



In this unprecedented year, Australia is seeing the vital work of early childhood educators. Over the next four pages, we demonstrate how much you are valued and will continue to be respected long after the COVID-19 response

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) recognises the enormous pressure early childhood educators, teachers and service leaders have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. You have been working harder than ever to provide quality care and education to children, and to support the many stressed families who have faced uncertainty about their own employment.

Many of you have navigated a complex and frequently changing operating context—the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Relief Package, the JobKeeper payment, workplace health and safety guidelines, and adapting

practice and pedagogy to keep children safe. You have done this while supporting each other and looking after your own families and wellbeing.

Much of this has gone on without acknowledgement or recognition. It is time for everyone to say thank you. On behalf of Australia's families, employers, economists, decision-makers, and everyone hoping for a safe and smooth recovery, we say thank you.

To strengthen our message we invited leaders from across Australia to say thank you and this is what they said:


Dan Tehan MP

Minister for Education,
Australian Government

'As Australians from all walks of life who have pulled together to beat the coronavirus, we owe a special thank you to our early childhood educators

and teachers who have provided continuity of education and care to our children. I understand this recent period has caused uncertainty and anxiety, but you should be proud of the way you have risen to the challenge and continued to make a real difference in the lives of our children and their families.'


Ros Cornish

CEO, Lady Gowrie Tasmania

'As has been the case for decades, educators and teachers have again demonstrated resilience and flexibility in the face of government change, always placing the needs of children and families as the priority.'


Professor Susan Irvine

Head, School of Early Childhood
and Inclusive Education,
Faculty of Education,
Queensland University of Technology

'Over the past few months, we have seen Australian educators and early

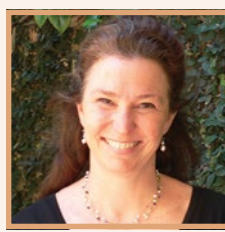
childhood teachers at their best. Thank you for continuing to put children and families first and reminding us all of the integral relationship between care and education. You have demonstrated courage, agility and professionalism and shown the community that ECEC is an essential service in good times and bad. Let this be a step forward to improved funding and support, and equitable remuneration for professional work.'


Professor Joce Nuttall

Research Director,
Institute for Learning Sciences
and Teacher Education,
Australian Catholic University

'The pandemic has highlighted the critical role of early childhood

educators in supporting Australia's children, families, and economy. Enormous praise is due for your work, which has been a lynchpin of Australia's response to COVID-19.'


Dr Jane Page OAM

Associate Professor,
Melbourne Graduate School of
Education, University of Melbourne

'Thank you for your steadfast dedication to providing high-quality education and care during these

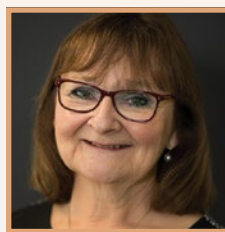
difficult weeks. Your commitment to young children and their families throughout these challenging times is a testament to the professionalism and resolve that characterises the early childhood workforce, and has once again highlighted why early childhood education and care services are essential to the fabric of our society.'


Selena Uibo MLA

Northern Territory Minister for
Education, Minister for Workforce
Training, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

'As early childhood educators, you are invaluable and your work is vital.

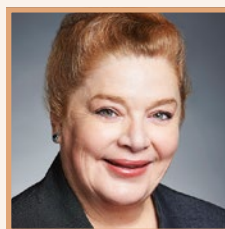
Here in the [Northern] Territory, you have assumed responsibility over and above many in our community. I know all Territorians are incredibly grateful to you and your continued work with our children. We cannot thank you enough for the dedication and commitment to Territory children and families.'


Jane Bourne

ECA Qld Branch President;
CEO, The Creche & Kindergarten
Association

'I am in awe of the dedication and strength of our early years educators and our teachers. In times such as this

it is so important to have dedicated people to believe in. Our educators and teachers have always been there to support communities, families and their children throughout our vast nation. We, your communities, are so fortunate to have you. Thank you to each and every one of you.'


Sue Ellery MLC

Western Australia Minister
for Education and Training

'Thank you to public school staff across Western Australia, from the most remote communities to our towns and suburbs. Our school communities have

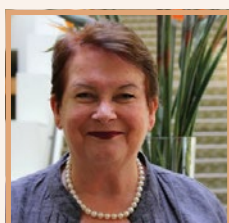
done a great job welcoming students back to the classroom, supporting students at home and frequently cleaning schools to give parents confidence that the classroom is a safe place for their children to be. It's been a big effort. Thank you.'



Dr Jen Jackson
Education Policy Lead,
Mitchell Institute

'Early childhood educators have shown courage at the frontline of the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19. You've dealt

with infection risks to keep services open; financial strain from reduced enrolments and new funding models; and tremendous pressure to support children and families to cope with the disruption to their own lives. Australia owes early childhood educators more than thanks—it owes you a promise to keep recognising your importance in the lives of children and families.'



Dr Anne Kennedy
ECEC Consultant

'If we needed evidence of the courage, commitment and professionalism of educators, we have seen these qualities in action during the pandemic.

By continuing to work during the pandemic, educators have shown us why they are an "essential service" for children, families and communities. My heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the marvellous educators who are staying focused, committed and calm in this time of great uncertainty.'



Julia Davison
CEO, Goodstart Early Learning

'When the post-pandemic parades are held, Australia's early learning educators and teachers should be up the front, showered in cheers and applause. Congratulations on the

extraordinary commitment you have shown through a very difficult time. You have proved to the few remaining doubters that early learning is an essential service and now everyone understands your true value.'



