

Implementation and Process Review

Goodstart Plus ... a place-based integrated approach to enhancing children's outcomes through early childhood education and care

'... what we do here is what breaks cycles. ... I think that the work the educators do here is changing lives for the better.' *(Goodstart educator, Blue Haven)*

We're for children, not profit.



Goodstart Early Learning acknowledges all Traditional Owners across Australia and recognises all First Nations Peoples' continued cultural and spiritual connections to the land, sky and waterways that surround us. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Contributors and Acknowledgements

Authorship and analysis were led by Dr Victoria Sullivan and Penny Markham, with responsibility for evaluation design, oversight of data collection, data interpretation, synthesis of findings and the drafting of this report, including the articulation of key learnings, conclusions and next steps.

Strategic oversight and support were provided by Myra Geddes, whose leadership and guidance were instrumental in shaping the direction, scope and integrity of this review.

Key contributions and guidance were provided by members of the Goodstart Plus Independent Evaluation Advisory Group, alongside the Goodstart Social Impact team and subject matter experts across pedagogy, nutrition, inclusion and operations within Goodstart. The review also benefited from independent research expertise, with interviews conducted by Dr Judy Gregory and nutrition analysis by Dr Bonnie Searle; their insights strengthened the credibility and depth of the findings.

This Implementation and Process Review was developed through the collective efforts of many individuals across Goodstart Early Learning and partner organisations. We extend our sincere thanks to the centre leaders, educators, cooks, teachers and families at Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven, whose openness, reflections and lived experience were central to this review. Their commitment to children, their centres and communities continues to shape the evolution of Goodstart Plus.

Suggested citation:

Goodstart Early Learning (2026) *Implementation and Process Review: Goodstart Plus... a place-based integrated approach to enhancing children's outcomes through early childhood education and care*: <https://www.goodstart.org.au/getmedia/b369f6d7-169b-42b1-8854-aed6d96a80cf/Goodstart-Plus-Implementation-and-Process-Review-Report.pdf>

Contents

Contributors and Acknowledgements	2
Acknowledgement of Country	4
Children's Acknowledgement of Country	4
Executive Summary	5
Seven Key Learnings From This Review	6
Introduction	8
Early Childhood Policy Context.....	8
Goodstart's Strategic Direction 2025–2029	9
Our Strategic Priorities and Goodstart Plus	10
About Goodstart Plus	11
Goodstart Plus Evaluation Approach	14
Findings	15
Addressing the Key Evaluation Questions	15
Engagement with the Approach	17
Enhanced Structural Quality	20
Enhanced Process Quality	22
Strong Leadership and Professional Development	26
Minimum 3-day Attendance	32
Enhanced Nutrition.....	33
Other Insights.....	37
Conclusions	39
Next Steps for Implementation	39
Next Steps for Evaluation	40
Appendix 1 – Goodstart Plus Theory of Change	41
Appendix 2 – Methods	44
Interview Participants	44
Guiding Questions	45
References.....	48

Acknowledgement of Country

Goodstart Early Learning acknowledges all Traditional Owners across Australia and recognises all First Nations peoples' continued cultural and spiritual connections to the land, sky and waterways that surround us. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and respect the Darkinung Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Goodstart Plus centres sit. We would like to thank them for caring for and protecting this Country. Goodstart acknowledges that these lands have been places of teaching and learning for thousands of years and home to the longest continuing culture on earth. This land was never ceded.

Through our work with children, families and communities, we seek to listen, learn and deepen our understanding and respect of First Nations cultures, tell the true stories of Australia's history and care for the land on which we live, work, play and learn.



Children's Acknowledgement of Country

*Here is the land,
Here is the sky,
Here are my friends, and here am I.*

*We say thank you to the Darkinung
people for the land we play on.
Hands up,
Hands down,
We are on Darkinung land.*

– Children at Lake Munmorah

*One little finger,
One little finger,
One little finger,
Tap, tap, tap.*

*Point to your friends,
Hi friends!
Point to your friends,
Hi friends!
Lay them in your lap, lap, lap.*

*Here is the land,
Here is the sky,
Here are my friends,
And here am I.*

*Thank you Darkinung,
For the land that you share,
Hands up, hands down,
On the Darkinung ground.*

– Children at Blue Haven

Executive Summary

This report reviews the implementation of Goodstart Plus – an integrated, place-based approach to early childhood education and care (ECEC) intended to support children and families in communities that face entrenched disadvantage. The Goodstart Plus approach was developed in collaboration with the Goodstart Thought Leaders Advisory Group in 2024, using a Delphi process that built on the existing evidence base. For Goodstart Plus, the Thought Leaders established an Independent Evaluation Advisory Group, which met quarterly to provide advice and guidance to support the ongoing development of Goodstart Plus and each phase of its evaluation. In early 2025, Goodstart Plus implementation commenced at 2 centres in the central coast region of New South Wales – Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven.

This review was conducted between October and December 2025. The findings are based on 34 informal interviews with team members from each centre, including centre leaders, educators, teachers, cooks and parents, supplemented by conversations with Goodstart employees from Centre Support Office and analysis of administrative data collected through Goodstart's systems and governance reporting for Goodstart Plus. The Independent Evaluation Advisory Group reviewed the draft report in December 2025. Their feedback has been incorporated into this final report.

This report assesses the implementation of Goodstart Plus against the 4 key evaluation questions outlined in the multi-year evaluation framework, and provides insight into the experience of Goodstarters at Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven. It identifies learnings relevant to Goodstart Plus, the Goodstart network more broadly, and potentially the sector as a whole. Where relevant, it describes course corrections implemented by Goodstart in response to feedback from the centres and summarises the key learnings arising from this review.

When interviewed in October 2025, centre team members were universally positive about the benefits and impact of Goodstart Plus. All team members could see the impact of additional investment at their centre. They felt privileged to have the opportunity to implement Goodstart Plus. Families described seeing noticeable improvements in their children's learning and self-regulation. The Goodstart team members interviewed for this review identified valuable opportunities for enhancing implementation, including support for navigating rapid changes, enhanced communication about Goodstart Plus, stronger consultation processes and creatively addressing space limitations.

Seven Key Learnings From This Review

1. Educators and Teachers are engaged and positive about Goodstart Plus

Educators and teachers confirmed that Goodstart Plus is bringing positive improvements to their teaching practices and children's learning. They are motivated by the opportunity to make a meaningful difference for children and families, particularly in enhancing learning, wellbeing and overall development.

2. Uplifting centres takes time and effort

Bringing the centres to the level of foundational quality required for Goodstart Plus is a gradual process requiring sustained effort and collaboration. Centre teams invested considerable time and effort in adapting their environments, embedding new practices and engaging with professional development, while the around-centre support team provided and continues to provide critical guidance, resources and hands-on assistance. This joint approach ensures improvements are implemented thoughtfully and are sustainable, building strong foundations for teaching and better outcomes for children.

3. Enhanced nutrition supports children's learning and wellbeing

The focused uplift to provide 75 per cent of children's nutrition (up from 50 per cent) is widely recognised by Goodstart Plus centre teams as a valuable change that is delivering a perceived positive impact in children's social interactions. Improved food quality and quantity, with increased protein earlier in the day and simple initiatives such as 'crunch and sip', contribute to improved self-regulation and more focused engagement. Enhanced nutrition has implications for wider application in Goodstart centres.

4. All Children Communicate! is highly valued

All Children Communicate! (ACC!) supports teachers and educators to focus on communication and language development, and actively engages families to support their child's communication and language development at home. To maximise its impact, centre teams have identified that additional professional development is required for all educators following the introductory ACC! workshops, as the planned cascade model did not achieve the desired impact across the centres.

5. Early orientation and clear communication are critical

Understanding the purpose and goals of Goodstart Plus early on helps Goodstarters to engage confidently and adapt effectively. Centre team members said that introductory workshops early in the process are needed to build confidence and create a shared sense of purpose across the team. Further, clear, consistent communication throughout implementation reduces uncertainty and supports smoother transitions during periods of change. Together, these strategies will establish strong engagement as the approach evolves.

6. Pace and timing of implementation affect engagement

The centres are excited to be the first Goodstart Plus centres and recognise they are involved in creating something new. The pace of change created some challenges during key transition periods. The lessons learnt from this initial phase will further strengthen planning, deepen team engagement and support smoother transitions.

7. Budget learnings

While it is too early to determine cost-effectiveness, our budget monitoring shows that centre teams are actively using budget opportunities and complying with systems put in place to capture Goodstart Plus costs. The current underspend against the forecasted budget reflects, in part, the true cost of the program, including lower-than-expected investment to deliver the core elements and learnings around the phasing of activities.

Introduction

Goodstart Early Learning is Australia's largest not-for-profit social enterprise and Australia's largest early childhood education and care (ECEC) provider. Goodstart has over 670 centres located in all Australian states and territories. We educate and care for more than 64,000 children from 53,000 families and employ approximately 16,500 Goodstarters (team members). We have a deep commitment to reconciliation with First Nations peoples.

Goodstart's 5-year Strategic Plan prioritises achieving consistently high-quality, inclusive services in all Goodstart centres. However, we know that in some locations where complex social and economic challenges are entrenched, even a high-quality ECEC service isn't likely to be enough to improve outcomes for children. Goodstart Plus reflects the evolution of Goodstart's efforts over the past 15 years to build a methodology for improving children's outcomes – working from an ECEC platform and alongside families and leaders in each community. As with all our work and in alignment with the Early Years Learning Framework,¹ we intend to weave First Nations perspectives and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and doing through this at a systems and community level.

Central to this work is a commitment to listening to children, families and local leaders, and sharing what we learn with the sector, policy makers and others to drive systemic change and create new funding approaches and ecosystems that improve outcomes for children and families in the moment, at school and in life. Our work with Goodstart Plus sits alongside other significant investments we make in all of our centres to support children and families likely to be experiencing vulnerability.

Early Childhood Policy Context

'These kids give you hope for the future... But I'm also reminded of what we're doing in early education. We're making a difference ...'

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, 1 May 2024, Winthrop Primary School, Perth.

The Australian early childhood policy context is evolving rapidly, with the Australian Government committed to moving towards a universal ECEC system in a staged approach. Goodstart continues to advocate that inclusion and equity need to be a crucial pillar of a universal system, alongside access, affordability, quality and safety. This approach was also recommended in the Final Report of the Productivity Commission review into early learning in 2024.² Children experiencing vulnerability are most at risk of poorer outcomes in school and life, but also stand to benefit the most from access to high-quality, inclusive early learning. This section provides an overview of the current early childhood policy and reform environment, including how Goodstart Plus is aligned to this and can assist in shaping it as part of Goodstart's broader advocacy strategy and activities for 2026.

