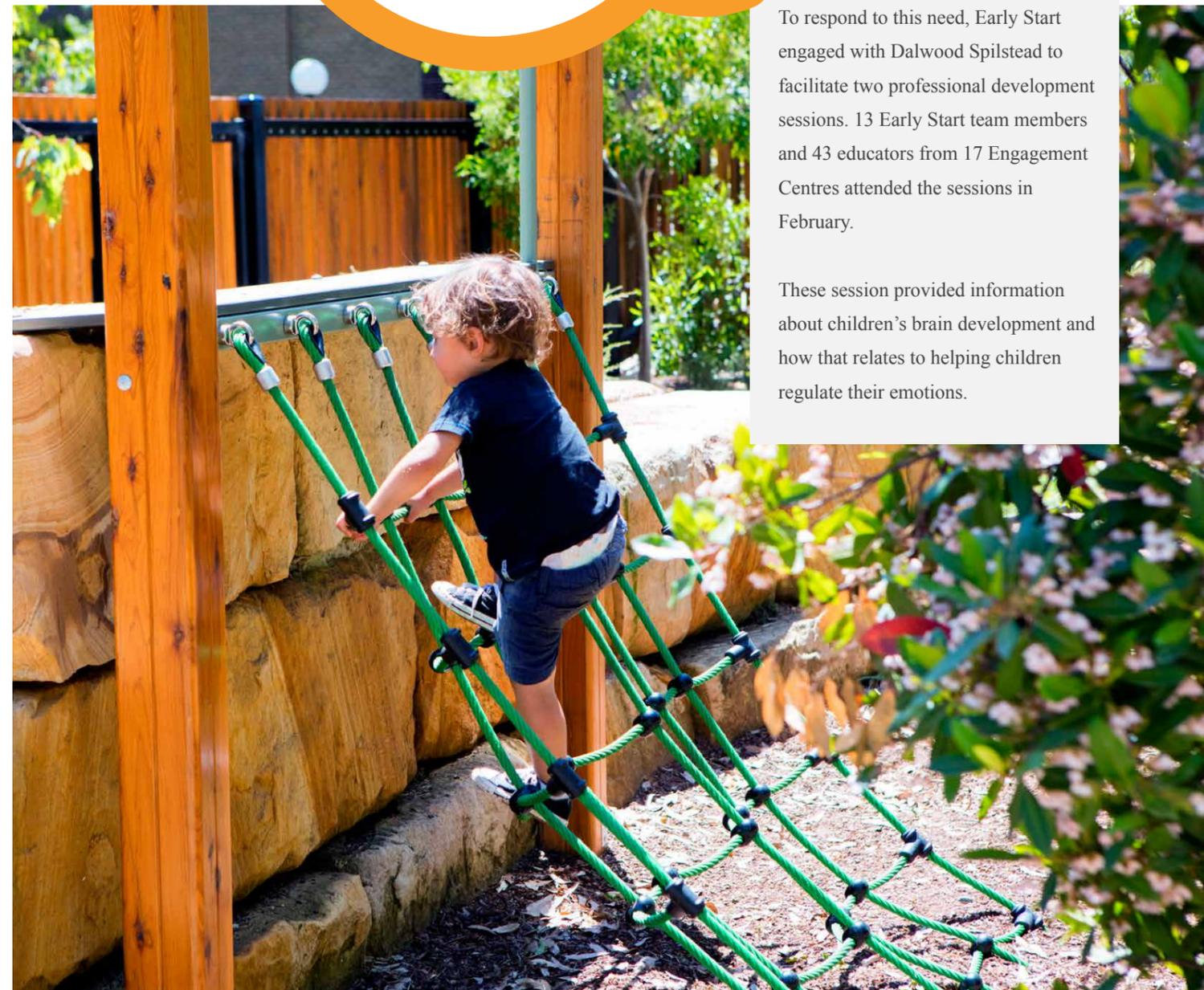
*Kiley
Basin Preschool & Long Day
Care Centre*

TRICKY KIDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How to best respond to children displaying BIG emotions was a key issue identified by many of our Engagement network educators.

