

reflections

GOWRIE AUSTRALIA PUBLICATION ISSUE 3 2022



Welcome to the third edition of Reflections for 2022. Reflections is Gowrie Australia's publication for showcasing exemplary work across six Lady Gowrie organisations and a celebration of our connections with children, families, colleagues and research associates.

In the education and care sector investment in recruitment and targeted professional learning has proven critical to achieving a good fit between educators and employers and in influencing retention and quality. In this edition, Lady Gowrie Tasmania and Gowrie Victoria share how each organisation is working to support, skill and enable its workforce.

In this edition:

Achieving 'the right fit': Lady Gowrie Tasmania Pathway to a Traineeship program

Driving force: A culture of coaching and mentoring to help combat workforce concerns



ACHIEVING ‘THE RIGHT FIT’: LADY GOWRIE TASMANIA PATHWAY TO A TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM

Lisette Graham and Trevor Brown, Lady Gowrie Tasmania

It is widely acknowledged across the Australian education and care sector that there is a critical shortfall of qualified and skilled educators in the workforce.

ACECQA reports that 39,000 additional educators will be required nationally by 2024. Tasmania is 2% of the Australian population so, we can reasonably assume that 780 additional educators will be required to enable Tasmanian families to participate in work and study and for Tasmanian communities and the economy to flourish.

(Early Childhood Australia, Tasmania Branch. (2021). Early Years & School Age Care Workforce Strategy: Tasmania 2021 & Beyond, p.11.)

In a tightly regulated environment, where a high level of knowledge and responsibility is required for work with children, attracting and retaining people with compatible human skills and the capability to learn and develop

professionally is a complex challenge. Lady Gowrie Tasmania, as the largest community based, not for profit provider of education and care services in the state, is keenly interested and is invested in finding solutions. As such, the organisation has been an active participant in the EYSAC (Early Years and School Age Care) Workforce Strategy for some years. EYSAC, which is an initiative of Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Tasmania Branch, and funded by the Tasmanian Department of Education, Education and Care Unit, draws on collective impact theory, change management theory, collaboration and co-design to address workforce challenges and create the conditions for sustainable change.

Through participation in one of the EYSAC Workforce project's state-wide Innovation Network meetings, Lady Gowrie Tasmania embraced an opportunity to deliver a ‘pathway to employment’ initiative from mid-2021. A subsequent meeting with the Local Jobs Program Employment Facilitator for Hobart and Southern

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Tasmania, organised and facilitated by the EYSAC Project Manager, shaped a proposal to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE). The proposal outlined a place-based pre-employment ‘taster’ program to attract and channel approximately 20 jobseekers, in two cohorts, into employment and traineeships with Lady Gowrie Tasmania (LGT).

The *Lady Gowrie Tasmania Pathway to a Traineeship* program was managed by Gowrie Training & Consultancy (RTO45602). For each cohort, it encompassed:

- a screening and recruitment component, delivered in partnership with Workskills, with a focus on compatible ‘human skills’ and suitability for study.
- an induction component focussed on deepening understandings of the rewards and demands of careers working with children.
- three weeks of classroom learning sessions, dedicated to sector related topics and information.
- a nationally accredited unit of competency, CHCDIV001 Work with Diverse People, as an introduction to the formal study requirements needed to achieve the minimum qualification.
- a two-week supported work placement in one of LGT’s long day care services.
- a meeting towards the completion of the program with each of the participants to reflect and ascertain suitability for a traineeship or other employment with LGT (for example, in an OSHC program).
- interaction with Mas National, who facilitated the traineeship sign-ups.

Critical to the success of the program was the allocation of a dedicated Project Manager and a Project Coach,

who worked closely with each of the participants as well as with the Gowrie Training & Consultancy RTO team, the LGT Education Services leadership team and the participating long day care teams. This approach ensured that each of the program participants had the wrap around support they needed to succeed. To support the Project Coach, a coaching framework, previously developed for an EYSAC project, was adapted for use and a program evaluation tool was created.