The current landscape is being shaped by significant public policy processes and strategies, which are linked to our long-term ambitions for Goodstart Plus. We are working collaboratively with sector partners, academics and philanthropic organisations to ensure we leverage these opportunities and

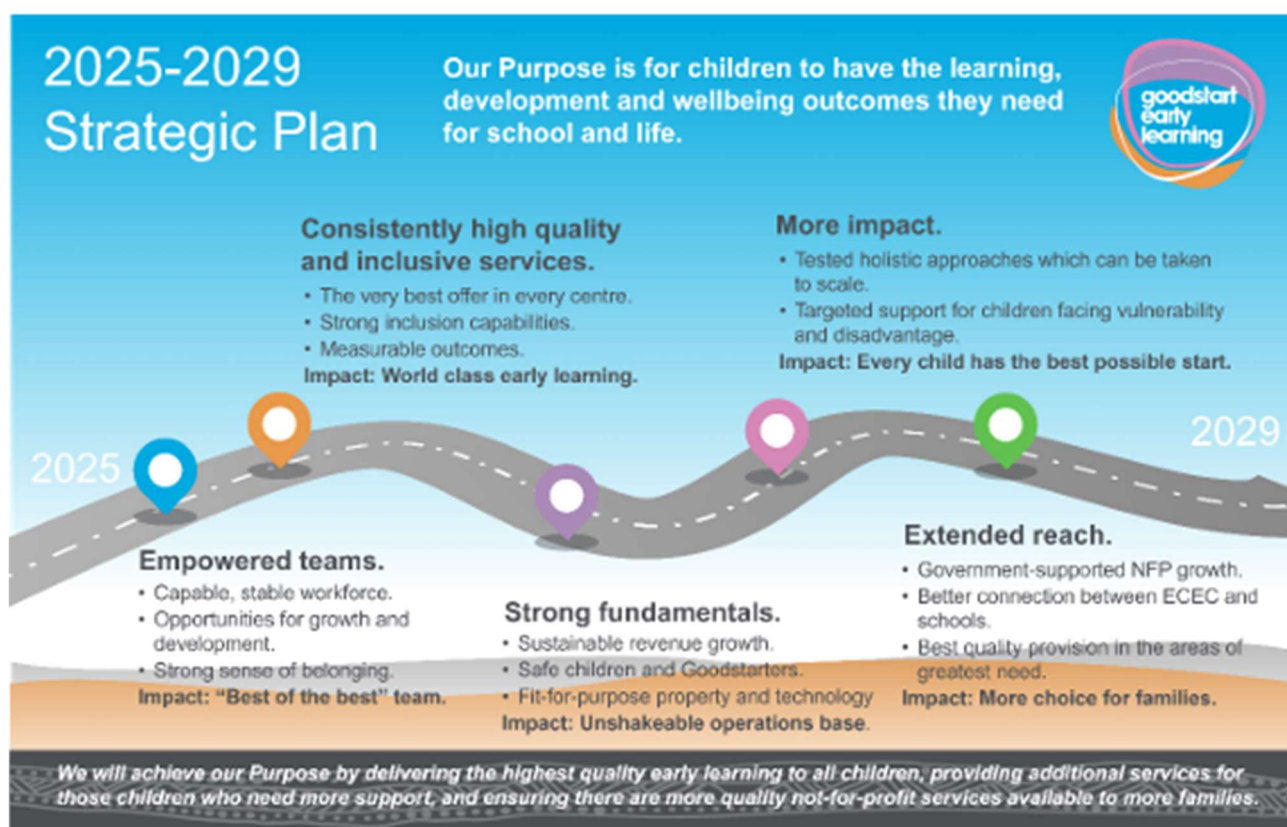
secure long-term change that will deliver the additional support needed for children and communities facing disadvantage and vulnerabilities.

Goodstart Plus builds on significant recent milestones, including the launch of the Early Years Strategy, agreement to the Draft National Vision for Early Childhood Education and the finalisation of the Productivity Commission Report into ECEC, *A path to universal early childhood education and care*. These seminal commitments, which are aligned with our overall objectives for Goodstart Plus, alongside our broader evidence and expertise at Goodstart, will allow us to focus our efforts on current concerns and reforms so we can ensure that we improve the policy, regulatory, funding and practice foundations for the communities and families that most need access to quality inclusive early learning. Specifically, the current context includes: The Early Education Service Delivery Price Project, which will ensure the Government can understand the reasonable cost for providers to deliver quality ECEC services throughout Australia; the Thriving Kids program, which is designed to support children aged 8 and younger with mild to moderate developmental delays or autism; the \$1B Building Early Education Fund, which aims to increase access to early education by building or expanding not-for-profit centres in high-demand, regional and underserved areas. We will also continue to explore opportunities with state governments through their specific reform priorities, such as the Flying Start reforms in South Australia, which respond to the South Australian Royal Commission into early education.

Goodstart's Strategic Direction 2025–2029

Against this backdrop of unprecedented opportunity in ECEC, Goodstart's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan charts a course to reach more children and families and to deliver them better outcomes in line with our belief that all children deserve the best possible start in life and no child should be left behind. We have a relentless drive to ensure our services make a difference, with the aim of achieving 'Exceeding' on the National Quality Standard (NQS) in our centres and recognising that achieving 'Exceeding' makes the most difference to children's outcomes.³ Over the period of our Strategic Plan, we will continue to invest in better pathways and outcomes for all children by ensuring all Goodstart services are of the highest quality. We will provide more holistic and targeted services for those children, families and communities who need extra support, and enable more high-quality, not-for-profit services to be established in the areas of greatest need. Our strategy also includes a specific focus on leveraging our evidence and scale to ensure we achieve positive changes in government policy and funding to support all of Australia's children – not only the children who happen to attend a Goodstart service.

Our Strategic Plan is summarised below to highlight the strategic priorities, targeted outcomes, expected impacts and indicative sequencing through to 2029.



Our Strategic Priorities and Goodstart Plus

We aim to deliver on our Strategic Priorities in every centre and every community, while investing more in centres located in communities facing entrenched disadvantage – with Goodstart Plus being just one of several investments focused on centres serving these communities. This targeted investment will help us deepen our understanding of what works and for whom, with a view to scaling approaches that show promise.

As we work towards consistently high-quality, inclusive services across our entire network, we will test and learn through Goodstart Plus to better understand the impact of individual components of the model and the model overall. In so doing, we will also learn more about the investment required to achieve better outcomes for children in the most vulnerable communities.

Our evidence will underpin advocacy for extended reach in areas of greatest need, more favourable policy settings that enable broader not-for-profit growth, and partnerships with governments to deliver not-for-profit services on school sites and in locations where they can have more impact and make the biggest difference.

About Goodstart Plus

Goodstart Plus is an integrated, place-based approach to ECEC, intended to support children and families in communities that face entrenched disadvantage. It delivers a core early learning approach, informed by a theory of change that combines enhanced pedagogy and targeted investment to improve teaching quality, boost school readiness and enhance children's learning, development and wellbeing. Its long-term aim is to close attainment gaps, build stronger communities and generate evidence for scalable practices across the organisation to further support our children and families.

Research consistently demonstrates that ECEC is a powerful foundation for improving child development, particularly for children with diverse needs or experiencing vulnerability. Despite this, existing policy, funding mechanisms and service models often fall short in delivering the teaching quality and attendance intensity required to make a meaningful difference for children likely to be experiencing vulnerability. At Goodstart, we believe that high-quality, inclusive early education is essential to driving positive change for children experiencing disadvantage.

Goodstart Plus was developed in consultation with Goodstart's Thought Leader Advisory Group of national and international child development and early learning experts, following an extensive literature review, model development and testing with experts through a Delphi process. It is designed to be implemented in SEIFA 1–3 communities, in locations with 2 or more Goodstart centres that have high foundational practice as measured by being 'Exceeding' on the NQS or the Red Amber Green (RAG) scale (Goodstart's internal quality assessment).

Goodstart Plus provides an elevated ECEC model with 5 core evidence-based elements (above what is typically provided in other Goodstart centres) intended to provide high-quality, inclusive teaching and learning:

- Enhanced structural quality (with out-of-ratio staffing including separate Educational Leaders (ELs) for the birth–3 and 3–5 cohorts, an additional Teacher (Early Intervention and Inclusion Specialist) and a Partnership Coordinator)
- Enhanced process quality (elevated teaching and inclusion practices) with fidelity to evidenced-based programs that have a track record in improving child outcomes in communication language and literacy
- Strong leadership across the centre leadership team
- Professional development (additional hours and professional supervision)
- Minimum 3-day attendance for children
- Enhanced nutrition to meet 75 per cent of children's daily nutrition requirements.

While this core is common across all Goodstart Plus centres, implementation is designed locally in consultation with communities, families and centre team members. Implementation is supported by Goodstart's around-centre support teams, Social Impact Integrated Services Team and the Goodstart Plus Governance Group.



Goodstart Plus will be delivered through a regional cluster model, with small groups of Goodstart centres working together to implement changes. By working collaboratively as a cluster, we anticipate that centres will amplify their collective impact, facilitate peer-to-peer learning, foster meaningful and lasting improvements within their communities and maximise their collective resources for the benefit of more children and families. Over time, we envisage that other non-Goodstart services in a local area might join the approach.

Once the core elements of Goodstart Plus are in place, each cluster will develop its own access and inclusion plan to reflect its unique needs and priorities. Through this place-based approach, centre teams will be empowered to shape initiatives that align with their community's context and priorities. They will receive flexible funding to address local priorities from a selection of evidence-informed services and supports. This could include professional development for locally identified priorities and access to child and family support services, allied health, outreach playgroups, etc. This will enable them to partner with families and communities, engage in centre-led, place-based planning and develop service integration and collaborative partnerships.

The Goodstart Plus theory of change and the 5 core elements of the approach are summarised in Appendix 1.

The first cluster was established in 2025, in the central coast region of New South Wales, with 2 Goodstart centres – Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven. As at January 2026, the 2 centres had:

- Employed an additional 2.5 FTE – additional staff including a Partnership Coordinator (1.0 FTE, shared across the cluster), ELs (0.5 FTE out-of-ratio time at each centre), and an Early Intervention and Inclusion Specialist Teacher (1.0 FTE at each centre)

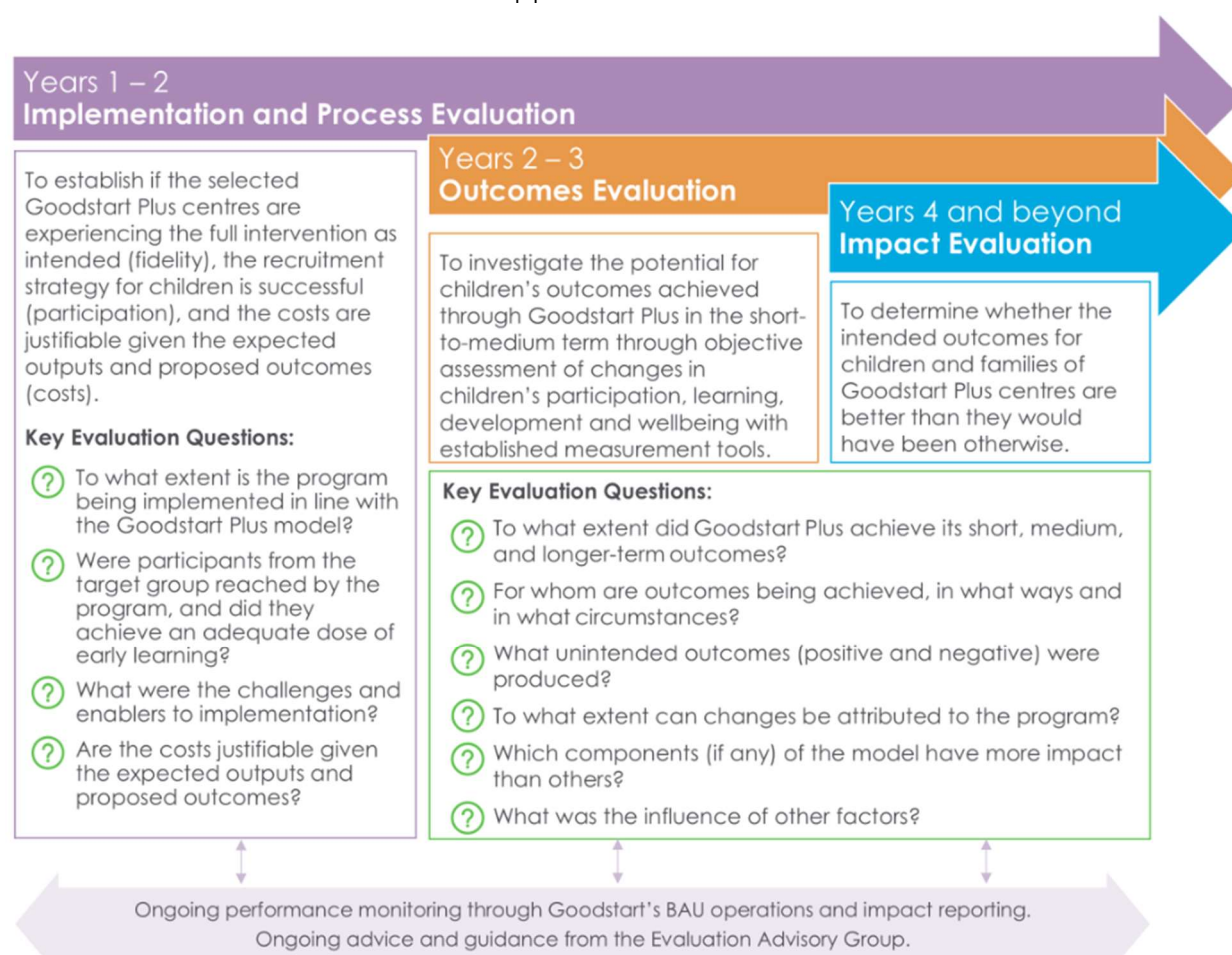
- Achieved a significant uplift in learning environments and resources with support from the practice team and an investment of \$53,000 for resource uplift (total across the 2 centres) and \$26,000 in Centre Support Office team travel and professional development costs
- Implemented professional development opportunities resulting in improved programming across the centres and the early stages of implementing All Children Communicate! (ACC!)
- Uplifted nutrition through substantial improvements to the nutritional quality of children's meals and additional cook hours.