To respond to this need, Early Start engaged with Dalwood Spilstead to facilitate two professional development sessions. 13 Early Start team members and 43 educators from 17 Engagement Centres attended the sessions in February.

These session provided information about children’s brain development and how that relates to helping children regulate their emotions.





REMOTE EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

In November, Discovery Space Education and Experience Officer Mitchell Crouch and Community Engagement & Research Coordinator Fay Gowers travelled to Wilcannia and Broken Hill for educational outreach.

Mitchell was there to provide children with tailored science shows and hands-on experiments.

Given the constraints around equipment that could be transported to this remote region, Mitch based his shows and experiments on air, and relied mostly on using simple equipment that's readily available.

"Being able to take the Discovery Space to these remote communities was phenomenal. Particularly when you see the children exploring the equipment and prompting their own experimental play," Mitch said.



ENGAGEMENT CENTRE NETWORK 2020 AND BEYOND!

In 2019 an extensive consultation was carried out with the Engagement Centres to guide our work together.

Educators completed questionnaires and we developed a clear understanding of how Early Start would support early childhood services into the future. This consultation process showed the most valued offerings were professional learning, in-centre coaching and mentoring.

Throughout November each Early Start Engagement Centre Coordinator engaged key educators of each service to shape a new relationship agreement.

As a result of our consultation, and the development of strategies to address barriers, a new relationship agreement was developed with 39 early childhood education centres re-signing to the Engagement Centre network for two years.

