

# Inclusion Matters

Issue 2, 2021



**Inclusion Support QLD**

Supporting educators in early childhood education  
and care services to include all children



# From the State Manager of Inclusion Support QLD

Welcome to our second edition of Inclusion Matters for 2021.

The Early Childhood Education and Care sector (ECEC) is feeling the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is encouraging to see the inspirational work of educators as they continue to work collaboratively together to support the inclusion and wellbeing of children, families, and educators within their services.

While it is important to create a positive mental health environment for children and young people, it's also important to focus on your wellbeing and that of your colleagues. So, this edition focuses on information and resources to support your wellbeing and educators across QLD share their strategies and ideas.

In this issue the spotlight is on the Strategic Inclusion Plan and the importance of critical reflection. At present 1555 services in QLD have an active Strategic Inclusion Plan which is a huge achievement and is another indication of educator's commitment to improving and embedding inclusive practices.

This edition highlights the support and resources available through the Inclusion Support Program as we feature a range of new sensory aids available through the Specialist Equipment Library, provide an insight into our visits to remote services and hear from educators about their inclusive practices.

Our ISQ Inclusion Planner for 2022 is also now available through your Inclusion Professionals.



The resilience and commitment demonstrated during these times is a true indication of the genuine and dedicated professionals within our Early Childhood Education and Care services and we look forward to continuing to support you on your inclusion journey.

Soraya Apps  
State Manager, Inclusion Support QLD



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## Acronyms used in Inclusion Matters

<b>ACECQA</b>	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
<b>EYLF</b>	Early Years Learning Framework
<b>IP</b>	Inclusion Professional
<b>ISQ</b>	Inclusion Support Queensland
<b>MTOP</b>	My Time Our Place
<b>NQS</b>	National Quality Standard
<b>QIP</b>	Quality Improvement Plan
<b>RAP</b>	Reconciliation Action Plan
<b>SIP</b>	Strategic Inclusion Plan

*Inclusion Support Queensland acknowledges the First Peoples of Australia as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the many Lands on which we work, live and play.*

*We pay respect to Elder's past, present and emerging, as they continue to share their knowledge to preserve their histories, cultures, and stories for future generations.*

*We respect their deep spiritual connection to their Lands, waters, and communities, and we are committed to assisting educators in their learning and journey towards a reconciled Australia.*

# Do You Have a Wellbeing Plan?

**Wellbeing planning for you**  
Use this to reflect on your stressors and plan for your wellbeing.

**STOP** What are my stress behaviours and what ways do these stress behaviours affect others and me?

**REFLECT** What stressors (biological, emotional, cognitive, social or prosocial) trigger my stress behaviours?

**ACT** What protective factors can best support my wellbeing?

**My wellbeing strategies**

Biological:

Emotional:

Cognitive:

Social:

Prosocial:

**Which Be You resources, tools and events will I use?**

Explore Be You and the Wellbeing Tools for You at [beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you](https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you) to further understand your own mental health and protective factors for your mental health.

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We know that a positive environment for children is important for their mental health, but it is important for your mental health too. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and Outside of School Hours Care (OSHC) services can be stressful environments. Be You suggest that reducing and managing stress levels, maintaining positive social interactions and asking for help when needed are the most helpful actions you can take to support your wellbeing. The *Planning for Wellbeing: mine, yours, ours* offers practical supports for recognising and reducing stressors and *The Wellbeing Plan for Educators* is a great place to start to plan for your own wellbeing. Wellbeing is about finding balance. Visit <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you>

Some actions that might support your wellbeing could include:

- ▶ Scheduling time for activities that you enjoy
- ▶ Staying in touch with family and friends
- ▶ Eating well and keeping physically fit
- ▶ Prioritising sleep, by adopting good sleep habits
- ▶ Engaging in meditation or mindfulness practices
- ▶ Discussing role clarity and workload with relevant members of the leadership team
- ▶ Accessing professional support





