

SEPTEMBER 2026

Spring has arrived, bringing longer days, a little more sunshine and hopefully plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors with the children! 🌻

There is lots to share in this month's newsletter—important updates, practical reminders, inspiring Educator stories and ideas to support your practice. A great deal of time and care goes into putting it together, so please find a quiet moment, grab a cuppa and have a proper read. There may just be something inside that inspires you, answers a question or saves you from missing an important update!

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

We had some pretty exciting news this week! Family Day Care Australia announced the Regional Educator Winners for the 2026 Excellence in Family Day Care Awards, and three of our beautiful Nature Alliance Educators were named Regional Winners!



We honestly couldn't be prouder of the three of you. One of the lovely things about being a staff member for Nature Alliance is that we get to see the parts of Family Day Care that other people don't always see. We see the thought that goes into your environments, the relationships you build with your children and families, the questions you ask, the things you worry about getting right, and all those little moments that probably seem quite ordinary when you're living them every day.

Awards are never the reason we do what we do, and they certainly aren't the only measure of an amazing Educator. But it is really special when the work happening quietly inside an Educator's home is recognised outside of it. Lizzie, Leanne and Madi, this recognition is so well deserved and we hope you take a moment to feel really proud of yourselves and what you have achieved. A huge congratulations to all three of you. We are incredibly lucky to have you as part of Nature Alliance.

DOES YOUR CAR INSURANCE COVER YOU?

Last month FDCA shared some information about [motor vehicle insurance](#) for FDC Educators. They have negotiated a range of motor vehicle insurance policies to meet a variety of day-to-day needs. If you use your car for school runs, excursions or transporting children in care, it is essential to check that your insurer knows the vehicle is being used as part of your FDC business. Not all standard motor vehicle policies automatically cover business-related use, carrying children in care or multiple child safety seats and booster seats. FDCA advises Educators to ask their insurer:

- Is my vehicle covered when transporting children as part of my Family Day Care business?
- Are all child safety seats and booster seats covered, and what policy limits apply?
- Is my vehicle's use correctly classified under the policy?

If you haven't spoken to your insurer about how you use your vehicle, now might be a good time to check. It's much better to know exactly what you're covered for before you ever need to make a claim.

WHERE CHILDREN CAN BE CHILDREN



PRACTICAL TIP SHARED BY AUTISM INCLUSIVE

Small changes can make a big difference. When supporting autistic and neurodivergent children, consider asking:

- Is the environment predictable?
- Are expectations clear?
- Does the child have a way to communicate their needs?
- Are sensory needs being proactively supported?
- Are adults co-regulating before expecting self-regulation?
- Does the child have opportunities to engage with their interests?

Inclusion begins with understanding what a child needs to feel safe, connected and supported.

For more useful resources and guidance consider subscribing to [Autism Inclusive's](#) Bi-Monthly Newsletter.



POLICIES BEING UPDATED

We are currently reviewing the policies below and you value your input. As Educators, you are the ones putting these policies into practice every day, so your feedback is important. If something isn't clear, doesn't quite work in practice, or you think there is a better way of wording or approaching something, please let us know. You don't need to provide formal feedback – even a quick email, phone call or chat with your ESO is helpful.

- [Policy 4](#) – Serious Incidents Emergencies & Evacuation
- [Policy 5.3](#) – Transportation and Safe Arrival of Children
- [Policy 11](#) – Participation of Volunteers & Students
- [Policy 20](#) – Registration of FDC Educators

It's important that our policies are clear, practical and reflective of how Family Day Care actually works.

TEMPLATES THAT HAVE BEEN UPDATED

It has been a very busy month of updating templates! Please ensure that when you need a template, you download it from the website because the version you may have downloaded previously is now out of date.

- [Draft Parent Handbook](#) – there have been significant changes to this document, so please use this template as your master copy when you start updating your current version.
- [Educator NQS Self-Assessment Tool](#) – This is a new template for those Educators who are interested in assessing their FDC against the National Quality Standards. This document is very useful for **Assessment & Rating** preparation and reflection.
- [Terms of Trade](#) – Updated to include the new bank fee charges and structure.
- [Food Safety Checklist](#) – Updated to reflect Jo Chapman's updated working days.
- Cancellation of Care form has been discontinued.

IMPORTANT COMPLIANCE UPDATE: WWCC RECEIPTS NO LONGER ACCEPTED

Under current regulations, Working with Children Check (WWCC) application receipts are no longer accepted as valid proof of clearance. To legally deliver care, educators and their service must hold and provide a copy of their actual, valid WWCC card. Please ensure your card details are up to date with the service. If your card is due to expire, submit your renewal early to avoid any interruption to your care provision. You can apply for the card up to 3 months prior

CREDIT CARD SURCHARGES

The Reserve Bank of Australia has announced that businesses can no longer pass credit card surcharges on to customers. From 1 October, families will no longer pay these surcharges, as Nature Alliance will absorb this cost. Transaction and declined-payment fees will remain unchanged.



