





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# PROFESSIONAL MENTORING PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS DECEMBER 2012 REPORT



**Prepared for:**

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

**Prepared by:**

Assoc Prof Andrea Nolan  
Dr Anne-Marie Morrissey  
Jenni Beahan  
Dr Iris Dumenden

On behalf of the Mentoring Project Team:

Associate Professor Andrea Nolan (Project Director)\*  
Dr Anne-Marie Morrissey (Deakin University Team Leader)^  
Dr Catherine Hamm\*  
Elizabeth Rouse^  
Jan Hunt\*  
Jennifer Aitken\*  
Louise Laskey^  
Dr Sarah Ohi^  
John McCartin\*  
Brian Doig^  
Jenni Beahan (Project Co-ordinator)\*  
Dr Iris Dumenden (Project Research Officer)\*

\*Victoria University

^Deakin University

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report documents the completion of the program for the second cohort of participants and what we have learnt along the way about mentors, mentees and mentoring. The continued growth and development of the Professional Mentoring Program for Early Childhood Teachers would not have been possible without the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the leadership shown by Karen Weston, Briony Grigg and Gina Suntesic.

As we come to the conclusion of the second cohort of mentees and mentors through the program, there is cause to celebrate. By listening to and acting on the feedback from the first cohort much has been learnt and revised to ensure that the overall experience for this second cohort was a very positive one. This has turned out to be a 'feel good' project where there are reported gains in practice by both mentees and mentors. What can be observed in mentees is professional growth, a rise in confidence, engagement with families and communities, advocacy and skills development. Comments from both mentees and mentors speak about increases in confidence, practice changes, skills developed or refined, and the evolving of professional networks. A sign as to the enjoyment and rewarding nature of the program is the fact that a number of our mentors, trained throughout the two cohorts, are interested in continuing on in the program.

This second cohort saw 73 kindergartens and day care centres across Victoria involved in the project. The locations included all suburbs in Metropolitan Melbourne; Regional and Rural locations include in and around Portland, Warrnambool, Hamilton, Ararat, Horsham, Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo, Mildura, Seymour, Shepparton, Benalla, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Bairnsdale, Sale, Moe, Mansfield. Some Mentors and Mentees in Regional areas have travelled up to 500 km to attend training and; some Mentors averaged in excess of 1200 kms (in total) to visit their group of Mentees in the workplace. The data relating to travel is well illustrated when viewed in the context of the State of Victoria and with the assistance of the DEECD GIS Mapping Analyst, Regional and Metropolitan maps were created (see Appendices A and B).

Word about the program appears to be spreading across the early childhood field. In considering the future it would be important to continue a strategic mentoring program within the early childhood sector to ensure the culture shift continues to strengthen. Discussions are taking place with DEECD about what mentoring in early childhood would look like into the future. We applaud this action.

**Associate Professor Andrea Nolan and Dr Anne-Marie Morrissey**

On behalf of the Mentoring Project Team

December 2012

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the final report of the second cohort to complete the Professional Mentoring Program for Early Childhood Teachers across the state of Victoria.

## 1.1 Background

Already noted in the July 2012 Report, were the Mentor and Mentee recruitment process for this second cohort, the demographics of the participants, the data from the Pre-Mentoring Program Evaluation (PMPE), and Mentor Training Day which was held jointly with VIT, Shared Learning Day 1 (19th March, 2012), and Shared Learning Day 2 (18th June, 2012), and a brief summary of the progress of the site visits and engagement with the online forums.

The July report's overall reflection of the progress of the second cohort commented on the inability for the program to be rolled out regionally (due to the lower than expected numbers of participants in regional areas) which could account for some potential participants being unable to commit to the program. This manifested in the difficulty of matching Mentors and Mentees by geographical location. Rather than refuse inclusion in the program, differing arrangements as to those originally proposed were put in place. These arrangements saw the matching of Mentors and Mentees occur outside of geographic locations, relying on the willingness of Mentors to travel longer distances to their Mentees. As was noted at the time in the report, this does question the belief that Mentees and Mentors need to be geographically located as all parties where this has occurred have continued to be positive about the arrangements and feel fully supported. This second cohort was also more open to being matched outside of their service type (something that the first cohort criticised), seeing it as a chance to learn more about other ways of working in other services. The effectiveness of the Program has resulted in one region identifying and introducing the role of Mentor (14 hours per week) into a Position Description.