# So How Are Educators Supporting Each Other's Wellbeing?

*"At Wandilla Magic we believe that staff are the apex of our service, so promoting wellbeing is key. We have a staff praise board, photo wall and beautiful praise portfolios. The purpose of the praise portfolios is for staff to collect memories and treasures along their journey; so they have a reminder of why we do what we do on the days when it is more challenging to remember." – Wandilla Magic Childcare Centre*



*"At Buderim OSHC, once a week we dedicate 30 minutes to staff culture. This can be playing a group game, clay modelling, or a team building exercise. All educators enjoy the organised activity based around staff culture each week." – Adam Barrett, Coordinator, Buderim OSHC*

*"I appointed a Wellbeing Champion to make sure that our team feel appreciated. We have shared morning teas, silly dress up days, a jar of inspirational quotes each and positive messages pop up on our online platform." – Robyn Pomare, Centre Director, Green Leaves Early Learning*

*"At Empowered FDC Service we have a Vade Mecum (Educator Wellbeing Book) designed to assist our FDC Educators to focus on themselves more and set monthly intentions in areas such as health, wellbeing and tasks to assist with creating positive mindsets." – Victoria Everist, Managing Director*



*"Practical ideas at the centre include staying positive and promoting fun as a way of being. Recently we had Book Week and on the Friday we all came dressed up, plenty of laughs!" – Green Beginnings Innovation Parkway*

*"A simple acknowledgement everyday by saying thank you for today. Gratitude and being acknowledged goes a long way." – Chancellor Park World of Learning*

*"We promote sharing of culture with families and communities. Trish from the Toddlers Room recently shared her Maori New Year culture and special traditions in our reception area at Green Beginnings. When Educators feel valued and respected, they are given a voice and are heard. This approach creates a culture of professional inquiry as we all learn collaboratively."*







# Spotlight on the Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP)

## What is a Strategic Inclusion Plan?

- ▶ A Strategic Inclusion Plan is an inclusion assessment and planning tool for improving and embedding inclusive practice.
- ▶ It should be regarded as a ‘living’ document, implemented, updated on a continual basis and reviewed within a 12-month period.

## Why should our service develop a Strategic Inclusion Plan?

- ▶ Developing a Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) supports you to identify your current inclusion capacity as well as the strategies and actions you and your team will implement to ensure all children can actively and meaningfully participate in the program.
- ▶ A Strategic Inclusion Plan also links with your service’s Quality Improvement Plan and is regularly sighted by Authorised Officers from state and territory regulatory authorities, as evidence of critical reflection and inclusion planning.

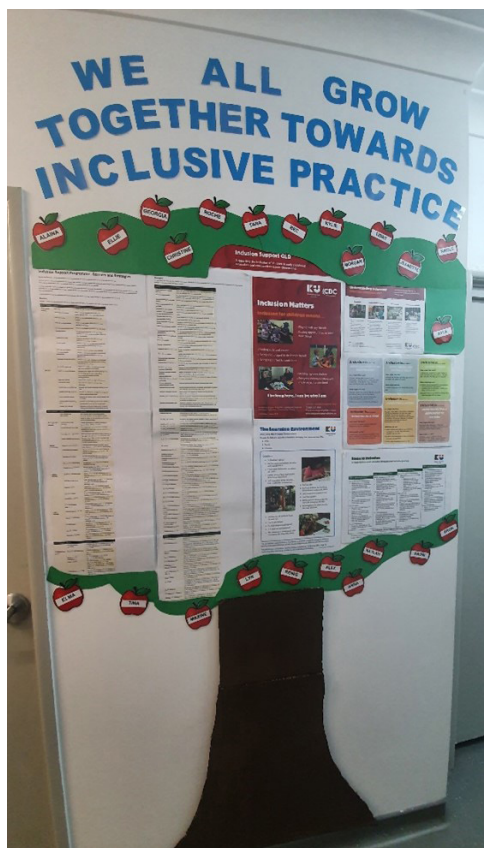
## “Our service values inclusion” sticker

- ▶ In recognition of your commitment to inclusion an Inclusion Professional will provide your service with an “Our service values inclusion” sticker. This sticker can be displayed to show families, the community, Authorised Officers, and any other visitors that you value diversity and recognise inclusion as a right for all children.
- ▶ Each year that your service maintains an active SIP, your Inclusion Professional will provide your service with a star which shows that you continue to be a service that values inclusion.





