

Inclusion Ready News



Sector Capacity Building Program

Issue 1 | February 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

From the Manager, KU NSW Sector Capacity Building Program	2	Be You – Educator Wellbeing	4
Disability and Inclusion Program Funding Application Dates	2	ACECQA and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Resources	5
KU SCBP Professional Learning	3	Moving beyond quality on the road to inclusion – Inclusive Outdoor Environments	5
Conference Watch	3	Feature Article: Inclusion Together	6
What's new on the Inclusion Gateway?	3	Preschool Inclusion Consultants in focus	8

From the Manager, KU NSW Sector Capacity Building Program

We hope that the preschool year has started well for you. Our team is here to support you to be inclusion ready for the year ahead.

I hope that many of you were able to participate in our first webinar of the year “It’s a New Year; Supporting Children and Families During this Exciting, but also Challenging Time!” with our international guest speaker, Dr Mary Louise Hemmeter, and that the content provoked some reflection and planning to help your team kick start a positive, smooth transition into the 2025 preschool year.

In our first issue of Inclusion Ready News for 2025 we share feature articles on the vital role that collaboration plays in inclusion and one preschool’s reflections on a redevelopment of their outdoor space to make it more inclusive. We also share a range helpful dates for your diary and links to relevant inclusion resources.



Emma Pierce
Manager, NSW Sector Capacity Building Program
KU Children’s Services

Disability and Inclusion Program Funding Application Dates

Below are details of the 2025 cut off dates for High Learning Support Needs (HLSN) and Inclusive Environments (IE) funding applications. Please contact your Preschool Inclusion Consultant if you need support with completing these funding applications.

Application cut-off dates for HLSN Funding	Notification of Outcome and Payment
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 6 December 2024	Quarter 1: By 28 February 2025 (Funding is for January to March)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 7 March 2025	Quarter 2: By 23 May 2025 (Funding is for April to June)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 23 May 2025	Quarter 3: By 31 July 2025 (Funding is for July to September)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 15 August 2025	Quarter 4: By 31 October 2025 (Funding is for October to December)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 10 October 2025	Final adjustments: By 5 December 2025* *Only certain types of variations (increase in hours, decrease in hours, extended absence and child has left) and applications for children enrolled after the Quarter 4 application cut-off date will be considered for payment.

For further information, please see the [Disability and Inclusion Program Funding Guidelines](#).

KU SCBP Professional Learning: Webinars

You will find all our upcoming webinars and workshops listed under '[Upcoming Events](#)'.

A range of face-to-face workshops and inclusion networking sessions are also being planned in various locations based on regional priorities, so please keep an eye on your email for registration details. All our Sector Capacity Building Program (SCBP) events are funded by the NSW Department of Education as part of the Disability and Inclusion Program making them free to all community preschool educators.

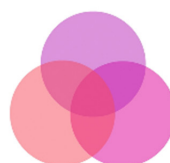
Conference Watch

Coming up in 2025

- ▶ [ECA National Conference](#):
1-4 October 2025, Perth
"Universal not uniform: Leading change, strengthening unity and honouring individuality."



- ▶ Reimagine Australia [ChildKind](#) Conference:
26 -28 October 2025, Sydney
"Understand Me, Support Me, and Enable Me": the 2025 ChildKind Conference program provides a rich blend of keynote addresses, interactive workshops, and panel discussions - all designed to empower professionals in creating meaningful, child-centred outcomes.