Participants reflected on their personal growth and achievements as they moved through the program and shared their thoughts and feedback. Generally, they felt increased levels of confidence and enjoyment and decreased anxiety around participation, learning and work. This was attributed to:

- the focus on relationship building from program staff.
- feeling they weren’t ‘judged’ for lack of knowledge or for asking questions.
- the small group size (12 in each group).
- mentoring and support received from the program coach and LGT staff.

“This course made me come out of my shell more and I did things I didn’t think I was capable of doing.” – Sarah

Additionally, the establishment of routines – set days and times for the program, improved the participants’ organisational skills and promoted discipline and autonomy for adult learning.

Within the program, information and tasks were presented in interesting and engaging ways to promote curiosity and enjoyment of learning. Several participants identified that they had overcome negative stigmas



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surrounding study and were enthusiastic about the possibility of future learning and education.

"I am so thankful for the opportunity and the support from the project staff, as well as educators and service... there is a lot of help around me. I'm so lucky and happy!" - Jodi

"The efficiency of being able to do 4 weeks of theoretical work... then work placement, and a paid traineeship was just too rare an opportunity to pass on." - Lauren

The Project Coach and Gowrie Training & Consultancy training team also reflected on the program, identifying a number of valuable elements:

- Acknowledgement of individual learning styles, including identifying any literacy 'gaps' as well as strengths, supported everyone within the group
- Consistently clear and articulate communication and positive trust-based connections with participants, was key to their continued attendance and completion of the program.
- Development of a Code of Conduct, outlined clear expectations of behaviour, fostered respect, and a sense of belonging.
- Gaining insight of each participant's mental and physical health, past education experience, and learning challenges, guided the team in providing appropriate resources and support.
- The Gowrie Training & Consultancy team designed a safe environment (psychologically and physically) for all participants, thereby supporting optimal learning and development.

- Tailored learning tasks with individual mentoring time allocated for participants supported their understanding of and capacity to complete tasks.
- Strong interpersonal skills of all involved staff were a strength in maintaining engagement, across all facets of the program from start to end.

For the participating LGT educators and service leaders, the involvement and leadership of the dedicated Coach was universally identified as key to the program's success. Regular service visits over the course of the work placement component assisted with resolving any issues and supported staff and participants to build healthy social and professional connections. This attention ensured that each of the program participants had a positive and realistic work experience, thus enabling them, and the LGT service teams, to accurately reflect on whether a career in education and care would be the 'right fit'.

Overall, the *Lady Gowrie Tasmania Pathway to a Traineeship* program yielded positive outcomes both individually and at an organisational level. Of the 24 participants who commenced, 18 successfully completed the program. 16 of those participants were employed with LGT and of those, 14 commenced traineeships within the organisation.

In mid-2022, 13 of the program participants are progressing through their traineeships with Lady Gowrie Tasmania. The program has successfully demonstrated that close attention to finding the right fit between an individual and an organisation supports retention and that dedicated, ongoing support is highly valuable. To this end, Lady Gowrie Tasmania has continued to employ a dedicated Trainee Coordinator/Coach to support all



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trainees and their workplace teams across the organisation.

The *Lady Gowrie Tasmania Pathway to a Traineeship* program was developed and delivered by Lady Gowrie Tasmania in scope with the Local Jobs Program, which was announced by the Australian Government in 2021 as a part of the economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lady Gowrie Tasmania acknowledges and thanks the Department of Education, Skills and Employment for its support.



References:

ACECQA National Workforce Report <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-workforce-strategy>, https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/202010/ChildrensEducationandCareNationalWorkforceStrategy_O.pdf.

Early Childhood Australia, Tasmania Branch, Early Years & School Age Care Workforce Strategy: Tasmania 2021 & Beyond https://eysac.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ECATas-workforce-Strategy_2021-FINAL-Web-Version-1.pdf.

Lisette Graham

Lisette Graham has worked in a variety of roles across the Tasmanian education and care sector for over three decades. Lisette's early professional experiences included working in long day care settings, along with a little 'dabbling' in outside school hours care programs.