Director Renee Saikovski, from Wonder Kids ELC Mackay, reflects with us on the creative way she is using her services Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) as a living document to support educators to embed inclusive practices.



"I have created an inclusion tree with all the valuable resources that you (Inclusion Professional) have provided me, it is displayed in the staff room hallway.

Our inclusion tree displays the trunk, representing the whole service, the leaves represent each educator in our team, and the tree is a visual reminder to educators that 'inclusion is a whole service approach'.

The resources on the tree are the first point of reference for the educators to seek out, when they encounter a barrier in their environments, or with their practice and need some clarity around what strategies and actions they can use to support children's inclusion in their rooms.

I am excited to see how this visual will continue to support us in our inclusion journey. We have found the Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) to be such a valuable resource to support us in identifying what, how and who can be involved as we move forward."

"One goal we identified during our Strategic Inclusion Planning was to be more authentic in embedding Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander cultures into our environments. The pictures below are a visual outcome of the strategies and actions our service implemented in achieving these goals."





# Critical Reflection on Critical Reflection – Educators Engaging in the Kind of Reflection That Leads to Real Change



*Dr Jennifer Cartmel is a senior lecturer in the School of Human Services and Social Work. She has been involved in a wide range of research projects within the children's services, most recently about children's social and emotional learning. She co-wrote My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia, which is used to guide programming in services.*

## *By Dr Jennifer Cartmel*

Critical reflection is part of my everyday thinking. I use it to think about everything I do, especially when it comes to children and their families and the educators with whom I work. In recent times, I have been using a process called Circle of Change Revisited model (COCR) (Cartmel, et al, 2015) that has been really effective in helping educators reflect and change their practice to achieve the best possible early learning opportunities for children.

I thought the best way to share with you what I have learned is to use the model to explain what I mean. The model has four steps (Deconstruct, Confront, Theorise and Think Otherwise) and at each step it is linked to some questions to help me think 'to and fro'

– creating new ideas, which is characteristic of critical reflection. I use the model myself as I think about my practice and how I could change to benefit children and families. Also, I find it useful to use when I am in conversation with colleagues as it helps us to really think deeply about the way we work.

### **Deconstruct**

I think about how I describe my practices because it is my conversations or the way I set up the environment that makes children feel safe or cared for and engages them in learning experiences. The underlying principle to the COCR model of critical reflection is not about the children or what they are doing, but it's about me/you and our/your practice.

We need to:



*Describe the situation or experience. What practices and processes are being used here? What have we done here that we always do?*

### Confront

Am I just describing what I do or am I able to acknowledge how confident I am or how I feel about the way in which I undertake my work with children? We need to ask:

*What do I take for granted? Are there ways that I am expected to conform? What is expected by others – what is woven into this situation that is difficult for me to think about?*

### Theorise

I think about whether I am doing things just because someone told me to do it like that. How do I know the reasons why I do things? Whether it be the way I communicate with the children or my colleagues or the way I set up the indoor or outdoor environments. We need to ask:

*What information, including contemporary theories and research, can help me to understand my practices? What are the values or philosophies or*

*cultural information that can help me to understand what I do? From where can these be drawn? What do I need to read or watch or who should I talk to?*

### Think otherwise

I wonder what I could change that will make children feel good about themselves and want to become involved? Should I change the way I speak? Could I make some changes in the layout or the resources I provide in the indoor or outdoor environment? And I think about if I made the changes, which children or families, or perhaps even colleagues, would benefit and how would it benefit them?