## 1.2 Aim

The program's aims remain the same as the original intentions with an increase in early childhood teachers' access to mentoring relationships in an effort to support and further develop practice. The project has in fact acted to broaden the idea of mentoring for early childhood teachers, promoting the benefits of effective mentoring for teachers, children and families. Understanding and engagement with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and National Quality Standards (NQS) remain features of the program.

## 2. FINDINGS: COHORT TWO

This summary provides details of the Reflections on Learning Template, the Post-Mentoring Program Evaluation (POMPE), as well as the three questions considered at the Celebration Day, the Site Visits, incorporation of SAM, and the project Website.

The data that informs the following sections is somewhat limited. Despite numerous requests for the completion of the template to inform the presentation for the Celebration Day, and subsequent follow up phone and email contact, only 41 out of 94 completed templates were received. After numerous attempts to contact participants and no more data forthcoming, it was decided to use the data already collected and include any late data in 2013 reports.

### 2.1 Program Completion

In most cases the Project Co-ordinator was advised by the Mentor if a Mentee did not want to or was unable to continue in the Program. Where possible the Mentee was encouraged to continue particularly, in the case of a change of employment, but unfortunately this was not always practical. During the course of the Program, the Mentors were encouraged to 'report' if Mentees were not responding to their 'visit appointment requests' – this was followed up by the Project Co-ordinator who also attempted to make contact with the Mentee. When contact was made it was confirmed with the Mentee that they were still interested in continuing in the Program, with agreement made for the Mentee to follow up on visit arrangements. In some instances the Mentee again did not carry through with these arrangements. This has resulted in some ambiguity around Mentee completion of the Program.

**Table 1: Cohort 2: Mentor / Mentee Program Completion Summary**

	Numbers	Comments
Number of new applicants offered Mentor role:	12	One Mentor was asked and agreed to continue in the 2nd cohort as a Mentee from an isolated area would otherwise not have been able to be included in the Program. The Mentor was asked and agreed to undertake workplace visits only – she was not required to (but was invited to attend) all Shared Learning Days and the Celebration Day.
Trained Mentors (from 2011):	8	
Mentors who participated both 1st and 2nd cohort:	1	
Number of Mentors who completed Program	21	All Mentors completed the program
Number of applicants who accepted and commenced Program as Mentees	73	
Number of Mentees who completed Program	67	
Number of Mentees who did not complete the Program. Reasons for non-completion are shown in comments	6	<b>Formal departure</b> from the Program (2 people): resigned from position (1); work and personal pressure (1) <b>Informal departure</b> from the Program (4 people): i.e. failed to respond to email requests from Mentors/Project Co-ordinator

### 2.2 Action Research Projects

In this program Mentees are asked to choose one aspect of their practice that they would like to concentrate on. Together with their Mentor they then take a systematic approach to how they critically reflect on this aspect of practice and this then becomes their critical reflection project throughout the mentoring program. The name

Action Research Project was changed to Reflective Practice Project half-way through the first cohort to make it sound more 'user-friendly' and distinctive from 'a university assignment'.

## **Project topics**

Topic choices for the Reflective Practice Project for Cohort Two revolved around the following themes which are in hierarchical order (smallest number of projects to largest number of projects):

### ***Coping with change***

#### ***Advocacy***

- This project focuses on advocating for the linguistic and cultural needs of the local community to the employer and engaging them in funding additional support in the way of a bilingual staff member

#### ***Assessment for learning and development***

- Attention was on methods of recording observations, along with ways to share a child's learning journey with parents

#### ***Building leadership skills***

- Projects under this topic concentrated on supporting team and self in programming and planning, and the belief in self as a teacher and leader

#### ***Documentation***

- Projects focused on the 'what, when, how' of documentation, making it more meaningful, relevant and effective, as well as linking documentation to the framework

#### ***Collaborative and inclusive practice***

- This was a topic that drew a lot of attention with many projects aligning with the notion of collaborative and inclusive practice. These projects included relationship building with families, children, colleagues in an Aboriginal centre, school colleagues, planning for diverse families and children, inclusive programming for children and families (culturally responsive), programming in LDC, supporting children with additional needs, and developing confidence / skills to deal with children, parents, committees, and staff.

