

2013



## trauma and young children

a caring approach

Final Report

January 2013

WOMEN'S HEALTH  
GOULBURN NORTH EAST



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Further copies of this report are available from: Women's Health Goulburn North East

Phone: 03 5722 3009

Email: [whealth@whealth.com.au](mailto:whealth@whealth.com.au)

Web: [www.whealth.com.au](http://www.whealth.com.au)



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## Acknowledgements

### **Committee members:**

**Angela Craven** – Early Childhood Network Coordinator, Rural City of Wangaratta

**Susie Furlan** – Coordinator, Wangaratta Child Care Centre

**Kim Cater** – Coordinator Children's Services, Rural City of Wangaratta

**Di Goldsworthy** and **Madonna Flanagan** – Senior Early Childhood Development Coordinators, Queen Elizabeth Centre

**Debra Kiley** – Koorie Education Coordinator, Department Education Early Childhood Development

**Louise Scheidl** – Mental Health Promotion, North East Child and Adolescent Mental Health

**Julie Tyler** – Project Manager, Women's Health Goulburn North East

**Judy O'Keefe** – Resource Development, Scott & Associates Consulting

### **Consultation:**

**Michelle Clarke** – Child First Alliance

**Jenny Citroen** – Manager of Day Care, Upper Murray Family Care

**Linda Baker** – Early Years Network, Upper Murray Family Care

**Judy Davis** – Family Violence Integration Coordinator

**Sandra Forrest** – Indigo Shire

**Karyn Forge** and **Christine Layley** – Yarrunga Primary School

**Megan Hanley** – Junction Support Services

**Sharon Heson-Smith, Karen MacNamara, Christine Downing** – DEECD

**Deb Mims** – Foster carer

**Julie Wilkins** and **Vanessa Dodd** – Out of Home Care, Upper Murray Family Care

**David House** and **Simone Arnold** – Bumblebees Childcare, Wodonga

### **Consortium members:**

Rural City of Wangaratta

Benalla Rural City

City of Wodonga

Shire of Mansfield

Women's Health Goulburn North East

Early Years Network

### **Evaluation**

This project was evaluated externally by Deb Nicholson Consulting – [www.debnicolson.com](http://www.debnicolson.com).

## Executive Summary

*Trauma and young children – a caring approach* was a six-month project initiated to:

- design, deliver and evaluate a suite of professional development activities and training resources for early educators working with young children (0–8 years) across north-east Victoria
- produce a community/hospital waiting room DVD showcasing opportunities for parents and carers to help their children learn.

The project responded to an identified need to better equip educators and caregivers to provide a positive environment for children with trauma to learn, play and thrive. It provided early childhood educators with access to the expertise of international, national and local experts in the impact of child trauma on learning and development, and occasions to establish a shared understanding of best practice.

The project was funded in June 2012 by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) under the *Child Aware Approaches* initiative, and managed by Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE).

Project outcomes include collaboration between organisations, the formation of new networks and partnerships, and a wealth of information and resources freely available on the internet<sup>1</sup> for all educators and interested persons to access. This body of knowledge alone is of significant value to the sector.

A series of recommendations to assist with the embedding of the Professional Development Training Resource Kit is included on page 29 of this report.

### Snapshot

The Conference, Seminar, Project Launch and Professional Development Training Resource Kit Rollout reached approximately 350 participants representing more than 100 agencies from north-east Victoria.

All events were overwhelmingly evaluated as positive and as meeting a significant need in the target group to raise awareness and improve responsiveness when working with children with trauma.

Despite its very short timeframe, the project achieved all its objectives. A framework has been established to roll out training across the region through a network of informed and trained staff representatives committed to embedding the learning in their organisations and sectors.

In June a Project Committee was established, whose efforts, alongside consultation with key stakeholders, enabled insight into the needs of each sector to be addressed throughout the project.

The project activities began with a Conference for 134 early childhood educators. This was followed by a briefing session (the Launch Dinner) attended by 40 senior educators and community professionals, again with the aim to raise awareness about the impact of trauma on young children and how this project will better equip north-east Victoria to support children. An opportunity arose in the early stages of the project for Dr Dave Zeigler, an international child trauma expert, to deliver a full-day Seminar attended by 117 early childhood educators.

The three professional development opportunities for early childhood educators and professionals were extraordinarily well received by the sector. An overwhelmingly positive evaluation demonstrated significant increases in participants' awareness about the impact of child trauma, and in their confidence and skill level in responding to child trauma.

Concurrently a suite of Professional Development Training Resources were developed as part of a kit comprising:

- **Toolbox Talks** (3 x 20 minutes face-to-face) for delivery during staff meetings and professional development days to introduce the issues associated with caring for children with trauma
- **Professional Development Modules** (3 x 6 hours face-to-face) looking at the impact of trauma on young children, developing strategies for working with young children with trauma and their families/carers and building resilience
- **Applying the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Principles** (8 x 6 hours face-to-face) modules addressing each of the Practice Principles
- **a Self-paced Learning Package** comprising 15 modules including five hours of DVD presentations from local, national and international subject matter experts
- **a literature review.**

Fifty-five key stakeholders met to familiarise themselves with the resources and to discuss opportunities for collaboration and implementation.

A community DVD was produced to raise awareness about providing a healthy environment for children to grow and develop, and is available for free on the WHGNE website.

#### **Benefits of *Trauma and young children – a caring approach***

- Enriches and reflects on current practice
- Fits into the national and Victorian Early Years Learning and Development frameworks
- Recognises the issues faced by regional and rural early childhood educators
- Is inclusive of all children
- Provides a consistent language, understanding and practice across the early childhood sectors
- Offers flexible professional development and learning options for early childhood educators regardless of their previous experience

*Trauma and young children – a caring approach* brings best practice to north-east Victoria, encouraging services to use a common language and supporting strategies across the early childhood sector. The project seeks to extend the ability of early childhood services to identify and respond proactively to children with trauma, and their families.

## Introduction

Trauma impedes children's learning and development.<sup>1</sup> Infants and young children are especially at risk of serious emotional, psychological, social, behavioural and developmental consequences.

The statistics are alarming. For example, one in four Victorian children are the victims of family violence.<sup>2</sup> The urgent need to find a way to raise awareness of and respond to this issue brought early childhood educators and services in north-east Victoria together to develop an innovative, collaborative response. The project, while addressing the issue of trauma related to family violence, also deals with the impact of all forms of trauma, including generational, sexual abuse, and neglect.

*Trauma and young children – a caring approach* brings best practice to north-east Victoria and encourages services to adopt a common language and support strategies across the early childhood sector. The project has extended the ability of early childhood services to identify and respond proactively to children who have suffered the impacts of trauma, and their families. It has identified and addressed the need to better equip educators and caregivers to provide a positive environment for these children to learn, play and thrive.

## Rationale

Early childhood educators in north-east Victoria have found that they were encountering infants and children from newborns to eight year olds who were suffering the effects of trauma in their lives. These educators expressed a desire to enhance their existing knowledge of child development by focusing on issues that are most relevant to understanding the impact of trauma. They wanted a deeper understanding of concepts such as attachment, neurobiology and the impact of trauma on learning and development, and to develop strategies to work more effectively with children and their parents or carers. For this group, and others working in the early childhood sector, accessing professional development in the traditional ways is often unviable because of competing priorities, and limited capacity to release staff from face-to-face work.