*How else could I think? What could I prioritise what I hadn't before? What will I do differently? Who will benefit and how?*

Reference:

Cartmel, J; Macfarlane, K; Casley, M; Smith, K. Leading Learning Circles for Educators Engaged in Study, Department of Education and Training, Australia, 2015



# Supporting Services in Very Remote Locations of Far North QLD?

The Cairns Inclusion Agency Hub supports many services in remote areas spanning to far north and western Queensland. A percentage of these services are classified remote, and others are very remote.

## What does this look like?

Remote and very remote services are visited at least once every six months by two Inclusion Professionals who support educators to critically reflect on their practices and identify possibilities for change. IPs recognise the inclusion journey of each service is unique, so support is tailored to meet the individual needs of each remote service.

## Our recent visit to Thursday Island

Visiting our very remote services is extremely rewarding but does involve a range of different

travel options and our recent trip to Thursday Island included:

**Day One** – Inclusion Professionals (IP) departed Cairns on a two-hour plane trip to Horn Island. Traveling on smaller planes is definitely an interesting experience and we always check the weather conditions as sometimes it can be a little rough.

Thursday Island is then our base for the next two days and limited travel options result in IP's setting off by foot to visit the three education and care services on the island. This includes two Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) services and one centre-based long day care service. In total IPs clock up 12,000 steps in one visit.

**Day Two** – commences with the IPs taking a water taxi over to Hammond Island, which can also be a little worrying depending on the weather conditions.



The IPs then endure a long uphill walk to the OSHC service, however this is made so much easier by the spectacular views on the way.

Following the support visits to the service, it's back the way we came to Thursday Island via water taxi and ferry to Horn Island for an overnight stay.



**Day Three** – it's time to catch a helicopter to two of the outer Islands of the Torres Strait. Depending on visibility, we may see an abundance of sea life including turtles, dugongs and even crocodiles.



*"We really appreciate and look forward to the Inclusion Professional visiting us in such a very remote area of QLD. During our visit the IP supported us to develop a SIP which has been a great planning tool to reflect on what is happening and identify strategies that are easy to introduce and follow for the educators, it has helped the team with consistency and helped to settle the big behaviours we were seeing."* – Director, Lady Gowrie Thursday Island Child Care Centre

*"The IP supported us to develop an Innovative Solutions Project which has had a big positive impact on the environments, the educators have gained a*

*better understanding on how to support and help children, how to look behind the behaviours and look for a solution rather than focus on the problem. It has helped educators to separate the behaviour from the child and reflect on what they need to change or do to meet children's needs."* – Coordinator, Lady Gowrie Kindergarten & OSHC

Inclusion Professionals also travel to the Northern Peninsula Area of Cape York to provide inclusion support to educators. This includes Bamaga, New Mapoon, Umagico and Injinoo. Again, fine weather is a must, as otherwise the experience has proven to be less enjoyable!



# Using Specialist Equipment to Support Wellbeing



Some children require a little extra support to be able to be included with their peers and participate in the program. Do you have a child experiencing barriers to inclusion in your environment? Your Inclusion Professional can support you to identify these barriers and develop strategies to address these barriers. Have you considered borrowing equipment from the Specialist Equipment Library as a strategy?

Sparrow Early Learning Sippy Downs contacted their Inclusion Professional to help them to support James participate in the program with his peers. They collaborated with allied health professionals and the family to gain information around what Specialist Equipment would be most suitable for James to be included. Educators were guided by the allied professionals on how to fit and use the equipment correctly.

*“The use of Specialist Equipment has supported James’ inclusion within our program by enabling and supporting him to develop friendships with his peers. The use of the low chair has meant that James can be physically supported in areas such as the sandpit and be on the same level as his peers, thus enabling positive interactions and play. Our Inclusion Professional Donna supported us with mentoring and guidance every step of the way. She was able to role model ways to include James using small group interactions to encourage other children to join in. It has been an absolute delight to see James flourish and build those beautiful relationships with his peers.” – Laura Hussain, Assistant Service Manager & Educational Leader*

# Specialist Equipment Library

We are excited to announce that a range of sensory aids are now available for ECEC services to access through the Specialist Equipment Library (SEL).