#### ***Connecting with families***

- This was another area where a large number of projects converged such as involving families, working with parents for positive child outcomes, helping families feel a sense of belonging, connecting with multicultural families, effective communication strategies, and self-confidence to achieve desired outcomes.

#### ***Professional practice***

- This topic had the most projects including those with an emphasis on skills / strategies in leading the group and the room, group times, transitions and scaffolding, further refining skills, developing time efficient and effective documentation, planning process, and strategies to encourage respectful behaviours while supporting and recognising a child's natural energy, spirit and enthusiasm. There was also the notion of developing their identity as a teacher.



## 2.3 Site visits

Site visits were ongoing throughout the Program.

While the majority of Mentors completed four site visits to their Mentees, not all of the Mentees in this cohort availed themselves of this opportunity. Nine Mentees did not receive all four visits – either by failing to respond to appointment requests from their Mentor or by formally notifying their Mentor that they did not require further visits. It was noteworthy that many visits took place outside of the workplace for reasons including; lack of time allocated for discussion and planning to occur; workplace relation issues (for example projects that related to bullying or building self-confidence were inappropriate to be discussed in the workplace); encouragement by Mentors for Mentees to visit their workplace; and informal meetings by groups used to network. Mentors generally felt it equally important for their Mentees to visit them in their workplace to create further networking opportunities and to expand discussions about practice. The Mentors whose Mentees chose not to be visited, felt a sense of failure and inadequacy in that they had not fulfilled their mentoring role. It is noted that where Mentors allowed the Mentees to identify their own requirements and concerns which were then followed up on, resulted in a stronger relationship and more positive outcomes for all. This was also the case where the Mentor established, developed and minted communication with their Mentee and group. Mentoring groups where communication was not as effective and caused a break down in the mentoring relationship, were offered feedback and support by the Mentoring Project Team to the Mentors.

The implementation of guidelines for each visit provided more direction for both Mentor and Mentee during the visit and allowed them to focus on what had been achieved and what needed to be followed up. If the visit logs were utilised correctly, this was particularly relevant at the fourth visit to provide the Mentee with the opportunity to identify their next step on completion of the Program. Some goals that Mentees identified included a move to primary school teaching; becoming a teacher educator; changing to a new position where they were more supported; undertaking and completing the validation process; pursuing Mentoring roles; developing leadership opportunities; and undertaking programs such as those offered at the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership or University courses. While some Mentors and Mentees explored developmental opportunities as part of the bigger picture in the early childhood profession, others focussed on individual goals which included; plans for retirement, achieving work and life balance; exploring professional learning opportunities in areas of self-interest; and further developing family relationships and practices within the centre.

## 2.4 Online forums

Online forums still proved difficult in a number of ways. The main problems were that the Mentees didn't receive email notification when someone sent a post to the forum, and most commented that time to access the forum was an issue. This was not a feature that was available when the website was first developed. Further modifications have enabled email alerts to be part of the online experience for the 2013 cohort. Other aspects that could have caused frustration were that some posts went unanswered and some Mentees really wanted to connect with other Mentees outside of their immediate Mentee/Mentor group so they had communication with peers from like services/situations. Despite these issues, the Mentors actively encouraged their Mentees to use the online forum as a site for the sharing of experiences and practice.

As the teaching year progressed, the number of users and posts decreased with nine of the 21 Mentor/Mentee groups not having any activity from August through to November. Many posts were not responded to and the most number of responses was three. Topics on the forum initiated by Mentees included first post/Hi; team teaching experiences; suggestion box follow up; teaching time and non-teaching time and Self Assessment Manual user problem. It was noted that Mentors encouraged Mentees to use the forum with the topics of centre

philosophy; family meetings; research project discussions; cluster management experiences and Transition Learning and Development Statements.