These achievements are discussed in more detail in the findings section of this report.

Goodstart Plus Evaluation Approach

The Goodstart Plus evaluation approach is designed to determine the value, merit, potential and worth of Goodstart Plus. The findings and outcomes of Goodstart Plus will emerge over an extended time and require a chain of evidence through qualitative and quantitative data collection from the early stages of implementation. The purpose of gathering this evidence is to build a robust foundation for an external impact evaluation that will demonstrate whether Goodstart Plus improves children's outcomes (as defined by the Australian Early Development Census and NAPLAN) and school readiness with the necessary foundations to make sustained improvements beyond ECEC and into school. The intention of the evaluation is to learn in cycles that enable improvements as the model evolves and to understand the impact both of the entire model and its individual component parts. What we learn will be shared with the broader ECEC sector, policy makers and funders to advocate for scalable, needs-based funding in communities with high needs.

The table below describes the overall approach to the Goodstart Plus evaluation.



This review considers the early implementation of the first Goodstart Plus cluster. Findings will inform implementation in future clusters and guide improvements for the first cluster. The findings provide insights into the key evaluation questions and core elements of the model.

The methods used to collect the data for this review are detailed in Appendix 2.

Findings

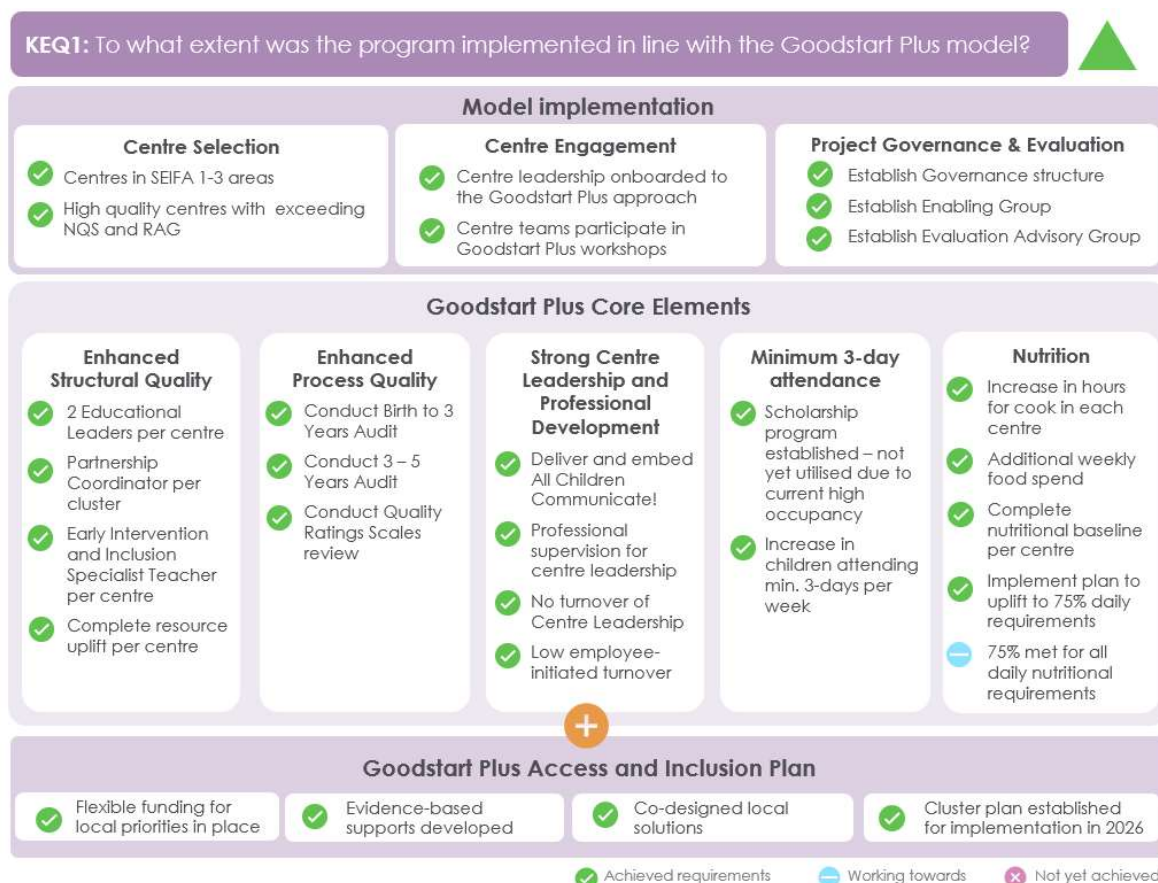
Addressing the Key Evaluation Questions

This review considers the early implementation of the core in the first Goodstart Plus cluster. While it offers insights into the key evaluation questions and core elements of the model, these questions cannot yet be answered in full because implementation is still in its early stages. Hence, these findings should be viewed as preliminary. They will guide improvements for this cluster and inform future rollouts.

The implementation and process review of Goodstart Plus will address 4 key evaluation questions:

- To what extent was the program implemented in line with the Goodstart Plus model? (fidelity of core elements)
- Were participants from the target group reached by Goodstart Plus, and did they achieve an adequate dose of early learning? (participation)
- What were the challenges and enablers to implementation?
- Are the costs justifiable given the expected outputs and proposed outcomes?

The tables below summarise the elements implemented to date against these key evaluation questions, and show that most areas have been achieved. At the time of assessment, only one area was identified as 'working towards', with enhanced nutrition averaging 73 per cent against the 75 per cent target.



KEQ2: Were participants from the target group reached by the program, and did they achieve an adequate dose of early learning?



Target Group Reached

- ✓ Centres in SEIFA 1-3 areas
- ✓ Centres with high proportion of children experiencing vulnerabilities. Centres selected support:
 - 124 children with at least one risk factor; 49 with multiple risk factors
 - 15 children at risk of abuse or neglect
 - 67 children from low income families
 - 54 children with a developmental delay or disability
 - 48 First Nations children

Dosage

- ✓ Increase in children meeting dosage per centre – from 46% in Sep 2024 to 67% and 74% at the two centres in Sep 2025
- ✓ Increase proportion of vulnerable children attending at least 3 days per week – rose by 10-43% for children 3 years and older, and 15% for all ages
- ✓ Low rates of child turnover (non-school leavers) – at 8.2% and 7.0% in August 2025 for the Goodstart Plus centres, compared to the NSW North average of 19.2% and national average of 26.4%

✓ Achieved requirements — Working towards ✗ Not yet achieved

KEQ3: What were the challenges and enablers to implementation?



Challenges and Learnings Arising from Implementation

- ✓ Maximise impact and foster deeper engagement with centres by front-loading key elements at the start of the program, ensuring roles are recruited early, information is clear and accessible, and centre teams have dedicated time to understand the purpose and goals of Goodstart Plus.
- ✓ Strengthen family engagement from the outset by recruiting the Partnership Coordinator early, prior to the rollout of core pedagogical practices.
- ✓ Support a smooth transition and effective centre planning by scheduling centre upgrades and resource uplifts outside of peak transition periods.
- ✓ Where increases in attendance days are not feasible due to high occupancy, encourage consistent attendance patterns throughout typical seasonal fluctuations to realise the benefits of regular attendance.
- ✓ Proactively engage new families enrolling to highlight the benefits of attending three days per week, to support stronger routines, relationships, and learning outcomes from the outset.
- ✓ Significant space and infrastructure challenges impact on effective implementation of the Goodstart Plus approach. A collaborative planning process to develop a tailored solution that eases pressure on physical spaces is being utilised.

Enablers

- ✓ Centre Goodstarters enthusiasm and engagement with the approach
- ✓ Centre leadership actively embraced the Goodstart Plus approach with genuine commitment and passion
- ✓ Centre support office's responsiveness to the needs of the centres as challenges emerged
- ✓ Governance and enabling groups

✓ Achieved requirements — Working towards ✗ Not yet achieved

KEQ4: Are the costs justifiable given the expected outputs and proposed outcomes?



Outputs

- ✓ Core elements implemented as planned, ensuring fidelity to the Goodstart Plus model.
- ✓ Efficiencies achieved, with many activities delivered at a lower cost than forecast.
- ✓ Resource allocation utilised effectively to support centres progressing towards intended outcomes.
- ✓ Outputs tracking toward proposed outcomes, laying the foundation for future impact evaluation.

Outcomes

- Strong foundations laid to enable a future evaluation of cost effectiveness.
- Cost during the first year is lower (est. \$482k per centre) as preparatory work is completed, compared to second year once foundations are established (est. \$540K per centre) and access and inclusion elements are implemented (e.g., menu of supports, Allied Health services).

✓ Achieved requirements — Working towards ✗ Not yet achieved

Engagement with the Approach

Centre team members' engagement with Goodstart Plus

Findings to date

When interviewed in October 2025, team members were universally positive about the benefits and impact of Goodstart Plus. All team members could see the impact of additional investment at their centre. Team members talked freely about the benefits of the program and the opportunities it has given them. They value the opportunity to participate in Goodstart Plus.

- 'When you look at all the gifts of Goodstart Plus: the EL time, the full-time cook, the additional educator [teacher] off the floor ... any service will benefit from it. I think that's the biggest takeaway from Goodstart Plus – the additional factors help uplift practice and quality.' (CD2)
- '[I] feel like you come to work and you can do your job ... and you're not feeling burnt out ... you're able to actually provide quality care for the children.' (S11)
- 'Whatever is happening with the educators is working, because I feel that there's calmness in the centre ... I feel it's probably the calmest [in the 11 years I've been here].' (S26)

Centre Goodstarters were enthusiastic about the benefits of Goodstart Plus and saw clear impacts from the additional investment at their centres – especially from the uplift of educational and physical resources. Their reflections also highlighted opportunities to strengthen implementation with a more measured rollout to support deeper engagement and smoother transitions.

- 'Change is scary to some people ... I think the hardest part was ... wrapping your head around where it was coming from ... what's now and then where to next.' (S11)
- 'The timeframe for certain things felt rushed ... when we could go back and embed it ... that's when we're having the 'aha' moments.' (CD2)
- 'I feel like we didn't really take off on the right foot, but I feel like now ... the dust is settling and we're kind of getting into the groove of it.' (S23)

Team members at the centres attended 2 workshops about Goodstart Plus – a centre-based workshop in July 2025 and a combined workshop with both centres in September 2025. Most team members attended these workshops and enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the Goodstart Plus approach and purpose. They felt listened to and engaged, and they appreciated the opportunity to contribute their suggestions. Many relished the opportunity to have a combined workshop across the 2 centres to connect as a cluster. They appreciated the chance to engage in cluster planning to co-design the access and inclusion elements of the model and suggested that holding a workshop earlier in the year could have further strengthened understanding and confidence before implementation began.

- 'It wasn't until [the workshops] actually started where we personally understood where they were coming from and why we need this.' (S10)

- 'At the moment we're working off a 2-year timeframe. I reckon the 2-year mark is when you're going to really start seeing changes. We're seeing small changes [now], but to see the full embedding [will need 2 years].' (CD2)
- 'We had those 2 meetings ... we talked about what we're good at and what we want to improve on, what we'd like to see happen, and then we weighted our priorities by putting stickers on what we thought, which I really liked.' (S17)



Insights

Workshops for team members are an important way of sharing information about Goodstart Plus and encouraging buy-in. An initial workshop needs to be held when Goodstart Plus is first introduced to centres, well before any changes are made. Team members enjoy having opportunities to both learn about the new program and contribute their suggestions for change. Cluster-wide workshops are appreciated and help to build an understanding of the cluster model. Introducing a complex initiative like Goodstart Plus presents a valuable opportunity to build strong foundations through thoughtful, phased communication and engagement with all team members.



