

NZ Early Childhood Research
10th Annual Conference 2006
**Partnerships in Early Childhood
(PIEC)**

*A relationships-based approach to early
intervention in childcare*

Greg Antcliff

Senior Manager
Early Childhood



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The Case for Investment in Early Childhood

- Social change over the past 20-30 years
- Worsening developmental outcomes
- Service delivery difficulties
- Brain development research and the identification of the critical periods- adversity impacts on brain development
- Ecological factors eg. family stress, lack of supports

(June McLoughlin 2005)



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Brains are Built Over Time



Newborn



3-month-old



2-year-old



“Although the biology of infancy is universal in historic time, human perceptions of infancy and what is required to care for them is a social construction”.

(Prof. James McKenna, 2006)



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Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Development are Highly Interrelated

- Emotional well-being and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities
- Social skills, emotional health, and cognitive capacities are all important prerequisites for success in school and later in the workplace

(Shonkoff, 2006)



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Why the Early Years ?

If the race is already halfway run even before children begin school, then we clearly need to examine what happens in the earliest years”

(Esping – Anderson, 2005)

“Like it or not, the most important mental and behavioural patterns, once established, are difficult to change once children enter school”

(Heckman & Wax, 2004)



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PIEC

A relationships-based approach to Early Intervention in childcare

- Childcare centres play a critical role in the lives of children and families
- PIEC builds on existing skills, strengths and resources of childcare providers
- PIEC promotes strong, healthy relationships between children, childcare staff, families and communities



Evidence Base for Early Intervention in Early Childhood

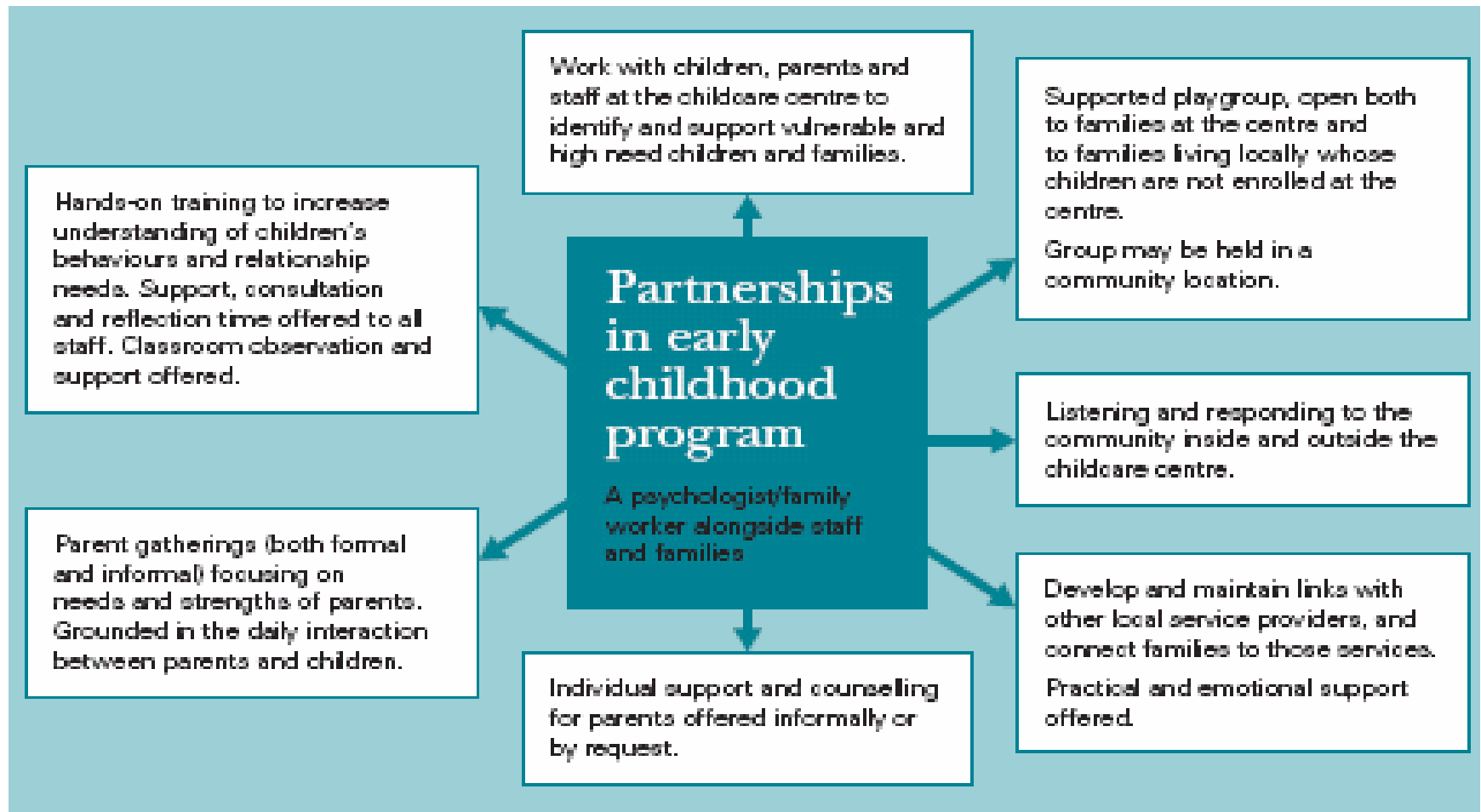
Quality early childhood programs have the potential to create an environment that:

- Foster children's lifetime development
- Minimises risk of abuse or neglect
- Reduces likelihood of future criminality

Provence & Naylor (1983), Johnson & Walker (1987), Miller & Whittaker (1988), Weikart & Scheinhart (1992), Oates *et al* (1995), National Crime Prevention (1999), McCain & Mustard (1999, 2002)



PIEC Program Model



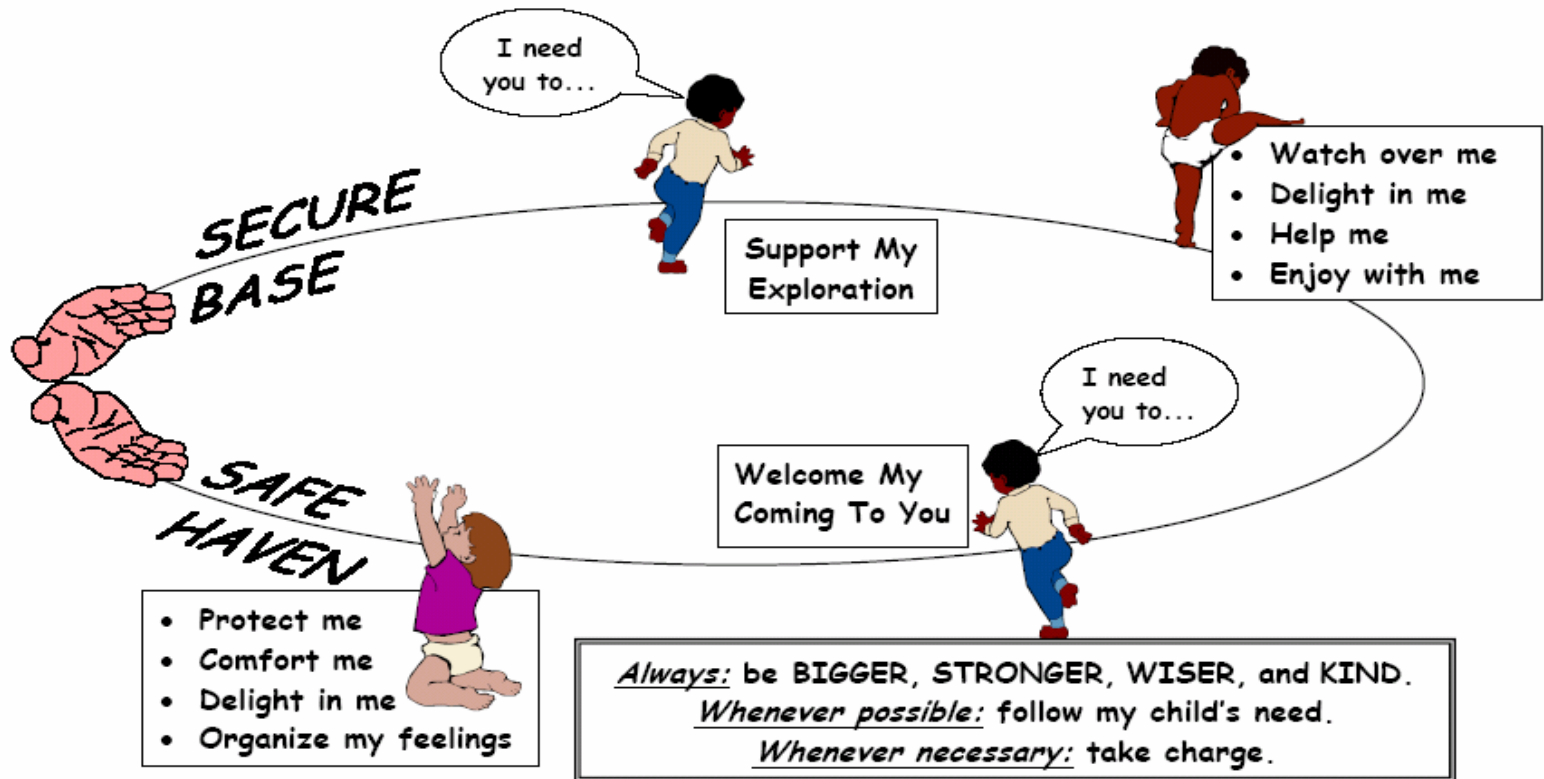
PIEC Program Model

Components of the model

1. Layered support
2. Staff training
3. Change Management Model
4. Parent sessions around attachment and children's emotional needs
5. Formal and informal parent and staff support
6. Building reflective capacity of staff
7. Connecting parents to service system
8. Connecting parents to community