### Scope

The project covered the eight local government areas of Wangaratta, Benalla, Mansfield, Wodonga, Indigo, Towong, Alpine and Moira.

The project targeted early childhood educators and carers working with children from 0–8 years old.

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<sup>1</sup> Perry, B and Pollard, R *Homeostasis, Stress, Trauma and Adaptation: A Neurodevelopment View of Childhood Trauma*, 1998, [www.childtrauma.org](http://www.childtrauma.org).

<sup>2</sup> *Measuring Family Violence in Victoria, Victorian Family Violence Database, Volume 5, Eleven Year Trend Analysis 1999–2010*, Department of Justice, 2012.

## Objectives

1. To *identify good practice and/or research various approaches* that have been taken in community services to meet the needs of children and young people experiencing, exposed to or at risk of exposure to domestic/family violence, mental illness and sexual abuse, recognising that substance abuse issues may intersect with these risks, and to document the strategies that have proven to be effective.
2. To *improve or enhance the service response* for children and young people experiencing, exposed to or at risk of exposure to domestic/family violence, mental illness and sexual abuse, recognising that substance abuse issues may intersect with these risks, and to document the strategies that have proven to be effective.

## Project methodology

### Background

In May 2012, a small cross-sectoral group led by the Early Childhood Network approached the Family Violence Integration Coordinator at WHGNE to collaborate on developing a proposal for FaHCSIA. The group identified that a partnership was required to address the needs outlined above. There was concern among members of the Early Childhood Network about the number of early childhood educators coming into contact with children impacted by trauma. Frontline workers therefore needed to have access to information and training to assist them in identifying and responding to these children through a seamless approach coordinated with other sectors and agencies.

In June 2012, a Project Manager was appointed from WHGNE and a Project Committee was established. The Committee comprised representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (including the Koorie Education Coordinator), North East Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, local government, childcare centres, and early childhood development workers from the Queen Elizabeth Centre. It was evident from early on that the Committee was a workable size, and over the course of the project was able to build trust and good relationships that enabled the needs of each sector to be recognised and addressed through the project.

### Collaboration

In June 2012, the Committee met to determine the objectives and outcomes for the project. This collaboration was an important part of the development and implementation process – aligning representatives from all of the early childhood sectors, providing optimal conditions to bring best practice to the region and developing consistent shared understandings and language. Key workers were identified and all were willing to be involved, providing consultation and attending alternative meetings or communicating by phone or email.

The first task of the Committee was to review the project plan and begin implementation of the project activities. The short timeline encouraged the Committee to bring greater focus to its work. The Committee met monthly for a total of seven official meetings.

Many informal comments emerged throughout the project that endorsed the importance of cross-sectoral involvement in the project and expressed people's appreciation of the opportunity to work together, not only at a committee level but also on the project activities.

Collaboration established with agencies outside the local government areas has greatly enriched the project. For example, early in the project it was discovered that two other agencies (Berry Street and The Benevolent Society) were working on their own projects aimed at addressing the impact of trauma on young children. The Project Manager contacted them and arranged a conference call to learn about each project and discuss opportunities for collaboration and sharing. An additional meeting was held in Melbourne. The unintended but greatly welcomed outcome is that each agency has developed resources for different audiences and agreed to share their final resources.

Effort was made to pair the project's activities with outside activities and professional development – for example, 'Identifying Family Violence Training' was held alongside the project specifically for early childhood educators.

### **Indigenous perspective**

The Koorie Education Coordinator for the DEECD opened the conference and provided insight to the audience on the historical and intergenerational trauma that continues to impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

The DEECD Koorie Engagement Support Officer team who attended the conference connected and interacted with the keynote speaker presentations and workshops. Their experience and role clearly link to the relevance and recognition of how the historical aspects can be understood to achieve greater support and outcomes in a collaborative way when working with early years providers and families.

The project deliverables have aligned with and have initiated further professional development for the DEECD Koorie workforce. This workforce has since developed and implemented combined training with the early years sector to encourage shared cultural learning and practice to increase Koorie family and child engagement.

Professional development activities to increase knowledge in the area of trauma and young children at a regional level for the Koorie workforce will continue in 2013, and will focus on their own capacity to deliver and support their communities through participating in the Koorie-specific 'Yarning Up On Trauma' training package.

Debra Kiley

## Deliverables

The deliverables of the project were to:

- conduct a conference for early childhood educators to raise awareness about the impact of trauma on young children
- arrange a briefing session (the Project Launch) for senior educators and community professionals to raise awareness about the impact of trauma on young children and to launch the Professional Development Training Resource Kit
- develop a suite of Professional Development Training Resources for early childhood educators
- train key stakeholders to deliver the training resources in the sector.

An opportunity arose in the early stages of the project for Dr Dave Zeigler, an international child trauma expert, to deliver a full-day Seminar. The seminar program is included in Table 1 below. The project's activities reached a total direct audience of 346 professionals.

**Table 1 Project events and activities**

Date – 2012	Event	Participants
10 September 9.30am – 4.30pm	<b>A one-day Conference</b> for early childhood educators working with young children. The conference showcased expert speakers Gregory Nicolau, George Habib and Robyn Miller provided participants with an opportunity to attend a hands-on workshop as part of the day.	<b>134</b>
7 November 6.30pm – 9.00pm	<b>A Launch Dinner</b> provided an opportunity for principals, preschool directors and community service managers to hear about the project's objectives, to network and to meet the expert speakers. The guest speakers were Dr Sonia Sharp, Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood Development Group, DEECD, who spoke about her experiences of working with children and how important it is to make a difference to each and every child and how this project will equip the north-east to support these children to grow and learn; and Dr Dave Zeigler, who previewed his presentation for the next day's Seminar.	<b>40</b>
8 November 9.30am – 4.30pm	<b>A one-day Seminar</b> for early childhood educators working with young children. This Seminar provided an opportunity for over 100 participants to hear from international childhood trauma expert, Dr Dave Zeigler.	<b>117</b>
20/22 November Wangaratta and Wodonga 10.30am – 12.30pm	<b>Professional Development Training Resource Kit Rollout.</b> Supervisors, managers, Student Support Service Officers, and Early Years Development Advisors were introduced to the resources that enable the delivery of professional development in their service or sector.	<b>55</b>

To be rolled out in 2013, freely available on the WHGNE website	<p><b>Professional Development Training Resource Kit</b> for educators working with young children.</p> <p>77 hours of face-to-face professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toolbox Talks (3 x 20 minutes) for delivery during staff meetings and professional development days to introduce the issues associated with caring for children with trauma, and practice principles</li> <li>• Professional Development Modules (3 x 6 hours)</li> <li>• Applying the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Principles – face-to-face modules (8 x 6 hours)</li> <li>• a Self-paced Learning Package – 15 self-paced learning modules including five hours of DVD presentations from local, national and international subject matter experts</li> <li>• a literature review,</li> </ul> <p>DVD for community centres, medical centre waiting rooms etc. to raise awareness about providing a healthy environment for children to grow and develop.</p>	<p><b>Not yet counted but estimated to be in the mid to high hundreds before June 2013</b></p> <p><b>List of 533 agencies</b></p>
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## Evaluation methodology