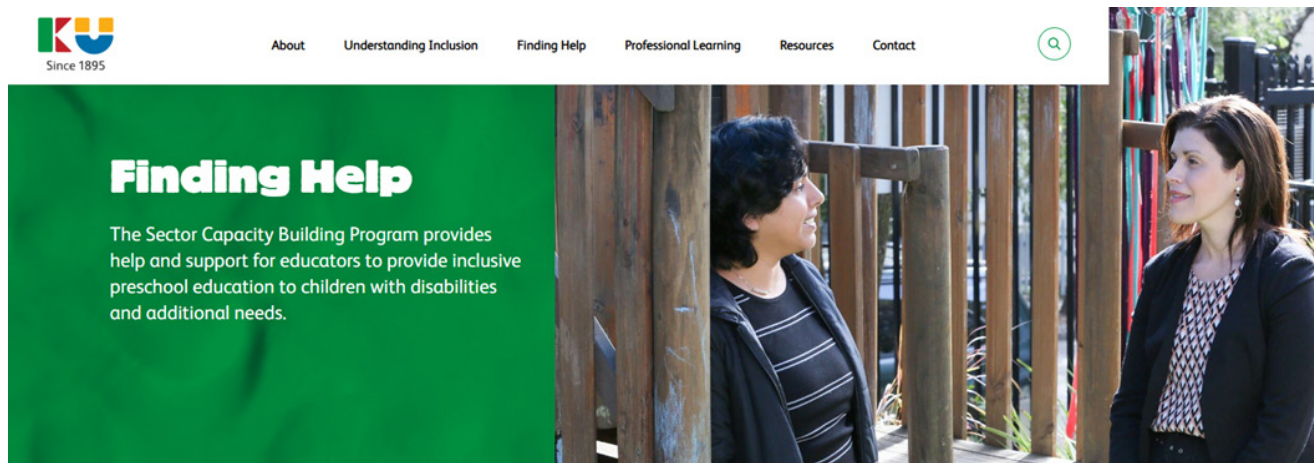


CHILDKIND
Understand me. Support me. Enable me.

Reimagine Australia's 2025 Conference
26 - 28 October 2025
Manly Pacific, NSW

What's new on the KU Inclusion Gateway website

To access our KU SCBP Inclusion Gateway website, [click here](#).



Webinar Recordings

In case you missed Dr. Amanda Niland presenting our ‘Music as a key to Inclusion’ webinar, Amanda shared information and strategies to use music to nurture relationships between educators and children, and between peers with diverse ways of being. She also addressed the use of music to help ease stress and anxiety for adults and children and support self-regulation.

Amanda outlines how music can be seen as a powerful communication tool used to create an inclusive community through the routines and transitions of the day.

You can access the webinar recording [here](#).

Transition to School: Timelines

A reminder that we have created term by term timelines in checklist form to help educators to support children and families to make a smooth transition to school.

You can find the Term 1 Transition to School timeline and checklist [here](#) and the Term 2 Transition to School timeline and checklist [here](#).

Embedding Inclusion in Conversations with Children – Information Sheet

Inclusion involves more than one conversation, more than the reading of one book and more than one inquiry or project. This resource sheet and the accompanying book list may support educators to embed conversations about inclusion, diversity, similarities, and differences with children using respectful and inclusive language choices. This resource can be found [here](#).

Transition to Preschool: Landing Page

We have created a new landing page on the Inclusion Gateway website to help you support children to transition into your preschools smoothly.

The ‘Transition to Preschool’ landing page is where all relevant resources, such as social scripts, getting to know your child and tip sheets, have been conveniently located, and can be accessed [here](#).

Be You: Educator Wellbeing

Educator well-being is at the heart of caring for children. It also has close links to children and young people’s wellbeing and educational outcomes.

[Here](#), you will find links to the Be You educator well-being guide, plus fact sheets, planning tools, event recordings and videos designed to help individuals and learning communities build and maintain educator well-being.

‘Action Teams’ are central to Be You

We know the most effective approach to supporting mental health is one that involves the whole learning community – including leaders, educators, children and young people, families, and the wider local community. We call this a ‘whole learning community approach.’

Are you a BeYou Learning Community? If not, explore [here](#). If yes and you are the ‘Action Team’ leader, contact your Be You Consultant today.

Log into your Be You Profile and find their details in your [My Learning Community dashboard](#).

