



2016

Annual Report Highlights





Early Start brings research, education and community together for children, especially those growing up in regional and remote Australia or living in vulnerable circumstances.

39%

of visitors to the Early Start Discovery Space were first time visitors to a university campus, raising aspirations and building unique, new connections to the University of Wollongong.

Vision

For all children to realise their potential

“

We are very pleased with our investment in Early Start which offers children opportunities to learn through play, particularly encouraging children to become creative, curious, confident, and collaborative and to develop a can-do attitude at a formative stage of brain development”.

THE ABBOTT FOUNDATION

Early Start

is a collaborative initiative between the Commonwealth Government, The Abbott Foundation and the University of Wollongong committed to social transformation for children. This initiative provides a holistic approach, bringing together academic research, tertiary education programs and community engagement.

Early Start is unique in delivering its impact in a holistic way. The Discovery Space allows for direct interaction and engagement with children and families to inspire imagination and ignite a love of learning. The partnership with engagement and early childhood centres allows us to make an impact through service providers, which are focussed on the local environment and issues. Research allows us to understand the key challenges and develop community interventions that are based on evidence.

Finally teaching and learning programs allow us to develop leadership and a greater understanding of the importance of quality of programs to deliver a sustainable impact.

Early Start provides a myriad of opportunities for developing a multi-disciplinary platform for investigating issues of local, national and international significance associated with the critical early years of a child, focussing on changing life trajectories for children, early.

Our Work

How we empower children, families & communities

Discovery Space



An environment that stimulates curiosity, supports independence, encourages social interaction, nurtures creativity and promotes a sense of community.

Research and Intervention



We ask, seek and explore what matters for children's development through interdisciplinary research and embed programs that address community needs.

Engagement Centres



Collaborating with services in regional and remote areas (virtually and physically) to improve quality outcomes, especially in communities dealing with complex issues.

Teaching and Learning



Influence curriculum, teaching and learning practices to enhance professional capacity and contemporary knowledge in early years.



Early Start Discovery Space

An environment that stimulates curiosity, supports independence, encourages social interaction, nurtures creativity and promotes a sense of community.



Numbers

100 282

children, families, carers and educators experienced education through the power of play at the Discovery Space.

2933

primary school children participated in curriculum based learning through school excursions.



Hands down the best place to take my toddler to! We love having a membership & popping in to play often."

NATALIE
(FACEBOOK REVIEW)

The Early Start Discovery Space is Australia's only dedicated children's museum and the first-of-its-kind in the world based on a university campus. It provides interactive experiences, stimulating educational programs and learning-through-play activities for children aged birth to 10 years and their families. The Discovery Space acts as a partner for families, early childhood centres and schools by enhancing the value that children gain through play-based experiences and is grounded in evidence.

Activities are designed to allow children to take control and share their imagination and creativity

with others. The best-designed activities ensure accompanying adults have as much enjoyment as children, sharing the experience as co-learners and creators.

All the experiences have been designed to inspire and encourage meaningful play and, therefore, learning. Through a 'partnership of play' – between children, parents, educators and the Early Start Discovery Space team, we hope to enhance the enduring benefits that children receive from play.

1515

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
participated in curriculum based learning through school excursions.





“

Educational and fun for all! Not just a ‘play centre’ with slides and ball pits, but real fun and education for the children (and adults)”.

EARLY START DISCOVERY
SPACE VISITOR

“

IMB is committed to helping our customers and communities be better off. The Early Start Discovery Space is an important investment for us in helping educate and inspire so many children and families in the Illawarra as well as regional and remote areas.”

IMB BANK,
MAJOR SPONSOR



“

What a lovely experience we had yesterday! Beautiful play spaces for children, families and the students to connect and engage in learning. Love that there is room and time for both intentional and spontaneous play. We cannot wait for our next visit! Thank you”.

LARISSA (FACEBOOK
REVIEW)

A TEAM OF YOUNG ARTISTS captured the meaning of world peace in an international art collaboration spanning five countries. To coincide with the International Day of Peace, children from the Early Start Discovery Space joined forces with children from four other museums around the world to create an artwork that highlights the importance of peace and

74

UOW students, staff and Illawarra community members volunteered their time to the Early Start Discovery Space.



Early Start Engagement Centres

Collaborating with services in regional and remote areas (virtually and physically) to improve quality outcomes especially in communities dealing with complex issues.



Numbers

Supporting

1347

children and their families in 41 early education and care centres in regional and remote Australia, face-to-face and virtually.

Completed individual development assessment of over

800

children and families accessing the engagement centres, of which 34% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.

Supported over

117

early childhood educators in targeted professional skills development and embedding of quality practices in the centres.

Early Start is connected with 41 Engagement Centres throughout NSW and the ACT, which provides a portal into these communities to redress social and educational disadvantage. Together with our partners we are working to create and enrich life opportunities for young Australians from regional and remote areas.

A dedicated team in Early Start and academics from a range of disciplines work closely with the centres. Strong relationships between UOW and our community partners have allowed researchers in UOW to access individual child development data to support

the quality of education in these settings.

Supported with technological interconnectedness, the Early Start Engagement Centres allow us to create new models to link research and practice, and bring about better outcomes for children.



Map of centres



Connecting
each centre with
a critical friend
from the Early Start
interdisciplinary
academic team.

“

Thank you for
bringing quality
professional learning
to Walgett and for
your support of
our educators and
children”.