Learnings

To maximise impact and foster deeper engagement, Goodstart is refining its implementation approach to introduce key elements earlier in the approach. This includes ensuring roles are recruited early, information is clear and accessible, and centre teams have dedicated time to understand the purpose and goals of Goodstart Plus.

By building stronger connections to the 'what' and 'why' from the outset, centres will be better positioned to embed changes thoughtfully and collaboratively. This will enhance outcomes for children and families.

Initial family perspectives

Evidence

Strong relationships and partnerships with families and caregivers are an important factor in the delivery of high-quality, inclusive ECEC. As outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework, families are children's first and most influential educators, with their earliest learning taking place through relationships in family and community.⁴ Through Goodstart Plus, the core family partnership features of Goodstart's teaching and learning approach will be complemented by place-based options to support family engagement and partnerships enabled by the Partnership Coordinator (1.0 FTE for the cluster). Children are more likely to thrive when there are strong and supportive relationships between their families, educators, community and local professionals.

Findings to date

We did not expect families to be familiar with the Goodstart Plus approach, as the second phase of the model, which addresses access and inclusion, has only recently commenced. The Partnership Coordinator, employed to work across the cluster in August 2025, will be an important part of this connection to families and the wider community.

The families interviewed for this review had all noticed changes during 2025 – including renovations, new room layouts and additional educational resources. The families commented that Goodstart provides their children with excellent education and a safe, caring environment. They all believed their children were being well-prepared for school.

Using the Families Net Promoter Score, families in both centres reported above Goodstart-average performance: Blue Haven scored 71.4 points, and Lake Munmorah scored 80 points, compared with the NSW North average of 53.5 points and the national average of 52.8 points.

Team members agreed that families were unlikely to know a lot about Goodstart Plus, but would have noticed the uplift in the environment and educational resources. They said that families' eyes 'light up' when they come for a pre-enrolment tour and hear about the things offered at the centres.

- 'You go into the classroom now and they're sort of sitting at separate stations, whereas last year you'd come in and it was just chaos. Now they're learning to sit down ... [the educators are] very present ... constantly doing something with the children.' (P2)
- 'The children have a lot of independence here, like you'll see them out on the climbing equipment ... which is so good for them. ... It's challenging for the kids. ... She comes home with her drawings and she's writing her name. ... She is coming home wanting to read a lot of books. ... The program really is amazing. I have seen such a change in my daughter.' (P3)
- 'Every now and then he'll come ... singing a new nursery rhyme. The other day ... I said how old are you, and he went 'one, 2, 3' [counting on his fingers]. ... And then I said can you count some more, and then all of a sudden he counted to 10 and showed me all his fingers. I thought, I didn't teach you that. ... Every week I reckon he comes home with something else.' (P1)
- 'Everything in all honesty [has prepared her for school] ... her social skills, her learning, her focus, they've worked on everything.' (P6)
- '[She was with] my dad the other day ... I walked out and she'd written the word 'softball'. He had told her the letters to write, and she was writing. ... I think, where did you learn that!' (P6)

Learnings

Recognising the importance of strong family engagement from the outset, Goodstart has revised its implementation approach to ensure the Partnership Coordinator is recruited early – prior to the rollout of core pedagogical practices.

While the initial strategy focused on embedding foundational teaching and learning elements first, early insights showed that having the Partnership Coordinator in place from the beginning strengthens relationships, supports planning and enhances the overall impact of Goodstart Plus. This adjustment reflects Goodstart's commitment to responsive implementation and maximising outcomes for children and families.

Enhanced Structural Quality



Evidence

Structural quality is essential to delivering quality ECEC and considers the elements that can be regulated, including staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, staffing mix, group size and teacher/educator relationships.⁵ Structural quality interacts with and influences process quality, with minimum structural quality standards for ECEC services set out in the NQS. For this reason, the Goodstart Plus model includes elements of structural quality above the minimum Australian standards and above the Goodstart minimum standards.

Goodstart Plus enhances structural quality through:

- Staffing above ratio requirements
- Qualification mix and leadership capacity.

This is enacted by introducing an additional EL, so that each Goodstart Plus centre has a birth–3 specialist and a 3–5 specialist. In addition, each Goodstart Plus centre has an additional teacher with an early intervention and inclusion specialisation. In this way, Goodstart Plus centres have a mix of additional out-of-ratio resources and qualifications to enhance teaching and learning. For this review, we have focused on the additional EL time.

Additional Educational Leader Time – Summary



Findings to date

Additional Educational Leader (EL) time

Educational leadership is critical to achieving and sustaining high-quality teaching practices that improve outcomes for children. For this reason, additional EL time is a foundational element of the Goodstart Plus model, aligning with advice from our Thought Leaders.

In the interviews conducted for this review, team members described great benefit in having ELs available beyond the standard ratio. Team members said the additional EL time is being used to improve programming, provide additional resources for educators, develop new ideas for the centre and mentor other educators by working alongside them in rooms. Further, centre Goodstarters said that having an EL focused on birth–3 and another on 3–5 ensures all age groups receive the tailored support they need. Previously, the single EL concentrated mainly on the preschool cohort.

- 'The 2 extra sets of hands off the floor 2 days a week has made a big difference.' (CD1)
- 'Having the ability as the educational leader to have those 2 days means that I'm not rushing curriculums ... I actually get to be able to spend time with educators and ask what they need, what they're lacking, where they need to go, what they really want ... it's good to be able to be part of the leadership team and bring that back to the others.' (S3)
- 'The extra support and added support with team members in the rooms ... the best thing you can do in child care is give more time to the team members.' (S18)
- 'For the centre as a whole [it makes a difference]. It allows [the ELs] to keep on top of everything ... more time to engage with the team members and help them with things ... give more assistance.' (S21)

At Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven, the additional EL time was introduced early in 2025. This timing provides valuable insights into how best to support team transitions. Centre Directors reflected that with more pre-planning and lead time, the integration of additional ELs could be even more effective, with enhanced communication, strengthened collaboration and a smoother rollout aligned with centre rhythms.



Insights

All centre team members recognised the value of the additional EL time, noting its positive influence on teaching quality and outcomes – especially for younger children.

Educators welcomed the extra support, describing it as a meaningful enhancement to their practice and an opportunity for professional growth.



Learnings

Recruitment of ELs will commence earlier in future centres and incorporate multiple recruitment channels with a preference for a qualified ECT. This will mitigate the impact of delays in recruitment and onboarding and enhance the centre's qualification mix.

Commencing engagement between centre leaders and centre support teams in the year prior to implementation will support a smooth transition into Goodstart Plus and effective centre planning.

Exploring whether to recruit ELs from within the centre or through external advertising presents a valuable opportunity to strengthen leadership capability and pathways. A balanced consideration of both options will enable Goodstart to build a robust leadership pipeline, support succession planning and ensure that centres have access to the skills and experience required to deliver high-quality, inclusive early learning.

Enhanced Process Quality



Evidence

Process quality involves the day-to-day interactions and experiences of children, teachers and families. It is foundational to providing high-quality teaching and learning, and research evidence builds a strong case for a model that enhances process quality for children experiencing vulnerability.⁶ The EPPSE study outlines key characteristics of early learning that effectively support children's learning, including:⁷

- Quality of child–adult verbal interactions
- Knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and assessment
- Knowledge of how young children learn
- Educators' skills in supporting young children in resolving conflict through self-regulation/co-regulation
- Helping parents and families to support children's learning at home.

The National Quality Framework, including the Early Years Learning Framework, sets the minimum standards for process quality for ECEC services, with Goodstart making additional investments in our Outcomes Framework and internal quality program (e.g., our RAG internal quality assessment). For Goodstart Plus centres, we have focused on ensuring centres are operating at an 'Exceeding' standard as part of their core ECEC offering.

Enhanced Teaching and Learning – Summary



Findings to date

Enhanced teaching and learning

Early in 2025, both Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven had a significant uplift in physical and educational resourcing for their indoor and outdoor learning environments. All team members and families interviewed for this review were positive about the improved environments, room layouts, furniture and learning resources. Team members said the centre resources sparked enthusiasm and empowered them to elevate their teaching practice, laying the foundation for enhanced outcomes for children.

In late 2025, we conducted a Quality Rating Scale (QRS) Moderation Visit at both centres. These visits confirmed improvements in the centres' enabling environments, adult-child interactions, intentional teaching, sustained shared thinking and children's emotional wellbeing. Both centres demonstrated enhanced self-regulation among children. Both centres met their QRS targets and have action plans in place to meet their stretch targets of achieving a score of 7 across the 22 sub-scales by the end of 2026.

In the QRS Moderation Visits, Educators and Teachers demonstrated greater purposefulness and active co-regulation with the children. At Lake Munmorah, the impact of the Early Intervention and Inclusion Specialist Teacher to support children with diverse learning needs was particularly visible, with staff reporting valuable insights and learning gained from her collaborative approach and co-teaching. Both centres have clear action plans in place to build on their foundational practices and continue improving the quality of provision.

In the interviews conducted for this review, team members said that the improvements at each centre were the most noticeable changes resulting from Goodstart Plus. Several team members commented that the improved room layouts have changed their teaching.

- 'I do love how we have utilised the whole room. The room has been divided up in their small areas. I find the connections and the experiences we make are more intimate, personalised. They're more specific. The children will spread out and you have your smaller intimate groups, which makes the learning and your connections a lot stronger.' (S24)
- 'This looks so much better, and the children are using all the areas of the room. Like there's not an area ... they've avoided because there's nothing there or it's not inviting ... you can see the passion come back, you know. It's a space you want to be in. ... And a space you're proud of.' (S21)
- 'The layout, I didn't expect it to change that much, but it's worked. ... Seeing how room layouts should be done has helped us figure out supervisions and where kids actually get drawn to ... The rooms are all thoughtfully arranged ... it's a lot better than when we're hectically trying to mix the rooms around at the start of the year. ... It was nice having someone come in and actually explain how we can do it and why the rooms should be set up that way.' (S10)

Decisions about room layouts were made in the first half of 2025. In the interviews conducted for this review, some centre Goodstarters said they felt empowered to contribute to decisions about room layout and described the process as highly collaborative. Others saw opportunities to further strengthen consultation, suggesting that broader involvement could enhance shared ownership and learning.

- 'We did get to choose. ... All the way through, she [Practice Partner] did the research for us, she did the hard yards, but it was always, what do you think? There was never once she came in and went ... this is it.' (CD1)
- 'There was someone who came to mentor us on the environment ... helping us in a way in the room.' (S9)
- 'We had some people come ... and help us set up our room, which was nice ... there were 2 people that had the whole day, which we would never get. ... You're lucky if you get 10 minutes once a month to do stuff like that.' (S17)

Team members said the new resources have improved learning experiences for children and contributed to positive behaviour change.

- 'The new resources have definitely helped ... provide more learning opportunities ... the children have been a lot more engaged in all the experiences and activities.' (S6)
- 'We've got so many more beautiful resources and the children are more engaged because [there's] a lot more to use ... now they're wanting to sit at tables and get engaged ... I've noticed a huge difference.' (S21)
- 'There's fewer behaviour issues now than ... 6 or 7 months ago ... they've improved a lot.' (S9).
- 'We have definitely seen changes in the number of children with behaviours that challenge and feel like we've made an impact.' (S17)



Example

Educators in the preschool rooms at both Blue Haven and Lake Munmorah referred to magnetic building blocks as an example of the impact of additional resources. Previously, both centres had enough magnetic blocks for one child to play at a time. When a second child wanted to use the blocks, the children often became frustrated and acted out, knocking down each other's buildings. With the new resources, both centres have ample blocks for multiple children to build at the same time.

An educator at Blue Haven commented:

- '[It] impacts their social skills because they're sitting with more children, building things, listening, learning, doing their mathematical concepts, talking with each other, helping each other ... it's not necessarily the children finishing a task educationally, it's more they're working on their social and emotional and regulation skills with these resources because there's ample amount for everyone. By giving them the resources they need to engage and cooperate and enjoy what they're doing and teaching them an awful lot about how to cooperate and get stuff done.' (S25)



Example

An educator at Lake Munmorah talked about how new teaching strategies helped her support a preschool-aged child to achieve a learning milestone and provided her with some insight into his behaviour. This child would rarely sit down and do pencil work with the group.

