

Inclusion Ready News



Sector Capacity Building Program

Issue 2 | July 2026



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From the Manager, KU NSW Sector Capacity Building Program

We are pleased to share the news that KU has been offered a six-month extension to our contract for the NSW Sector Capacity Building Program (SCBP) until 31 December 2026. Term 3 is when we review and update your preschool’s Preschool Profile and Action Plan. This is a great opportunity to celebrate successes and progress and to identify how your KU Preschool Inclusion Consultant can support you to further enhance inclusive practices at your preschool. In this issue of Inclusion Ready News, we talk about upcoming inclusion dates for your diary including Disability and Inclusion program funding application dates and conference dates. We also share articles in this issue about supporting language, core strength and gross motor development and transition to school actions for children with disabilities in term 3.

We welcome 3 wonderful new team members this term:

- ▶ Stefanie Overton - Preschool Inclusion Consultant, working part time in the Northern Sydney region
- ▶ Michelle Barker - Preschool Inclusion Consultant, working part time in the Central Coast region
- ▶ Tracey Thomas - Preschool Inclusion Consultant, working full time in the Western Sydney region

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Inclusion Ready news!



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

Disability and Inclusion Program Funding Application Dates

Below are details of the 2026 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 any funding applications.

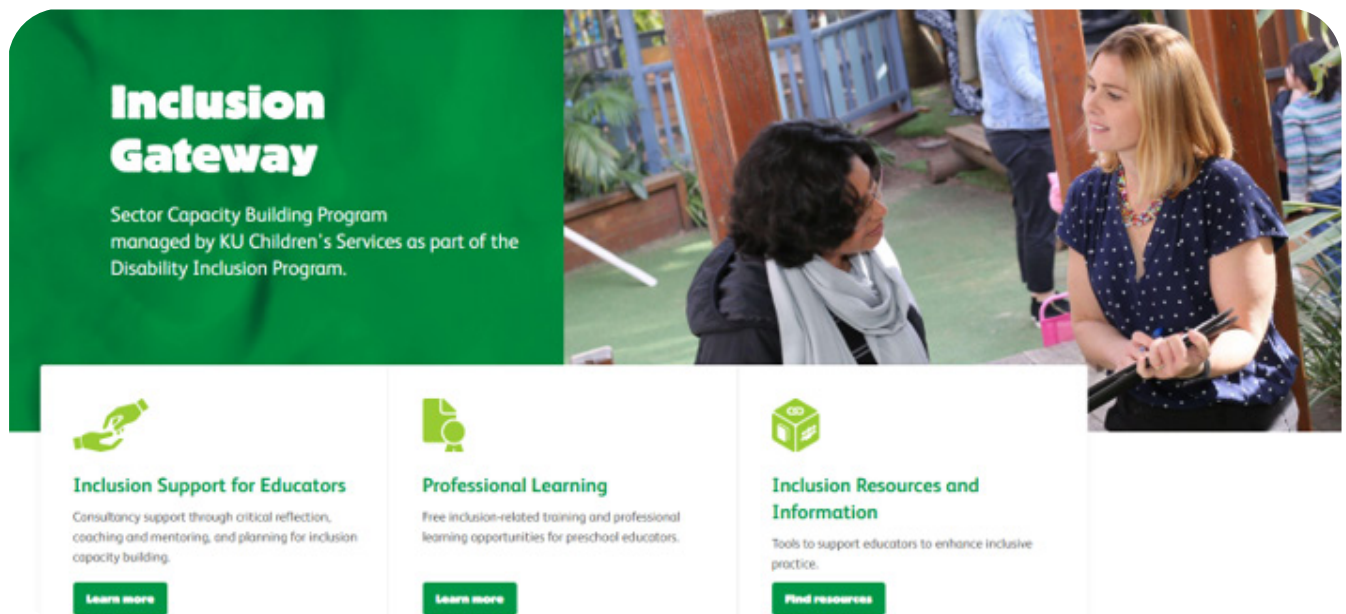
Application cut-off dates for HLSN Funding	Notification of Outcome and Payment
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 14 August 2026	Quarter 4: October (By 30th October 2026 - Funding is for October to December)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 16 October 2026	Final adjustments: December (By 4 December 2026)

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

KU SCBP Professional Learning

You will find all our upcoming webinars and workshops listed under [Upcoming Events](#) on the Inclusion Gateway website.

