



## FACT SHEET

# Wellbeing in Early Childhood Education and Care

### Why It Matters?

Educators are the heart of early childhood education and care. Your wellbeing directly impacts the quality of care, relationships with children and families, and long-term sustainability in the profession.

Educators spend about one-third of our day, around 8 hours at work, so it's essential that our workplaces are environments where we feel safe, comfortable, respected, and even happy.

A mentally healthy workplace benefits everyone: educators, children, families, and services.

*"We give so much of ourselves that there's nothing left at the end of the day."*

*Burnout is not a personal failure, it's a signal that something in your environment or routine needs to change.*

### Common Challenges in ECEC's:

Working in early childhood settings can be highly rewarding, but also emotionally and mentally taxing.

#### Key stressors:

- Emotional demands of nurturing children daily
- Staff shortages and growing workloads
- Complex family dynamics
- Poor working conditions and time pressures
- Behavioural challenges from children
- Lack of recognition and support

### Understanding Burnout & Stress:

Burnout is emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress. It often develops gradually and can be hard to notice at first. In education settings, it's often tied to the emotional labour of caring for others while neglecting your own needs.

#### Warning signs include:

- Constant fatigue, irritability
- Detachment, reduced motivation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety or feeling overwhelmed

#### Sources of workplace stress:

- Heavy workloads and tight schedules
- Conflict with leadership or colleagues
- Behavioural issues
- Feeling undervalued or isolated

Self-care isn't  
selfish, it's  
essential.



## Strategies to Support Your Wellbeing:

*"Identifying self-care strategies can support with reducing stress across your home and work life balance."*

- Set boundaries between work and home
- Take regular, even short, breaks
- Talk with peers – don't isolate
- Prioritise activities that recharge you
- Seek help early (GP, EAP, counsellors)
- Reflect on your work with a mentor
- Practise mindfulness and stress-relief techniques
- Stay active, eat well, and stay connected

## What Leaders and Services Can Do:

- Create a culture of respect, support, and collaboration
- Ensure adequate staffing and flexible rostering
- Acknowledge and celebrate educators' contributions
- Provide access to mental health support and supervision
- Encourage professional development and mentoring
- Normalise wellbeing conversations

## Wellbeing Is a Shared Responsibility:

Everyone has a role to play, staff and leadership alike. A mentally healthy workplace improves:

- Staff retention
- Job satisfaction and morale
- Relationships with children and families
- Outcomes for young learners

## When to Ask for Help:

If you're not feeling okay, don't wait. Wellbeing and mental health is just as important as physical health. Support is available and recovery is possible. Talk to:

- Your GP
- A trusted colleague
- A psychologist, coach or mental health professional
- Your workplace's Employee Assistance Program

## Support Services:

- **Be You** – Mental health tools for educators: [beyou.edu.au](http://beyou.edu.au)
- **13YARN** – 13 92 67 24/7 confidential, culturally safe crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- **Head to Health** – Access to services and information: [headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au)

- **Heads Up** – Workplace wellbeing resources: [headsup.org.au](http://headsup.org.au)
- **Beyond Blue** – 1300 22 4636
- **Lifeline** – 13 11 14 (24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services)

**Your wellbeing is not a luxury – it's a necessity. When educators are supported and thrive, so do the children in their care. Let's focus on wellbeing to build a mentally healthy and sustainable future for our sector, together.**