



UNIVERSITY OF  
CANBERRA

# A GOOD START IN LIFE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

*Benefits and impact*

**Guiding public health policy efforts in promoting health and wellbeing for early childhood (birth to 5 years) and to inform local intervention efforts focused on the community and broader systems level.**

# A GOOD START IN LIFE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

## Benefits and impact

The early years of a child's life significantly impacts their health and wellbeing not only during childhood but across the lifespan. Studies published to-date have reported positive lifelong effects of early intervention programmes, not just on educational attainment, but also on income and interaction with the criminal justice system.

Research has also demonstrated the effectiveness of high-quality, focused preschool programmes in reducing the effects of social disadvantage, developing children's social competence, physical and emotional health, and preparing children for a successful transition to formal schooling. In recent years, the health, education and social services sectors have emphasised the importance of the

early years of childhood and has renewed its commitment to policies and programmes that support early childhood health, wellbeing and development. The Good Start in Life Study will evaluate a multi-sector, multi-component, and integrated services/supports for improving the health and wellbeing of children who are at risk of developmental vulnerability.



### MOLLY RHODIN

Director, Cooida Cottage Early Childhood Centre, Charnwood

The Good Start project provided a range of speech pathology, occupational therapy and early childhood supports to Molly and her team at Cooida Cottage over the past 3 years.

### BENEFITS AND IMPACT

The Good Start in Life project was such a rich tool for our medium size service that has educators and teachers with varied professional experience and knowledge. The most beneficial aspect of the project was the infusion of knowledge from the project team so highly relevant to our daily work implementing inclusive curriculum for up to 80 children per day. The collaboration was transparent and reciprocally responsive, benefiting

knowledge and practical application as early childhood education qualifications do not cover many aspects that my team learnt from the project team. Having a pool of highly motivated, respectful, and diligent people who took their role seriously and professionally enabled our curriculums to tighten and benefit children further — the mix of personalities and suggestions was transformative, almost like a combination laksa!

**“From someone who has been in the sector for over 30 years, this has been a very special experience. My team has learnt a great deal, of themselves, of others and how beautifully a village can collaborate for the benefit of children and social outcomes.”**

Molly Rhodin

### EDUCATOR FEEDBACK

*“Good to talk to other professionals to help us in everyday practices. Not enough opportunity! We need them more.”*



## LEANE TOWNROW

Director, Kirinari Early Childhood Centre, Bruce

The project provided a range of speech pathology, occupational therapy and early childhood supports to Leane and her team at Kirinari over the past 3 years.

### BENEFITS AND IMPACT

The Good Start in Life project has been invaluable for me and the educators at Kirinari. As a standalone centre, we often feel just that, alone. The Good Start project has connected us to our community in a supportive and enabling way. We now feel more confident in assisting our families to connect with additional support and we are more confident in having conversations, that can often be quite difficult.

**“Susie (Good Start’s Family and Community Liaison Coordinator) has been a great support to me in my first 2 years as Director at Kirinari. I really appreciate the guidance and advise she has given.”**

Leane Townrow



**“Good Start in Life serviced this gap and improved relationships with families who may have felt hesitant to engage with allied health or family services prior to the program.”**

Caitlin Winter

## CAITLIN WINTER

Former Family Literacy Coordinator, Libraries ACT, Currently Team Leader, Connected Beginnings, Yerrabi Yurwang

The Good Start project provided weekly allied health support, during term time at Libraries ACT’s Sensory Story Time.

### BENEFITS AND IMPACT

The Good Start in Life project partnered with Libraries ACT from the end of 2021-current and have been crucial to the Family Literacy Coordinator’s outreach success. We partnered with the Good Start in Life to launch a wrap-around offering of Sensory Story Time, a story time session designed for families with children who have autism or developmental delays. Having the Good Start in Life presence ensured families and Library staff were connected in with the various child health support services available in the area, and the allied health

students were able to have informal developmental chats with parents about the specific needs of their children. Good Start in Life were also the first to initiate playgroups in the region post covid restrictions and serviced a great need for families and children to reconnect and establish relationships. The anecdotal impact of having the allied health students present was insurmountable, as most families contend with extended waiting lists for appointments and limited offerings of what they could do to support their children in the meantime.

### EDUCATOR FEEDBACK

*“I learnt so much about communication with children and how [to] deal with situations.”*

## ANONYMOUS PARENT, 3-YEAR-OLD CHILD

Receiving support through the Play and Participation Screening Service at one of the project's Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) services

### BENEFITS AND IMPACT

I would first like to thank the Australian Government for putting in place such a useful curriculum. The Good Start program has been very beneficial to me as a parent in so many ways. I have been able to have a greater understanding and usefulness of play and having my child engage in pretend play.

During the program, I was assisted with referrals to the other professional teams that can assist my child. With the help of Cate (Good Start's Occupational Therapist and Susie, Good Start's Family and Community Liaison Coordinator); the referral was much easier and very comprehensive as Susie detailed every information needed, which was handed over to the walk-in clinics.

The enthusiasm from Cate and crew gave I and my husband the motivation to carry on. On financial grounds, the program was quite helpful because I was not working at the time my child started the program. Not worrying about how to make payment was a huge help and a big relief for the family.

**“We couldn't but just appreciate the efforts of Cate, Susie, and all the OT students who have been involved in this journey. From the place of inner gratitude, I say thank you.”**

Anonymous Parent

## KASIA ZAPASNIK-GRODECKA

Program Manager at Capital Regions Community Services (CRCS)

The Good Start in Life project provided allied health and early education support to several CRCS facilitated playgroups.

### BENEFITS AND IMPACT

Capital Region Community Services (CRCS) have been working collaboratively with the Good Start in Life project since 2020. The collaboration between CRCS Families and the Good Start in Life project first and foremost provided children (0–5 years) and their families with playgroups, community connections and early intervention opportunities, addressing developmental vulnerabilities.

Through the Good Start in Life project, CRCS Families were able to have Occupational Therapists from the University of Canberra attending CRCS Playgroups, and offering free occupational therapy advice to families.

It has been great working with the Good Start in Life project and their staff, which created many opportunities of professional growth when sharing knowledge and expertise whilst increasing quality services provided to vulnerable children and their families in the ACT.

**“CRCS Families will miss the Good Start in Life project and its staff members. CRCS Families want to take the opportunity and say thank you.”**

Kasia Zapasnik-Grodecka

### EDUCATOR FEEDBACK

*“Professional insight from the Good Start Occupational Therapist about how to better set the environment for kids' needs.”*

## A GOOD START IN LIFE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

### RESEARCH TEAM

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