The Collegial Support Forum (only accessed by Mentors and Mentoring Project Team members) was also only utilised on a few occasions to express concerns about Mentee's welfare in the workplace and that of the Sector - a copy of the discussion was edited to delete names and workplace details and then forwarded to the DEECD Project Managers to highlight the worrying experiences of teachers in the field. The forum was also used to highlight/question the capacity of Mentees to commit to the Mentoring Program as the end of the year approached. While the main purpose of the forum is for Mentors to access collegial support - the Project Co-ordinator uses the forum to also update both Mentors and Project Team members on issues relevant to the Program. The Director and Co-ordinator felt it was important to let Mentors know that their concerns had been notified to DEECD and to encourage them (and their Mentees) to continue to identify and discuss concerns and experiences that impacted on their wellbeing and the sector in general.

## 2.5 Self-Assessment Manual (SAM)

Cohort two was more forthcoming with their SAM responses and 30 were received. General comments about undertaking the SAM process were favourable. Many Mentees could see the benefits of completing SAM and thinking more about the theoretical perspectives which underpin their practice. Some were curious as to why certain perspectives were reflected in SAM and set about reading and thinking more about why they do things the way they do. One Mentee stated that SAM had opened her eyes to her own practice enabling her to better understand the basis of her philosophy, while another Mentee suggested that this tool would be useful for her to revisit in a couple of years' time to see if anything about her practice had changed. Mentors also commented that they found SAM useful to help them reflect on their own practice.

## 2.6 Reflections on learning template: Mentees & Mentors

In the final round of data collection a template was sent to all Mentors and Mentees in Cohort Two prior to the Celebration Day to capture the learning that occurred during the life of the Program. The following information is taken from these completed templates.

### 2.6.1 Personal learning

Mentors were asked to recall how they felt after having participated in the mentoring program. Words that Mentors used in their summaries included:

- Empowerment
- Learning
- Enthusiasm
- Enjoyment
- Collaboration
- Increased confidence

Many Mentors appeared to learn a lot about themselves such as: they are good listeners, empathic, have valuable knowledge to share, are doing a 'good' job, are truly passionate about the early childhood sector, and that it is difficult not to just step in and solve problems. As one Mentor wrote about what she had learnt from participating in the program: *'That I am extremely passionate about the early childhood sector and that I hold very high professional standards and adhere very strongly to the Code of Ethics.'* Whilst another stated *'I feel*

*more empowered in my ability to help others in the sector, that I have a lot to contribute and that I can learn from my mentees along the way. I think it has been a journey for all of us.'*

With this came a growth in self-confidence, noted by a number of Mentors, with the realisation that they did have much to offer the field. However, for one mentor there was also the realisation that *'I cannot control every outcome and that I don't have all the answers.'* Another commented, *'I have learnt that I may not have all of the answers but that is not too important. What is important is for the Mentees to find answers that are workable for them.'* And another commented, *'I felt at first what could I offer? Am I really "qualified" to do this? All the self-doubt things you have, especially on the first mentor shared learning day. Now I feel I have something to offer, sage advice, ideas, empathy, sounding board, emotional support and resources. However, I know I still need to work on my skills in mentoring. I still just want to solve everything for them!'*

For some Mentors this learning has impacted on their own practice as highlighted in the following quotes:

*'I have grown in many ways - I gained so much from my colleagues/mentees. For example, how to look at things/issues differently. This process has shown us practical ways to solve/assess/reflect - breaking problems into smaller manageable components. I have also developed a better ability to "listen" - what is being said as well as "hearing" the underlying issues/concerns.'*

*'I actually learnt a lot. I have changed the way I program over this year. It also opened my eyes to the problems facing those in childcare (not kinders) and found staff there to be very dedicated. I enjoyed being there to support and not direct or lead. I loved that.'*

*'I feel that this opportunity has made me reflect more critically on my own professional practice and what I have to offer to the field.'*

The reciprocal nature of the program is reflected in these comments where both Mentees and Mentors gain from participation. *'I feel more confident, connected with the field, enthusiastic about change and new possibilities. I also feel that I made greater impact on my Mentees than originally thought. I also feel that networking and collaboration with other professionals is vital for the ongoing improvement of all educators practice.'*

It was an enjoyable experience for Mentors to be able to exchange ideas – get new ideas, validate current ideas and talk together to come up with new solutions or expand on current practice. One Mentor noted *'It is not often we set aside time to talk professionally about general issues.'*

Mentees learning revolved around an increase in confidence levels and a belief in themselves as professional educators. They have learnt:

- To prioritise and not get too overwhelmed and stressed
- To stop worrying
- There is more than one way of achieving a goal
- New ways to look at problems
- 'Everything takes time to evolve and develop and over time it gets better'
- The importance of reflecting on practice
- Learning will never cease, and
- To value themselves and their practice.