A range of face-to-face workshops and inclusion networking sessions are currently being planned in various locations based on regional priorities. 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, aside from required training materials for accredited courses.



What's new on the KU Inclusion Gateway website

Webinar Recordings

Recent additions to the inclusion gateway include some of the recordings from our term 2 webinars below:

Supporting Toilet Learning at Preschool: This webinar explores foundations for toileting independence and the strategies and environmental supports that may assist individual children. You will also hear about ways to work in partnership with families of children who are experiencing difficulties with toilet learning. Please find the link to the webinar recording [here](#).

Impacts of Externalising Behaviours: Supporting peers who experience others' distress: This webinar focusses on children who are witnessing their peers' externalising behaviours. It outlines ways to support the preschool community experiencing challenging situations. Please find the link to the recording [here](#).

Access our [KU SCBP Inclusion Gateway website](#), where you can explore more resources.

Conference Watch



► [ECA National Conference](#)

30 September to 3rd October 2026,
Melbourne, Victoria

“Holding the past: Creating the future.”

Transition to School for Children with Disabilities

On the KU SCBP Inclusion Gateway website there is a dedicated page for information to support educators with transitions to school for children with disabilities. You can view this page [here](#).

This page provides information relating to:

- When can children start school?
- Recommended timeline
- School options – NSW Public Schools
- Other school options – e.g. Catholic, Autism Spectrum Australia, independent.
- Helpful resources

Important activities for Term 3 of the year prior to starting school

Educators can:

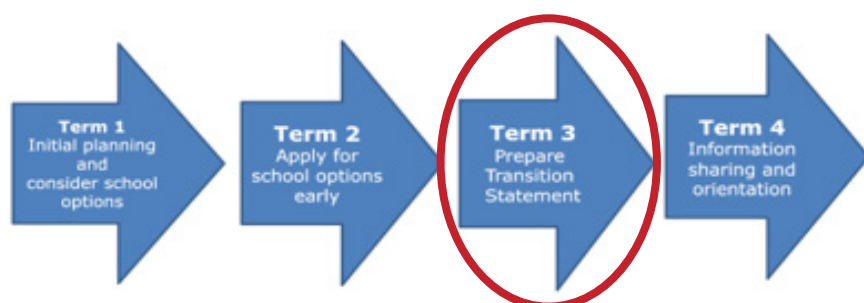
- Meet with the child’s family to discuss progress with the enrolment process for their preferred school/support class. Note their child’s strengths, preferences, and support needs in the preschool environment to help them to consider school options.
- Ensure that families have scheduled any assessments required for school placement.
- Provide any additional information that may be relevant to a particular school option e.g., access to assisted transport. Refer to ‘Reimagine Australia’s Ready, Set, School’ resource available on the KU Inclusion Gateway website.
- Complete the Transition to School Statement sharing information about the child’s strengths, needs and strategies that have worked to support this child’s inclusion and participation.
- Continue to review the child’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goals in collaboration with the child’s family and others involved and ensure that at least one goal relates directly to the transition to school process.
- Liaise/meet with the school and family to plan for a smooth transition for children with disabilities or additional needs.
- Use the Starting School Social Script templates on the KU SCBP Inclusion Gateway website to help prepare the child to start school. You will find them [here](#). Encourage the family and receiving school to individualise these scripts with photos and information from each child’s school.

Support families to:

- ▶ Consider offers of school placement and ensure that any offers are received in writing before declining others.
- ▶ Discuss with the school, the school's application for individualised funding if appropriate.
- ▶ Complete any assessments required for enrolment.
- ▶ Meet with the Learning and Support Teacher (LAST) and team at a public school, or an equivalent team at independent, Aspect or Catholic schools. Exchange information, discuss transition and orientation plans.
- ▶ Ask advice from the school about how to best prepare their child for a successful start to school e.g. check if there is a school information booklet/ or already developed story about the school to share with their child.

For more information, please contact your Preschool Inclusion Consultant.

Timeline for year before school



Moving Beyond Quality on the Road to Inclusion

Intentional planning to build core strength and gross motor skills

Have you noticed that children are arriving at preschool with lower levels of physical capability than in previous years?

