



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION  
AUSTRALIA

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# Early Learning Statement

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## Edmund Rice Education Australia

### The place of Early Learning in Australian education

*The early years... provide the foundation for learning throughout school and beyond. The key to children's earliest learning and development is the quality and depth of interaction they experience.*

COAG (Council of Australian Governments) Education Council. (2019). Alice Springs (Mparntwe) education declaration. Canberra: Department of Education, Australian Government.

### Preamble

Edmund Rice Early Childhood Education covers children from the age of three months through to eight years of age and is a critical period in every child's development, markedly influencing adult life values, wellbeing, outcomes and social connectedness. It is a time when children grow, not only physically but spiritually, forming their personality and their appetite for learning.

The period between birth and three is a time when children unconsciously absorb both positive and negative information from their environment. They learn and remember without knowing they are doing it, simply as a result of living and interacting with their environment.

Before the age of three, children are at the most adaptable and most vulnerable stage of their life.<sup>1</sup> From the age of three children become explorers who come upon opportunities, making conscious what

their unconscious mind has already absorbed. This is why high-quality education and care environments are of the utmost importance to facilitating optimal child development.

Quality early childhood education supports the important and rapid cognitive growth of childhood and is especially efficacious for those who have experienced disadvantaged.

This Early Learning Statement addresses EREA's work with children in its Early Learning Centres.

### Our Commitment

EREA Early Learning Centres are places which demonstrate fidelity to the EREA Touchstones through creating a lifeworld of symbols, language, liberating actions, practices and relationships, with a hope-filled program that engenders belonging and touches hearts and minds.

They do this in the context of the highest standards of compliance to the National Quality Framework and the National Quality Standards.

Our Educational program and practices enhance each child's learning and development. Educators facilitate and extend this through a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child in their care.

We are committed to developing the quality of leadership in our early childhood education, because we believe that it is critical to the provision of quality education and care. Quality leadership recognises the importance of the voice of the child and connecting and building respectful relationships between children and with families and community.

<sup>1</sup> Moore, T.G., Arefadib, N., Deery, A., Keyes, M. & West, S. (2017). The First Thousand Days: An Evidence Paper – Summary. Parkville, Victoria: Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

# Vision, Mission, Charter and Staff Formation

## Vision

Our vision is that the four Touchstones of the EREA Charter<sup>2</sup> provide the foundation for framing the provision of age-appropriate, play-based and child-centred learning experiences and a lifeworld of symbols, language, liberating actions, practices and the relationships which support them. Through this education, we will provide our children with the foundations to become independent, confident and resilient young people.

## Mission

Our Mission in early childhood education is to provide a high quality, safe, natural and sustainable environments that promote respect, compassion, well-being, and curiosity in every child.

Our actions have a direct influence on every child's learning. We strive to:

- Create a genuine sense of belonging
  - Be role models for our children, and encourage older children to be the same for their younger peers
  - Support each child's spirituality
  - Engage with parents and carers, with whom we partner in the education of the young
  - Live and learn together in harmony
  - Be reflective practitioners
  - Focus on the Gospel values of respect and compassion
  - Allow each child to develop at their own pace
  - Use language and actions which, of themselves, teach the young
  - Provide a safe and caring environment
- Encourage community and develop trusting and respectful relationships with all members of the community
  - Celebrate important life and community moments
  - Foster wellbeing and confidence in every child
  - Utilise a combination of approaches and processes to support effective transition to school.

## The Charter Touchstones

We believe that:

- Learning is holistic and that every child deserves to learn at their pace in a safe and caring environment.
- The greatest evidence of the lived experience of Gospel values will be in the relationships that we develop and nurture among all members of our community.
- We are a community where children, parents/ carers and staff are treated, at all times, with respect and dignity and which, following the example of Christ, is a truly inclusive community where each person is valued for their intrinsic worth.

<sup>2</sup> EREA Council. (2017). Charter for Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition: Our Touchstones. Richmond, Victoria: Edmund Rice Education Australia. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3eM4UOK>





Our children explore and engage at their own pace in a prepared environment, which enables them to succeed and achieve learning outcomes. Both planned and spontaneous child-centred or play-based learning opportunities can occur across the Foundation Learning Areas.<sup>3</sup> When each of these areas is interconnected with experiences across more than one area, a holistic education is fostered. When exposed to learning about our First Peoples, different countries and different cultures, children grow in appreciation and knowledge of human diversity and develop a sense of justice and equity. When parents and carers are encouraged to appropriately partner their children through their lives, children are happier and learn more easily.



Gospel spirituality can find means of expression within daily activities and community relationships. We do this by providing an environment that focuses on the Gospel values of respect, compassion and the fostering of well-being and confidence in every child in a non-judgemental atmosphere. It is in this environment that children's spirituality is supported, assisting them to come to know themselves—their identity and emotions—as well as navigate their world, problem solve, make positive choices and become resilient.

For older children aged 5-8 years in a school setting, we commit to the Catholic Religious Education through local diocesan programs.

<sup>3</sup> See ACECQA. (2017). *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/3rxD1xW>

<sup>4</sup> See EREA (Edmund Rice Education Australia). (2019). *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*. Richmond, Victoria: Author. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/33Jqf4Z>

<sup>5</sup> Department of Education and Training. (2009). *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*. Canberra: Council of Australian Governments. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/38pmLHT>



Each centre of early childhood learning should strive to create an environment of welcome and belonging for staff, children, parents/carers and visitors. Through this welcome, we promote harmony, equity and good relationships among nationalities, cultures, religions, genders and children with additional needs.

We are committed to seeking ways to make our children aware of the place of First Nations people in Australia and making First Nations peoples welcomed in our communities.<sup>4</sup>

There are several key ways in which we care for and nurture the dignity of each child, fostering their wellbeing; we help them to:


- Feel good about who they are
- Feel comfortable with similarities and differences in others
- Recognise bias and stereotypes and explore these through play questioning and literature.



As reflected in the Early Years Learning Framework,<sup>5</sup> children belong firstly as a member of their own family, then as a member of a group or class, then as a member of the Early Learning Centre community and finally as a member of a wider community.

A curriculum that integrates the themes of justice and peace supports the development of empathic children who will be well prepared for the multicultural, multifaith society of which they are a part.

We commit to sustainability practices in outdoor education to encourage children to have a greater awareness of, and respect for, the environment and creation.



*...we will provide our children  
with the foundations to become  
independent, confident and  
resilient young people...*





## Interface with other education delivery types in EREA


The EREA Principals' Forum is the peak body of school leaders in EREA.

We commit to ensuring a conduit between the Principals Forum and senior leaders in EREA early childhood education settings by:

- Ensuring that there is one Early Childhood Education specialist leader who is a member of the EREA Principals' Forum
- Establishing an Early Learning Advisory Group (ELAG).

*We commit to building a better world for all by raising our collective voice in relation to the nature of learning...*





*Edmund Rice Education Australia offers a  
liberating education, based on a gospel spirituality,  
within an inclusive community committed to  
justice and solidarity*

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