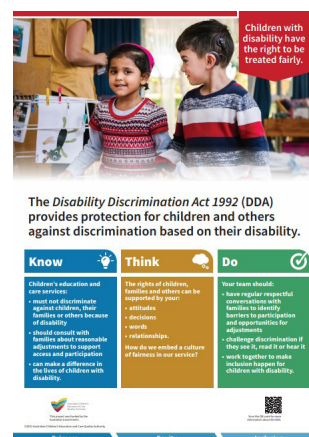


ACECQA/Discrimination Act Resources

Every child, regardless of ability, has a right to access and participate in education. It is the responsibility of educators to ensure that services and programs are inclusive and adaptable, to meet the diverse range of needs that children may have.

ACECQA has developed a suite of resources to help services understand their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and what reasonable adjustments they can make to ensure lawful and ethical access to all children. You can access the resources [here](#).

To find out more information about inclusion legislation and policy please visit our dedicated page on the Inclusion Gateway website [here](#).



Moving beyond quality on the road to inclusion

Developing an inclusive outdoor learning environment

Inclusive outdoor learning environments have the potential to support all children to dream, imagine, think, and play. They provide important spaces for children to build connections with peers and educators, practice and develop their skills, explore their senses, and help them to regulate their emotions. Quality Area 3 of the National Quality Standard encourages educators to reflect on how spaces, materials and resources can be adjusted to support and scaffold each child's learning, participation, development, and wellbeing. Through reflection and collaboration with children, families and specialists, educators can identify and address barriers to inclusion in outdoor learning environments.

"Element 3.2.1: Inclusive environment – Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments."
(National Quality Framework, ACECQA 2013)

St. John's Preschool Ashfield has recently had the opportunity to renovate, rethink and redesign their outdoor learning space to be more inclusive for all children. St. John's Preschool Director, Julie Irving explains, "our team and preschool community worked together to design an inclusive outdoor play space that is an absolute wonderland of play opportunities for everyone. We invited the children to design, draw and speak. The parents enjoyed contributing to the project and many external practitioners shared their wealth of knowledge along the way."

Julie goes on to explain that the children's emotional regulation and wellbeing has also increased. "It's like each child's full capabilities are extended as they spend time wondering, exploring, creating, and engaging in the natural world." Vanna Lockwood is the KU SCBP Consultant for the St. John's team on their inclusion journey. One big shift the team have made with Vanna's support in relation to planning, is to move to an indoor/outdoor free flow program for parts of their day. "Our new outdoor environments have meant more indoor/outdoor program with less structured times needed as the children guide the day as they negotiate with our teachers when intentional group times occur."

While the St. Johns Preschool team were in the fortunate position to be able to consider access and inclusion in the design stages of their new playground, it is not always possible for preschools to make such significant changes. Sometimes, the focus is on educators making small adaptations in established outdoor learning environments to support inclusive practice throughout the day.

Some reflective questions to consider in relation to inclusive practice in your outdoor learning environment might include:

- ▶ Does the program and routine/rhythm of the day support the needs of all children? (You might like to look at our [KU SCBP Responsive Routines and Transitions Tool](#))
- ▶ Do resources and materials allow for multiple uses, promoting flexible thinking and allowing full access for all children?
- ▶ Are there opportunities for children to plan, set up and then modify the outdoor environment?
- ▶ Can equipment, materials and resources be accessed and utilised by children of all abilities?
- ▶ Can your physical environment be adjusted and adapted to include all children and provide for their interests over time and through developmental stages?
- ▶ Does your service have an outdoor 'calming space' and/or other areas where children can engage in experiences to support them to regulate their emotions?
- ▶ Have you collaborated with children, families, and where relevant, allied health professionals to proactively identify and remove barriers to inclusion in outdoor learning environments?