Educators across the sector are reporting increasing challenges with children's balance, coordination, endurance and motor skills. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) highlights the importance of physical health and wellbeing, including gross and fine motor skills, as key predictors of children's later learning, wellbeing and developmental outcomes. Recent national data also shows an increase in the proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable when they start school.

Core strength provides the stable foundation children need for many aspects of learning and development. Strong core muscles support posture, balance, coordination and body control, enabling children to participate confidently in active play, maintain attention during seated activities, and develop the fine motor skills needed for drawing, cutting and early writing. Research shows that motor development progresses from the centre of the body outward, with core and shoulder stability forming the foundation for precise hand and finger movements. When children have a strong physical foundation, they are better equipped to manipulate tools, engage in self-care tasks, and participate successfully in learning experiences. As physical capabilities, including gross and fine motor skills, are closely linked to children's readiness for learning, supporting core strength in the early years is more important than ever.

How preschools can help

Preschool settings play a vital role in nurturing these skills through intentional movement experiences and active play. In this newsletter, Amanda Bitter, Director at Clipper Road Education and Care Service, shares how attending a Core Strength workshop through the SCBP in Nowra, has influenced educators' practice and strengthened their approach to supporting children's physical development.

What appealed to you about joining our Getting to the core of physical development workshop?

We were interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how physical development influences children's learning, regulation and participation. The focus on movement, core strength and the hidden senses provided valuable insight into supporting all children, particularly those who may experience challenges with engagement and participation. It was also a valuable opportunity to connect and collaborate with educators from other local early childhood services, share practices and learn from each other's experiences.

What strategies have you implemented at preschool after attending the workshop? Have you made any other adjustments to the environment after attending the workshop?

Following the workshop, our educators have become more intentional in providing opportunities for children to develop core strength and coordination through everyday play experiences. We have incorporated more obstacle courses, climbing opportunities, heavy work activities and movement breaks throughout the day. We have also reviewed our environment to ensure children have access to a variety of sensory and gross motor experiences that support vestibular and proprioceptive development.

Since implementing some of these ideas, have you noticed any changes in the child/ren in terms of behaviour, skill development, participation, or any other benefits?

We have observed increased confidence and participation from some children who were previously hesitant to engage in physical activities. Children are showing improved coordination, persistence and willingness to try new challenges. Educators have also noticed that some children appear more regulated and focused after participating in movement-based experiences.

Has participation in the workshop strengthened your awareness of children who may need support with gross motor, core strength and physical development?

Absolutely. The workshop provided practical tools and knowledge that have helped educators recognise signs that a child may benefit from additional support. It has increased our awareness of how physical development can impact participation, learning and self-regulation, enabling us to be more proactive in planning targeted experiences and collaborating with families when needed.

Talk with your Preschool Inclusion Consultant about an in-service on Core Strength and Gross Motor Development for your team.

Supporting children's language development in preschool

The most recent Australian Early Development Census (2024) indicated that 7.7% of children are developmentally vulnerable in the domains of language and cognition. Language is learned most effectively when educators provide intentional and responsive support through play and relationships across the day, rather than through planned or isolated language activities.

Key Practical Language Development and Strategies for Educators

Partner with families and caregivers:

This looks like:

- ▶ Listening to the family's knowledge of their child.
- ▶ Sharing simple language strategies with families they can use at home.
- ▶ Encouraging book sharing and conversations at home.
- ▶ Respecting and including home languages.
- ▶ Working alongside allied health professionals involved with the family

Intentionally respond to children's verbal and non-verbal communication:

Intentional, responsive interactions support both receptive and expressive language. A “serve and return” approach is particularly effective for children who are late talkers.

This looks like:

- ▶ Following the child's lead in play and talking about what they are doing using simple language.
- ▶ Using intentional pauses and wait time to allow children to process and respond.
- ▶ Repeating and slightly extending children's utterances (e.g. child: “truck”; educator: “Yes, a big truck”).

Embed language modelling in play-based learning:

Play-based interactions provide natural, motivating contexts for language learning. Educators can model vocabulary, grammar, and social language during child-initiated and guided play. Evidence indicates that play-based, naturalistic approaches can help improve vocabulary, sentence length, and social communication, particularly for preschool children with language delay.