One day, when the group was writing numbers, this child became increasingly frustrated and upset because he couldn't write the number 6. The educator was able to provide tracing lines for him to practise with, which the child used enthusiastically because it looked like 'big school work'. The child was able to trace the numbers, then write 6 without help, and was delighted with his achievement. He asked for another printout so he could practise at home. This child would rarely focus on classroom tasks, yet with a little one-on-one help he was able to succeed and focus.

The educator commented, 'That really changed my way of thinking with behaviours ... often they have an underpinning that we don't see ... actually it might be that he's not confident and doesn't like to show it.' (S23)

Within 2 days of the Early Intervention and Inclusion Specialist Teacher starting work at Lake Munmorah (end of October 2025), the Centre Director commented that she was already observing improvements in educator practice and child engagement. The teacher provides real-time, respectful mentoring by modelling strategies and guiding educators on managing challenging

behaviours. She offers immediate support in rooms in ways not possible for the Centre Director due to competing demands.

- 'I honestly I think this goes in one of my top 3 of Goodstart Plus of what I would love to get across the line for the rest of low SEIFA-rated services ... one of our little ones was building [heightened behaviour] and one of my educators had triggered this little one further. So [Teacher] then stood in, and helped to calm the child, but then went back and revisited and sat down and spoke to the educator about how she'd actually triggered that child. To be able to have that other set of eyes ... she's done the mentoring very respectfully. ... And she's unpacking everything that's being told to this educator by role modelling first.' (CD2)



Insights

Uplifted resources at the centres – seen through improvements in the learning environments, room layouts, furniture and learning resources – were the changes most noticeable to centre team members as a result of Goodstart Plus, with some commenting that it has improved their teaching.

Several Goodstarters have seen improved learning experiences for children and believe it has contributed to positive behaviour change.



Learnings

Starting the resource uplift the year prior to Goodstart Plus implementation will foster deeper engagement, strengthen ownership, and support a more collaborative and thoughtful implementation process.

To support a smooth transition and effective centre planning, Goodstart Plus will schedule centre upgrades outside of peak transition periods.

Strong Leadership and Professional Development



Evidence

Strong centre leadership has been shown to be a key driver of exceeding and excellent centre performance across the Goodstart network. Committed, high-performing centre leaders and centre leadership teams are essential to building foundational pedagogy and practice capability across the teams, forming meaningful partnerships with families, and supporting service integration and

collaboration with the community. Many studies into quality ECEC and family and community hubs have highlighted the essential nature of strong local leadership and capability.^{8,9}

In the context of Goodstart Plus, evidence shows that the leadership of an integrated service is a key element of its success because leaders can facilitate new and more integrated ways of working.¹⁰ Quality education is supported when educators and teachers receive high-quality professional development with an opportunity for critical reflection and access to modelled examples of practice that connect to theory in a supportive and trusted environment. Professional development complements educators' qualifications and increases benefits for children.¹¹ For this review, we have focused on the implementation of All Children Communicate!.

All Children Communicate! (ACC!)

Evidence

Vygotsky provides clear evidence that communication and language give children a powerful learning tool.¹² Language underpins learning and provides a foundation for building school readiness. Language is also necessary in forming social relationships, supporting mental health and giving children the confidence to be active citizens with a strong voice. There is new and emerging evidence about the role of ECEC in supporting language and emergent literacy.¹³

All Children Communicate! – Summary



Findings to date

ACC! is Goodstart's professional learning and child progress monitoring program, which aims to enhance children's communication and early language development across 4 communication domains: attention and listening, understanding, talking, and using social communication. On the ACC! assessment and monitoring tool, children are identified as either 'Emerging', 'Meeting' age expectations or 'Above' age expectations for each of the four communication domains.

ACC! is delivered through workshops to build teachers' and educators' understanding of children's communication development, including how to identify and implement each child's next learning steps and monitor progress against accepted developmental milestones. It is supported by an assessment tool used to monitor children's communication and early language progress across the 4 domains. ACC! was implemented at Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven from early 2025.

In the interviews conducted for this review, Goodstarters reported that ACC! has had more impact on their day-to-day work than any other change introduced under Goodstart Plus. Team members

were universally positive about ACC!, and described it as a tool that provides valuable insight and helps them to focus on the needs of individual children.

Most team members described the monitoring tool as easy to implement, but said they would have appreciated having more time to understand its purpose and conduct the initial assessments. Both centres used a cascade model, where the leadership team received extensive training in ACC! then provided support within their centres to help educators understand it. Some educators commented that it may be worth providing everyone with a short introduction to the tool. They suggested that a short session conducted by one of the Teaching and Learning team experts would encourage more initial buy-in and understanding.

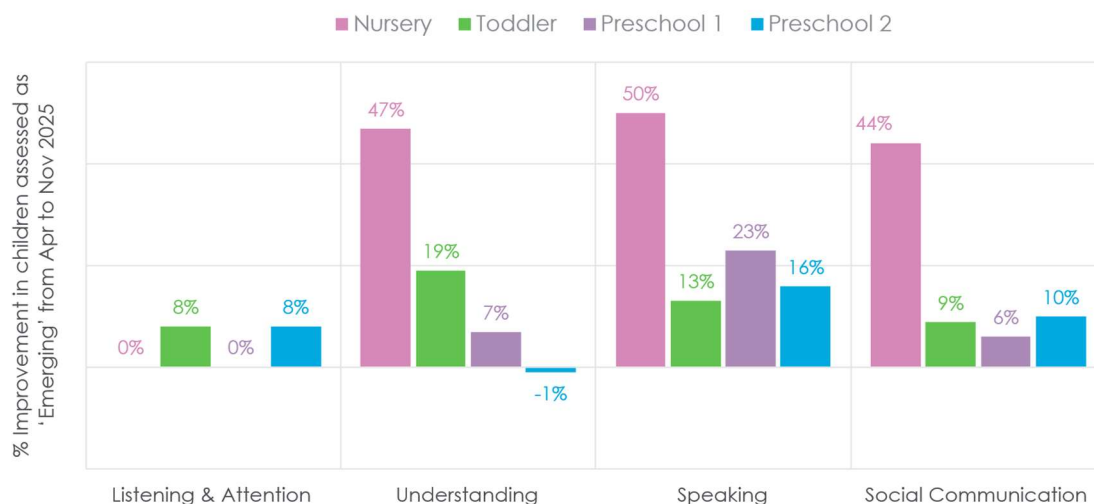
Team members were enthusiastic about the value of ACC!. Since conducting the initial assessments, they've been able to revisit the tool, embed it in their practice and understand its value. At Lake Munmorah, the tool is now incorporated into their planning cycle and used to inform conversations with families.

- '[It] opened a big dialogue for families ... it's the most feedback and buy-in we've had from families. We got the most feedback from families when we uploaded the documentation.' (CD2)
- 'Because of All Children Communicate!, we're focusing a lot more on the communication and language side of things. ... I've noticed a lot of our children, their verbal and communication skills have skyrocketed lately. ... They're surprising me in a good way on how well they're doing.' (S5)
- 'We're more aware ... of where children are up to and how to help them get to the next level ... I want to keep embedding it. It's not tick a box ... it looks like it'll be a long-standing helpful tool.' (S7)

Children's communication development

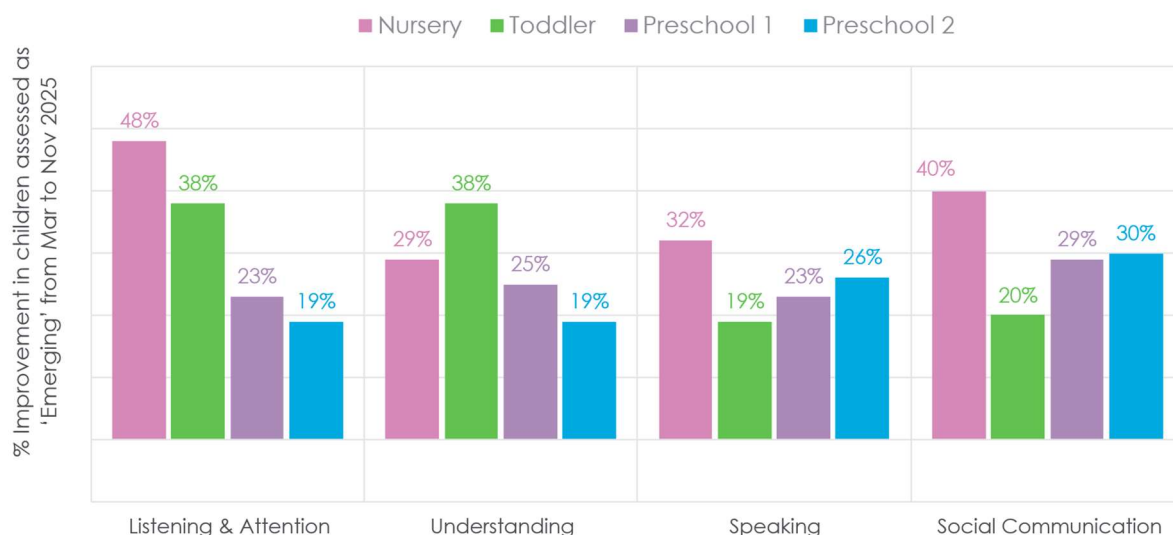
A review of ACC! implementation in Goodstart Plus centres showed positive growth in children's communication development between March and November 2025. Initially, a significant proportion of children were assessed as 'Emerging' in key areas, particularly in the younger age groups. Across both centres, consistent use of ACC! as a wraparound and coaching support has proven effective in strengthening language and communication practice.

Goodstart Blue Haven - All Children Communicate! Early Communication and Assessment Tool Implementation



A comparison between the April and November assessments in the nursery room at Goodstart Blue Haven shows that 'Emerging' results declined by 44–50 per cent in the Understanding, Speaking and in Social Communication domains. Toddler rooms also demonstrated reduced 'Emerging' levels. For example, 'Emerging' levels in Understanding decreased from 52 per cent to 33 per cent, and in Speaking from 52 per cent to 39 per cent. Overall, the data show enhanced early communication skills, particularly in younger age groups, while emphasising the need for continued targeted support in older age groups to ensure school readiness.

Goodstart Lake Munmorah - All Children Communicate! Early Communication and Assessment Tool Implementation



At Lake Munmorah, all rooms saw reductions in the number of children assessed as 'emerging' between the March and November assessments. For example, the children assessed as 'emerging' fell from 52 per cent to 29 per cent for listening, from 60 per cent to 35 per cent for understanding, from 83 per cent to 60 per cent for speaking, and from 72 per cent to 43 per cent for social communication. The improved results at Lake Munmorah show that knowing children and their

families is an embedded practice and provides a strong foundation when used alongside data to inform intentional teaching and use of ACC! strategies to directly impact children's outcomes.

The ACC! assessment data provides valuable insights into centre-level, room-level and individual children's learning needs and outcomes from the perspective of language and communication. The most significant growth can be seen in the youngest children, aligning with well-known evidence of this critical period in language development. Data from the preschool age groups emphasises a need for continued targeted support to ensure children are ready for school and life.

An additional insight reflected through the implementation of ACC! is the role of educators' understanding of early language and communication skills across the age groups. Educators consistently engaged with the ACC! tool and collected multiple cycles of data for each child in the service. This commitment and growth in educators' professional capacity during 2025 should not be underestimated.



Insights

All Children Communicate! provides a reflexive approach to measuring children's progress, which educators can use to develop age-appropriate and individual learning plans.

Families can engage with the outcomes of All Children Communicate! and collaborate with educators in discussions about their children's learning goals.



Learnings

Ongoing implementation of ACC! needs support from the Practice Partner, in addition to the ongoing support received from the ACC! trainers, to ensure theoretical underpinnings are embedded.

While it is appropriate to give detailed training to the leadership team, all centre educators would benefit from a formal orientation to ACC!

In all centres where ACC! is being implemented, feedback from educators shows how important this approach is for raising children's learning and preparing them for school.

In response to feedback gathered during this review, Goodstart has committed to further scaling ACC!. An initiative has been put forward, with the board's endorsement, for a universal rollout of ACC! following the successful implementation of the 3 to 5 Outcomes Framework. This initiative is yet to be confirmed.