Given the short timeframe and the multiple events to be evaluated, the project team and the evaluator agreed that simple ‘pre and post’ or post-event questionnaires would be utilised throughout. The questionnaires focused chiefly on measuring a shift in the awareness of the issues related to young children experiencing trauma, in the capacity to respond to trauma in young children and in the skill levels before and after each event. In the ‘Train the Trainer’ rollout the goal was to introduce participants to the resource kit and establish a level of confidence with the materials in order to ‘cascade’ the training to colleagues and/or other relevant groups. In order to meet the key selection criteria established for the project by the funding body, FaHCSIA, participants were also asked to comment upon the planning and conduct of each event. The Project Consultant developed an evaluation tool to use with the Training Rollout (analysed by the Project Evaluator), and the Project Manager developed a Survey Monkey tool for ongoing data collection in relation to the training rollout and use of the resource kit. All questionnaires contained a combination of multiple choice ‘scaling’ questions and invitations to provide narrative answers. All responses were analysed and tabled. Narrative responses were analysed according to similar responses and only the top two responses are set out in the next section.

## Methodology summary

1. Conference – pre- and post-questionnaire used
2. Project Launch Dinner – post-questionnaire used
3. Seminar – pre- and post-questionnaire used
4. Training rollout sessions – post-questionnaire used
5. Professional Development Training Resource Kit (available online) – online Survey Monkey questionnaire used

### Snapshot

The *Trauma and young children – a caring approach* events directly reached 346 people in the north-east region of Victoria between September and November 2012. Of these 346, 44 per cent were from the children's services sector, and 25 per cent were from the education sector (including government and non-government primary and secondary schools, special development schools, Tertiary and Further Education providers and universities). The primary school sector made up over half of the education sector representation. Other sectors represented were community education and health information centres (4 per cent), hospitals (3 per cent), community health services (3 per cent) and councils (2 per cent). There are plans to distribute the community waiting room DVD to 533 agencies and organisations before the end of the year. The remaining 19 per cent were made up of housing services, child protection workers, child/adolescent mental health services, faith organisations, specific community-based children's programs and participants who did not state a connection to a specific organisation.

## Evaluation

### Conference for Early Childhood Educators

The conference was held on 10 September 2012 in Wangaratta with 134 highly skilled and qualified professionals in attendance. It provided an opportunity for early childhood educators and other professionals working with children or families to learn from three experts: Robyn Miller, the Principal Practitioner for the Child Protection and Family Services Branch at the Victorian Department of Human Services; Gregory Nicolau, the Director and Consultant Psychologist of Australian Childhood Trauma Group; and George Habib, a Clinical Psychologist and the Discipline Senior for Psychology at the Early in Life Mental Health Service at Southern Health. The three presenters, experts in the child trauma field, were engaged to help conference participants to increase their awareness, confidence and skills in responding to children with trauma. The conference was designed so that expert presentations took place in the morning and workshops in the afternoon, and a plenary was held at the end of the day with two of the three presenters. Participants heard all speakers in the morning and were then asked to choose one workshop to attend in the afternoon. Extensive resources were set out in the foyer for participants to purchase.

Participants were asked to complete a pre-conference questionnaire to identify their workplace, occupation, relevant qualifications, length of time spent working with young children, and whether they had previously attended training on the topic. The main purpose of both the pre-conference and post-conference questionnaires, however, was for participants to self-assess their level of awareness and skill in recognising and responding to children with trauma. The stated goal of the conference was to raise awareness and heighten skill level in this area. We also wanted to highlight the training opportunities being developed through the project, and to gain feedback from participants on how they might make use of such opportunities in their workplace and whether they wanted more information about future training about young children and trauma—80 per cent of participants provided their contact details to be informed about future training. The following sections outline other findings from the pre- and post-conference evaluation questionnaires.

### **Who participated?**

Names and contact details have been collated in a database held at WHGNE for the purpose of keeping participants informed of future training opportunities.

### **Where from?**

Thirty different workplaces were represented at the conference, with the highest representation from Upper Murray Family Care and the DEECD. There were a high proportion of early childhood educators, including childcare workers, social workers, primary and secondary teachers, child protection workers and Koori Engagement Support Officers.

### **Qualifications**

Participants were asked about their relevant qualifications for working with children with trauma. Half of the participants (50 per cent) had Bachelor-level qualifications, and just under one-third (32 per cent) had Certificate 3 or 4, Diploma or Associate Diploma, while 14 per cent had higher degrees.

### **Length of time working in the field**

Among the participants, the average time spent working with young children was 29 years. The least amount of experience was two months and the most was 45 years.

**Participants' combined experience working with young children was 1696 years!**

### **Previous training or professional development**

Of all of the participants, 55 per cent had previously attended training or professional development on this topic and 42 per cent had not. Many participants had previously attended training or professional development delivered by one or more of the expert speakers. Three per cent did not respond to this question.

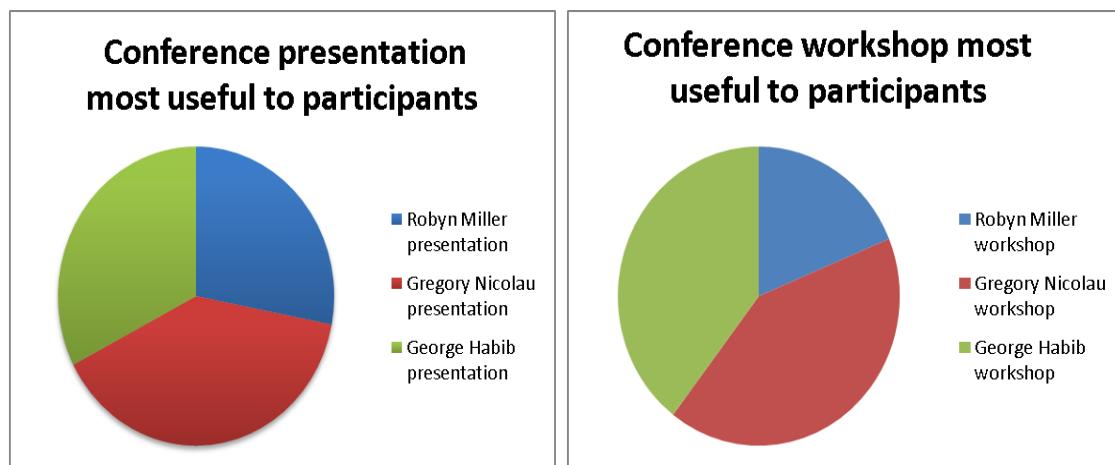
### **Expectations of the conference**

Participants expressed quite high hopes or expectations for what they would gain from the conference. In response to the question in the pre-conference questionnaire about expectations, most participants ticked all four categories provided, with 80 per cent wanting their awareness raised, 90 per cent expressing a hope of gaining skills, 82 per cent wanting to learn from the expert speakers and 62 per cent hoping to network with peers. After the conference, 80 per cent stated that their awareness had been raised, 90 per cent had gained some strategies, 57 per cent had extended their networks and 72 per cent had collected some

resources. One participant stated that she had gained ‘the confidence to guide and inform colleagues’.