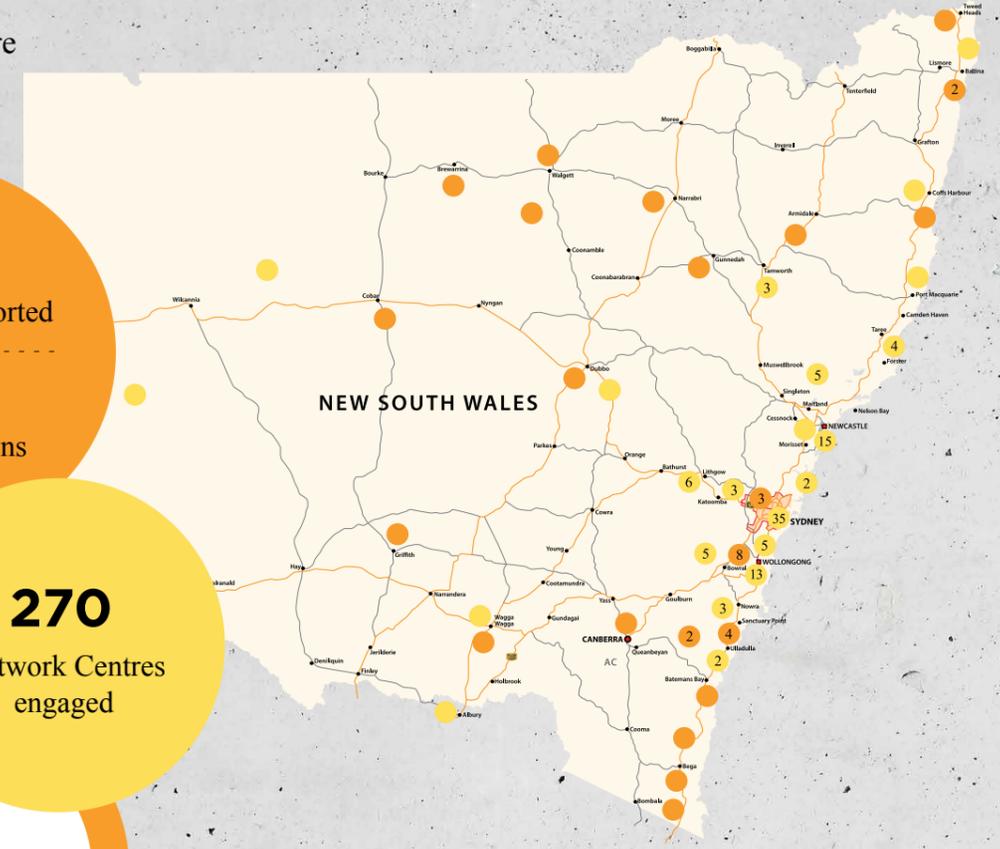
- Engagement Centre
- Network Centre

350
Educators supported

17
Virtual excursions

270
Network Centres engaged

41
Engagement Centres in 2019



SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE SERVICE INTEGRATION (SESI)

In 2018, Early Start received a \$500,000 grant from the Ian Potter Foundation to undertake a four-year project. Titled Supporting Effective Service Integration, the project aims to strengthen pathways for children and their families to access health, early intervention, education and wellbeing services in their community.

In 2019, the Early Start project team worked with six early education settings throughout Southern NSW for a pilot project to identify areas for learning and begin professional development.

"For me being part of the SESI reference group, is providing access to information that will support not only myself and our Educators but also our service and the families using it."

**Roslyne Webb, Coordinator
Noogaleek Children's Centre**



TRANSLATION

FROM RESEARCH TO THE REAL WORLD

Early Start specialises in transforming world-class multidisciplinary research into practice and policy to improve people's understanding of children's development, learning and health. Early Start has a strong commitment to evidence-based practices, programs and professional development to enhance the ways early years educators engage with children, parents and communities.

Our translation work has a direct, positive impact on children, families, service providers, schools, clinical programs, charitable organisations and government policy.

THEORY OF CHANGE



“Educators now have a deeper understanding of what ‘high quality’ is, and why it is so important. This has allowed them to be far more effective and confident advocates and practitioners.”