These specific items will not require a therapist's recommendation; however, educators will be required to work with their Inclusion Professional (IP) to identify sensory inclusion barriers and reflect on how the SEL sensory aids are the most appropriate strategy to support increased inclusion of children.

Items available may help educators support children to participate alongside their peers, understand emotions, provide calming experiences, support children's concentration, focus and engagement as well as prepare for transitions and change.

So what can you borrow? Box full of feelings, Glitter tubes, sensory liquid timers, Chime balls, Mini rain sticks, Fidget toys, Disc'o'sit cushions, Body Socks, Time timers plus, Howdahug chairs, Sensory pod swings, Cuddle Loops, HART Team parachutes, Kinderfeets Kinderboards, Ems Earmuffs and Bilibos.

A current Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) with SEL as a strategy will be required as part of the loan agreement. The SIP will outline the barriers to inclusion and specific actions for using sensory aid items. Items borrowed will be capped at four types of sensory aids per loan. This will support the equitable access across the state and encourage full use of all borrowed items during the loan time. Loans will be available for Educators to use for a **10-week time frame** before return.



## What's Next?

Inclusion Support QLD will soon be offering two separate opportunities to join online sessions to discuss Specialist Equipment and its use within your environments. Topics for the sessions will be:

1. Universal Designs for Learning
2. Sensory processing and use of Specialist Equipment

Contact your Inclusion Professional for more information.



# Homebush OSHC – Setting Out to Support Wellbeing



Thirty minutes west of Mackay, Homebush State School has been providing quality education to rural children since 1889. The school motto “Building Futures Together” encapsulates their strong belief that learning is for life and their commitment to providing a holistic, child-centred education which is supportive and inclusive of all.

In 2020 the P&C Association commenced an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program with a vision to support families with high quality care, student-centered, provision of engaging programs, mutually beneficial collaborations with the school and ultimately an inclusive program that valued diversity.

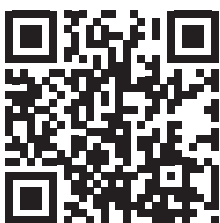
They reached out to their Inclusion Professional at the Mackay hub and requested support to develop their

very first Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP). In developing the SIP the service incorporated their philosophy to ensure the staff, families and students strengths and ideas were reflected and as a result they are now inclusion ready.

It was important to the service to create a relaxed environment that fostered wellbeing and where children experienced a sense of belonging. Strategies and actions were developed by the service to support the physical, social and emotional needs of all the children that attended the service and those who might join them in the future. The service continues to reflect on the wellbeing of their children and educators and update their SIP to reflect their changing practices.

# Wellbeing Resources and Links

Have you visited our website lately? We have some fantastic resources available to support wellbeing. Here are some new additions to the Educator Resources to Support Inclusion and Professional Learning pages. Scan the QR code or visit <https://www.inclusionsupportqld.org.au>



## Understanding Behaviour poster

This poster supports educators to critically reflect on their practice as individuals and together as a team to understand better how behaviour is a form of communication. Contact your Inclusion Professional to ask how you can access one for your service.



## Emerging Minds

Emerging Minds Learning offers free online courses specifically designed to support your practice. These short courses will provide you with a foundational understanding of infant and child mental health and the factors that impact on children's wellbeing including trauma.



## Pathways to Resilience

Pathways to Resilience have free 'on demand' webinars including supporting regulation in the early years, an introduction to self-care, trauma and attachment.



## Coming Together

*Coming Together* is Sesame Workshop's commitment to racial justice. Together with experts, they've designed developmentally appropriate resources to help you guide children to be smarter, stronger, and kinder – and upstanders to racism.







*The Australian Government funded Inclusion Agency is managed by KU Children's Services, in partnership with Cairns and District Child Care Development Association Inc.*