### **Which parts of the conference were most useful to participants?**

The participants had the opportunity during the morning of the conference to hear from all three expert speakers. In the afternoon the three speakers conducted workshops and participants chose one workshop to attend. A high number of participants answered this question by saying that all of the speakers were interesting and provided useful content in their presentations, and many indicated that all of the speakers were highly informative and engaging.



The first speaker, Robyn Miller, was apparently well known to the audience and participants rated her presentation highly. The participants were especially appreciative of her ‘dynamic’, ‘informative’ and ‘easy to understand’ presentation. According to one participant, Robyn ‘set the tone – she is a lovely presenter with a wealth of knowledge’.

Participants rated the second speaker, Gregory Nicolau, very highly, particularly noting how engaging, entertaining and relevant his presentation was and how many practical solutions and strategies he provided. One participant commented that Gregory ‘introduced how trauma impacts on brain development and gave some great examples, explanations etc.’. Another participant observed that she had gained ‘valuable understanding around praise, and concentrating on the meaning of behaviour rather than the behaviour itself’.

Participants also rated the third speaker, George Habib, very highly, with the majority of comments focusing on his knowledge and ideas around speech and language development. A number of participants remarked on the usefulness of the practical strategies and new ways of thinking that George provided – for example, his discussion around the question ‘What has happened to the child, rather than what is wrong with the child?’

The afternoon workshops with the three experts were well received, although a number of participants expressed frustration that they were not able to attend all three workshops. The workshops focused on practical applications and strategies for participants to take away and use

as part of their own practice, and most participants expressed appreciation of the practical nature of the workshops. One participant commented in relation to Robyn Miller's workshop that it was 'a very practice-oriented exploration of trauma', and another described it as 'a more intimate setting [that] felt like supervision, which I really appreciated'.

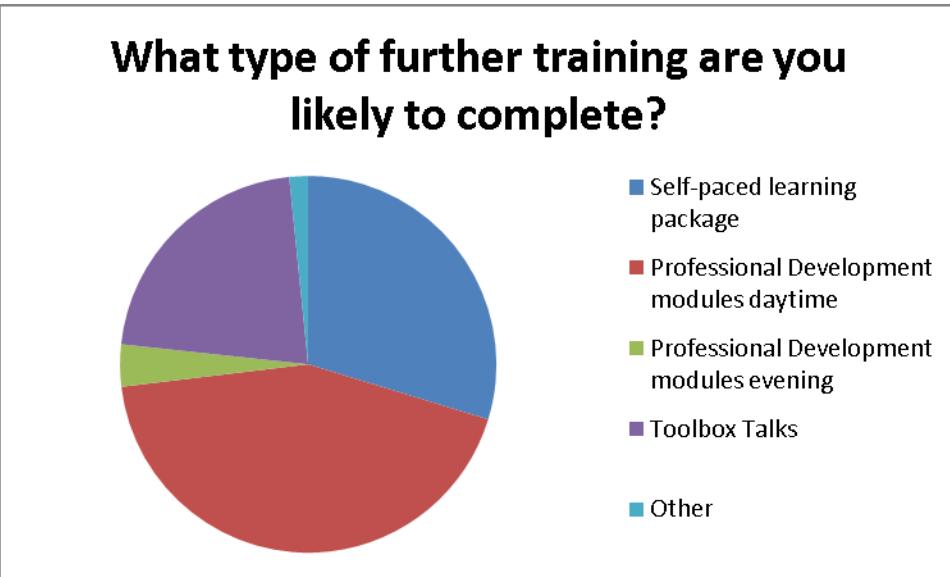
In response to Gregory Nicolau's workshop, participants generally agreed that it was very useful and holistic, and provided practical ways to work therapeutically. A number of participants also responded positively to some of the specific models that Greg demonstrated in the workshop. This was summed up by one participant who said, 'I felt as though I learned something practical about dealing with children with trauma, and about putting a plan in place'.

Participants also responded well to George Habib's workshop, with many remarking how they appreciated his use of real-life examples, practical approaches and in-depth yet informal discussion. Participants at this workshop said they came away with more concrete understanding about attachment, attunement and the meanings around trauma. One participant stated that George 'offered food for thought regarding attachment being an underlying issue'.

The plenary/hypothetical expert panel held at the end of the day was not rated highly by participants, with only 17 per cent saying it was useful. Reflections from the conference organisers suggested that the day was long and the information provided was rich, so by the end of the day participants were tired and 'full up'. However, some of the comments received were positive, such as 'I gained a multidisciplinary perspective on how to approach the case study' and 'the plenary brought the knowledge/day together'.

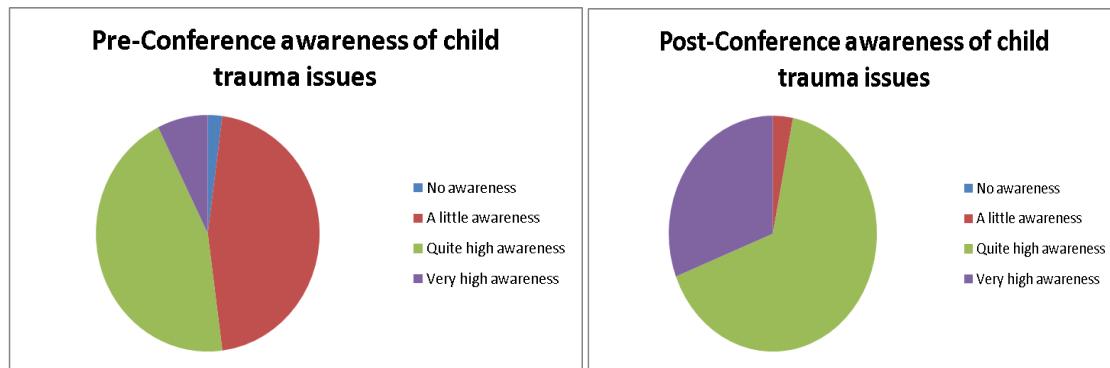
#### **What type of further training are you likely to complete?**

As part of this project a range of training options are being developed and piloted. Participants at the conference were asked to select the type of further training they would be likely to complete from a list of four options. Most participants ticked more than one box. The chart below shows a composite of the responses from both the Conference and the Seminar (see the next section).



#### Pre- and post-conference level of awareness about the impact of trauma on young children

The data shows that there was a significant increase in the participants' awareness after the conference. The number of people who reported that they had 'little awareness' prior to the conference decreased by 41 per cent after the conference. Similarly, those stating that they had 'quite high awareness' increased from 43 per cent to 64 per cent after the conference. Only 7 per cent of participants reported that they had 'very high or advanced' awareness prior to the conference, yet this figure jumped to 30 per cent after the conference. The data on the increase in participant awareness as a result of the conference is compelling, demonstrating that participants' expectations of the conference were met.