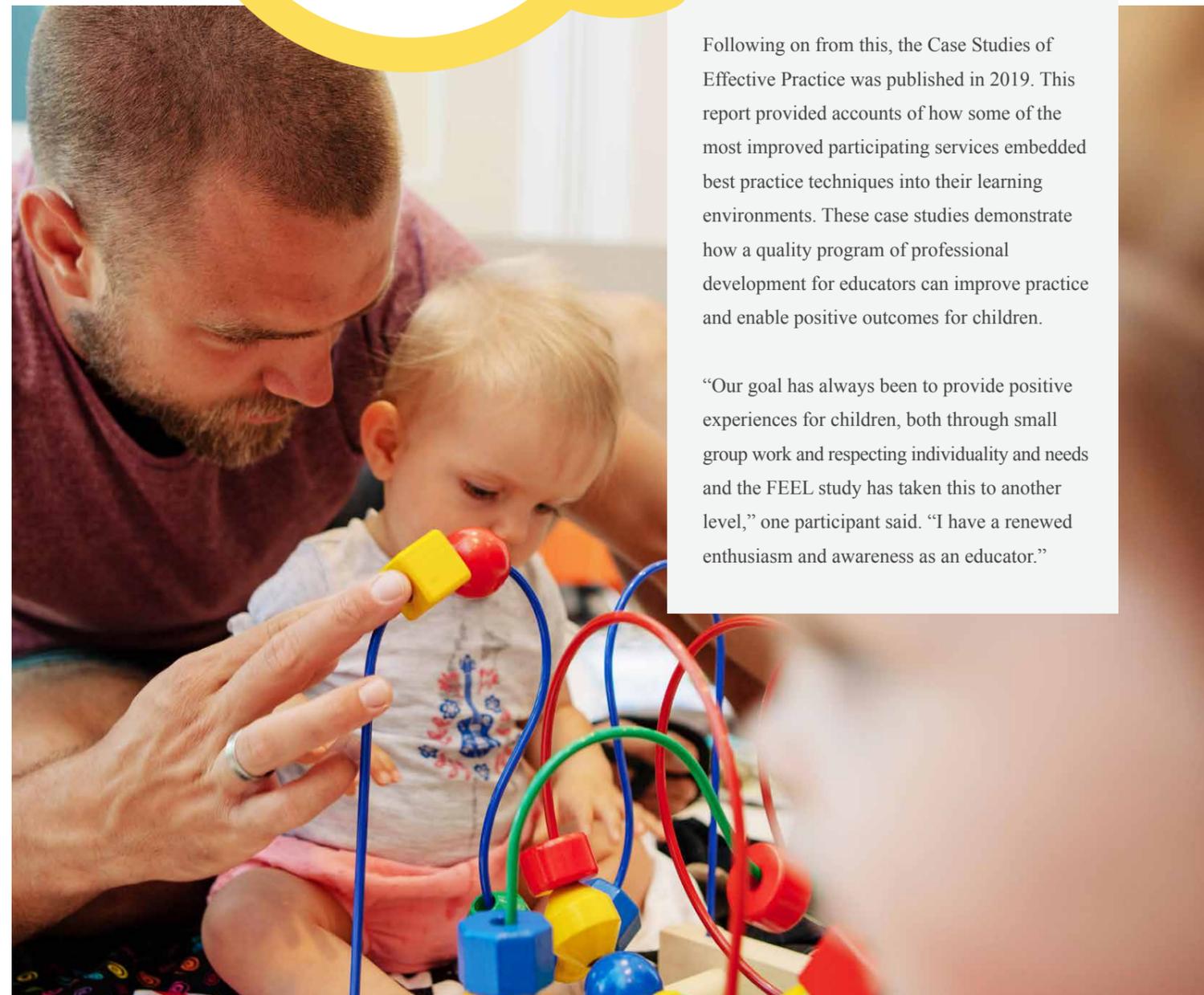
Educational leader

FOSTERING EFFECTIVE EARLY LEARNING

In 2018 the NSW Department of Education published Early Start's Fostering Effective Early Learning (FEEL) Study report detailing the results of evidence-based in-service professional learning trial.

Following on from this, the Case Studies of Effective Practice was published in 2019. This report provided accounts of how some of the most improved participating services embedded best practice techniques into their learning environments. These case studies demonstrate how a quality program of professional development for educators can improve practice and enable positive outcomes for children.

“Our goal has always been to provide positive experiences for children, both through small group work and respecting individuality and needs and the FEEL study has taken this to another level,” one participant said. “I have a renewed enthusiasm and awareness as an educator.”





PRISIST COACHING AND MENTORING PROJECT

Evidence-based professional development is fundamental to building the essential qualities that promote high-quality pedagogy.

In 2019 Early Start delivered its self-regulation Preschool Situational Self-Regulation Toolkit (PRISIST) coaching and mentoring program to seven centres, including two via blended delivery model (face-to-face and virtual).

The analysis and evaluation of the coaching and mentoring program will take place in 2020.

AUSTRALIAN 24-HOUR MOVEMENT GUIDELINES

No more than two hours of sedentary recreational screen time a day and at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity were among the recommendations of the new Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children (5 to 13 years) and Young People (14 to 17 years).

Launched by the Australian federal government in April, the guidelines were led by Senior Professor Anthony Okely and the Early Start team, and are based on the best available evidence.

Recent data indicates that less than one-quarter of young people meet the physical activity guideline. “If I could recommend a ‘magic pill’ to promote health among children and young people it would be physical activity. It has positive effects on all areas of health,” Professor Okely said.

The new guidelines are the first for these age groups to cover the full 24-hours, acknowledging that physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep are all interrelated.



LEADING FOR LEARNING

In 2019 the NSW Department of Education commissioned Early Start to develop and implement an evidence-based professional learning program, Leading for Learning

Associate Professor Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett said this quality program took an educator’s current knowledge into consideration, noting that just as educators create differentiated learning platforms for children, the same should apply to professional learning.