Professional Supervision

Evidence

Research confirms that early childhood education is complex and challenging work. As Wong et al. note, it 'takes a toll on educators' and leaders' physical and emotional wellbeing, especially in the face of high levels of attrition from the profession'.¹⁴ The value of professional supervision is demonstrated in work by Hood, who argues that working with children and families facing difficult circumstances can create challenges for educators that are sometimes played out in team dynamics.¹⁵ Educators need opportunities for open and meaningful discussion, support and

problem-solving, provided through both formal and informal communication channels. Access to ongoing professional supervision, conducted by supervisors who understand the ECEC context, is beneficial.¹⁶ A summary of the Goodstart Plus approach to professional supervision is outlined below.

Professional Supervision – Summary



Findings to date

Providing strong leadership and professional development is one of the 5 core elements of Goodstart Plus. Under Goodstart Plus, professional supervision has been extended to the wider centre leadership team, including the Assistant Director and ELs. At Blue Haven and Lake Munmorah, this was introduced in May 2025.

The leadership teams at both Blue Haven and Lake Munmorah spoke positively about the benefits of professional supervision and the way it supports them to reflect on their work and improve their practice. The comment below, from an EL, captures this perspective.

- 'The supervision visits ... have really helped me to just stop and think. ... I think that has definitely made me a better leader. ... I'm not so reactive. I'm more proactive now, and [try] to look at the positive sides because I think that if we model positivity, then that's only going to have this positive flow-on effect with the team. ... I think [it's] really important to stay positive and to communicate that positivity with the rest of the team. ... [The supervision gives] an outsider perspective. I'm not getting my solution, I'm getting how I can get to the solution. ... [It's the] journey it takes for me to get to the solution rather than somebody making the solution for me. ... She just gets me to stop and think, and I think that I've definitely grown as a leader this year.' (S12)



Insights

Professional supervision supports centre leaders to reflect on their practice and apply insights in real time, enhancing both individual growth and centre-wide impact.

Learnings

The review has reinforced the benefit of professional supervision and Goodstart remains dedicated to offering professional supervision to over 150 centre leaders working in complex environments.

Minimum 3-day Attendance



Evidence

The trust built between families and educators provides a foundation to support enrolment and regular attendance. Goodstart research shows that children who attend at least 3 days a week are more likely to continue to attend than children who attend one or 2 days.¹⁷ The Australian Government has recently moved to implement a '3 Day Guarantee' from 2026 on the basis of a comprehensive Productivity Commission inquiry that recognised that the current minimum entitlement of one day per week was insufficient to improve children's outcomes. To support peer-to-peer learning and consistent, nurturing educator–child relationships, Goodstart also prefers consecutive days of attendance.

Minimum 3-Day Attendance – Summary



Findings to date

One of the goals of Goodstart Plus is to ensure that children have access to an 'adequate dose' of early childhood education – that is, at least 3 days per week, consistent with the Federal Government 3-day guarantee being introduced in 2026.

Since Goodstart Plus implementation began in early 2025, Centre Directors have discussed the constraints of very high occupancy on their efforts to raise the proportion of children attending an average of 3 days per week. Blue Haven's average occupancy in the 6 months to September 2025 was 99.7 per cent. For Lake Munmorah, the average 6-month occupancy was 98.2 per cent. Despite these constraints, in the 12 months to September 2025, both centres increased their proportion of

vulnerable children attending on average 3 days per week – by between 10 per cent and 43 per cent for children aged 3 years or older, and by around 15 per cent for all ages. Typical seasonal fluctuations in attendance (e.g., due to school holidays) emphasise the importance of encouraging consistent attendance patterns.

In the interviews conducted for this review, this topic did not emerge spontaneously. Where appropriate, it was raised as a specific question. Team members and families who discussed this topic could see the value in having children attend multiple days, preferably consecutively. They felt that multiple days help to establish a routine, create friendships and encourage children to feel part of the centre. The leadership team were conscious that achieving 3 days per week may take some time to implement and that change is likely to be iterative, given that the centres are operating at capacity. Given this circumstance, the budget for scholarships was not utilised to capacity and has subsequently been reduced.



Insights

Both centres have increased their proportion of vulnerable children attending on average 3 days per week by between 10 per cent and 43 per cent for children aged 3 years or older, and by around 15 per cent for all ages.

The Goodstart Plus centres have a low turnover rate. In August 2025, turnover was: Lake Munmorah 8.2 per cent, Blue Haven 6.95 per cent, NSW North average 19.2 per cent, national average 26.4 per cent.



Learnings

The ability of the centres to increase attendance days depends on their current operating capacity. Both centres experienced very high occupancy during 2025.

Centres proactively engage families when they enrol to highlight the benefits of attending 3-days per week, including supporting stronger routines, relationships and learning outcomes.

Encouraging consistent attendance patterns throughout typical seasonal fluctuations (e.g., due to school holidays) supports families to realise the benefits of regular attendance.

Enhanced Nutrition

1. Enhanced structural quality:

Out of ratio Ed Leader (B-3; 3-5); Teacher – Early Intervention and Inclusion Specialist; Partnership Coordinator

2. Enhanced process quality:

Elevated teaching & inclusion practices; family centred practice; Goodstart Outcomes Framework & child level assessment

3. Strong leadership & professional development:

Additional hours & professional supervision

4. Minimum 3 days attendance:

above minimum entitlement with cost barriers addressed through scholarship program

5. Nutrition & food provision:

at least 75% of daily nutrition requirements

Evidence

Children from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to miss out on eating breakfast and are less likely to eat fruit and vegetables.¹⁸ This can negatively impact on cognitive performance

and children's ability to regulate their behaviour. Families with a low income are less likely to provide nutritious foods due to the cost and access to shops selling healthy foods.¹⁹

Access to proper nutrition during the first years of children's lives can have a profound effect on children's health status, as well as their ability to learn, communicate, think analytically, socialise effectively and adapt to new environments and people. ECEC settings are an ideal place for targeted, evidence-based interventions to reach young children and improve nutritional health, awareness and behaviours.²⁰ Providing nutritious meals in early learning is considered a central element of a quality early childhood program.²¹

Enhanced Nutrition – Summary



Findings to date

Under Goodstart Plus, centres aim to provide children with 75 per cent of their daily nutritional needs. All team members were aware of the enhanced focus on nutrition, additional hours for the cook and improved food budget. Team members said the centres' food had increased in both quality and quantity. They also mentioned the cooking groups offered in each room and valued this learning opportunity for the children.

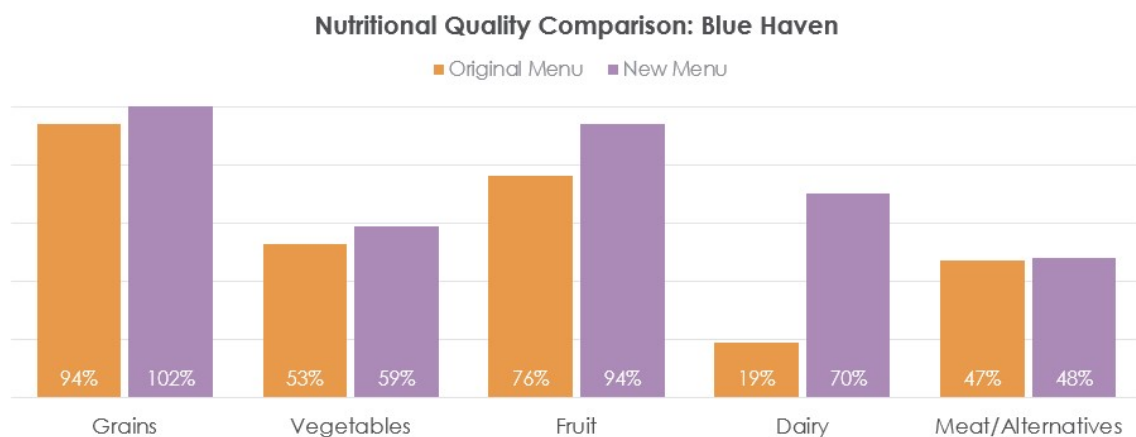
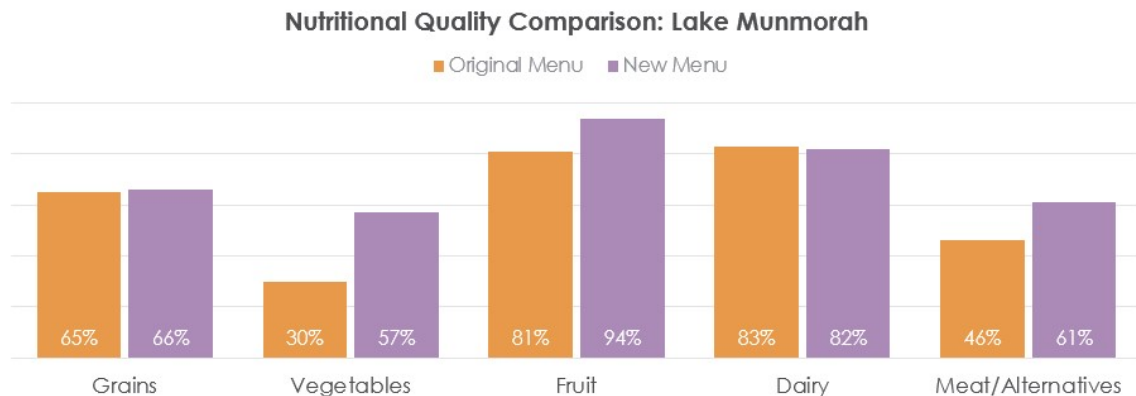
Goodstart engaged an external nutritionist to evaluate the centres' menus at the beginning of their Goodstart Plus journey. The nutritionist compared the original menus with new menus the centres developed to improve their nutrition output and benchmarked the menus against Australian dietary guidelines for young children. Both centres are progressing well toward the 75 per cent average target, with Lake Munmorah at 72 per cent (compared with 61 per cent at commencement) and Blue Haven at 74 per cent (compared with 57.8 per cent at commencement).

The nutritionist's analysis showed that both centres have made significant and meaningful improvements to their menus.

- Increased meat/alternatives have boosted protein and micronutrients such as iron and zinc, essential for healthy brain development and growth.
- Increased vegetables have provided fibre for gut health and micronutrients such as folate, potassium, vitamin C and vitamin A, supporting immune function and overall health.

- Increased dairy has supplied essential calcium for bone and muscle function.

The graph below shows how the centres have made substantial improvements to the nutritional quality of their meals. Most food groups now exceed the minimum 50 per cent provision expected for Goodstart long daycare services and are progressing well toward the 75 per cent target.



Several team members commented that the increase in protein offered earlier in the day is encouraging children to eat more and helping children to regulate their behaviour. Several team members mentioned that the raw vegetable snacks offered in the afternoon (called 'crunch and sip') also support self-regulation and communication.

- 'I have noticed since we've been giving them [more morning tea], the children's behaviour has definitely improved. ... My window's the best place to look at the playground. I can see just about everything. The playground has definitely calmed down since they've been offered that little bit more substance.' (S26)
- 'Knowing the children eat a hot meal at the centre takes the pressure off families in a big way.' (CD1)
- 'We have children who come in and you don't know if they've had breakfast, you don't know if they've had dinner, and then you're asking them to try and engage and share and cooperate for several hours before a big meal comes. So I think [the extra food has] definitely helped.' (S7)

- 'We're able to do 'crunch and sip', which is just a little regulation program. We were noticing that so many children were getting hungry at that 4 o'clock mark, and then they'd start to get angry or frustrated or everything would bother them. It's just some veggies ... they're regulating, they're also eating more veggies. ... And just the movement of crunch seems to be calming them and they all sit and talk about veggies.' (S11)
- 'This week we're doing maths and science, so we've got hand-pressed orange juice. ... We've measured how many mls, and the children can decide whether they think an electric blender or juicer is going to get more juice out. ... It's been valuable... the children love cooking.' (S13)
- 'All the children that were fussier ... at the start of the year ... they're all just sitting down and eating now, so we've got a lot more children trying foods.' (S18)



Example

A team member at Lake Munmorah talked about how she was able to get children involved in giving feedback about a new pasta dish that some children were reluctant to try. They decided to do a tally, where children voted on whether they liked the dish or not – but they could only vote if they actually tasted it. They recorded their votes and sent a note to the kitchen about it, letting the cook know that some children didn't like it. The educator commented, 'They had their say ... the idea that the kids can contribute to the choices, that's quite empowering for the children.' (S23)

Each week, the cook at Blue Haven offers a cooking group in each room. She commented that more children are engaging with the cooking and enjoying the challenge of contributing to their meals. The preschool group recently made egg sandwiches. The children cracked their own egg, poured it into the frying pan, used a spatula to turn it and buttered their bread. (S26)

The families interviewed for this review all commented on the quality of food available and how their children enjoyed the food offered.