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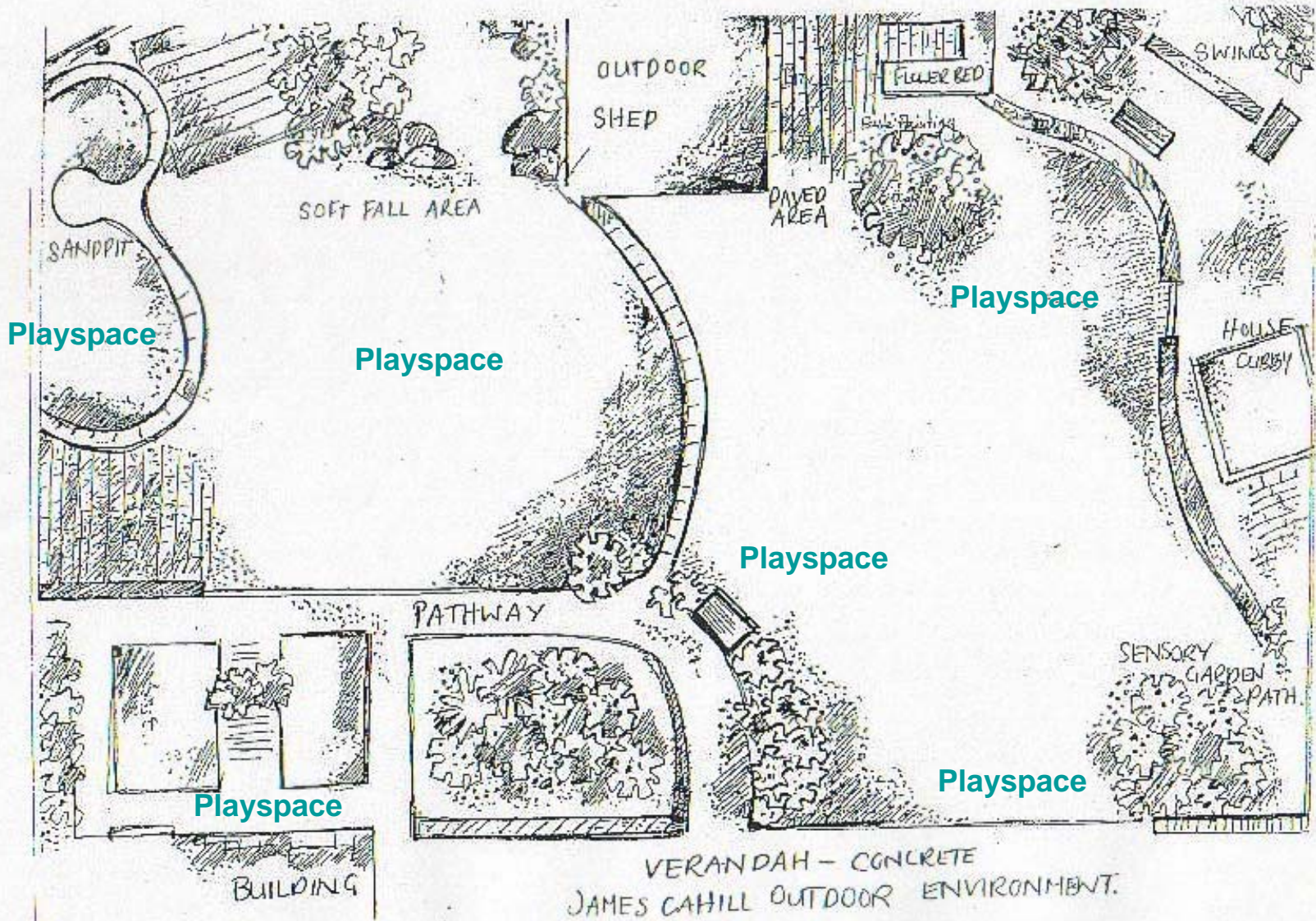
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Playspace

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VERANDAH - CONCRETE
 JAMES CAHILL OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT.

PIEC Program Model

- Increases understanding of child behaviour from emotional perspective
- Improves ability to support vulnerable children
- Helps families with parenting
- Acts as a 'bridge' to other community services
- Promotes connecting parents to informal social supports



Our Partners

- KU Children's Services (x 2 Preschools)
- Lady Gowrie Child Centre (1 LDC)
- Campbelltown City Council (6 LDC)
- Wyong City Council (5 LDC)
- The Benevolent Society (1 LDC)



Working in Partnership

- Time to establish meaningful and trusting relationships with partner organisations
- Staff resistance to change
- Staffing the program with suitably qualified staff
- Staff working in the context of two organisations
- Better integration of services



Anticipated PIEC Outcomes

- Improved relationships between children and their parents, children and other children, and children and childcare staff
- Childcare and preschool staff better able to foster healthy emotional and social development for all children
- Increased social competence and emotional self-regulation and a decrease in behavioural problems for children



Anticipated PIEC Outcomes

- Better quality care for children enrolled at participating centres
- Greater confidence in parents about their parenting
- Greater access to support services for parents and informal support for the family
- Childcare centres established as a focal point for families in the community



Evaluation Strategy (2005-2008)

- Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of NSW to conduct the external evaluation for the life of the program
- Equates to 10% of the total budget
- Three tiered approach:
 - Process evaluation
 - Performance based monitoring
 - Impact evaluation



Evaluation Strategy

Process (formative) Evaluation

- Monitor the extent to which the program is delivered in the form envisaged
- Interviews / focus groups with key personnel and families
- 6 Centres / preschools in total (2 each region)



Evaluation Strategy

Performance based Monitoring

- Assess the progress in achieving expected outputs
 - **Output information**
 - Frequency and type of service, number of participating children and families
 - **Input information**
 - Resources and staffing eg. cost benefit analysis