To feel reassured that it is fine not to feel that you don't know everything at this early stage in your career has certainly acted to lift the confidence levels of many of the Mentees as the following comments attest:

*'We will never know everything, it is a wonderful career to be involved with children and to keep on extending our own learning and developing as well.'*

*'This year in general I learnt to trust myself more, to make decisions and stick to them even if they are not perfect. I learnt that I can't possibly achieve everything I would like to in a day and that it is important to celebrate the small achievements and know that I will improve as I teach more.'*

*'I have learnt that as an early childhood educator I am continuously building on my professional knowledge and further extending my teaching practices through having effective partnerships with other educators. Professional growth is an ongoing process that is accomplished through working collaboratively with fellow educators.'*

For one Mentee she was assisted to find courage and confidence within herself:

*'I have learnt that I am actually quite a confident person. I have found courage in myself to tackle challenging and difficult conversations with families and with educators.'*

A deepening awareness of the importance of reflecting on practice was noted by a large number of the Mentees, with many commenting on how beneficial this has been to their understanding and work with their colleagues, the children they teach and their families.

*'I have continued to learn about my own process of learning – I have been able to view myself in different situations and then reflect back on these in my mentor/mentee meetings, which has encouraged me to be honest and see my own journey from a more objective perspective.'*

*'I have recognised the beautiful connection between constant reflection and changing practices and I have thoroughly enjoyed the process. The way that one discovery can lead to another and it becomes a constant cycle. I have also discovered that I love designing the new ideas, creating new planning/documentation/routine ideas and implementing them.'*

*'I have become a deeper reflector and much more aware that how things first appear will evolve given consistent non-biased reflection. Bias also needs to be redetected and removed as it is a silent and an invisible lens over the eye.'*

There was however challenges to personal learning and these can be organised under the themes:

- Time management
- Open-mindedness
- Confidence

### ***Time Management***

Time management was an ongoing issue for some Mentors and Mentees. Trying to find mutual times to visit everyone was difficult especially when Mentees often seemed busier than the Mentors themselves. In one case a Mentee travelled closer to the Mentor to assist with the scheduling of visits. Finding time for visits became more difficult towards the end of the year when 'time is at a premium for teachers'. With varying schedules and Mentees located across various locations, time will always be a factor when face-to-face visits are involved.

## **Open-mindedness**

It was unfortunate to note that some Mentors found their Mentees not as open-minded as they would have liked. Three mentors mentioned the resistance they felt from their Mentees:

*'I found that two of my more mature (older) teachers/mentees quite resistant to change and their programs were very outdated. Also, their use of technology was very limited. I did not address these issues as that was not my role. I just assisted them where I could.'*

*'It was challenging trying to get some of the mentees to be open.'*

*'Sometimes, particularly early on in the program, it was difficult to get the mentees to think more widely. It is interesting to see how much more confident and relaxed they are about talking about what they do at the other end of the year.'*

As with Cohort One, those Mentees whose employer had suggested they undertake the mentoring program, did not engage or contribute effectively. It could be said that they weren't invested in the opportunity because they didn't volunteer to apply. This indicates that the success of the program hinges on the participants identifying for themselves what they want to achieve.

## **Confidence**

Feelings of nervousness were experienced by some Mentors which revolved around whether they did indeed have something to offer their Mentees, and questioned their own skills and ability to Mentor.