As her career progressed, Lisette moved into family day care, where she spent extensive time working as a coordinator, supporting educators and children. Lisette also worked for a few years with a family support program, working alongside families to strengthen parenting skills.

More recently Lisette has worked within the Department of Education, Education and Care Unit team as an Authorised Officer. In this position, compliance work and assessment and rating of education and care services against the National Quality Standard and National Regulations was a major professional focus.

Currently, Lisette is employed by Lady Gowrie Tasmania in the role of Trainee Coordinator/Coach.

Trevor Brown

Across an early years career spanning over 30 years, Trevor Brown has held a number of pedagogical and leadership positions. Trevor worked for many years as an early childhood teacher and kindergarten Director in Queensland before moving into advisory work across the state.

He then led the professional development program for a large state-based not for profit early years organisation, before leading a statewide transition to school/developmentally appropriate pedagogies project for the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The lure of Tasmania found Trevor re-locating in 2016. Since 2017, he has worked for Lady Gowrie Tasmania in the position of Innovation & Growth Manager.





DRIVING FORCE: A CULTURE OF COACHING AND MENTORING TO HELP COMBAT WORKFORCE CONCERNS

Penny Harrison

Recent studies have outlined the need for a multi-faceted approach from governments, employers, training providers and higher education in combating critical staff shortages and boosting workforce sustainability.

Among the recommendations for growing and retaining a skilled and professional workforce is training that connects students with services, allowing them to work while they study. A rich culture of mentoring and coaching has also been flagged as a *well-rounded and structured approach that contributes to a deepening of the quality of education... as well as affording career development opportunities for those involved.* (Investing In Our Future, 2021, CELA, CCC, ELAA, page 28)

ACECQA also found links between longevity of staff and quality improvement, while services rated as exceeding the National Quality Standard also tended to draw on a broader suite of professional development approaches, such as collaborative critical reflection, coaching and

mentoring, shared learning, and a community of practice. (Quality Improvement Research Project, ACECQA, 2019)

At Gowrie Victoria, coaching and mentoring is a cornerstone of our culture as we continuously strive for best practice and a highly skilled workforce.

This culture is an integral part of both our internal practice and the professional support we offer the sector across Victoria. Gowrie Victoria Early Learning Executive Manager, Nicole Pilsworth, says this internal support and development manifests in a 70-20-10 approach, where 70 per cent of learning is achieved on the job, “alongside each other, through discussions, through critical reflection on practice, and through a really strong coaching and mentoring program”.

“The 20 and 10 per cent are really focused on that more formal learning – whether it’s training and studying or learning how to be a good coach to support your team,”

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Nicole says. “We’re lucky to have a learning and development specialist and a pedagogical leader, to really support educators and teachers to continue to develop their journey.

“One of the exciting things is seeing educators start as trainees, continuing their career progression through further study, both formal and informal, and really building their knowledge and skills as they develop into leaders.”

Externally, mentoring and coaching are at the core of our adult learning programs, from traineeship education to mentoring early career teachers through to registration, as well as coaching with more experienced teachers and education leaders.

Our on-the-job learning model, supported by reflection and mentoring, has developed into an extensive traineeship program that allows trainees to work and earn alongside educators, while studying towards their qualification.

The early childhood traineeship program is a practical way for new educators to develop strong foundational skills as they begin a career in early childhood education. Its methodology includes “wrap-around support” for trainees to mentor them throughout the program..

This year, with support from the Victorian Department of Education and Training, the program has been extended to include other services.

Each trainee cohort is supported by a facilitator who maintains an overview of their whole learning experience.

A Mentoring the Mentor program for participating services aims to support the trainee’s supervisor at their service and ensure effective support is in place.

For the past three years, Gowrie Victoria has also focused on supporting provisionally registered teachers (PRTs) through a mentoring program that guides them through to reaching full teaching registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

New funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Training will see the program embark on another major intake this year.