Evaluation Strategy

Impact Evaluation

- Pre-test and post-test design
- To assess the impact or outcomes of the PIEC program over time
- Dimensions of: child & family functioning and ratings of relationships between children, child care centre staff, families and communities
- Questionnaires for families and staff at 4 points in time
- Data collection in all 14 centres/preschools



Method

Participants

Data has been collected from staff and parents in the 14 childcare centres involved in PIEC. The possible sample for the evaluation was every child aged 12 months and over, who attends a centre two days or more a week



Method

Participants

- **Participating Centres** *N= 14*
- **Staff questionnaires** *N= 544*
- **Parent questionnaires** *N= 417*

Data collection timeline

- **Baseline – Time 1 April / May 2006 – all children**
- **Middle – Time 2 – November 2006 – all children**
- **Middle – Time 3 – March 2007 – children starting in 2007 only**
- **End – Time 4 – November 2007 – all children**



Measures

Standardised Instruments

Two scales to assess the *relationship between staff and children* and the *relationships between parents and children*:

1. *Pianta Student- Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)*
2. *Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS)*



Measures

Standardised Instruments

Two scales are used to measure changes in children's *social and emotional well-being*. These are age-dependent and the age of the child determines which scale is used at each time period:

1. *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)*
2. *Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA)*



Measures

Standardised Instruments

- One scale is used to assess the *child's experience of the child care setting*:

1. *The Leiden Inventory for the Child's Wellbeing in Day Care (LICW-D)*



Measures

- **Demographic information** from parents and staff
- *Staff* were asked about their qualifications, level of education, how long they had been employed at the childcare centre or preschool.
- *Parents* were asked country of birth, education, current work status and household income, questions about their parenting self-efficacy, perceptions of the local neighbourhood and access to services and support



Measures

- Questions on ***parenting and relationships*** were adapted from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). This will enable a comparison with broad population data in the final phase of data collection. These questions elicit information on family functioning.
- Questions on ***community connectedness and access to services*** were adapted from the National Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and LSAC. These questions elicit information on social capital. This information also gives important contextual information on the environment in which PIEC is being implemented



Results

Parent characteristics by Area

Country of birth

	Percentages		
	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
Australia	85.61	71.20	68.09
Overseas	14.39	28.80	31.91

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin

Yes	2.96	2.84	3.45
No	97.04	97.16	96.55



Results

Parent Characteristics by Area

Household's main source of income

Percentages

	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
<i>Wages/Salaries</i>	73.64	88.27	57.47
<i>Own business</i>	3.10	5.03	1.15
<i>Govt benefit</i>	22.48	5.59	35.63
<i>Other</i>	0.78	1.12	5.75



Results

Child characteristics by Area

Gender

Percentages

	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
Male	49.64	48.37	51.58
Female	50.36	51.63	48.42

Age

1 yr	10.87	9.78	10.53
2 yr	21.01	21.20	30.53
3 yrs	33.33	30.43	31.58
4 yrs	26.81	33.70	23.16



Results

Child Characteristics by Area

Days per week attending

Percentages

	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
Two Days	42.34	40.66	44.21
Three Days	32.12	37.36	31.58
Four Days	13.14	15.38	10.53
Five Days	12.41	6.59	13.68

Child attending other centre

Yes	7.19	7.73	2.13
No	92.81	92.27	97.87



Results

Support provided by PIEC to Staff

Staff training in understanding children's behaviour and relationships

Percentages

	<i>Central Coast</i>	<i>East Syd</i>	<i>SW Syd</i>
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<i>Yes</i>	<i>73.98</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>90.28</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>26.02</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>9.72</i>

Staff training in supporting vulnerable children and families

<i>Yes</i>	<i>99.18</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>100.00</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>0.82</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0.00</i>



Results

Support provided by PIEC to Staff *Staff Supervision support*

Percentages

	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
Yes	68.76	66.22	75.00
No	31.25	33.78	25.00