This looks like:

- ▶ Using self-talk, narration and parallel talk during construction and dramatic play. “I am putting this block on the bottom to make it more stable.” “You are throwing the ball up very high!”
- ▶ Modelling turn-taking language during games. “I'm finished. Your turn.”

Implement interactive shared book experiences (Dialogic reading):

Interactive reading actively involves children during shared reading rather than passively listening. It builds vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, critical thinking and opportunities to practice spoken language.

This looks like:

- ▶ Individual or small group shared reading experiences.
- ▶ Asking open-ended “what” and “why” questions. Using “I wonder...” statements to invite comments.
- ▶ Encouraging children to label pictures and predict events in the story. “I wonder where he will go next?”
- ▶ Expanding on children's responses. Child - “He jumped over” Educator - “Yes. He jumped over the fence.”

Provide a language-rich environment:

High-quality language environments expose children to frequent, meaningful language exchanges across the day.

This looks like:

- ▶ Using descriptive language more than directive language.
- ▶ Introducing new vocabulary throughout all daily routines and program elements
- ▶ Displaying print, symbols, and visual supports alongside spoken language.

Use visual supports to scaffold understanding:

Visual supports help children with language challenges to process and understand spoken language. They are helpful for all children within a busy preschool room, where distraction and noise levels can interrupt focus.

This looks like:

- ▶ Using visual schedules and routine cards across the day.
- ▶ Using choice boards and picture cues to support 2-way, reciprocal communication and child autonomy.
- ▶ Pairing real objects and gestures with spoken language.

Explicitly teach and model vocabulary:

Educators can target a small number of high-value words repeatedly across contexts to support deeper learning.

This looks like:

- ▶ Introducing new words before an activity begins. “There is trampoline so we will need to take turns”
- ▶ Repeating new words multiple times during play and routines “It’s Fred’s turn to wash his hands”
- ▶ Encouraging children to use new words in functional contexts.

Repeating vocabulary in natural contexts improves word understanding and use for children with language delay and other language difficulties.

The Brighter Beginnings Connect & Communicate Toolkit created by the NSW Department of Education and NSW Health is designed to equip early childhood educators with information and resources on 4-year-old communication development to use in everyday practice. The tool kit includes resources educators can adjust to suit your preschool context.

You can find these resources here: [Brighter Beginnings Connect & Communicate Toolkit](#)

Preschool Inclusion Consultants in Focus

Meet our 3 new KU SCBP Preschool Inclusion Consultants:



Tracey Thomas
Western Sydney

Tracey is an early childhood teacher with over 20 years' experience. She holds a Bachelor of Education and Diploma of Children's Services & is currently studying a Graduate Certificate in Inclusive Education. Throughout her career, she has held a variety of leadership and teaching roles, including room teacher, educational leader and centre director working across preschools, long day care services and supported playgroups.

Tracey is committed to fostering positive, collaborative, and solution focused workplace cultures to ensure educators feel supported and empowered to achieve the best outcomes for all children.



Stef Overton
Northern Sydney

Stef has been working as an early years educator in both preschools and long day care centres for over 25 years - both as an educator and Director. She has a Bachelor of Education, a Cert IV in Training and Assessment, and is currently completing a post graduate certificate in Inclusive Education at Western Sydney Uni.

Stef has worked collaboratively with allied health services over the past 10 years both as an educator and as a parent with lived experience supporting diverse learners. Stef is especially passionate about understanding children's sensory regulation needs in order to support their inclusion and engagement.



Michelle Barker
Central Coast

Michelle has worked across early childhood and primary education for the last 14 years across the UK and Australia. With a degree in Psychology and Post Graduate Diploma in Inclusive Education, she has worked across mainstream and special education, including leadership roles, such as Assistant Principal for Inclusion- as well as roles in allied health and Early Intervention.

With a strong focus on inclusive practice supporting children with diverse developmental needs, Michelle has a passion for creating environments where every child feels understood, valued and able to participate. Her approach is strengths-based and relationship-focused, recognising that meaningful inclusion begins with understanding each child and empowering the adults around them.

She enjoys collaborating with educators to reflect on their practice, build confidence and create inclusive environments where all children can thrive.