



Brighter Beginnings Newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of the Brighter Beginnings newsletter – where we share news, resources and stories about how we can collectively support NSW families and children in the first 2000 days of their life.

In this edition we bring you some of the key evidence about why the first 2000 days matter and share resources that support the healthy development of children under five. Please share these with your colleagues and the families you work with. Together we can all help NSW families give their children the best start in life.

What is Brighter Beginnings?

Brighter Beginnings: the first 2000 days of life is a NSW Government initiative that brings together government agencies and front-line professionals to improve outcomes for NSW children and families in the first 2000 days of life, from conception to age five. Head to nsw.gov.au/initiative/brighter-beginnings to learn more.



Why do the first 2000 days matter?

The first 2000 days of a child's life, from conception to the time they start school, is an important time for physical, social and emotional health.

Experiences during these early years have deep and long-lasting effects, predicting outcomes like:

- Success at school and in finding a job
- Lifelong health
- Risk of substance abuse and criminal behaviour

By the time they start school, children develop 90% of their brain, but this development is not uniform in all children. The children exposed to higher stressors such as domestic violence, household mental health or poverty may have poorer developmental outcomes than children experiencing protective factors, such as a stimulating and caring home environment, quality early childhood education or higher household income and education.

This evidence summary prepared by the NSW Ministry of Health explores these factors in more detail and highlights how we can support families with universal services and targeted interventions, depending on their needs and circumstances.

Please share this with your network to help us raise awareness of this important life stage.



Watch seven-year-old Molly demonstrate how a game of peek-a-boo can change the world.

How can we measure child development?

The Australian Developmental Census (AEDC) is a national population-based measure that tracks Australian children's development by the time they start their first year of full time school. Data is collected by Kindergarten teachers relating to five key areas of early childhood development referred to as 'domains':

- **Physical health and wellbeing** – Children's physical readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills.
- **Social competence** – Children's overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approach to learning and readiness to explore new things.

- **Emotional maturity** – Children’s pro-social and helping behaviours and absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour and hyperactivity and inattention.
- **Language and cognitive skills (school-based)** – Children’s basic literacy, advanced literacy, basic numeracy, and interest in literacy, numeracy and memory.
- **Communication skills and general knowledge** – Children’s communication skills and general knowledge based on broad developmental competencies and skills measured in the school context.

The five AEDC domains have been shown to predict later health, wellbeing and academic success, including NAPLAN results.

In NSW, 1 in 5 children are vulnerable on one or more AEDC domains, and that number more than doubles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

As professionals working with children and families, we all play a key role in raising awareness about the importance of developmental checks and in supporting families with resources and information to give their children the best start in life.

Here are some resources for parents and carers to increase their understanding of AEDC, and what they can do to support their children’s development at home:

- [AEDC Resources for Parents](#)
- [Frequently asked questions for families](#)

The AEDC data collection takes place every 3 years, usually in Term 2, and it is done by children’s kindergarten teachers. The latest collection happened in May-June this year, and schools will soon receive the rough data, which will be available at community level in March 2022.

The NSW government, like many other Australian jurisdictions, is increasingly

relying on the AEDC data to measure the success of government initiatives and interventions, and prioritize resources to improve outcomes for children.



[Check out this explainer video](#) about AEDC and share it with colleagues and families.

Want to know more?

Join the [AEDC NSW 2021 Research Symposium](#) on Thursday 12 August (half-day) and aedc.gov.au or the [AEDC section](#) in the NSW Department of Education's website.

In case you missed it

Here are some NSW government initiatives that support Brighter Beginnings, announced in this year's budget:

- [Free preschool extended for 2022](#)
- [\\$12 million boost for mums and bubs in the bush](#)
- [\\$8 million star boost to literacy budget](#)

Watch some great presentations from the [Brighter Beginnings Virtual Conference](#) by health, education, community services and customer experience experts.

Visit the [Brighter Beginnings step by step](#) guides. This is a one stop shop for

information and services for parents that guide them through these important life stages: having a baby, parenting young children and starting school.

Upcoming events

AEDC NSW 2021 Research Symposium – Thursday 12 August

We look forward to welcoming you as we explore the value of AEDC datasets and how we can respond to school-level, community-level, state-level and national data from the 2021 AEDC data collection.

Presenters include representatives from local councils, Telethon Kids Institute, schools, Early childhood education, NSW Department of Education and UNSW researchers.

Venue – online via Zoom

Date and time – Thursday 12 August 2021 from 8:30 am (half-day)

Cost – Free

[Book your place now](#)

Can't make it? Register anyway to receive the video recording after the event.

Got questions, feedback, or stories to share?
Email us at BrighterBeginnings@det.nsw.edu.au

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