- 'My daughter comes home really loving the food. And I've seen the effort that goes into making a menu and feeding the children healthy and nutritious meals. ... And the cooking experiences ... my daughter always comes home talking about that.' (P3)
- 'She'll tell me about meals she's had ... so yummy. She tries to be fussy at home ... I'm like, I know you like tomato because you ate it at school.' (P6)



Insights

Centre team members reported that improved nutrition has a positive impact on children's behaviour.

Due to the increase in cook hours, food is more visible at the centres. Goodstarters and parents alike commented on the delicious cooking smells that greet them each morning, create a more welcoming environment and encourage children to talk about food.



Learnings

Increased investment in food and cook hours has led to more reported positive child outcomes as well as more interest and engagement from children and families in food and nutrition.

This has created a space for families to take home learnings from the centre about engaging in cooking with their child to produce healthy meals that the child will eat.

Other Insights

Infrastructure constraints

Both Blue Haven and Lake Munmorah are working creatively within their existing spaces to implement Goodstart Plus, demonstrating adaptability and commitment to making the program successful. Both centres have a small administration space (linked to the entrance foyer), a small programming room (with 3 workspaces) and a staff room.

Team members who are off the floor (including the ELs, the Partnership Coordinator, the Centre Director, and educators engaged in training or programming) problem-solve collaboratively to make the most of the limited shared spaces.

When outsiders visit either centre, the programming room may become unavailable to other team members for an extended period. Neither centre has a space where the team can meet privately with families or other visitors.

The teams are exploring options for how this could be addressed. This could include using community assets near each centre to solve the constraints of operating an integrated hub in facilities that are not purpose built. This issue is likely to feature in all but a few locations where Goodstart Plus is implemented.

- 'Looking forward, if we're wanting to engage families ... there needs to be space. ... Physical infrastructure is a real issue.' (S1)

- 'There are certainly opportunities already coming up where people are saying to me, yes, we can come in and help families in your centre. But there's nowhere for them to work.' (S1)



Insights

Planning for Goodstart Plus implementation needs to include close attention to the physical space constraints at each centre. A lack of space may make it more complicated for centres to implement some aspects of Goodstart Plus and could affect outcomes for children and the approach.



Learnings

Goodstart recognises the significant space and infrastructure challenges faced by centre teams. In Phase 2 of implementing Goodstart Plus, a collaborative planning process for access and inclusion is being used to co-design approaches to addressing priorities the centres have identified for themselves. The priority is to develop a tailored solution that eases pressure on physical spaces and removes barriers to effective implementation.

However, it is important to note that Goodstart Plus does not have a dedicated capital works budget. Any required enhancements must be funded through Goodstart's business-as-usual (BAU) processes, which may result in delays and impact the pace of implementation. This reliance on BAU systems underscores the need for creative, locally driven strategies and strong organisational support to ensure centres can achieve the outcomes envisioned under Goodstart Plus.

Conclusions

The implementation of Goodstart Plus has achieved strong centre leader and educator engagement and clear support for the developing Goodstart Plus model. It has been implemented as intended and is reaching the audience intended. This review demonstrates that the approach is enabling and supporting centres with:

- Enhanced structural quality through additional programming time, off-the-floor EL time, a full-time Partnership Coordinator for the cluster, and a full-time Early Intervention and Inclusion Specialist Teacher at each centre (with one centre still recruiting) with perceived benefits for high-quality, inclusive teaching practices, ultimately supporting improved learning experiences for children
- Enhanced process quality through high-quality teaching and learning approaches, including the highly valued ACC! and improved environments and resources, with benefits for children such as enhanced personalised learning experiences and day-to-day interactions with educators
- Strong leadership and professional development through professional supervision for the leadership team with possible benefits for educator and child wellbeing and retention and improved teaching quality and critical reflection
- An increased proportion of vulnerable children attending 3 days or more per week despite high occupancy at the centres, which is likely to support long-term outcomes
- Enhanced nutrition, with perceived benefits for children's behaviour and learning.

Goodstart Plus is being implemented in a responsive, consultative way, with real-time adjustments as learnings emerge. Initial evidence signals strong potential gains, pending continued implementation and evaluation.

Next Steps for Implementation

In addition to the insights and learning outlined in this report, Goodstart is undertaking the following actions to further strengthen and scale Goodstart Plus in 2026 onwards:

- Establishing peer-learning networks (communities of practice) to connect educators, cooks, teachers and leaders across Goodstart Plus clusters to share insights, challenges and innovations across different model components
- Establishing a data insights group to regularly review key data points, discuss any drivers of change and support actions at the local level to address issues and challenges in real time; this work is being supported by co-designing dashboards with centre teams to ensure data is accessible, meaningful and actionable at the local level
- Expanding family engagement strategies, such as co-designed communication materials, family-led initiatives and culturally responsive practices to deepen family partnerships and strengthen family engagement in children's learning at the centre and at home.

Next Steps for Evaluation

As Goodstart Plus moves into its second year of implementation, a strategic focus on evaluation and knowledge sharing will be critical to strengthening the model and informing future scale-up. Our approach will prioritise rigorous, evidence-based analysis to identify which components of the model deliver the greatest impact on children's outcomes and demonstrate cost-effectiveness. Insights from this analysis will inform evidence-based decisions for scaling program components and guide recommendations to optimise resource allocation and program design. We will also consider the implications of Goodstart Plus for the broader Goodstart network and the sector more generally.

The Year 2 implementation review will include targeted deep dives into leadership, family engagement and professional development. These areas have been agreed by the Independent Evaluation Advisory Group as priorities for evaluation in the coming year, with a focus on understanding their implementation, impact and scalability.

We will continue to work with our independent Evaluation Advisory Committee to develop our approach to evaluating the model. This is likely to be a stepped-wedge design, with centres that are waiting to participate in Goodstart Plus acting as waitlist controls. This approach addresses the complexities of identifying appropriate centres to use as controls and ensuring equity across the Goodstart network. We will also build on our current and planned data-linkage partnerships to allow comparisons of outputs and outcomes with non-Goodstart centres.

Insights will be shared with our centre teams, academic partners, policy makers and sector stakeholders to drive continuous improvement and influence broader ECEC reform. This commitment ensures that learnings from Goodstart Plus not only enhance implementation within our network but also contribute to creating lasting knowledge for the sector.

Appendix 1 – Goodstart Plus Theory of Change

Problem

Children living in communities of entrenched disadvantage experience poorer outcomes than their peers, and these inequitable outcomes are persistent.

Opportunity

There is an opportunity to take what we know from the evidence to test an approach to partnering with families living in these communities and providing a core offer of the highest-quality, inclusive and high intensity birth to five years ECEC with additional services and supports to realise the benefits of children's regular and ongoing attendance in early education.

Assumptions

1. Current levels of intensity, quality and support for families and children in ECEC are not adequately overcoming factors of disadvantage in communities of entrenched disadvantage.
2. A whole-of-centre and place-based core early education model focused on strong partnerships with families, where we serve the 'child in family' rather than solely the child, will deliver greater benefits.
3. Goodstart has the commitment, capability and resources to deliver a very high quality inclusive ECEC offer for families and children, and delivering this service will give us credibility to deliver partnership and integration with other community partners and parts of the service system.
4. There is government appetite for reform and interest from philanthropic organisations. If we can demonstrate the model works at a large enough scale we will be able to secure recurrent government funding for the model.
5. A place-based approach delivered in clusters of centres in the same geographic community will deliver more impact than stand-alone centre investments, and this approach includes scaling to non-Goodstart centres to have a community level impact.
6. There are several 'golden threads' that run through the theory of change, including Families as First educators; Reconciliation and supporting First Nations people's self determination; Supporting Adults in the service system to work in service of better outcomes for children and families.

If we	By	This will result in	And this will eventually lead to
Apply place-based planning and investment approaches with ECEC as the transformative core of the offer	Investing in clusters of at least two Goodstart centres in close proximity in a geographic area Leveraging partnerships with families, existing and emerging community-based groups to ensure decision-making to meet the needs of families Establishing integrated ways of working, including adding a new Partnership Manager role to the Centre team (or across the cluster) & Investing in Centre Leadership professional development on delivering integrated services	Greater opportunities for local efficiency and economies of scale Tailored, local solutions to achieve target structural ECEC quality, realise benefits, and overcome barriers to access for families More and deeper partnerships developed and maintained across services and with families	Improved outcomes in areas that support children's school readiness in Goodstart Plus centres ("starting school on a level footing with their peers") Specific outcome areas as per the 'Goodstart Outcomes Frameworks' including language and communication supported by All Children Communicate!
Boost and sustain investment in enhanced structural and process quality in participating centres - our Core ECEC program	Increasing the number of expert teachers and educators (above NQS and Goodstart minimum standard qualification mix) to ensure children benefit from and ECT qualified CD; the ECT qualified Educational Leader role will be split across two people, and provide an Additional Needs Specialist Teacher and Educator Implementing evidence-based teaching practices and strategies to deliver against an outcomes framework for children aged birth-three and three-five years Embedding affirmative family-centred practice, cultural inclusiveness and integration as part of the core pedagogical approach Sustaining the intensity of investment over the implementation period	Very high-quality leadership and inclusive teaching practices to underpin strong partnerships with families that support children's learning outcomes and increase the likelihood of influencing the home learning environment	Children have the learning outcomes and necessary foundations to make sustained improvements beyond ECEC and into school Specific outcome areas as defined in school assessments, AEDC and NAPLAN
Address cost and non-cost barriers to access and attendance for the most disadvantage children by partnering with families	Securing free or close to free access to high dose of ECEC via government fee relief, support from the Early Learning Fund or philanthropic scholarships Ensuring (through investment, service delivery or collaboration) other community-led solutions to address non-cost barriers for families and care givers	Regular (minimum 3, ideal 4/5 days attendance for children aged 3-5); and (minimum 3 days attendance for children aged under 3)	A scalable, evidenced approach to enhance early learning outcomes for children in communities experiencing entrenched disadvantage
Facilitate access to services needed by children and parents to take advantage of the core offer (called health and other child and family support services)	Developing a 'menu' of evidence-based support services for centres to select from based on family and community needs and integrating the services with the core ECEC offer for children and families Identifying local partnership and delivery models for support services based on family needs, aspirations and local community service system	Increased and more timely access by families to additional support services that make a difference and that support their ongoing participation in ECEC Improved quality and inclusion of other services in communities that support their ongoing participation in ECEC	Structural changes to policies, practices and funding for ECEC in communities of disadvantage (Goodstart and the Sector)
Measure, evaluate and learn	Supporting a rigorous, try, test and learn evaluation approach including Enhancing day-of operations data and insights so centre teams and partners can closely monitor progress and adjust as required	Key lessons identified and captured for iterative refinement of model + data and monitoring in place to track progress against outcomes More evidence informed decision making at a local level based on up to date and meaningful data and insights	Long term impact Every child has the learning, development and wellbeing outcomes they need for school and life Close the attainment gaps of children living in communities of entrenched disadvantage Stronger communities underpinned by stronger partnership approaches with families

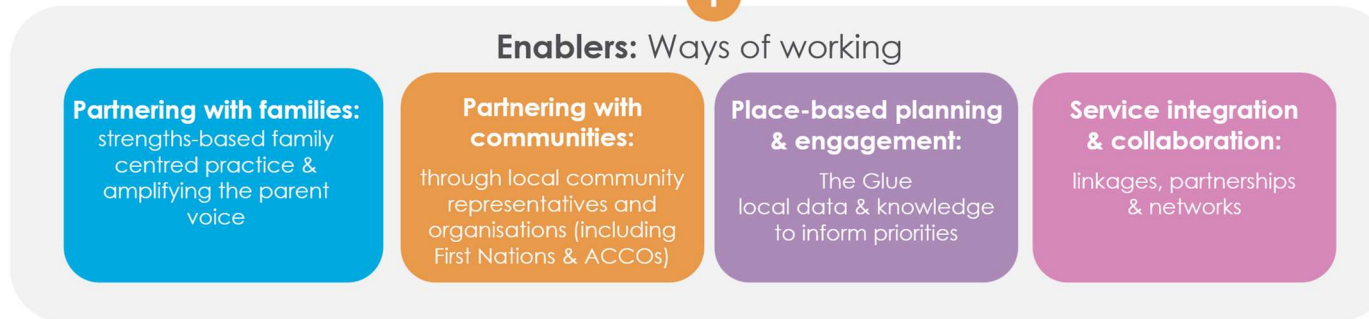
Goodstart plus core: high quality, inclusive teaching & learning
with consistent participation to improve child outcomes



Locally codesigned solutions for access & inclusion



Enablers: Ways of working



Evaluation & measurement:
Improved child outcomes with positive impacts for children, families & communities

For details on the literature underpinning the theory of change, please refer to the 2024 Thought Leaders Pre-read document, which is available upon request.