“Educators have so many strengths. There was recognition of what they were already doing well, but also areas that presented potential for growth and development.” Cathrine said.

The professional learning emphasised the importance of critical reflection in embedding high-quality practice with children and was well-received by attendees.

“The professional learning we went to has 100 per cent made me a better teacher. I cannot wait for the follow-up sessions and continuing the learning,”

**Cass, Early Childhood Teacher
Marayong Public School**



The Early Start team provided expertise and guidance to many parts of our organisation and led us through a rigorous review to provide great insight on the changes needed and the important value that the Early Learning Centres provide to the children and families in our system.

**Andrew Roden – System Design and Performance Manager
Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn**

SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2019

Catholic Education Canberra and Goulburn

Review of Early Learning centres operations including scenario modelling and implementation of changes.

Catholic Care Wollongong

Guidelines to legislation and regulation landscape for operating in an Early Childhood Education and Care along with centre feasibility study.

NSW Department of Education

Commenced review of assessment approval questions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

STRONGER TOGETHER

Early Start has established strong roots within our wider communities to build positive, long-lasting connections. We are focussed on supporting hard-to-reach communities dealing with complex challenges, and we work very closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and services to highlight traditional culture and promote inclusion.

7
Community Playgroups
used the Discovery Space
per week

10 community outreach
events reaching
 **1,124**
people

“The canoe-building exercise is an authentic learning experience for all involved and is just one example of how we are slowly changing UOW into a culturally rich learning environment.”
*UOW Pro-Vice Chancellor
Professor Paul Chandler*



CHILDREN HELP BUILD AN ABORIGINAL BARK CANOE

In September, children from one of Early Start’s Engagement Centres, Noogaleek Children’s Centre in Berkeley built a traditional bark canoe with the help of Aboriginal high school and UOW students, local community members, and Aboriginal knowledge holders John and Terry Kelly.

The Roads and Maritime Services, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, UOW’s Woolyungah Indigenous Centre and the Department of Education all came together to learn from each other.

Roslynn Webb, Noogaleek Early Childhood Coordinator said, “It was a great opportunity for the children to be exposed to an experience from their cultural background. The experience also allowed the Educators to include this in their programs for the children with follow-up learning activities.”

3,747

volunteer hours



67

volunteers in 2019

STORYTIME PROMOTES INCLUSIVE PLAY

The sounds of more than 30 children singing and dancing filled the Book Nook as Miss Roxee and Sam the Ukulele Man put on a Drag Storytime in July. Organised in conjunction with Rainbow Families Illawarra, Miss Roxee read books, sang songs and created art with the children.

“It’s great to be able to provide this inclusive activity to our visitors,” Matt Ball, Early Start Community Program Coordinator said. “Rainbow Families Illawarra is an amazing community group that helps families establish supportive connections.”

Miss Roxee said she felt very welcomed by the Discovery Space members, visitors and staff.

“I had a blast!” Miss Roxee said. “I can’t wait to come back for another event.”

LEGO® THERAPY

Throughout 2019 Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT) delivered a weekly LEGO® Therapy program in the Discovery Space. LEGO® therapy is a social development program for children with autism spectrum disorder or other social communication difficulties.

Alyssa Piper, ASPECT social skills group organiser, says that when children play with LEGO®, they’re more likely to interact with each other through collaborative play.

“Our social skills group was an overwhelming success, with families providing some great feedback on the quality of the resources, staff and spaces we were able to utilise,” she said.

“We had one particular family whose child is significantly anxious but has since been able to attend the space with other community members and maintain his play for large amounts of time, which is a huge achievement for them.”