*'Each visit I was initially nervous, hoping I would be able to support the mentees making sure their precious time was used wisely. Don't judge, it is hard not to rush in with solutions that we would engage in, the process is much more worthwhile if the mentees find their own solutions with your guidance ...they love to share their thoughts, let them.'*

*'I tend to absorb all their negative experiences and feelings. I get worried about the sector in relation to what some services are doing and I feel worried about where the sector is headed in relation to the educators.'*

Where Mentees were doing well in their services, Mentors felt that they were not needed or did not have anything extra to offer. 'That some mentees were doing really well they didn't need my support and I didn't feel that I was able to support them any further in their role.'

Another issue which caused Mentors concern was working out where each Mentee was in relation to their own learning and professional development, as the following statements illustrate:

*'Discovering what mentees actually wanted. One relationship was really positive and I learned from her but the other was more problematic and I felt I really didn't meet her needs (which I feel horrible about) and we had differing expectations of the program.'*

*'I think it is challenging to determine just where each mentee is in their understanding of themselves. The challenge is to keep asking questions to find common understandings and ideas that are supportive of each individual mentee.'*

Overall, Mentors have learnt:

- To have confidence in their own knowledge
- To realise they have something valuable to contribute

- That they are also learners
- How rewarding it is to guide and support others
- Effective listening skills
- Valuable ways of working with others

## 2.6.2 Effective mentoring

Research states that for mentoring programs to be effective, they need to be:

- **Reciprocal:** An equal professional relationship, both are teachers and learners. The experienced and new to the profession or professionally isolated teacher work together in an equal professional relationship where they are both teachers and learners.
- **Dynamic:** Mentoring influences/changes the context; and the context shapes the relationship. The relationship is organic. Whilst an understanding of mentoring is needed to underpin the approach, a formula does not work in forming the relationship.
- **Reflective:** The Mentor facilitates reflection on the part of the mentee to support the development of their professional identity; the Mentor professionally challenges the Mentee in developing their theory/philosophy, and sense of efficacy. In doing this the Mentor continuously reflects on their own practice and self-image as a teacher and Mentor.
- **Based on Professional Support:** While personal support is inherent in a mentoring relationship the emphasis is on professional support, in this case supporting the growth of teaching expertise.

In analysing the data all four elements considered part of effective mentoring were evident in the participants' responses. The following are excerpts that illustrate the alignment.

### **Reciprocal Relationships**

*'That we all have so much knowledge (even though sometimes we think we don't) and it is very rewarding to use this knowledge to help others. This is a two way process.'* (Mentor)

*'I gained so much from my colleagues/mentees. How to look at things/issues differently.'* (Mentor)

*'The relationships I have formed. One particular mentee has inspired me and helped me make a decision about my own long term career.'* (Mentor)

*'I believe the mentors would feel a sense of achievement in journeying with each of the mentees. To see the personal growth of the mentees over the program. The mentors would also have had the opportunity to reflect upon their teaching practice and to learn from the mentees.'* (Mentee)

### **Dynamic**

*'Open communication (collaborative partnerships) with my mentor and colleagues (including my Director) made me realise my expectations were unrealistic.'* (Mentee)

*'I am constantly evolving and responding and learning in my teaching practice.'* (Mentee)

*'I learnt that I am a good early childhood educator and I have been further empowered and reassured by my mentor who has been a fantastic support to me throughout this program. I have been able to re-evaluate where I want to be within my practice and the career path of which I would like to take.'* (Mentee)

*'I had very high expectation for both my project and myself. I often felt I did not meet my own goals. However through my mentors continued guidance I learnt new ways of looking at the problems which arose to help create new opportunities for greater learning.'* (Mentee)

### **Reflective**

*'I feel that this opportunity has made me reflect more critically on my own professional practice and what I have to offer to the field.'* (Mentor)

*'I have recognised the beautiful connection between constant reflection and changing practices and I have thoroughly enjoyed the process. The way that one discovery can lead to another and it becomes a constant cycle.'* (Mentee)

*'I have learnt that I am actually quite a confident person. I have found courage in myself to tackle challenging and difficult conversations with families and with educators.'* (Mentee)

### **Based on Professional Support**

*'I feel supported and strong (emotionally) with a great network.'* (Mentee)

*'That having someone outside your workplace to share 'work' concerns with is always rewarding.'* (Mentor)

*'We seem quite isolated and are not under the same umbrella, we all have different employers and seem somewhat disjointed, so connecting with others in the profession is important.'* (Mentor)

## **2.7 Discussion questions related to impact on practice**

To explore the connections between participation in the Program and participants own practice, and any implications this might have for child outcomes, data was collected from discussions held at the Celebration Day. Mentors worked as a whole group, noting down individual thoughts, whilst Mentees worked in pairs or individually to document their responses. All responses have been summarised below under the questions that were used to frame the discussion.