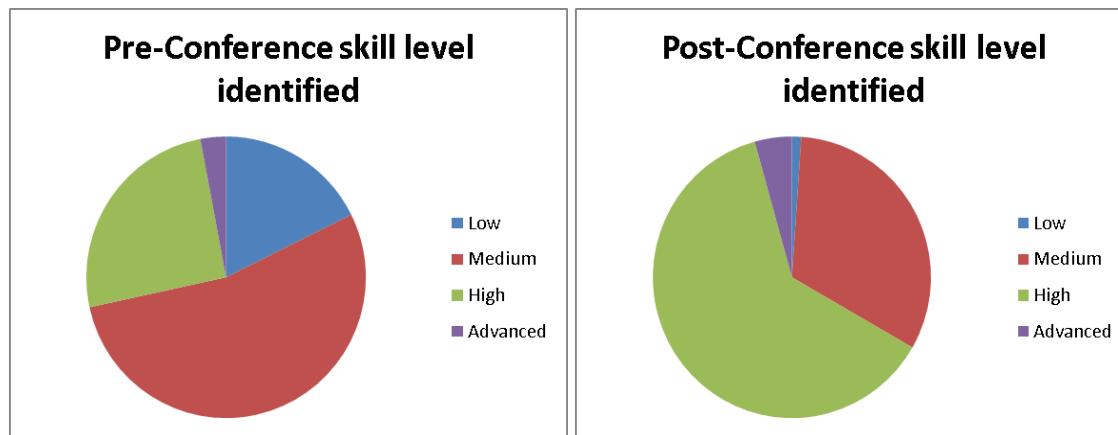


*'This conference has opened my eyes.'*

*'I feel like I know more than I did this morning, but I still don't feel confident in this area.'*

### Pre- and post-conference level of skill in recognising and responding to trauma in young children

The data reveals a significant increase in participants' self-assessment of their skill level after the conference. Prior to the conference, more than half (55 per cent) of participants rated themselves as having 'medium'-level skills. By the conference close, 58 per cent of participants rated themselves as having 'high'-level skills. There was a 32 per cent increase in participants rating these skills as 'high' at the end of the conference. Therefore, the data clearly demonstrates that participants perceived that their skill levels increased significantly as a result of attending the conference.

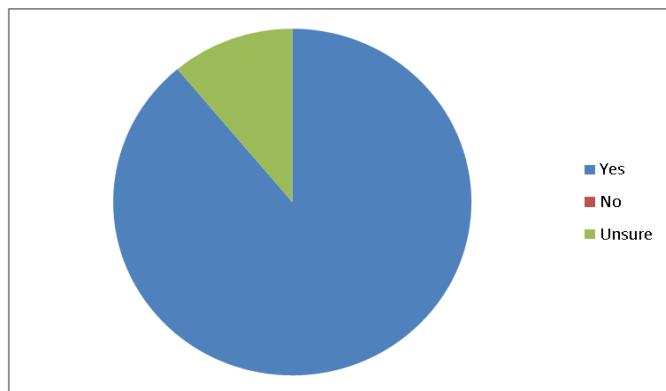


*'I now know some of the symptoms to look out for.'*

*'I am just beginning to gain strategies in working with children who have experienced trauma; today was very useful in info gathering.'*

### Do you feel better equipped professionally to respond to young children with trauma?

After the conference, 88 per cent of participants stated that they felt better equipped professionally to respond to young children with trauma. This is a clear endorsement of the conference outcome.

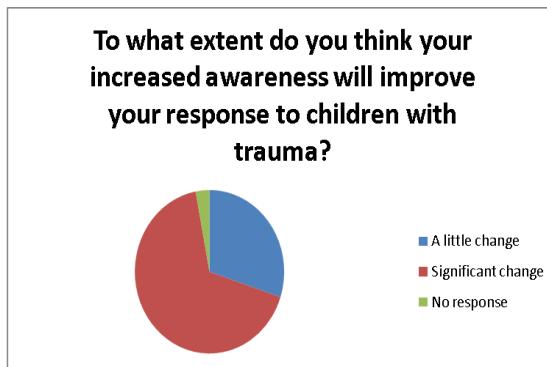


*'I feel that I'm better equipped now than when I arrived.'*

*'I feel more confident in recognising children with trauma, but yet to develop confidence in my response. I found the panel helped me to clarify as a manager how my service might have a more planned response.'*

**To what extent do you think your increased awareness will improve your response to children with trauma?**

More than two-thirds (67 per cent) of participants reported that their increased awareness as a result of attending the conference will improve their response to young children with trauma.



*'Great to have this information reiterated to continually keep this thinking part of our work.'*

## Launch Dinner

The Launch Dinner was held on the evening of 7 November with a target audience of 40 senior practitioners, managers and partner agencies. The objective of the launch was to bring the project to the attention of senior staff, to brief them and encourage them to enable their organisation and staff to be appropriately trained. Some of the launch attendees had also attended the conference so were aware of the project and its outcomes. The event was an opportunity to introduce the audience to Dr Sonia Sharp, Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood Development Group, DEECD; and to Dr Dave Zeigler, the internationally renowned expert on children and trauma who was delivering the full-day Seminar the following day. Launch Dinner attendees were asked to complete a brief questionnaire (three of the four questions are set out below) after the event, which was specifically aimed at identifying how they might incorporate the learning gained from the launch speakers into their own practice, and their top ‘takeaway message’.

*‘Fantastic to have us in the same room. Thank you.’*

### **1. After tonight’s event, my awareness and understanding about trauma and young children has increased/by how much**

In response to this question, 53 per cent of attendees answered ‘yes’, 14 per cent answered ‘no’, and 32 per cent did not respond. Of the total number attendees, 53 per cent said that their awareness and understanding had increased ‘a little’, 28 per cent reported that their awareness had increased ‘quite a lot’, and 7 per cent experienced a ‘significant’ increase in awareness.

*‘I was astounded at the statistics that one in four children witness family violence and the large statistics in Wangaratta itself!’*

### **2. What I heard tonight from the presentation, the project and the speakers will help me to...**

Among the participants, 61 per cent responded that they would use the information gained from the launch to support their staff appropriately (to recognise and respond to trauma in young children); 32 per cent said that they would use the information gained to help or guide them to develop relevant policy in the workplace; and 14 per cent provided their response in the ‘other’ category. The latter group provided remarks such as ‘always be aware while working with the children in my care, and support any of the training in this area’, and ‘understand the project scope. Develop new links to others concerned with trauma and violence’.

*‘I will be encouraging staff not to give up, to access the training package, and to support each other and the children we work with.’*

*‘Assisting the region-wide priorities for the family violence sector and recharge my energy working towards a safer Hume region.’*

*'Have a greater awareness of networking and referrals to training opportunities across sectors and organisations.'*

### **3. Top takeaway message from the Launch Dinner**

The main (43 per cent) takeaway message for participants was from Dr Zeigler's message to 'never give up on a child'. The second most popular takeaway message (25 per cent) was that collaboration and partnership is the key to doing this work effectively. Finally, Dr Sharp's telling of the 'starfish' story struck a chord with 14 per cent of the audience.