Alyssa Piper – ASPECT



NORTHFIELDS CLINIC @ EARLY START

In 2019 the clinic continued to provide children and families in the Illawarra with affordable access to high-quality psychological services. This included 68 neuropsychological assessments and reports, more than 1,000 hours of individual and family psychological therapy, and training of 46 clinical and professional psychologists. The Cool Kids anxiety program and Confident Carers/Cooperative Kids program continue to be popular with 27 parents and 56 children taking part. 2019 also saw the introduction of the Chilled Group program for adolescents with anxiety, and the continuation of the HSC Stress Management Group.

Feedback from children and families was highly positive. Many participants expressed appreciation of a shorter wait time compared to other services in the community and one participant made special note of the “respectful, caring and well-trained staff”.

Integration of the clinic and the broader research of Early Start continues with the Family, Learning and Interaction theme around parent-child early attachment relationships.

2019 PLAYGROUPS

- International Students & Their Families
- Rainbow Families Illawarra with Aurora
- Black Box with Grand Pacific Health
- Intergenerational with Playgroup NSW
- Let’s Play, Let’s Eat with Family Services Australia
- Lunch Box Learning with SCARF and Kiama College
- Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT)

SPEAKER SERIES CONNECTS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Early Start’s Speaker Series has again proven popular in 2019. More than 500 people attended four presentations to hear from Early Start’s expert researchers and gain practical advice they can use as parents, caregivers and educators.”

Topics included digital technology, reducing anxiety, understanding your peers, and the power of reading.

“The talk I saw really made me see digital technology from a different perspective,” said one attendee. “It’s great to have affordable access to real experts who can talk at a parent level. It gave me more confidence in my decisions.”

“I appreciate these talks are beneficial to families, but having access to these presenters is incredibly valuable as an educator too.”

Speaker Series attendee



2019 HIGHLIGHTS



▲ For the fourth consecutive year, the Discovery Space hosted **Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service** to celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day.

More than **100 NSW Health staff** heard from UOW Early Start experts, during a seminar designed to provide a deeper understanding of current health measurement and assessment methods.

▼ The Discovery Space opened its doors to **Destination Wollongong** for our first corporate event with more than 75 members enjoying music, canapes and speeches.



▲ Senior Professor Anthony Okely was named as one of the **world's most influential researchers**, featuring in 2019 Highly Cited Researchers list from the Web of Science Group.

▼ Early Start partnered with **Richard Crookes Construction** for a 'Name the Crane' competition. More than 200 children entered the competition and more than 68 children went on a free construction site tour.



▼ Early Start celebrated its **fourth birthday** with a three-day superhero celebration. Major donor, Christopher Abbot AM, was on hand to cut the cake.



▼ In partnership with Playgroup NSW and IRT, Early Start hosted a series of **intergenerational playgroups**, connecting children and older people in a fun, relaxed environment.



▼ Early Start's **Christmas Giving Tree** initiative raised \$570 for Barnardos Australia, SCARF and Family Services Australia to bring purposeful play to vulnerable children and families.



▲ Early Start became a registered NSW Government **Creative Kids** provider, redeeming more than 750 vouchers to support children's learning and wellbeing.



▲ **Bite-Size Chef** workshops launched giving children the opportunity to put on an apron and hat and cook healthy dishes.



▲ Federal Minister for Education, the Honourable **Dan Tehan MP** toured **Early Start** in August, discovering the exciting work that has been achieved over the past four years.

Another generous donation from **Lancaster Law & Mediation** was used to run superhero workshops where children learnt about ethics and created their very own costume.

NSW Department of Education released case studies of Effective Practice from the **Fostering Effective Early Learning** (FEEL) Study.

BOARD AND LEADERSHIP

ADVISORY BOARD DIRECTORS



PHILIP MARCUS CLARK AO
Board Chairperson
Chair – Finance and Fundraising

Philip is a member of the JP Morgan Australia Advisory Council. He chairs a number of listed and private company boards and government boards, including SCA Property Group, Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust and NSW Skills Board.