MEET YOUR NEXT EDUCATIONAL LEADER – JO CHAPMAN

An Educational Leader supports Educators to reflect on their practice, build confidence and continually improve the quality of education and care they provide. In Family Day Care, this doesn't mean telling Educators what to do. Instead, it means working alongside them—asking thoughtful questions, sharing ideas and resources, celebrating successes, and encouraging meaningful reflection that leads to positive outcomes for children. An Educational Leader helps create a culture of continuous improvement, where every Educator is supported to grow professionally while developing programs that are responsive to the interests, strengths and needs of the children in their care. Can you guess who your Educational Leaders are?



For me, it starts with you.

As your Educational Leader, I am here to walk alongside you, to listen, encourage, support and share ideas as you grow and reflect on your practice. Relationships and trust are at the forefront. It's important as your Educational Leader that you feel comfortable, allowing for honest conversations, asking questions, sharing ideas and celebrating your successes. It's a pleasure to hear about what's happening in your environment, the experiences you are creating, the interests you are following and those little moments where you see children learning.

I also love learning from you. Every educator brings their own strengths, experiences and ideas, and I believe we can learn a lot from each other. Sometimes we might talk about your program, reflect on an experience, explore an idea or simply celebrate something that has gone well.

Most of all, it's important you feel heard, supported and valued. My hope is that you leave our conversations feeling a little more confident, supported or with something new to explore.

Thank you for allowing me to walk alongside you.

FOOD SAFETY TIP

This month, we thought we could shine a little light on food in light of National Nutrition Week runs from 12–18 October 2026, with this year's focus on Positive Food Experiences for Children and Young People.

As educators, you have so many opportunities to help children build a positive relationship with food through your menus, mealtimes, cooking experiences, conversations and everyday routines.

As your Food Safety Officer, we thought we would share a few simple things to think about:

Take a fresh look at your menu or lunch boxes

Whether you provide food or children bring lunch boxes from home, Nutrition Week is a great time to think about the variety of foods children are experiencing.

If families provide lunch boxes, consider how you work together with families to support children's nutritional needs. Are there opportunities to share information, talk about children's individual needs and encourage a variety of nutritious foods? It can also be a great opportunity to involve children in making choices, trying new foods and talking about colours, flavours, textures and where food comes from.

Keep food fun and positive

Talk about food without labelling it as "good" or "bad". Explore colours, textures, smells and where different foods come from.



Get cooking!

Cooking with children can support so many areas of learning, counting, measuring, language, science, culture and independence. It's also a great time to model simple food safety practices.

Make food safety part of the fun

Handwashing, clean surfaces, safe food preparation and storing food correctly are important habits children can learn alongside us.

Celebrate food and culture

Food can be a wonderful way to learn about families, cultures and traditions. Why not invite families to share a recipe, food or tradition that is meaningful to them?

A little Food Safety Officer thought...

When we think about food, it's not just about what children eat. It's also about how they experience food feeling included, being involved, trying new things, learning where food comes from and enjoying mealtimes in a safe and positive environment.

Why not take a fresh look at your practice and ask yourself:

"What positive food experiences am I creating for the children in my care?"

Sometimes it's the small, everyday experiences that make the biggest difference.

BEST PRACTICE FOOD GUIDE FOR ECEC FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

A new [Best Practice Guide for ECEC Food Environments](#) has recently been released, and there are some really useful ideas in there for Family Day Care.

One of the things that is very useful is that you can select Family Day Care and the guide will show you the information that is relevant to our setting. It means you're not wading through pages of information that doesn't really fit with what happens in an FDC home! When you have a little time, have a browse through it. You might find something that confirms what you're already doing, gives you a new idea to try, or simply gets you thinking about the way food, mealtimes and healthy choices are part of the children's everyday experiences in your care.

As always, it's not about changing things just for the sake of it. Have a look, think about what makes sense for your children and families, and take from it what is meaningful for your practice.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SHARE

Looking for a professional development resource that feels less like a textbook and more like a catch-up with friends? Check out the **Pop Culture Parenting** podcast!

Hosted by Dr Billy (a developmental paediatrician) and Nick (a developing parent), this series strikes the perfect balance between clinical evidence and the messy reality of day-to-day parenting by using iconic movies like The Incredibles, Star Wars, and The Matrix as jumping-off points, they break down complex childhood concepts like neurodiversity, emotional regulation, and attachment theory into deeply practical, real-world insights.