*'Validate what we do at my workplace, we do not give up on our kids and each day is a new one.'*

*'Every child matters.'*

## Seminar with Dr Dave Zeigler

The Seminar was added to the project's event calendar when the project team learned that Dr Dave Zeigler was going to be speaking at other events across Australia in November, and could be available to come to Wangaratta. The seminar day was considered to be very successful by the project team, Dr Zeigler and his agents (Australian Childhood Trauma Group Pty Ltd).

The full-day Seminar was held on 8 November and attracted 117 participants from a similar range of agencies as were represented at the Conference (in many cases different staff members from the same agencies attended). Over half (54 per cent) of the participants came from five agencies or the education sector (early childhood, primary, secondary and special development). The agencies most highly represented were Upper Murray Family Care (18 per cent), from the education sector (17 per cent), YES Youth and Family Services (7 per cent), Upper Murray Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence Services (7 per cent) and Berry Street's Take Two program (5 per cent). The top five occupations, representing one-third of all participants, were Case Manager (10 per cent), Social Worker (8 per cent), Teacher/Educator (7 per cent), Family Services Practitioner (4 per cent) and students (4 per cent). Data was collected on the length of time participants had spent working with young children, and this data was similar to the conference data. The top five qualifications represented at the seminar (57 per cent) were social/welfare work (30 per cent), education (10 per cent), community services (9 per cent) and childcare (8 per cent). Of the respondents, 57 per cent had attended previous training or professional development on the topic (including quite a few who listed the original conference as such), while 43 per cent had received no such previous training. Similar to the conference evaluation questionnaires, participants were asked to complete a pre-seminar questionnaire to identify their workplace, occupation, relevant qualifications, length of time spent working with young children, and whether they had previously attended training on the subject. As with the conference, the main purpose of the pre- and post- questionnaires was for participants to assess their level of awareness and skill in recognising and responding to children with trauma. The objective of the Seminar was to raise awareness and heighten skill level via an interactive, detailed and practice-oriented presentation by Dr Zeigler.

Participants were asked what they hoped to gain from the Seminar and 105 of the 117 participants provided a narrative response. Almost all of the participants said that they hoped to gain awareness and/or practical strategies.

*'Skills and knowledge, development of professional practice, practical exercises.'*

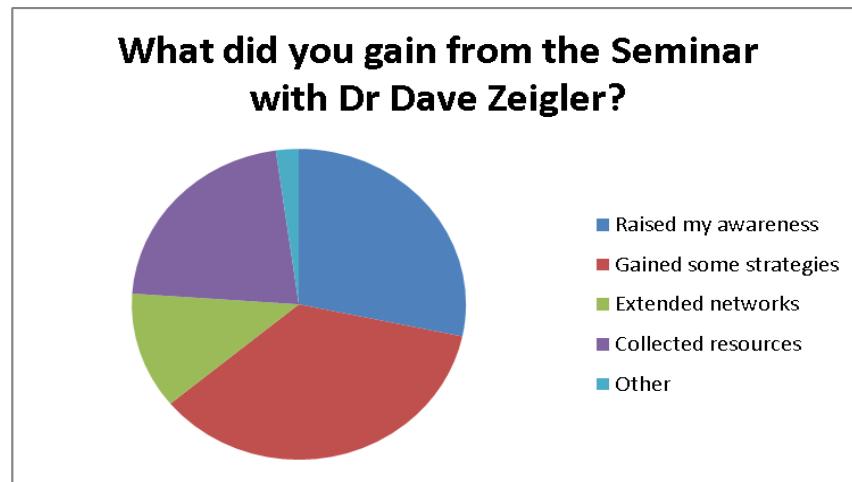
*'Strategies to pass on to teachers.'*

*'New insights, direction for future learning.'*

*'To be even more aware and tuned into children's needs and respond accordingly.'*

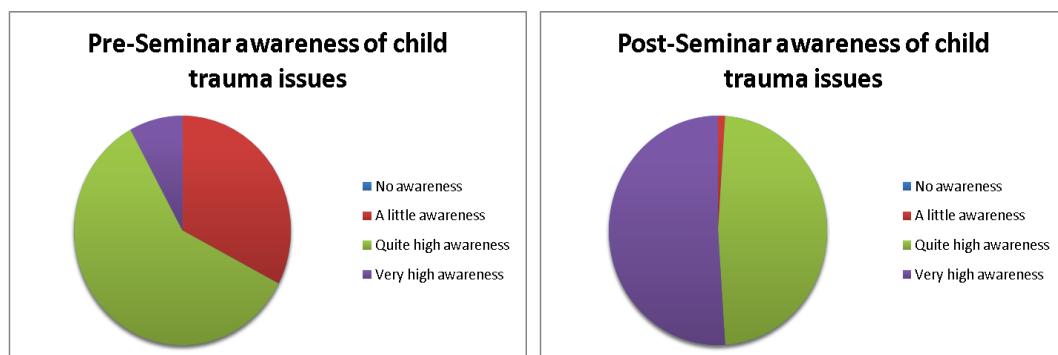
*'To gain knowledge, the stories, the inspiration and feel a sense of hope ... mostly to hear Dr Dave Zeigler speak, a person for whom I have had admiration and who has a lot to share.'*

The evaluation data presented below shows that participants who completed pre- and post-seminar questionnaires gained significant benefit from the event. Dr Zeigler delivered a workshop-style presentation over the entire day, exploring numerous practical strategies, problem solving techniques and suggestions for practice approaches. The day was enriched by his many anecdotes and a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation. Indeed, 97 per cent of participants stated after the Seminar that they had gained some practical strategies for working with children with trauma, and 94 per cent remarked that they felt ‘better equipped’ professionally to recognise and respond to children with trauma. This is a significant outcome for the project.