MELANIE KANSIL
Chair – Discovery Space

Melanie is currently Chief Commercial Officer for The a2 Milk Company. She has an MBA from Stanford University and an AB in Physics from Harvard University. Melanie is on the Board of the Stanford Australia Association.



PROFESSOR W STEVEN BARNETT
Chair – Research and Advocacy

Steven is a Board of Governors Professor and Senior Co-Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. His research includes studies of the economics of early care and education. Steven earned his PhD in economics at the University of Michigan. He has authored or co-authored more than 300 publications.



LLOYD NICCOL
Member – Finance and Fundraising

Lloyd is a Building Systems Innovation Specialist and brings a wealth of experience in product development and sustainability. In addition, Lloyd is an Honorary Fellow with the Faculty of Engineering and Information Sciences and was an original Early Start Advisory Committee Member commencing in April 2015.



DOREEN CLARK AM
Board Deputy Chairperson
Member – Discovery Space

Doreen is Chair of the Board of Children’s Discovery Museum Limited, an organisation working towards the establishment of a facility for children aged 3 to 12 years in Western Sydney. Doreen was made a Member of the Order of Australia in January 1997 for services to science and education. In 2003 she received a Centenary Medal.



ELAINE HENRY OAM
Chair – Inclusion and Outreach

Elaine spent the last 25 years of her executive career in health and education as CEO of the Cancer Council (NSW) and CEO of The Smith Family. Elaine also chaired the Government’s Stronger Families and Communities partnership. Elaine now serves on a wealth of boards/committees including the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth.



PROFESSOR GLENN SALKELD
Member – Research and Advocacy

Glenn is Executive Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences with the University of Wollongong. Glenn is a health economist with over 30 years of experience in public health research and education. He worked for the World Health Organisation, teaching economics and evidence-based medicine in countries including South Africa, India, Iran, Estonia, China and Hungary.



PROFESSOR PAUL CHANDLER
Member – Research / Member – Inclusion and Outreach

Paul, a Bidjigal man, was the first Aboriginal person to complete a PhD at UNSW. He is a former Australian Research Council (UNSW) Fellow. At UOW Paul is the Foundation Director of Early Start and the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Inclusion and Outreach). He chairs the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and co-chairs the Aboriginal Research Advisory Group. He has strategic oversight of Woolyungah and the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and Jindaola program.

ADVISORY BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS



PROFESSOR ELLEN FREDE
Member – Research and Advocacy

Ellen is Senior Co-Director at the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University and Research Professor at the Graduate School of Education. She holds a Doctorate in developmental psychology, a Master’s degree in human development and a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood education.



MICHAEL BETTERIDGE
Member – Discovery Space

Michael is General Manager, Tourism Development and General Manager, Sales & Marketing at NRMA. Michael brings more than 20 years’ experience in marketing, sales, partner management and digital across a range of travel and tourism businesses.

VISITING PROFESSORS

PROFESSOR TED MELHUISH

Expert on research and policy in the area of early childhood. Contributor to social policy throughout the world and for the World Health Organisation.

PROFESSOR FRED PAAS

A leading mind in cognitive load theory – the design of effective and efficient learning environments.

LEADERSHIP TEAM



ANITA KUMAR
Chief Executive Officer

Anita is a passionate advocate for the rights of children and families, especially those dealing with complex life issues or living in vulnerable circumstances. She has a strong track record of forging impactful strategic partnerships across government, corporate, philanthropic, agency and sector organisations as a means to build a sustainable social enterprise.



ANA-LUISA FRANCO
Manager, Engagement Centres
(Until November 2019)

Ana-Luisa is committed to improving the quality of early childhood practices as the leader of the Engagement Centre team. She has more than 15 years' experience as a practitioner and a leader working collaboratively within a transdisciplinary team to influence outcomes for children and sector organisations as a means to build a sustainable social enterprise.