Linking children and families to additional services

Yes	100.00	93.24	98.65
No	0.00	6.76	1.35

Supporting families

Yes	100.00	100.00	100.00
No	0.00	0.00	0.00



Results

Support provided by PIEC to Parents

	Percentages		
	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
<i>Helped you in parenting your child</i>	25.20	19.10	22.73
<i>Help you learn about your child's L & D</i>	30.08	24.16	30.59
<i>Taught skills to play with & teach your child</i>	16.95	7.34	19.05
<i>Supported and respected Your family's culture</i>	13.45	7.47	17.07



Results

Support provided by PIEC to Parents

	Percentages		
	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
<i>Helped you find support by talking with other parents</i>	11.76	5.78	21.69
<i>Helped to improve your child's development or behaviour</i>	29.03	22.73	25.71
<i>Helped you in your relationship with partner</i>	6.72	2.84	13.25
<i>Helped you to feel good about yourself</i>	12.50	8.00	18.29



Results

Support provided by PIEC to Parents **Percentages**

	Central Coast	East Syd	SW Syd
<i>Told you about other services to help your child</i>	29.84	9.14	25.00
<i>Told you about other services to help your family</i>	25.41	6.29	23.81
<i>Provided an opportunity for you to meet other parents</i>	24.58	20.45	25.61



Results

Table 1: Pianta Student-Teacher Relationship Scale

NAME	PER CENT			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
Pianta Child-Teacher Relationship Scale	14.4 85.6	16.2 83.8	19.2 80.8	16.3 83.7
<u>Closeness</u>				
Low Closeness (<25 th percentile of normative sample)	32.0	33.0	39.0	34.3
High Closeness	68.0	67.0	61.0	65.8
<u>Dependency</u>				
High Dependency (>75 th percentile of normative sample)	8.2	13.1	13.7	11.4
Low Dependency	91.8	86.9	86.3	88.6
<u>Total STRS</u>				
Negative & Ineffective Relationships (<25 th percentile of normative sample)	18.5	17.8	23.3	19.5
Positive and Effective Relationships	81.6	82.2	76.7	80.5

Note: Percentiles from the raw scores have been calculated using the Total Normative Sample Percentile Conversions



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Results

Table 2: Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scores

DOMAIN	PER CENT			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<u>Conflict</u>				
High Conflict (>75 th percentile of normative sample)	35.6	33.9	40.4	35.9
Low Conflict	64.4	66.1	59.6	64.1
<u>Closeness</u>				
Low Closeness (<25 th percentile of normative sample)	3.7	3.8	6.5	4.3
High Closeness	96.3	96.2	93.5	95.7
<u>Dependency</u>				
High Dependency (>75 th percentile of normative sample)	54.8	51.6	63.8	55.4
Low Dependency	45.2	48.4	36.2	44.6
<u>Total STRS</u>				
Negative & Ineffective Relationships (<25 th percentile of normative sample)	23.9	19.9	29.0	23.2
Positive and Effective Relationships	76.1	80.1	70.0	76.8



Results

Table 3: BITSEA Scores Reported by Parents

DOMAIN	PER CENT			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
High Problem (scores fall at or above 25 th percentile) Not of Concern	13.3 86.7	16.9 83.1	20.0 80.0	16.7 83.3
Low Competence (scores fall at or below 15 th percentile) Not of Concern	11.4 88.6	13.8 86.2	22.5 77.5	16.9 83.1



DOMAIN	PER CENT			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<u>Total Difficulties</u>				
Normal	70.1	77.1	60.2	70.0*
Borderline	7.6	6.8	17.1	9.7*
Abnormal	22.2	16.1	22.7	20.3*
<u>Emotional Symptoms</u>				
Normal	91.7	91.5	89.8	91.1
Borderline	2.0	3.4	6.8	3.7
Abnormal	6.3	5.1	3.4	5.1
<u>Conduct Problems</u>				
Normal	73.6	83.2	67.1	75.2*
Borderline	6.9	6.7	5.7	6.6*
Abnormal	19.4	10.1	27.3	18.2*
<u>Hyperactivity Score</u>				
Normal	69.4	83.3	75.0	75.6*
Borderline	8.3	5.0	2.3	5.7*
Abnormal	22.2	11.7	22.7	18.8*
<u>Peer Problem</u>				
Normal	73.6	71.7	68.2	71.6
Borderline	10.4	11.7	12.5	11.4
Abnormal	16.0	16.7	19.3	17.1
<u>Prosocial Score</u>				
Normal	55.6	56.4	67.1	58.7
Borderline	20.1	20.5	9.1	17.5
Abnormal	24.3	23.1	23.9	23.8
<u>Total Impact Score</u>				
Normal	90.3	97.5	90.7	92.9*
Borderline	1.4	0.8	7.0	2.6*
Abnormal	8.3	1.7	2.3	4.6*