Whether you are an educator, a clinician, or a parent yourself, it is an incredible tool for understanding and supporting the growing minds in your care. You can tune in on all major listening platforms or watch their episodes on YouTube! <https://www.guidinggrowingminds.com/popcultureparenting>



CHILD PROTECTION / ONLINE SAFETY

A little resource to explore this month...

Online safety can sometimes feel like a big topic, especially when we are working with young children. But those early conversations can be simple, positive and part of everyday learning. The eSafety Commissioner's Early Years program has some great free resources for educators and families, including activities, posters, stories and practical ideas for talking with young children about technology and staying safe online.

There are also free professional learning modules developed by [eSafety and Early Childhood Australia](#) if you would like to build your own knowledge and confidence around online safety.

Sometimes it's the simple conversations we have with children that help build those important skills for later.

Have a look and see if there is something you could bring into your environment this month.

HI FROM DUNSBOROUGH

Jessy opened Blooms Collective Learning Service in May 2026, bringing with her 15 years of experience as an Early Childhood Teacher and a passion for Early Literacy, Language Development and Special Needs Education. While her experience is clearly reflected in her practice, what stands out most when visiting Jessy is the warmth, kindness and genuine joy she brings to her work with children.

Jessy has thoughtfully created a welcoming environment filled with opportunities for children to explore, investigate and learn. One of the highlights is her beautiful outdoor classroom, which extends the learning environment and gives children space to create, wonder, connect and follow their interests.

Jessy has a beautiful way of slowing down and embracing the little moments with children. She listens to their ideas, follows their interests and creates meaningful experiences that encourage curiosity, confidence and a love of learning. There is a wonderful sense of calm, connection and belonging within her environment, and her kindness shines through in the way she supports and interacts with children.

It is always a joy to visit Jessy and see Blooms Collective Learning Service growing within the Dunsborough community. Thank you, Jessy, for creating such a warm, inspiring and beautiful place for children to learn, grow and make memories.



WORD OF THE DAY

Program – in early childhood education, a program is much more than a collection of observations or a list of activities planned for the week. An observation helps us notice, understand and document something about a child — their interests, learning, development, relationships or ideas. The program is what we do with that information. It brings together what we know about the children, their families and community, along with spontaneous learning, routines, the environment and Educator knowledge, to make decisions about what happens next. In Family Day Care, a program might include experiences intentionally planned in response to an observation, but it should also reflect opportunities for play, emerging interests, children's ideas and choices, everyday routines, community experiences and learning that develops unexpectedly throughout the day. Not everything on the program needs to begin with a written observation, and not every observation needs to result in a planned activity. A meaningful program is responsive and flexible — it shows how you are using what you know about your children to support and extend their learning, development and wellbeing.



AEDC DATA – CREATING ENVIRONMENTS THAT SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT

When we think about supporting children across the five AEDC domains, it is easy to focus on the experiences we plan or the interactions we have. But the environment itself also plays an important role in children's learning and development. The way spaces are arranged, the resources children can access, and the opportunities they have to move, explore, communicate, collaborate or simply have some quiet time can all influence how children engage and learn. A supportive environment doesn't need to be elaborate or filled with expensive resources — it needs to respond to the children who use it.

In Family Day Care, our home-based environments provide so many natural opportunities to support the AEDC domains. A child independently pouring their own drink is developing physical skills and independence. Two children building together are negotiating, communicating and problem-solving. A quiet space can help a child recognise when they need time away and begin to regulate their emotions. Books, loose parts, puzzles, natural materials and everyday household items can invite curiosity, language, creativity and thinking. Even small changes to an environment can create new opportunities for children to practise skills, make decisions and take greater ownership of their learning.

Sometimes the best way to reflect on your environment is simply to stand back and watch. What does your environment allow children to do without you? What opportunities does it provide for independence, connection, challenge, communication and discovery? Using the AEDC domains as a lens can help us notice what our environments already support well — and where a small change might open up a whole new opportunity for learning.

Reflect on:

- *What can children independently access, choose and do within your environment?*
- *Which AEDC domains do you see being naturally supported through your indoor and outdoor spaces?*
- *Are there children whose current strengths, interests or needs aren't as well supported by the environment?*
- *What is one small change you could make that might create a new opportunity for children to explore, connect, communicate or challenge themselves?*

You can explore AEDC data for your local community at the [AEDC Community Data Explorer](#).

EDUCATOR SHARE

Although Father's Day has been and gone, we wanted to share this example from Jenni because it is such a great demonstration of critical reflection in everyday practice.

In the lead-up to Father's Day, Jenni in Collie took some time to critically reflect on what the occasion might mean for children who do not have a father or significant male figure in their lives. Looking at the celebration through the lens of social justice, fairness and inclusion, she recognised that a traditional approach to Father's Day could unintentionally leave some children feeling different or excluded.