The mentoring program, which lasts three to five months, encompasses:

- three onsite observation and reflection sessions.
- mentor feedback in between sessions to guide PRTs on any area they may need to further develop as they gather evidence of their professional practice.
- mentor support for PRTs in presenting their completed Inquiry Project to a workplace recommendation panel.

While mentoring is crucial to guide and support less experienced educators, Gowrie Victoria also recognises the need for coaching at all levels to foster a community of support and education for everyone, from trainees through to leaders and managers.

Gowrie Victoria Coaching is offered to external services as part of the Victorian Government School Readiness Funding program. It involves an experienced consultant working with a service to understand professional goals and develop a plan to implement them.



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Gowrie Victoria Consultant Luelle Keamy says the plan is developed over several months and includes online sessions, onsite visits for observation, demonstration and feedback, and group workshops.

“We will focus on whatever area areas the service has in mind, or we will use a range of techniques to draw out what the particular strengths and needs are,” Luelle says. “It’s about listening and developing great relationships with the team over time that really help tailor a plan that’s relevant and meaningful. This gives it a greater chance to be embedded over time.”

The program includes:

- initial discussions to understand professional goals. These may relate to a number of specific areas, such as pedagogical practice, team communication and management, maintaining partnerships with families/communities, development of engaging learning spaces, and supporting the educational leadership role.
- a plan for online sessions, onsite visits for observation, demonstration and feedback, and group workshops.
- a coach who will source relevant readings, recommend resources and share contemporary practice examples related directly to particular goals.
- space for ongoing reflection to consolidate and embed new learning.

Luelle says the program is essential for supporting educators and helping “keep that spark alive”.

“Sometimes it’s just about listening and offering support, which is definitely important, especially during these times.”

As a provisionally registered teacher, Sarah Rawley found the process to full registration “challenging and overwhelming”.

However, Sarah credits her Gowrie Victoria mentor with guiding her through the process successfully. “This meant I was able to seek a consistent person out for support and guidance when I was struggling,” Sarah says.

A Gowrie Victoria mentor supported Sarah during the planning stages of her final Inquiry Project, which involved developing a question and putting together a program for a block of teaching. There were also observation sessions, reflective feedback, and consultation during the implementation period, which continued through to Sarah’s presentation of her final project to a panel.

“It meant that when those challenges arose, it wasn’t as hard or overwhelming because of that mentor,” Sarah says. “They supported me to see that it wasn’t so daunting, but part of my day-to-day work life... following planning cycles, observing children and developing a plan to teach, interacting with children and reflecting on it, and then extending on their learning.”

Sarah became a fully registered teacher towards the end of 2021 and not long after was offered the role of Aboriginal Outreach Worker for Gowrie Broadmeadows Valley, supporting the enrolment and education of First Nations children at the service.

During NAIDOC Week, the Victorian Government announced the extension of the Koorie Assistants program, appointing Sarah the Koorie Preschool Assistant for the Hume/Moreland area.

This position will see Sarah take on her own mentoring role, supporting other services in the area to create culturally safe and inclusive environments, and working collaboratively with Aboriginal families and communities to work through any enrolment concerns or barriers. “It’s really exciting and rewarding to be able to take on this role, supporting services and families to feel confident and create a sense of belonging,” Sarah says.

References:

Investing in our future: Growing the education and care workforce: November 2021 <https://www.cela.org.au/CELA/Publications/Reports/Investing-in-our-Future-25-Nov-2021.pdf>

Quality Improvement Research project: November 2019 <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/quality-improvement-research-project-2019.PDF>

Penny Harrison

Penny Harrison is a journalist, book reviewer and children’s author. Her picture books include Extraordinary (New Frontier), Rainbow is My Favourite Colour (Little Hare), and the CBCA Early Childhood Book of the Year Notable Me & My Boots (Little Hare). A passion for the children’s book industry is reflected in Penny’s role as editor and reviewer with Kids’ Book Review, and in her work with schools and libraries throughout Melbourne. A lifestyle journalist for more than 20 years, her work has appeared in a range of Australian magazines and newspapers. Penny now works for Gowrie Victoria as Content Writer/Editor.

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