Results

Table 4:
SDQ Scores
Reported by Staff
*($X^2 p \leq 0.05$)



DOMAIN	PER CENT			
<u>Total Difficulties</u>	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
Normal	79.8	89.4	69.8	82.3*
Borderline	6.7	6.5	9.4	7.2*
Abnormal	13.5	4.1	20.8	10.6*
<u>Emotional Symptoms</u>				
Normal	90.0	87.8	83.0	87.6
Borderline	1.1	4.9	7.6	4.1
Abnormal	8.9	7.3	9.4	8.3
<u>Conduct Problems</u>				
Normal	65.6	78.1	50.9	68.4*
Borderline	8.9	9.7	17.0	10.9*
Abnormal	25.6	12.2	32.1	20.7*
<u>Hyperactivity Score</u>				
Normal	75.6	88.6	75.5	81.6
Borderline	10.0	5.7	7.6	7.5
Abnormal	14.4	5.7	17.0	10.9
<u>Peer Problem</u>				
Normal	74.4	74.0	60.4	71.4
Borderline	13.3	10.6	13.2	12.0
Abnormal	12.2	15.5	26.4	16.5
<u>Prosocial Score</u>				
Normal	83.3	89.4	81.1	85.7
Borderline	13.3	3.3	11.3	8.3
Abnormal	3.3	7.3	7.6	6.0
<u>Total Impact Score</u>				
Normal	95.6	98.4	90.6	95.9
Borderline	2.2	0.8	1.9	1.5
Abnormal	2.2	0.8	7.6	2.6

Results

Table 5:
SDQ Scores Reported
by Parents
*(X2 $p \leq 0.05$)

Results

Table 6: Leiden Inventory of Child Well-Being in Day Care

DOMAIN	PER CENT			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
Poor Overall Well-Being (total score falls below 18, equivalent to less than 4 on the 6 point scale)	8.1	19.8	19.7	14.8
Good to High Overall (total score of 48 or above, equivalent to 4 and above on the 6 point scale)	91.9	80.2	82.3	85.2



Summary

Demographic Data

- Significant differences between areas.
- South West Sydney demographic characteristics of parents: highest proportion of parents born overseas, who speak a language other than English at home and rely on government pension or benefit



Summary

Attachment Relationships

- Majority of staff have positive and effective relationships with the children
- Approximately one fifth of staff have negative or ineffective relationships with the children
- Parents indicated over a third have high conflict and over 50% have high dependency levels in their relationships with children
- Approximately one fifth of the total CPRS scores reported by parents indicate lower overall positivity in their relationships with their children



Summary

Social-emotional development

- Majority of children for both measures of social-emotional development did not indicate problem behaviours
- Of children aged 1-3 yrs, approximately 17% rated by parents as having high problem scores and low competence scores indicating *Of Concern* status
- Approximately one fifth of children over 3 yrs rated by staff as having difficulty scores in the abnormal range
- In contrast only 10% of parents rated their children in the abnormal range for total difficulties



