

Media release



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Goodstart honours outgoing Chief Children's Officer, announces new appointee

After an extensive search, one of the most exciting roles in Australia's early learning sector has been filled, with Goodstart Early Learning announcing that Professor Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett will become its new Chief Children's Officer.

Professor Neilsen-Hewett is an internationally regarded educator and researcher in early childhood education, leading innovative teaching programs at the University of Wollongong. She is highly regarded by governments, industry, philanthropy, and researchers for her high quality and field leading teaching related research, which is impacting educational practice and workforce development both in Australia and internationally.

Goodstart's CEO Dr Ros Baxter thanked inaugural Chief Children's Officer, Sue Robb OBE, who joined Australia's largest early learning and care provider in 2018.

"While we still have several months to benefit from Sue's leadership and continued guidance, we want to take this opportunity to honour the incredible impact Sue has had on our organisation.

"Sue's passion, expertise, and unwavering commitment to children's learning and development have shaped Goodstart in profound ways. Her legacy will be felt for years to come.

"Under Sue's leaderships Goodstart has achieved sector-leading quality with 99% of centres Meeting or Exceeding the National Quality Standard. Well above the 91% average of our sector. We've achieved this because Sue have focused on ensuring our centre teams are supported to continuously improve the quality of children's experiences from birth right through to school with the introduction of new curriculum and measurement frameworks.

"At the same time Sue has helped to ensure that we have improved our levels of safe, inclusive pedagogical practice and that we carefully measure and strengthen outcomes for every child in our centres.

"To say we will miss Sue is an under-statement of the magnitude of her personal and professional impact. Sue has always championed a perspective which keeps children at the centre of all we do. We will hear her voice in our heads as we continue to work to fulfill our mission to give all Australia's children the best start in life.

"We wish Sue well as she embarks on her next adventure as she continues to share her extraordinary knowledge with ECEC sectors in her home country, Asia and the Pacific.

"As we move forward, I am thrilled that Professor Neilsen-Hewett will be joining us to continue the work we are doing to ensure our teams benefit from world-leading early childhood pedagogy and practice.



"Cathrine is a passionate and innovative leader who has made significant contributions to early childhood pedagogy and practice at a national level, at the University of Wollongong and as a member of the national Early Childhood Development Council.

"Cathrine's commitment to elevating the professional status of early childhood educators along with her expertise in areas like trauma-informed practice and technological integration will ensure our teams have the vision and pedagogical knowledge to take us forward.

"Her work on children's self-regulation, child assessment and early childhood pedagogy has impacted educational practice, programs and policy both in Australia and internationally and her expertise in children's behaviour and self-regulation has seen her appointed as an advisor on key projects in Victoria, NSW, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Professor Neilsen-Hewett said she was excited to have the opportunity to work with the teachers and educators across Goodstart's network.

"I'm thrilled to be joining Goodstart Early Learning at such a pivotal time for early childhood education in Australia. I have always been driven by a deep belief in the power of early learning to change lives and this role offers a unique opportunity to lead and collaborate with educators, families and communities across Australia to help shape inclusive and high-quality environments where every child can thrive.

"I believe the heart of quality early learning lies in the work educators and teachers do every day — building strong, responsive relationships with children, partnering with families, and creating environments where every child feels safe, valued and included."

Professor Neilsen-Hewett will join Goodstart in November.

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For more information

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Notes for editors: Goodstart Early Learning is Australia's largest not for profit early learning provider with 653 centres nationwide supporting 61,000 children from 51,000 families. We are committed to improving the lives of Australia's children and their families. Website: goodstart.org.au.