If you would like further support for reflecting on your inclusive outdoor learning environments, or in relation to applying for Inclusive Environments funding through the DIP program, please call your KU SCBP Consultant to arrange a visit.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Inclusion Together



Collaboration is key

Working together for inclusion supports teams to share and build knowledge, understanding, experience, skills, and ideas and increases opportunities for children with disabilities and additional needs to participate and learn in everyday environments. By working together to achieve best outcomes for a child, you can strengthen inclusion and build a strong, lifelong foundation for their learning, development, and wellbeing.

Who is part of an 'inclusion team'?

Children, families, and carers, ECEC services and early childhood intervention professionals can all be part of an inclusion team. Each team is different because each team member brings their own unique perspective and resources to the team. Children are integral members of the inclusion team. Their voice is important and should be considered at each step of the inclusion team journey. Find out more about [who is on an inclusion team](#).

Inclusion Together – a free resource for ECEC services and all other stakeholders

To support the inclusion of children with disability or additional needs in ECEC, the NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency led a collaborative project funded by the Australian Government Department of Education to develop a free online tool to assist services to build an inclusion team that works well together. [Inclusion Together](#) provides practical tools to help make collaboration and decision-making processes smoother so you can focus on achieving best outcomes for children together.

Inclusion Together includes:

- ▶ Conversation starters to guide important discussions
- ▶ Collaboration templates and meeting planners to ensure meetings are effective and productive
- ▶ Short videos featuring families and educators
- ▶ Dedicated Help and Best practice pages for extra support when you need it

Working together

The Inclusion Together map helps the inclusion team navigate their journey of working together. There are 4 steps that support team relationships, guide decision making and help you to monitor progress.

- ▶ Have a shared conversation – share hopes, needs, problems, thinking, goals and ideas
- ▶ Find common ground – find common ground to focus on, together
- ▶ Agree on the path forward – agree on next steps and ‘who does what’
- ▶ Keep connected – check in and keep working together as the journey continues

Preschool reflections on team collaboration and inclusion:

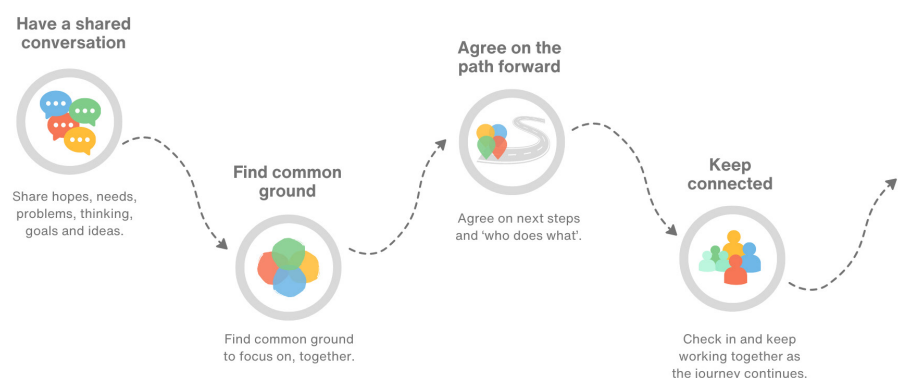
At St Dunstan's, we advocate for the child and family and amplify their voices when we engage with therapists. We welcome therapists into preschool. Our priority is to have a therapist's visit contribute to the child's learning, development, and wellbeing, to help provide educators with skills/ knowledge/training, and for educators to provide the therapist with insight into how the child is engaging at preschool; to further inform goals and work they are doing.

We want to ensure that children are not withdrawn from their peers or engagement in learning when their therapist comes in. In our way of working together for inclusion, we take a considered and child focused approach. We will invite a therapist in for an initial visit, after which we will discuss if further visits work in the best interest of the child, family, and educators. We believe it is important to have open conversations with all therapists in order to work towards common goals, discuss updates and what is or is not working.

We constantly keep this in mind and reflect on each child's strengths, ideas, and goals before making any decision that may affect their learning, development, and wellbeing.