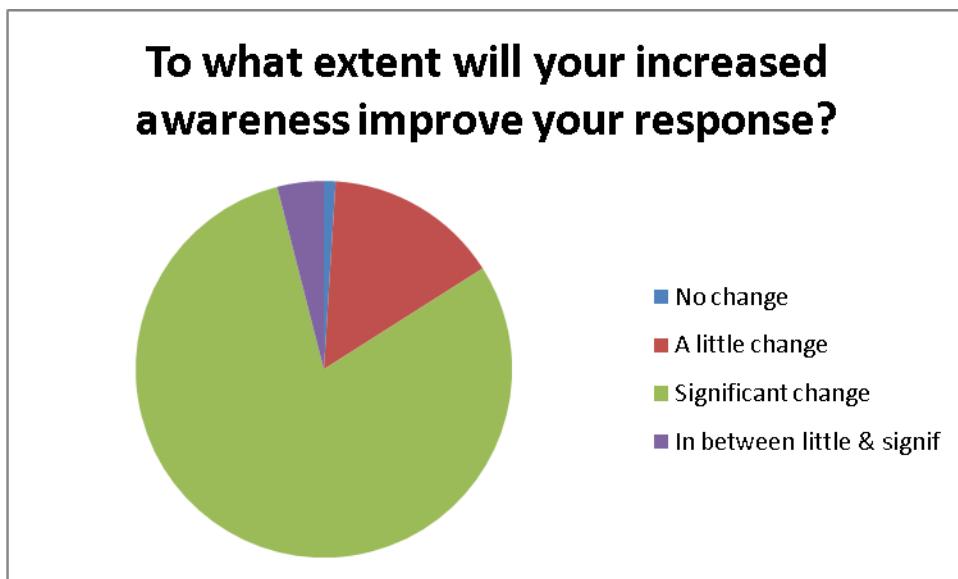
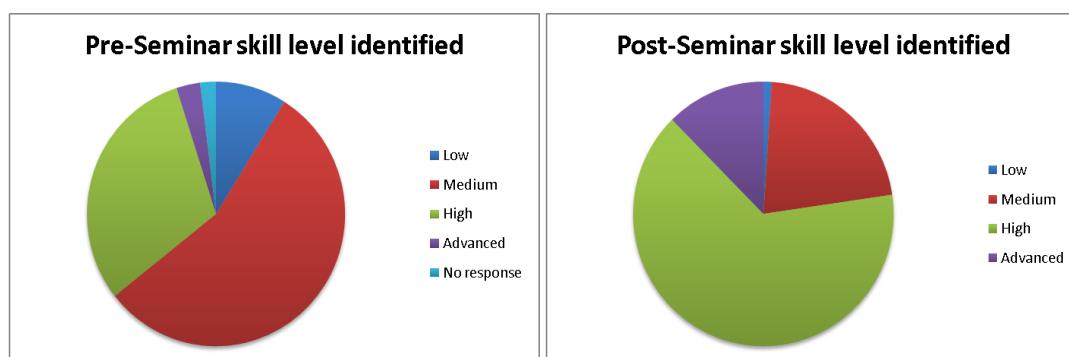
#### How would you rate your current level of awareness about young children and trauma?

The pre- and post-seminar data shows that there was a significant increase in participants' awareness of trauma in young children after the Seminar. For example, the number of people who reported that they had ‘little awareness’ prior to the Seminar decreased by 32 per cent after the Seminar. Further, there was a 41 per cent increase in participants stating that they had ‘very high awareness’ after the Seminar. Before attending the Seminar, 68 per cent of participants rated their awareness as ‘high’ or ‘very high’ – a rating that increased to 95 per cent after the Seminar.



**How would you rate your current level of skill in recognising and responding to trauma in children?**

The charts below illustrate the significant increase in the skill level of participants according to their self-assessment after the Seminar. Prior to the seminar, more than half (56 per cent) of participants rated themselves as having ‘medium’-level skills. Yet at the end of the Seminar almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of participants rated themselves as having ‘high’-level skills. Eighty per cent of participants went on to say that their increased awareness (and thereby presumably their skill) will improve their response to children with trauma.



## Professional Development Training Resource Kit Rollout

The main purpose of the *Trauma and young children – a caring approach* project was to develop a suite of professional development resources for early childhood educators in north-east Victoria. The resources include 77 hours of face-to-face professional development, consisting of:

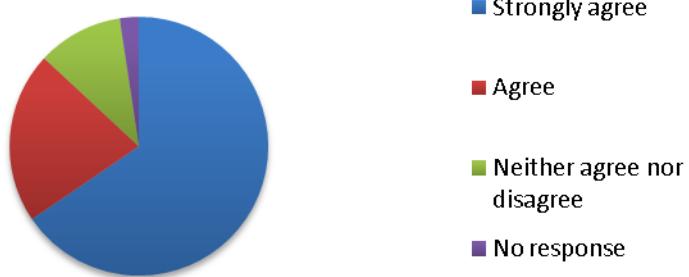
- *Toolbox Talks* (3 x 20 minutes face-to-face) for delivery during staff meetings and professional development days to introduce the issues associated with caring for children with trauma
- *Professional Development Modules* (3 x 6 hours face-to-face) looking at the impact of trauma on young children, developing strategies for working with young children with trauma and their families/carers and building resilience
- *Applying the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Principles* (8 x 6 hours) face-to-face delivery modules addressing each of the eight Practice Principles
- a *Self-paced Learning Package* comprised of 15 modules including five hours of DVD presentations from local, national and international subject matter experts
- a *literature review*.

Originally it was anticipated that the training would be conducted as part of the project; however, consultation with the sector led to a slight change in direction, resulting in two training rollout workshops. These were held on 20 and 22 November in Wangaratta and Wodonga, with a total attendance of 55 people from 39 agencies who are currently providing education and professional development for the early childhood sector, or have an educational leadership role within their organisation. The main aim of the training rollout was to introduce participants to the resources and equip them to conduct training in their workplaces.

Participants who attended the training rollout sessions completed a short questionnaire after the session. The first part of the questionnaire contained four statements with multiple choice answers. Nobody chose disagree or strongly disagree in response to any of the four statements so these categories were removed from the pie charts. The questionnaire also included four questions. The facilitator included an activity whereby participants drafted their responses to the questions: What can you do or plan to do? What are the challenges you face? and What timeframe can you do it in? The participants' responses to the Professional Development Training Resources Rollout were overwhelmingly positive, with all committing to rolling out the training in their organisation or sector in the first half of 2013. If each participant delivers, for example, the Toolbox Talks to 10 colleagues, then 550 early childhood educators will learn more about how to recognise and respond to young children with trauma. The cascade effect of the training rollout has the potential to be remarkable. An online tool has been developed for facilitators to document the training they conduct.

Of all participants, 73 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the information presented at the training rollout was appropriate for their role as a training facilitator working with early childhood educators.

**Information was appropriate for  
my role as a training facilitator  
working with early childhood  
educators**



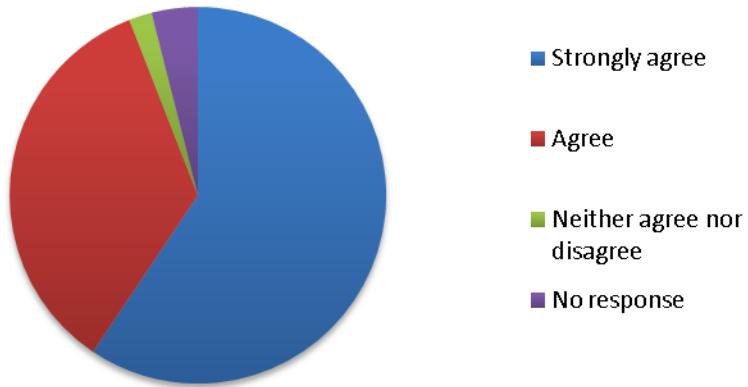
Among the participants, 97 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that the content of the resource kit was clear and easy to follow.

**The content of the  
*Professional Development Training  
Resource Kit*  
is clear and easy to follow**



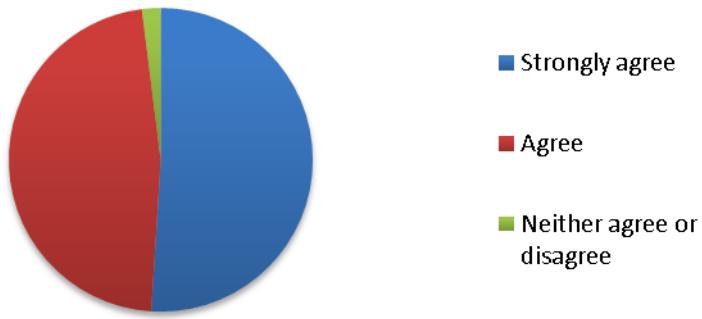
Moreover, 95 per cent of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the training rollout motivated them to facilitate training for early childhood educators working with young children with trauma.

