

# **Building Bridges: Using Road Safety Education to Develop Partnerships between Children's Services, Families and Local Communities across NSW**

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## **Biographies**

Linda Harrison holds a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood and has six years experience in the early childhood field in a range of children's services. Currently a Consultant with the Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program (ECRSEP) at Macquarie University, Linda is involved in presenting professional development workshops on road safety education and provides developmentally appropriate road safety strategies and advice to early childhood services across NSW.

Linda is working collaboratively with children's services in rural and urban NSW to support staff to effectively implement road safety education by using the "NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services" – a key early childhood document. The author has worked closely with these children's services to help staff build partnerships with families and their local community around road safety education. A particular focus of these interactions has been to encourage the children's services to address local pedestrian road safety issues, to ensure safe arrivals and departures of children and their families. Together with the ECRSEP team, the Motor Accidents Authority, the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority and City of Ryde, the author has been actively involved in developing an interactive "driveway safety display". Linda has used this display with a range of children's services and other road safety stakeholders, as one of many strategies to help prevent the tragic death or injury of young children as pedestrians in off road areas.

Analisa Burgio holds a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood. She has worked extensively in the early childhood industry developing educational programs including bringing collaborative learning to succeed in a non-traditional online environment. In her current position as an early childhood road safety consultant for the Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program (ECRSEP) Analisa is part of a team that delivers professional development workshops around road safety education to children's services and their families across NSW. One of Analisa's other roles is to provide support to professionals across a number of sectors including the delivery of professional development workshops to students studying in pre-service tertiary early childhood courses.

Analisa's major role with ECRSEP is as the Tertiary Coordinator in which she supports TAFE child studies education staff at both Institute and Divisional levels in providing input into their resources, curriculum material and quality assurance across the early childhood sector.

## **Abstract**

Research suggests that young children are dependent upon adults for their safety. They do not have the understanding nor ability to behave safely in the road traffic environment without adult assistance. Adults can take responsibility for children in the complex road traffic environment in two ways: one is through protection and the other is through road safety education. This paper reviews ways in which the Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program (ECRSEP) encourages adults to do both.

The first five years of life in Australian culture are characterised by increasing striving by the child towards independence. This leads many adults to overestimate the abilities of young children. Working in close partnership with children's services, ECRSEP aims to increase adult understanding of the developmental characteristics of young children that place them at risk of death and serious injury. Reducing casualties involves increasing community awareness of protective practices that are the most effective for babies, toddlers, preschoolers and for those in the early school years. Adult responsibility encompasses the safety of young children as passengers, pedestrians and at play.

ECRSEP works closely with children's services to help them plan and implement road safety education programs in partnership with their families and their local communities.

This presentation highlights the crucial role of early childhood educators in helping families keep their children safe in the road traffic environment. The authors share practical road safety education strategies for families and those that support them that are effective with young children. Strategies include ways to integrate road safety education, through joint planning and programming, within the daily lives of children..... both in the children's service and when they are out and about with their families.

The authors draw from their involvement in specific projects within local communities across urban and rural areas of NSW. They highlight ways in which ECRSEP works collaboratively with children's services to develop interactive road safety experiences which can be adapted by a range of road safety professionals, to address local pedestrian and passenger safety issues.

The Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program supports early childhood professionals in their key role as community advocates for the safety and well being of young children. This presentation will encourage road safety stakeholders within their local communities to see how they can work effectively towards keeping children safe in the road traffic environment through a co-operative approach.