Michelle Basha, Director, St Dunstan's Preschool, Eastwood

Image (right) is the Inclusion Together journey map:



<https://kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/resources/inclusion-together-a-map-for-working-better-together>

Preschool Inclusion Consultants in focus

We asked four of our KU SCBP Preschool Inclusion Consultants:

- ▶ What do you find most inspiring about your role as a Preschool Inclusion Consultant?
- ▶ What does inclusion mean to you?



Tahni Aitken

Northern Sydney

I am inspired by working with dedicated educators to improve practices that support inclusion. Helping educators create inclusive environments and embrace diversity drives my passion for this work.

Inclusion means ensuring that every child, regardless of their background or abilities, has equal access to opportunities and feels valued. It is about creating a space where diversity is celebrated, and all children are supported to learn, grow, and thrive.



Tracy Scott

Central Coast

I value the strong relationships I have been able to build with like-minded educators and really appreciate being able to step into preschool spaces in a value-adding way, offering fresh eyes and an inclusive lens. A highlight is having reflective conversations with so many dedicated educators and walking away feeling both inspired and proud of the capacity building taking place.

For me, inclusion offers a true sense of safety and belonging, true inclusion moves beyond access, and promotes an environment for all to thrive in.



Kelly Slip

Northern Sydney

Relationships are at the core of my practice as a consultant and I find the educators I work with inspiring in the way they are open to working together with me to build their capacity and cultivate a positive and proactive growth mindset, always striving to be more child-focused and inclusive.

Inclusion to me means that when equity, participation, access, and children's rights are at the heart of our pedagogy and embedded in our practice, every single child can flourish and succeed in being their best selves.



Amie Sykes

Nepean / Blue Mountains

I feel so privileged to work with so many different, wonderful teams of educators. I am inspired by the way educators are open and willing to engage in critical reflection with me, and the range of ways that educators adapt their practice and environments to include all children.

Inclusion to me (in a nutshell!) is about everyone having a place, belonging, and being valued for who they are. Inclusive practice, for me, means critically reflecting on (and making necessary changes) to our environments, practice, routines and rituals, communication, and programs so that every child can participate meaningfully.

Sample resource from Inclusion Together

Conversation Starters For Early Childhood Education and Care Services



Shared conversations are an opportunity to talk and listen with other inclusion team members.



- ▶ They help you to connect and start a working relationship.
- ▶ They help you to learn more about other team members and to understand what is important to them.
- ▶ They allow you to share what is important to you.

Shared conversations support the inclusion team to build strong, ongoing, working relationships.

- ▶ They improve communication, enhance teamwork and keep you on track.
- ▶ They help the team to find common ground to work on together, agree on the path forward and keep connected.
- ▶ They help you to work better together.

Shared Conversations come in many forms.

- ▶ They can be informal, such as a short catch-up at drop-off time, or more formal, such as in a planned meeting with all team members.
- ▶ They can be in-person, online, over the phone and through email interactions.



To connect and start a relationship

- ▶ Hello. Welcome to...
- ▶ My name is... My role is... My role involves...
- ▶ Hi. I haven't met (child) and/or your family yet. I am... What is your name?
- ▶ These are the names and pictures of the educators who support (child) to play and learn at our service. Have you met them all? Who can I introduce you to?
- ▶ Is there anything you need to know more about, or I can help you with?
- ▶ These are my/our contact details. The best time to have a phone/in-person... conversation with me/educator is...
- ▶ Always feel free to contact me by... I can generally get back to you in (time).



To help you learn about families and carers

- ▶ Tell me about your child and family.
- ▶ What are your hopes/needs/problems/thoughts/goals/ideas about your child's learning and development?
- ▶ What are your hopes/needs/problems/thoughts/goals/ideas about the inclusion of (child) at our service?
- ▶ What are your priorities for (child)'s inclusion at our service?
- ▶ Who are the people that are important to (child)?
- ▶ Tell me about (child)'s strengths/interests/identity/skills/dispositions...
- ▶ How does (child) prefer to communicate?
- ▶ What helps (child) to feel supported? How is (child) best comforted?