Appendix 2 – Methods

This review used exploratory, qualitative methods to gather first-hand accounts from team members and families directly involved in Goodstart Plus implementation, supported by quantitative data collected by Goodstart.

The qualitative data collection involved:

- Face-to-face interviews with team members at Lake Munmorah and Blue Haven centres
- Online (Teams) discussions with other relevant team members.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted by Dr Judy Gregory, an independent researcher not linked to Goodstart. The interviews were conducted between 9 and 20 October 2025, with 2 researcher visits to Lake Munmorah and 3 visits to Blue Haven. The interview phase involved 34 participants. The interviews were deliberately informal, with open-ended questions and discussion following the participants' interest.

Quantitative data was collected through the Goodstart Plus monitoring and evaluation process, which combines business-as-usual administrative data with targeted data collection designed for the model. A comprehensive set of primary and secondary data measures has been endorsed by the Goodstart Plus Governance Group and Independent Evaluation Advisory Group to monitor progress across all core elements of the model. These measures draw on Goodstart's operational reporting and are calculated using both booked and actual attendance data.

The approach uses Goodstart's existing operational performance reporting and attendance data, as well as measurement tools at the point of family enrolment and as part of ongoing monitoring. The quantitative approach provides initial baseline data and indications of the likelihood of achieving long-term outcomes for Goodstart Plus children and families. In the future, it will enable comparisons with other centres in the Goodstart network serving similar populations. Information collected will be shared with centre teams through regularly scheduled 'Data Integration Group' (DIG) meetings to identify the most useful data (type, presentation and frequency) to inform their daily decision-making and planning.

Interview Participants

For this review, face-to-face interviews were conducted at:

- Blue Haven – 9, 10 and 20 October 2025
- Lake Munmorah – 13 and 17 October 2025.

Interview participants included 28 team members and 6 parents:

- Team members at Blue Haven – 12 team members, including the Centre Director, Assistant Director, Cook, 2 ELs and 7 Educators
- Team members at Lake Munmorah – 15 team members, including the Centre Director, Assistant Director, Cook, 2 ELs and 10 Educators

- Parents at both centres – 6 parents, including 5 at Blue Haven and one at Lake Munmorah
- The Partnership Coordinator – interviewed on site at both Blue Haven and Lake Munmorah.

The interviews were deliberately informal, with open-ended questions and discussion following the participants' interest. Guiding questions for the interviews are included below, with only those questions relevant to the participant used in each interview.

The interviews were conducted in the programming room or staff room at each centre. All team members on site at the time of the interviews were invited to contribute, with a floating educator made available to cover their time off the floor. Parents were invited through the Centre Director.

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, with the transcription sent to all participants for checking. Team members' interview transcripts were sent directly to the team member by email, while parent interview transcripts were forwarded to the Centre Director.

When participants are quoted in the report, they are referred to by number, not name. Centre Directors are referred to as CD, other team members are referred to as S (including the Partnership Coordinator), and parents are referred to as P.

To support these interviews, online discussions were conducted with:

- Head, Social Impact Integration and Partnerships
- Project Manager, Social Impact
- Social Impact Systems Specialist
- General Manager, Performance Improvement
- Senior Inclusion Specialist
- National Lead – Birth to Three Years.

Guiding Questions

Goodstart Plus: Questions for educators

- How would you describe Goodstart Plus to someone who doesn't know anything about it? What does it mean for you? What do you think it's trying to achieve?
- Have you noticed any changes since Goodstart Plus started? What types of things have changed? Changes in your work? Changes in how you feel about work? Changes for families? Changes for children?
- What was it like when Goodstart Plus first started?
- How do you feel about the impact of Goodstart Plus on the centre and on your work? Advantages? Disadvantages?
- Do you have any stories about your work that show what Goodstart Plus is doing? I'd love to hear specific stories about things you do with children or families.

- I understand that 3 big changes are that you've got more EL time, a bigger focus on food and nutrition, and a bigger focus on communication. Is that how you see it? Are you seeing any impact from these things?
- Do you think that Goodstart Plus is reaching the right people?
- Do you think it's feasible to make Goodstart Plus a permanent thing? Do you think anything needs to be changed? Do you think it makes sense to roll out Goodstart Plus more broadly?

Goodstart Plus: Questions for families

- How long has your child been coming to Goodstart Blue Haven or Lake Munmorah?
- Does your child enjoy being here? How do you feel about bringing your child here?
- Do you feel that Goodstart is helping to make your child ready for school?
- Do you feel welcome at Goodstart? Do you feel you can ask questions? Do you feel you'll be listened to? Do you feel comfortable about talking to the team?
- I'd love to hear some stories about you child and what they do at Goodstart. Has anything made your child particularly excited?
- What do you notice when you're at the centre? Do you ever notice anything about what the children are doing or how the educators talk to the children?
- Have you noticed any changes at the centre this year?

Goodstart Plus: Questions for team members with a centre-wide role or broader

- How would you describe Goodstart Plus to someone who doesn't know anything about it? What does it mean for you? What do you think it's trying to achieve?
- What changes have been made at the centre since Goodstart Plus was introduced?
- Have you noticed any other changes that might be linked to Goodstart Plus? These might be in centre operation, in regional coordination, or head office things. What types of things have changed? Has it brought benefits? Disadvantages? In your opinion, has Goodstart Plus created changes for team members? For families? For children?
- Can you talk about how Goodstart Plus has been implemented? Were you well informed? What's the process been like? What's worked well? What could have been improved? (Where relevant ask if it was implemented in line with the model and whether the underpinning model is clear)
- Do you feel that Goodstart Plus is well (and appropriately) supported? (e.g., financial support, head office interest and monitoring, evaluation) Is it feasible for the long term?
- Do you feel that you have flexibility and autonomy at the centre level to implement Goodstart Plus in the way that works best for you? Do you feel you can make local decisions?

- Have you involved the community at all? How do you envisage this aspect of Goodstart Plus will develop over time?
- Has Goodstart Plus changed the way work is done at the room level?
- What do you think about the enhanced focus on nutrition? Have you seen any changes in terms of nutrition or food acceptance? (Specifically for cooks: How do you see your role in the centre?)
- Can you tell me anything about the enhanced focus on communication? Has the All Children Communicate! tool created changes for you?
- Has Goodstart Plus had any impact on how you feel about your work? Has it created any problems or additional work for you?
- Is Goodstart Plus worth the extra effort? Is it making a difference to the right children and families? (Where relevant ask about attendance target – whether feasible, effective, appropriate)
- Do you have any stories about your work that link to Goodstart Plus or show what it does?
- Do you think anything needs to be changed? Is there anything Goodstart Plus should be focusing on that it's currently not? Anything that should be stopped? Does it make sense to roll out Goodstart Plus more broadly?
- **For Centre Directors:** Goodstart Plus has a core of 5 additional or enhanced elements: increased staffing (Education Leaders, Early Intervention and Inclusion Specialist Teacher, Partnership Coordinator), enhanced quality (elevated teaching), more training and professional supervision, a goal of 3-day minimum attendance per child, and improved food and nutrition (75 per cent of daily nutrition while at the centre). Are you seeing changes in these areas? Are some easier than others? Do you feel this focus is working well?
- What would you like the board to know about your experiences with Goodstart Plus?
- What would you like the Centre Support Office to know about your experiences with Goodstart Plus – particularly things that might help with the roll out to other centres?

References

- ¹ Department of Education and Training, 2023, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/early-years-learning-framework>
- ² Productivity Commission, *A path to universal early childhood education and care*, ECEC Inquiry Final Report, September 2024, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/childhood/>
- ³ Australian Education Research Organisation, June 2024, Linking quality and child development in early childhood education and care <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/sites/default/files/2024-06/linking-quality-and-child-development-in-ecec-technical-report.pdf>
- ⁴ Department of Education and Training, 2023, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/early-years-learning-framework>
- ⁵ Slot, P, 2018, *Structural characteristics and process quality in early childhood education and care: A literature review*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 176, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/edaf3793-en>.
- ⁶ Slot, P, 2018, *Structural characteristics and process quality in early childhood education and care: A literature review*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 176, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/edaf3793-en>.
- ⁷ Taggart, B, Sylva, K, Melhuish, E, et al., 2015, *Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+): How pre-school influences children and young people's attainment and developmental outcomes over time*, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/455670/RB455_Effective_pre-school_primary_and_secondary_education_project.pdf.pdf
- ⁸ Moore, TG, 2021, *Developing holistic integrated early learning services for young children and families experiencing socio-economic vulnerability* (prepared for Social Ventures Australia), Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, The Royal Children's Hospital.
- ⁹ Wong, S, 2023, *A case study of clinical supervision to support early childhood leaders in times of natural disasters: "It's not a designer handbag"*, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Macquarie University.
- ¹⁰ Wong, S, Cumming, T, Bull, R, et al., 2021, *Evaluation of the Goodstart Professional Supervision Program*, Goodstart Early Learning.
- ¹¹ Harrison, LJ, Wong, S, Degotardi, S, et al., 2023, *Supporting participation in early childhood education (SPIECE) of children from low socio-economic status backgrounds – A 2018-2022 research project*, Commissioned by the NSW Department of Education.
- ¹² Vygotsky, LS, 1934/1987, *Thinking and speech*. In RW Rieber & AS Carton (Eds.), *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky, Volume 1: Problems of general psychology* (pp. 39–285), Plenum Press.
- ¹³ Siraj, I, Mathers, S, Gross, J, & Buchanan, C, 2024, *The role of early language development & social mobility: A working paper arising from a BERA presidential roundtable*, British Educational Research Association.

-
- ¹⁴ Wong, S, 2023, *A case study of clinical supervision to support early childhood leaders in times of natural disasters: "It's not a designer handbag"*, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Macquarie University.
- ¹⁵ Hood, R, 2014, Complexity and integrated working in children's services, *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(1), 27-43.
- ¹⁶ Wong, S, Cumming, T, Bull, R, et al., 2021, *Evaluation of the Goodstart Professional Supervision Program*, Goodstart Early Learning.
- ¹⁷ Rankin, P, Staton, S, Thorpe, K, 2025, *Link between participation in Early Childhood Education and Care and Australian Early Development Census domain indicators using The First Five Years Project data*. Preprint copy available at: <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:86fbe84>
- ¹⁸ Gautam, N, Rahman, MM, & Khanam, R, 2025, Socioeconomic inequalities in health behaviours in children and adolescents: evidence from an Australian cohort, *BMC Public Health* 25, 314, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-21472-6>
- ¹⁹ Moore, TG, 2021, *Core care conditions for children and families: Implications for integrated child and family services* (prepared for Social Ventures Australia), Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, The Royal Children's Hospital.
- ²⁰ National Nutrition Network, 2023, *Achieving equality and equity in the provision of food and nutrition support in early childhood education and care settings: Opportunities and actions for system change*, National Nutrition Network—ECEC, https://www.ecu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/1021810/KBG-NNN-EVIDENCE-BRIEF-No1-D.09.pdf
- ²¹ Heckman, JJ, & Karapakula, G, 2018, *The ABC/CARE intervention: The power of early childhood education*, The Heckman Equation, https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2018/06/F_Heckman_ABC_CARE_Quality_110117.pdf