### **2.7.1 Mentor Responses**

#### **What will you take into practice from participating in the Program?**

Mentors have been able to better appreciate the range of services offered to young children and their families. They have experienced differing styles of practice, differing perspectives, and the pressures / demands and challenges in the early childhood sector more broadly. This has made them aware of the importance of taking time to reflect, time to develop skills, ensuring 'the good talk - acknowledging strengths still happens.'

Collectively they have noted:

- Ongoing improved ability to relate to other human beings and take on their perspectives

- They too need to be more 'in the moment' and enjoy the time they are with the children without worrying about all the other issues that overwhelm their thoughts
- How beneficial communication is. How working together provides a flow of ideas and helps give direction to the work undertaken
- The value of having an emphasis on training staff
- An interest to continue to support early childhood staff
- Observation and range of services offered to children

### **What impact do you think participating in the Program had on Mentees' practice?**

Generally Mentors felt that participation in the program by the Mentees would have a positive impact on their practice. It was suggested that perhaps they may feel that they can take a little pressure off themselves which has allowed them to step back and view their own development and the impact they have had on the children they teach. It was also felt that they would have more of a sense of coherence in their planning and connection to the early childhood field. The practical ideas and support, as well as the challenging of professional thinking around practice were thought to have also had an influence on practice.

### **Do you see this as influencing outcomes for children?**

The perceived benefits of participating in the mentoring program for Mentees were seen as having the potential to influence outcomes for children. The following statements point to why this might be:

- *'Just by taking time to think and reflect ensures we consider our decisions more thoughtfully and this improves or at least changes outcomes'*
- *'Having an educator who is not "drowning", feeling overwhelmed, stressed or not good enough can only be good for children. The educators are feeling more grounded and are paying attention to small things that happen for children, they seem more present.'*
- *'Any support and self-assessment has to have a positive and ongoing impact on outcomes for children.'*
- *'Better equipped teachers who are less stressed.'*
- *'More confident teachers/educators - free to be more engaged and have 'fun' with children, etc.'*

### **2.7.2 Mentee Responses**

#### **What will you take into your practice from participating in this Program?**

Mentees listed a number of aspects that they would now take into their practice. These include:

Working with others...

- Listening - listen to others thoughts and ideas, sometimes it is just a new perspective
- Networking with educators from other areas is beneficial. This shows other ways of being especially in relation to different cultures.

Working with families...

- I will look at family involvement in a different way. I have found that families enjoy being invited and encouraged to be involved in the program.



- I have learnt to better value the impact families have within our kinder community and will establish a more positive learning partnership with parents.
- Many new ideas.

In relation to reflection...

- I would reflect, understand theories, network, work as a team.....
- Reflection not only benefits the children but helps the teacher to improve practices and also remain fresh and current in thought and practice.
- To continue to engage in professional learning as this supports reflection and challenges personal beliefs.
- Deeper and more critical reflection.

In relation to myself...

- A majority of responses revolved around gaining confidence about one's own knowledge, abilities, and belief and trust in self.
- To stress less, and to listen to my body and realise when I am becoming anxious and stressed, not ignore it.
- I have learnt to be more relaxed in my practice. Be with the children in co-constructing their learning instead of worrying about the observations I had to do.
- That we are all still learning, and that mistakes are a part of life.
- More confidence and a stronger sense of community and connectedness to other teachers.
- Confidence, a stronger sense of professional identity, a network of early childhood teachers.
- The mantra 'It's going to be OK, it's going to be OK...'