SENIOR PROFESSOR ANTHONY OKELY
Research Director

Anthony is a NHMRC Leadership Fellow. His research focuses on movement behaviours in children. In 2019 he was recognised on the ISI Highly Cited Researchers list. He is ranked by Scopus lifetime metrics as #6 in the world for 'physical activity and children'. Anthony has led the development of national and global guidelines and standards. He is currently leading an international surveillance study of movement behaviours in the early years (called SUNRISE) which involves 35 countries, 60% of which are low or middle-income.



BRENDEN LOGUE
Senior Manager, Operations and Business Development

Brenden is a skilled professional in both commercial business and government. His broad expertise includes operations management, human resources, accounting, marketing and stakeholder management. He is an effective manager who builds consensus and facilitates mutually achievable goals with staff, customers and stakeholders.



PROFESSOR MARC DE ROSNAY
Academic Director

Marc leads transformational early childhood initiatives with the goal of improving developmental, educational, and social opportunities for vulnerable children in regional, rural and remote contexts. Marc works to translate current evidence on child development and early learning into the everyday care of children and professional practices. His research focuses on how children become socially and emotionally competent.



MARTHA JOHNSON
Manager, Discovery Space Education and Experience

Martha is passionate about making learning experiences fun, engaging and meaningful for children, whilst also finding creative ways to include adults in learning. Martha has over a decade of experience educating children and adults in various roles and is committed to working collaboratively across disciplines to share knowledge and provide learning experiences that are based on best practice and research.



LEANNE GIBBS
Senior Manager, Engagement and Translation
(Commenced March 2020)

Leanne leads the work of the Early Start Engagement Team along with initiatives for translating research into practice. As an early childhood education professional she has led programs and organisations to advocate for children's rights and to create opportunities for high quality early childhood experiences. She is an author, podcaster and researcher investigating the emergence and development of leadership in early childhood education.



PROFIT AND LOSS SUMMARY

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

INCOME	2019 \$000's	2018 \$000's	VARIANCE \$000's
Fees and Charges	1,261	1,265	
Donations and Sponsorship	425	480	
Project and Research Income	1,703	906	
TOTAL INCOME	3,389	2,651	738
EXPENSES			
Employee Related	3,967	3,238	
Operating	1,124	1,180	
TOTAL EXPENSES	5,091	4,418	673
UOW FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES CONTRIBUTION	1,702	1,767	65

FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

Early Start was established as a collaborative initiative between the University of Wollongong (UOW), the Federal Government and the Abbott Foundation.

Early Start is an entity of the UOW. Please refer to UOW's Annual Reports for full fiduciary information. Early Start's Governance is through an Advisory Board. The Early Start Chief Executive Officer reports to the Board and the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2019 Early Start was generously supported by a number of donors and supporters including, The Abbott Foundation, The Ian Potter Foundation, CAGES Foundation, Graham Lancaster, UOW Student Services, Aurora and others. Research funding was also received for existing and new projects from: NSW Department of Education, Harvard Centre for Developing Child, Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Services, World Health Organisation, the NSW and Commonwealth Departments of Health and The Colman Foundation.

We also worked in partnership with a number of organisations in the non-profit sector, including Goodstart Early Learning, Anglicare, CareSouth, Big Fat Smile and Illawarra Family Services.

PROJECTS AWARDED FUNDING IN 2019

- Australian Research Council: Centre of Excellence – **Australian Centre for the Digital Child**
- National Health and Medical Research Council – **Physical activity and sedentary behaviour in young children**
- Australian Research Council – **Identifying optimal daily levels of movement behaviours in early childhood**
- Victorian Government – **MOVERS – a professional development randomised controlled trial**
- National Health and Medical Research Council – **Supporting opportunities for outdoor free play**
- The British Academy – **Understanding barriers and potential of ECEC in low-income South Africa**
- National Institute of Health – **The role of pilot studies in the design of well-powered trials**
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research – **Supporting healthy physical activity in Alberta child care settings**



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