

# Resilience and Wellbeing: What works for you?

## Research Findings



This fact sheet is designed to be used with the associated video, 'Introduction to the research study and key survey findings', which can be accessed at: [Supporting early childhood educator mental health and wellbeing](#)

A research project was undertaken by Early Childhood Australia (ECA) on behalf of the Department of Education and Training in October 2021 to explore factors that support resilience and wellbeing for the Victorian early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce.

Over 700 members of the Victorian ECEC sector participated in an online survey, with optional follow-up focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Thank you to all the professionals who participated in this important research.

### KEY SURVEY AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The majority of respondents (63%) identified as having worked in the sector for over 11 years and most were in teaching (40%) or service leadership (34%) positions. There was a mix of respondents from metropolitan areas (approximately 70%) and regional areas (approximately 30%).

The survey included three validated measures of wellbeing and resilience – the World Health Organisation Wellbeing 5<sup>i</sup>, the Brief Resilience Scale<sup>ii</sup> and the Early Childhood Professional Wellbeing Scale<sup>iii</sup>.

Although the survey results indicated low to average wellbeing for some of the workforce, pleasingly the majority of respondents (72%) reported normal to high resilience or ability to

'bounce back' from challenges. The majority of survey respondents (66%) were satisfied with their position as an early childhood professional.

Through the survey and interviews, educators shared the strategies they found helpful in building their resilience and wellbeing in both their personal and professional lives.

The top four wellbeing strategies early childhood professionals used in their personal lives were:

- ✓ connecting with friends and family (70%)
- ✓ adequate sleep (50%)
- ✓ relaxation (49%), and
- ✓ regular exercise (49%).

The top five strategies educators used in their professional lives were:

- ✓ focusing on their purpose and important work with children (60%)
- ✓ engaging in ongoing professional learning (51%)
- ✓ maintaining a work/life balance (51%)
- ✓ having a strong team that works together (48%), and
- ✓ connecting with a network of peers and colleagues (46%).



## SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

McMullen et al. identified three factors which positively influence wellbeing for early childhood professionals:

- 1) the importance of **supportive, collegial relationships**
- 2) knowing our **purpose, professional beliefs and values**
- 3) the value of **organisational structures that support wellbeing**.<sup>iii</sup>

These factors were all evident in the strategies identified in the survey. The qualitative data further demonstrated the importance of service leaders and providers committing to educator wellbeing through, for example, access to professional learning, supports such as employee assistance programs and recognising professional boundaries.

This data also aligns with new Australian research by Eadie et al. which found that organisations that support staff wellbeing lowered the risk of educator turnover.<sup>iv</sup>

Recognition of the importance of early childhood educator wellbeing is growing; see, for example, [Be You](#) and the evidence base supporting this important initiative. Research also highlights the value of the ECEC sector and how the wellbeing and resilience of the workforce supports program quality and child outcomes.<sup>v</sup>

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which self-care strategies do you use to support your wellbeing at home?
- What strategies do you draw from to support your wellbeing at work?
- What ideas mentioned in the video resonate most with you?
- How do these differ from those strategies your colleagues already use?

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Remember, there are a range of services and resources available to support your wellbeing:

- Call the Beyond Blue Support Service on 1300 22 4636
- Explore [Be You](#)
- Access your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), if available
- Speak with your General Practitioner (GP)
- Visit the Department's [Supporting early childhood educator mental health and wellbeing](#) webpage.

If you need an interpreter to help you speak with any of these services, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 13 14 50.

<sup>i</sup> Topp, C.W., Østergaard, S.D., Søndergaard, S., & Bech, P. (2015). The WHO-5 Well-Being Index: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 84, 167-176.

<sup>ii</sup> Smith, B.W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The Brief Resilience Scale: Assessing the Ability to Bounce Back. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 15, 194-200.

<sup>iii</sup> McMullen, M., Lee, M., McCormick, K., & Choi, J. (2020). Early Childhood Professional Well-Being as a Predictor of the Risk of Turnover in Child Care: A Matter of Quality. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 34(3), 331-345. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2019.1705446>.

<sup>iv</sup> Eadie, P., Levickis, P., Murray, L., Page, J., Elek, C., & Church, A. (2021). Early Childhood Educators' Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49, 903-913. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01203-3>.

<sup>v</sup> Logan, H., Cumming, T. & Wong, S. (2020). Sustaining the Work-Related Wellbeing of Early Childhood Educators: Perspectives from Key Stakeholders in Early Childhood Organisations. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 52, 95-113. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-020-00264-6>.