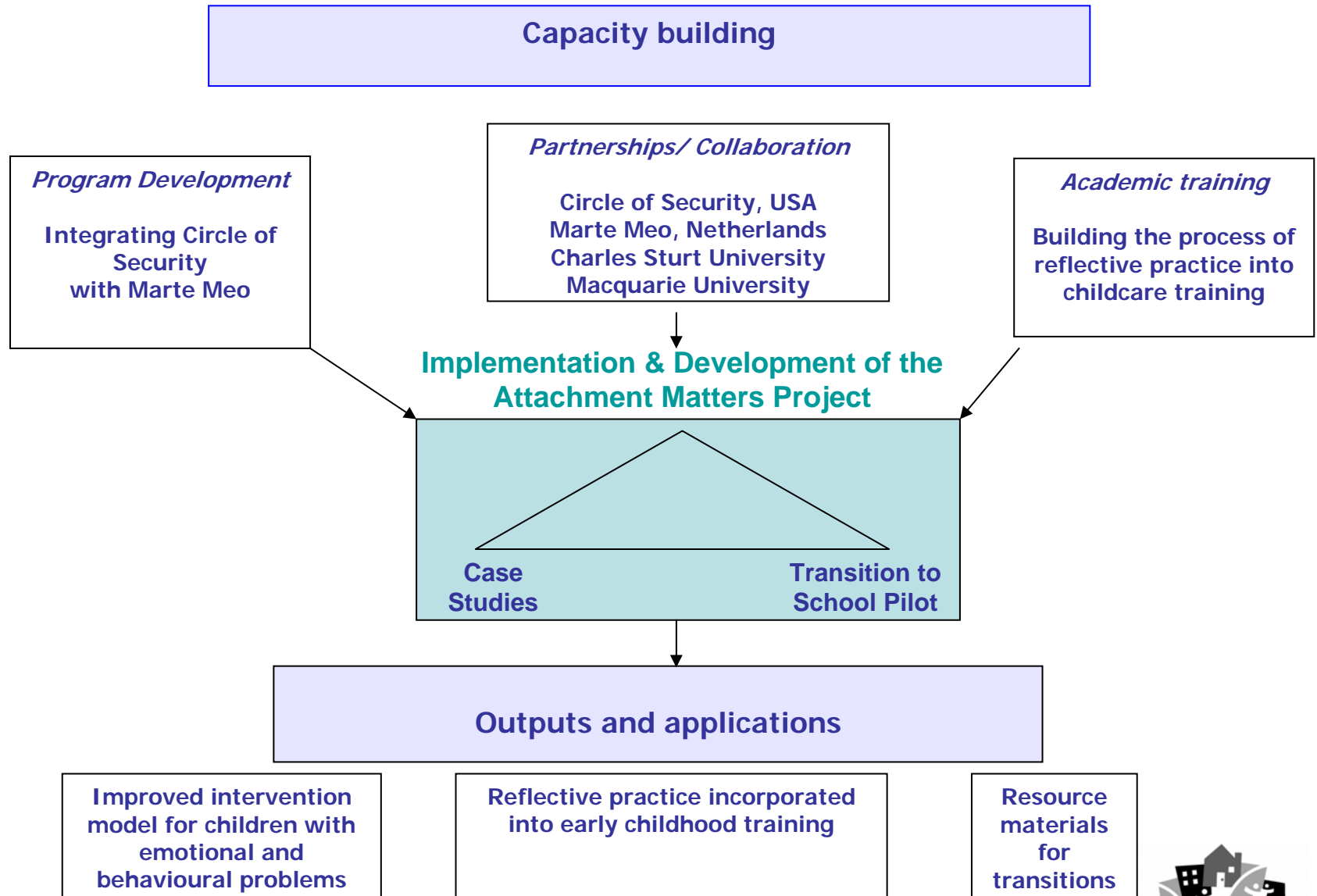
Summary

Community Connectedness

- Majority of parents indicated their neighbourhoods were safe and clean, they had access to good parks, basic shopping facilities and services and it was a good place to bring up children
- More parents in South West Sydney indicated they would like to move out of the area, it was not safe for children to play outside and people were unwilling to help their neighbours than in East Sydney or the Central Coast



Future Directions !



Greg Antcliff

Senior Manager, Early Childhood

The Benevolent Society

Phone: (02) 9339 8000

Email: grega@bensoc.org.au

Website: www.bensoc.org.au



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