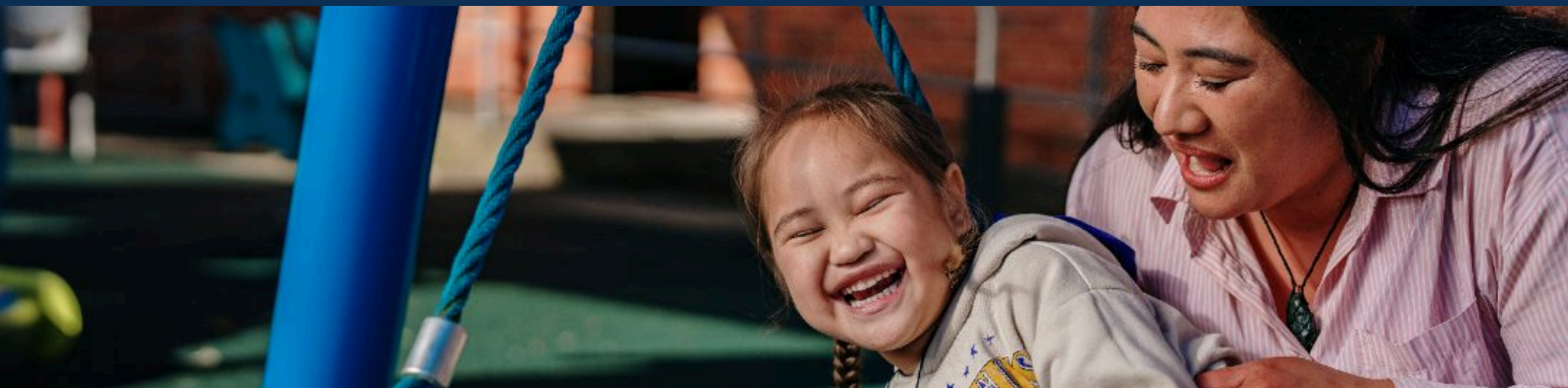


Lifting the quality of early education in Mount Druitt



The Early Childhood Educators' Network (ECEN), postcode 2770



The Hive is an early years, collective impact initiative operating within the postcode of Mount Druitt, supporting all children to have access to high quality early childhood education and care. The Hive runs the Early Childhood Educators' Network (ECEN), an ongoing professional learning and support network across 40 centre-based services in the 2770 postcode. Western Sydney University evaluated the ECEN across 2020 to 2025 against fifteen criteria to assess impact. The evaluation found the ECEN is lifting the quality of early childhood education right across one of the most disadvantaged postcodes in NSW and could be a model for consideration for similar contexts.

Outcomes WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

SERVICES 'MEETING' OR
'EXCEEDING' THE NQS



National Quality Standard rating

PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE
IN POSTCODE 2770



Rose faster than Blacktown or NSW

Services also reported a significant increase of connection between services due to the network, resulting in greater collaboration and learning opportunities.

The network equipped educators to feel more confident implementing innovative strategies that support the unique needs of children in a high poverty context.

How the network works



Bimonthly gatherings,
networking & coaching



Builds connections
across ECEC services



Embeds current theory
& best practice



Strengthens referrals to
local services



Led by a local trusted
educator

“ The Hive’s ECEN is an exemplary model of ECEC educator professional development in high poverty contexts.

— P.28, WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY, TeEach RESEARCH CENTRE



How the evaluation was done WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY, 2020–2025

The evaluation gathered evidence to assess the network against the evaluation criteria. Evidence was gathered through focus groups, a Mentimeter survey in the focus groups to compare data with 2019 data, social network analysis, a desktop review of gathering data provided by The Hive, and a desktop review of publicly available ACECQA and AEDC data.

5

FOCUS GROUPS

15

CRITERIA ASSESSED



Fifteen criteria, one clear result

WSU set fifteen questions to assess the impact and success of the ECEN — for example, *“Is current theory and disciplinary knowledge introduced to the network?”* Each was judged against the evidence gathered. Twelve were met with strong evidence, two with good evidence, and one — school readiness — with mixed evidence.

12 · STRONG EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

2 GOOD

1

- Is current theory and disciplinary knowledge introduced to the network?
- Do educators try things out in their centres?
- Do educators collaborate in their centres?
- Do educators access coaching or mentoring?
- Do educators incorporate child and family knowledge in their practices?
- Do educators participate in a community of practice?
- Are centres better equipped to support children with special educational needs?
- Has school readiness improved in postcode 2770?

- Does the ECEN support educator confidence?
- Does the ECEN support educator wellbeing?
- Are relationships between services built?
- Does the ECEN support reflective practice?
- Do educators feel like the ECEN responds to what they need?
- Is it easy to access different kinds of professional learning?
- Has quality improved in postcode 2770?

● Strong ● Good ● Mixed

Quality lifted across the board The four areas that lifted the most, 2021 to 2026

QA1

Educational program & practice

QA2

Children's health & safety

QA3

Physical environment

QA7

Governance & leadership

Four of the seven National Quality Standard areas rose across the evaluation period. Collaborative partnerships with children and families remains the highest rated area of all.

What educators told us IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“We are very isolated, I suppose. So, this has been an absolute blessing for us. Just being able to collaborate with other like-minded people, you know, and I've built some good relationships.”

ECEN MEMBER · FOCUS GROUP 3

“Reflection occurs when you see or hear about things other people are doing, and you reflect on how that might be adapted to be implemented in your service. Those reflections really actually lead to positive outcomes.”

ECEN MEMBER · FOCUS GROUP 3



FIND OUT MORE

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For the full report, visit thehivemtdruitt.com.au

Source: *Evaluation of The Hive's Early Childhood Educators' Network (2026)*, TeEACH Research Centre, Western Sydney University. Funded by United Way Australia.



FULL REPORT



United Way Australia is the registered charity that oversees The Hive.