### The workshop motivated me to facilitate training



Of all participants, 98 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that the training rollout showed them some ways to facilitate a range of training resources for early childhood educators working with young children with trauma.

### The workshop showed me some ways to facilitate a range of training resources



### What training are you most likely to facilitate from the resource kit during 2013?

Sixty-two per cent of participants said that they would deliver the Toolbox Talks in 2013. A number of people commented that they would deliver this as a 'starter' or 'in the first instance', suggesting that the method, content and time commitment required was realistic for many professional settings (such as schools and childcare centres). Of the total number of participants,

27 per cent stated that they would deliver the Professional Development Modules and 18 per cent said they would promote the Self-Paced Learning Package, while 7 per cent of participants said they would deliver ‘all’ of the training.

*‘Start with Toolbox and the first three modules, incorporating DVDs.’*

#### **What challenges do you need to address in order to facilitate the delivery of this training?**

The challenge for most participants (58 per cent) in seeking to facilitate the training in future was in relation to finding the time and managing competing priorities within their organisation or sector to promote, plan and deliver the training. This was particularly evident for those working in the education sector. A number of participants also commented that ‘getting the right people along’ or ‘getting people to attend’ was a challenge.

*‘Working with the school’s calendar to ensure that all staff get exposure to the training.’*

*‘Barrier we see in early childhood industry – time and collaboration.’*

*‘Making sure the information is then shared with all staff members, and we have contingency plans so it becomes a working document.’*

*‘Capacity to release staff from face-to-face care, planning time, competing priorities.’*

#### **What was the most useful thing about today’s training rollout?**

Almost half of the participants (49 per cent) expressed that the resources, manual and training package was the most useful ‘takeaway’ from the training rollout day. A further 38 per cent remarked that they appreciated the networking and sharing of ideas with other practitioners and trainers. This is summed up in one participant’s comment:

*‘Communicating with other people, planning and getting new ideas and getting to know the package.’*

#### **What could be improved?**

The majority of participants (82 per cent) said that there was ‘nothing’ to improve or left this section blank, which suggested that they had no comment to make about possible improvements. Seven per cent of participants said that they ‘don’t know yet’ and needed time to fully explore the materials and resources. The following comments were received:

*‘More time to work through some of the material.’*

*'More time to look at the materials and questions about the resources.'*

*'More detailed examples of the content within the folder and ways to facilitate modules.'*

### **Further comments**

Forty-nine per cent of participants expressed their appreciation and 51 per cent left this section blank. It can be assumed that those 51 per cent were satisfied with the event. There were no negative responses.

*'This has been a great course and experience. We have been able to network and hear about where and what other services are doing/seeing. Great networking opportunities. Thank you.'*

*'Sincere appreciation of effort and incredible resources. Many thanks.'*

*'I'm going to see if Goodstart can load the self-paced learning modules onto the intranet as we have a staff base of over 10,000 educators in Australia. An opportunity to roll this out to a vast number.<sup>3</sup>*

*'Thank you so much for the opportunity. It is a fabulous training package and will inform our educators ... this can only benefit our most vulnerable children.'*

### **Responses from workshop activity**

This activity was presented verbally in the workshops by the facilitators. Participants were asked to write down on a separate sheet of paper their intention to deliver the training in the first half of 2013. They were also asked to set out any challenges and the likely timeframe in which they would deliver the training. There were 42 comprehensive responses from the 55 participants, but given the extent of the narratives and the highly differentiated nature of the responses the latter were not analysed as such. However, some common themes emerged. All responses expressed an explicit commitment to roll out the training and many participants set out specific methods for how to do this within their organisation or sector. A number of participants stated that first and foremost they would use the materials to increase their own knowledge of and confidence with the subject matter. Many said that they would use the Toolbox Talks immediately, as this was easy to set up and implement during staff meetings (for which the Toolbox Talks were designed). All participants described ways of sharing the information, rolling out the training, and targeting the resources to particular parts of the organisation (including upwards to management).

The professional development training rollout aspect of the project appears to have achieved – or even exceeded – the expected outcome, with the majority of participants expressing their commitment to and practical examples of how they intend to introduce the materials to others, train others, share resources and improve their own knowledge. It would be interesting to

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<sup>3</sup> This has since happened.

return to these participants in six months to get an update on their progress in rolling out the training.

*'I will put it up on the company Intranet; tell staff about it at staff meetings; get an idea about how many staff are interested; coordinate with staff and management when we could start rolling it out.'*

*'This year [I will] identify with staff needs and understandings of children and trauma, particularly behaviour and managing this. At the start of next year [I will] set a 12-month learning schedule that can be adapted and suited to our service i.e. enrolment process, First Beginnings, transitioning program.'*

*'Share these resources with other students in my cohort. Share these resources with my university lecturers, particularly those who lecture in the health and safety of children. Be prepared to act as mentor with those students who wish to participate in the self-paced package.'*

## Next steps

A calendar of events has been developed until June 2013 to maintain the momentum of the project, including regular updates to the contact list of over 300.

The community DVD will be launched in March. This event will provide an opportunity to generate media about what young children need to play, learn and thrive, and to continue professional development opportunities.

Calendar ideas:

March 2013 – Community DVD launch & associated activities.

April 2013 – CAA conference

May 2013 – Follow-up evaluation from trainers regarding training delivery, barriers and enablers.

## Strengths of the project

- The project was initiated from the early childhood educators who are engaged directly in the field – thus the sector was listened to.
- The conference raised the issue of children's experience of trauma, enthusing early childhood educators to pursue more education.
- The project drew on local, national and international expertise.
- Awareness was raised through targeted consultation with key people.
- A cross-sectoral committee with food and laughter.
- There were established networks and champions who created a foundation for the project – such as the Wangaratta Early Childhood Network.
- The project maintained a focus on Indigenous cultures, from the committee's membership to the conference speakers.
- The project established tailored activities for specific roles – for example, managers were invited to the Launch Dinner, educators invited to attend the Conference and Seminar, and trainers invited to the rollout.

## Recommendations

1. Ensure that the professional development resources developed by the *Trauma and young children* project become embedded within regular or annual professional development for all early childhood educators.
2. Investigate the potential for the development and delivery of complementary online resources.
3. Investigate the potential for developing a Vocational Education and Training–accredited short course in working with young children with trauma.
4. Initiate an annual review process to assess resource use and potential improvements.
5. Disseminate resources nationally – for example, via the online environment or as a state-by-state rollout.
6. Develop guidelines for using this project model for other projects with short timeframes.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.whealth.com.au/work\\_trauma\\_and\\_young\\_children.html](http://www.whealth.com.au/work_trauma_and_young_children.html)