Rather than assuming every child has a dad, Jenni thought about the individual relationships that are important to the children in her care. Children were given the choice to make something for a grandad, uncle, brother or another special male person in their life, and the celebration became **'Special Men in Our Lives Day'**.

It's a lovely example of how critical reflection doesn't always have to result in a huge change. Sometimes it's simply stopping to question something we routinely do and asking, *"Does this work for every child here?"* Father's Day may be over for another year, but perhaps it gives us all something to think about when the next celebration comes around. Who is represented? Who might not be? And are there small changes we could make so that every child and family feels that they belong?

Thank you, Jenni, for sharing your reflection and giving us all something to think about.



WELLBEING

Working with children brings many intrinsic rewards, which keep family day care educators going 'the extra mile'. Yet despite these joys and deep satisfactions, being a family day care educator is often physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. Children are influenced by the people around them and their surroundings for family day care educators to be effective in educating and caring for children, it is important that they also look after their own wellbeing. *You can't pour from an empty cup*, as the saying goes.

Many factors can contribute to positive personal wellbeing. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. What works for some, does not work for others. Below are some tried and true ways to look after your personal wellbeing that may be useful starting points:

- **Eat well**
- **Be physically active**
- **Get enough sleep**
- **Find ways to balance work and life demands**
- **Foster and maintain personal relationships**
- **Find ways to manage your stress**
- **Maintain your own interests outside of work**
- **Know when to seek additional help**

<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/educator-wellbeing/beyond-self-care---an-educator-wellbeing-guide>
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/fact-sheets/wellbeing-and-stress-management/wellbeing-for-educators>

PLAYGROUP

Many thanks to Sylvia in Busselton for hosting our playgroup in August. Now that we have welcomed spring, we are hopeful that we can resume our playgroups in the park from October, when the weather is usually a little more predictable. During the morning, we had several opportunities for mark-making, including sensory sand play in a fairy garden and collaborative mud painting. The mud painting was a huge hit! The children were drawn to the space and eagerly explored the different textures and consistencies of the mud. I also provided a bowl of turmeric mixed with water, adding a vibrant pop of colour and creating a contrast to the natural brown tones of the mud. Creating paint from natural materials provides such wonderful opportunities for children to explore colour, texture and the ways in which we can use nature as a creative resource. It also opens the door to scientific exploration as children observe how materials change when they are mixed, crushed or combined with water. This got me thinking about what other natural materials we could explore. Perhaps flowers, soft stones, leaves or bark could be crushed using a mortar and pestle to create different colours and textures. There is so much potential for children to experiment, make predictions, compare their discoveries and explore what happens when natural materials are transformed into something new.



SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP IN OCTOBER

Welcome to October! This month is bursting with wonderful opportunities for us to come together and celebrate what truly matters. From honouring our amazing educators and grandparents to raising vital awareness for mental health, wildlife conservation, and children's wellbeing, our calendar is packed with meaningful moments. Whether you are grabbing an extra coffee to kick off the month, putting on your loudest shirt for a great cause, or getting ready for some spooky Halloween fun, there is something for everyone to participate in.

- 1st - International Music Day / International Coffee Day
- 2nd – World Smile Day
- 4 – 10th World Space Week
- 5th - International Teacher's Day / World Habitat Day



6 – 12th Australian Wildlife Week
10th – World Mental Health Day
16th – Loud Shirt Day
19 – 25th National Bird Week / National Water Week
24th Oct - 1st Nov – Children's Week
25th – Grandparents Day
28th – National Chocolate Day
29th – Bandana Day
31st – Halloween / Day for Daniel

OFFICE HOURS

Our office hours are 8.30am to 4.30pm. If you have a query outside of these hours, please email or phone and leave a message. If you need to speak with someone in an emergency, please ring Jo Georgiou and if your call is not answered immediately, leave a message and your call will be returned.

PHONE NUMBERS

ADMIN TEAM - Sandra & Caitlin: 0431 449 567 (Mon – Fri); **ESO SOUTH - Joy:** 0429 030 362 (Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri); **ESO SOUTH - Jo C:** 0477 029 531 (Mon - Thurs); **ESO NORTH - Lea:** 0477 029 228 (Mon, Tue, Thurs & Fri); **ESO NORTH - Brenda:** 0494 656 801 (Mon -Wed) ; **MANAGER - Jo G:** 0477 029 132 (Mon – Fri)

To ensure that we respond to your emails promptly please send your queries to: info@naturealliancefdc.com.au

"Accept that some days you're the pigeon and some days you're the statue!" – Scott Adams

WHERE CHILDREN CAN BE CHILDREN