EDUCATOR, KOOLYANGARRA
PRESCHOOL, WALGETT





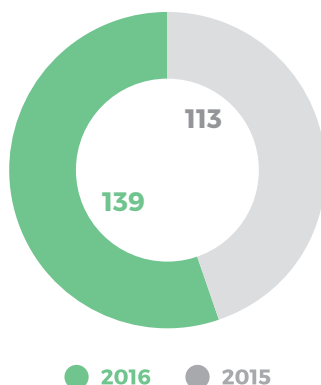
Research and Intervention

We ask, seek and explore what matters for children's development through interdisciplinary research, and embed programs that address community needs.

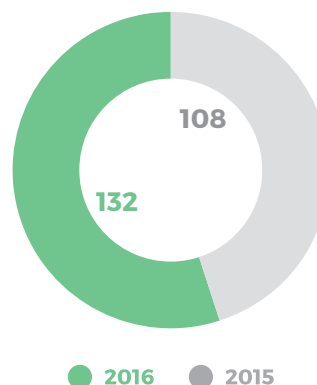


Numbers

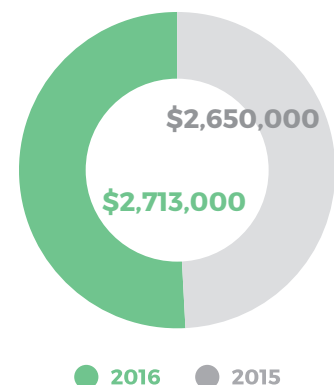
PUBLICATIONS



HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH (HDR) STUDENTS ENROLLED



INCOME AWARDED



World-leading researchers investigating real life challenges for children, families and educators come together at Early Start. More than 135 researchers and students are engaged in interdisciplinary, evidence-based research across the spectrum of children's educational, physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. From screen time to junk food advertising, educational inequity to learning through play, our research is focussed on finding answers to questions that are vital to improving knowledge and outcomes in early years education.

Our research aims to inform professional practice, influence policy development and have a real impact on the lives of children, young people and families.

“

My husband and I left feeling empowered and encouraged. We were given practical strategies, as well as hearing valuable research. The presenters were really lovely, you could tell they were passionate and loved working with people”.

EARLY START DISCOVERY SPACE SPEAKER SERIES ATTENDEE



Teaching and Learning

Influence curriculum, teaching and learning practices to enhance professional capacity and contemporary knowledge in early years.



67

PARENTS AND CARERS

attended a lecture on the benefits of play and how children learn from it, presented by Professor Marc de Rosnay, Academic Director and Professor of Child Development at

Numbers

118

children across NSW participated in 'Wind and Air' virtual excursions.

42

families engaged in an 8 week nutrition and attachment program in partnership with Family Services Illawarra.

Early Start is training the next generation of professionals focussed on the earliest years of life. Students undertake innovative teaching programs that incorporate significant participation from children, their families and communities.

Real world teaching experience, strong international research links and innovative programs have helped to earn the University of Wollongong a proud reputation for producing high quality graduates.

Tutorials take place within the purpose-built Early Start facility, with students drawing on practical elements within the Discovery Space and making clear links between theory, practice and real world experiences.

Our Playful Learning Space has been designed to replicate an early childhood learning environment and is used to run educational programs for children and provide professional development to early years educators.

We are also providing education to families on topical parenting issues and connecting experts directly with the community.

“

My daughter is much more confident to go out on her own and explore the Space. Up until 4 weeks into the program she wouldn't leave my side and this was difficult with my other daughter who is 1 being very clingy also. This has been one of the first times I've been able to go out with both of the girls”.

DONNA, NUTRITION AND ATTACHMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

THE EARLY START INAUGURAL CONFERENCE

on Improving Children's Lives: Translating Research for Practice, Policy and Community saw more than 600 delegates from 11 countries discussing how to improve children's lives held at the University of Wollongong.

Leadership

Early Start leadership and the advisory committee bring together professionals with a wide range of experience and knowledge from diverse backgrounds, and areas of influence, and with a passion for delivering transformational change and sustainable impact within the society that supports young children and families.

Anita Kumar

COO (CURRENT)

Michelle Kellaway

CEO (2014 – 2016)

Marc de Rosnay

ACADEMIC DIRECTOR

Tony Okely

RESEARCH DIRECTOR

Glenn Salkeld

EXECUTIVE DEAN FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Paul Chandler

FOUNDATION DIRECTOR

Early Start Advisory Committee

Mr Philip Marcus Clark AM (Chair)

Dr Andrew Bisits

Dr Ken Boston AO

Mr Luke Carroll

Ms Lisa Chung

Ms Elaine Henry OAM

Ms Melanie Kansil

Prof Paul Chandler (UOW)

Prof Glenn Salkeld (UOW)

Discovery Space Advisory Group

Mr Christopher Abbott

Mr Lloyd Niccol

Ms Doreen Clark

Ms Sam Knight

Mr Clyde McConaghy

“

I am delighted with the success of Early Start and its engagement with the community. The vital role that Early Start plays in empowering children, extending their love of lifelong learning, deepens the University of Wollongong's commitment to education in changing life trajectories”.

PROFESSOR PAUL
WELLINGS CBE, VICE
CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG



50

local Indigenous children took part in cultural activities at the Early Start Discovery Space in recognition of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's day.

Koori Kids Culture Club



A two year initiative between Early Start researchers, Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, and the local Aboriginal community in the Shoalhaven led to the

Koori Kids Culture Club. This unique after-school program that encourages Aboriginal children to engage with Country and their culture and make healthy lifestyle choices.

11 year old Shaylah shares the impact of the program explaining, "Since the club, well I am proud because when me and Jason did our news topic he brang in his shell hook thing and, yeah, we talked about how, what the culture and how long they've been around for and, yeah, how to play the didge."



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Building 21,
University of Wollongong,
Northfields Ave, NSW 2522,
Australia

earlystart.uow.edu.au