Gabrielle Sinclair
CEO, Australian Children's Education
and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

'In extraordinary times, society understands what is truly important. From everyone at ACECQA, our warm appreciation of, and gratitude for,

your dedication to the safe education and care of children. Because of you, they can flourish.'



Amanda Rishworth MP
Shadow Minister for Early Childhood
Education and Development

'Thank you to all early educators and staff who have done so much for our community during this uncertain time. Your care and compassion for our

children and families has been amazing. As a mum with two young children, I personally know how important your work is. I can't say thank you enough!'



Chris Legg
ECA National President;
CEO, KU Children's Services

'My heartfelt thanks and admiration go to all early childhood educators and teachers who have continued to work in their services throughout the COVID-19

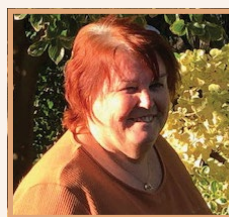
pandemic, providing stability and emotional support to children and families during this challenging time. Through low attendances and the continual threat of COVID-19, you increased your already high level of health and hygiene practices and were agile and responsive to finding new ways to keep connected with the children and families who were not attending. Your professional expertise during this time will benefit those children for many years to come—you are our heroes!'



Dr Pauline Roberts
ECA WA Branch President;
Senior Lecturer, School of Education,
Edith Cowan University

'The pandemic has highlighted the important role of the early learning sector in Australia, and I think all

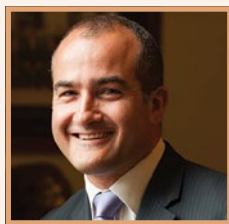
educators should be recognised for their contribution across this extremely difficult period—often at a cost to their own wellbeing. The last few months highlight the political nature of our work, and will hopefully provide opportunities for robust and productive conversations about the status of the early years ... so this recognition can be transposed into real change for staff and families. Thank you for your service!'



Margaret Owens
ECA WA Deputy Branch President;
Coordinator, Catholic Education
Western Australia

'Appreciation and gratitude to out-of-school-hours educators for maintaining a safe, secure play environment for

children. You stepped up and filled the void for families and children by providing extended vacation programs, which enabled essential workers and vulnerable children to have continuity of care, whilst dealing with their own anxieties related to COVID-19. You are the unsung heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic.'


James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier of Victoria;
Victoria Minister for Education

'Thank you to all early childhood educators and teachers, who have shown enormous dedication keeping Victorian children happy, healthy and

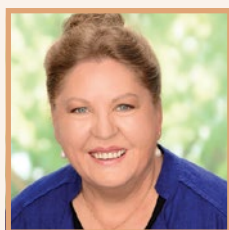
learning during this time. The way you have responded to this pandemic—supporting children in your services and at home—has drawn to public attention what has always been true; that early learning is a critical profession.'


Dr Fay Hadley

Associate Professor,
Department of Educational Studies,
Macquarie University

'As an academic working closely with ECEC centres, directors, teachers and educators, I wanted to say a huge thank

you. The dedication, the above-and-beyond leadership, and the care and consideration taken to manage the complex issues that have been unfolding due to COVID-19 is amazing. I have also heard from many families their gratitude for the ways you are working with their children to ensure they stay connected to their teachers and educators. As ECEC professionals, you are helping to ensure the children you teach are feeling safe and secure. I do believe one of the silver linings of this pandemic is that families and society have a growing appreciation of ECEC teachers and educators and the important work you do in providing nurturing and learning environments. I am hopeful that this respect for the ECEC profession will resonate well after the pandemic is over.'


Dr Carol Burgess

ECA NSW Branch President;
Head of School, School of Teacher
Education, Charles Sturt University

'I am always very proud to be a member of the early childhood profession but even more so lately. The teachers, educators and all members

of the teams in ECEC settings have made us all proud. The dedication you have demonstrated and the difference you have made to the lives of those families dealing with the ramifications of COVID-19 in our community is overwhelming. Each and every day, you show the true value of being an early childhood educator. We really appreciate all the effort and hard work you do!'


Helen Gibbons

Executive Director for Early Education,
United Workers Union

'I would like to thank all workers in ECEC for your extraordinary efforts over the past few months. Educators have delivered quality early education

and care in the face of immense pressure and uncertainty. You deserve not only our thanks, but much more than that: to be valued for the amazing work you do every day. We have an opportunity now to rebuild our sector on the foundations of respect and professional recognition for educators.'


Associate Professor Lennie Barblett

Associate Dean, School of Education,
Edith Cowan University

'Being responsive has been key to leading and working with COVID-19 and once again the early childhood workforce has shown what matters—

warm, respectful relationships and courage. Everyone who works with children has led with these attributes at this time and is to be congratulated. As a sector, you have shown Australia what it means to be a professional educator.'


Dr Megan Gibson

Senior Lecturer, School of Early
Childhood and Inclusive Education,
Faculty of Education, Queensland
University of Technology

'These intense coronavirus-induced times have further amplified the

importance of the work that early childhood educators do each and every day. As an early childhood teacher who is passionate about building and sustaining the early childhood workforce, I want to say thank you. Your professional expertise, together with the commitment, care, compassion, and kindness that you provide for young children and their families, will be remembered as part of this significant point in history. You are highly valued, and you are central to the fabric of your community, and of our country. Thank you, and please take care of your own health and wellbeing so that you may continue to do your amazing work.'