### **How did this impact on the children you teach?**

Mentees were very clear about the impacts their participation in the mentoring program had on the children they teach. They outlined aspects such as enabling the children in the group to become more responsive for their own learning and directing their learning from their interests; creating a better understanding of the children and the families in the kindergarten community which led to the creation of more engaging learning opportunities and the development of a community partnership with families; more focused intentional teaching and more reflection on practice. A rise in confidence enabled the Mentees to become more relaxed in their interactions with the children and able to spend more quality time with them rather than worrying about documentation. It also assisted them to be more articulate about their beliefs about teaching and learning which led to improved communication within services. The following responses are representative of the data:

*'We have felt more relaxed so our interactions have been calmer and engaged; renewed sense of purpose, children benefit as we've energised the program.'*

*'I believe I have become more in tune with children's attempts to understand and their individual learning styles. I also think this process has assisted me to commence developing professional confidence which supports leadership. This impacts children as if the teacher is in control of goals and objectives and team direction, then children can sense this and relax, providing direction to learning and provocations.'*

*'I am more confident within my own abilities and have developed the ability to further empower my families which also supports the learning and development of the children I teach. I see each individual better now.'*

### **What do you think Mentors gained from participating in the Program?**

There was general consensus amongst the Mentee responses that the Mentors would have gained valuable experience to take back into their own practices and reflect on further, as well as a sense of pride and achievement in the efforts of their Mentees. It was also felt that they could also now hold a better understanding of the many struggles and frustrations early childhood teachers encounter trying to adapt to so many new changes. With this knowledge they can reflect on the broader educational community and the diversity, strengths and challenging of the sector.

## **2.8 Mentees Experiences**

To further highlight the experiences of Mentees, two Mentees, chosen by their Mentors, have agreed for us to share their journeys in the program.

### **Mentee A**

*"When I applied for this Mentor Program, I envisaged gaining skills in leadership as I began my first year teaching kindergarten. As a pedagogical leader in my workplace I started the year with trepidation, particularly when I met my strong and experienced team I would be working with. On meeting my mentor, we defined my project as 'Gaining confidence in my leadership skills'.*

*As the year progressed, and the stresses grew, I began to have considerable self-doubt and anxiety about my knowledge and skills in early childhood teaching. I felt beaten down by behavioral guidance issues in my kinder group, team management of the educators working in my room, and in particular how to cope with a very dominant co-worker. My Mentor provided me with support; not just someone to listen, but someone to tell me I have a right to be overwhelmed by this.*

*My Project began as 'Gaining confidence in my leadership skills' but quickly turned into many rambling, yet supportive, conversations with my Mentor. We nussed out that I actually do know what I'm doing and talking about, and that I need to stop second-guessing everything I say and do. Slowly I began believing that I wasn't the worst teacher ever and that I am doing the best with the situation I have.*

*Together we worked out strategies I felt comfortable in using when approaching challenging conversations and confronting co-workers who I felt didn't respect my ideas or decisions. This enabled me to begin to come out of the shadow of my dominating co-worker. These strategies included using a reflective journal, defining rationales behind my decisions, and personally documenting my achievements however big or small.*

*On my first visit I had specific goals - to question myself less and stick to the decisions that I make. By the second visit I was struggling quite a lot with negative comments and constant critique from my colleague. I found it difficult to stand up for myself as I felt our approaches to early childhood education differed so dramatically. I felt she didn't listen to me anyway so what's the point in standing up for myself as the kindergarten teacher. Looking back on my mentor logs from my third visit, I described myself as feeling like I was drowning in relation to confronting people and dealing with conflicts. However, I felt much more positive and self-assured about my kindergarten program and my work with children. At my fourth visit I felt less stressed and anxious and I think I was back to my bubbly self again, and this was lovely to share with my Mentor on this final visit.*

*I feel I have got to a point where I am more self-assured in my teaching practice and have actually begun to believe in myself over this year and through my Mentor visits. In order to do this I needed to put myself first and*

*find a balance in my life. I found a work life balance. I stopped working at home; I stopped putting the expectation on myself that I work from home and on weekends. I realised you can't do and be everything all at the same time, and that doing the best that I can do, with my circumstances right now (group of children, setting, resources, time) is absolutely fine. On accepting this I was able to approach my teaching in a calmer and more enjoyable way. While my search for work/life balance was challenging, it made me realize I put exceedingly high expectations on myself – often feeling guilty if I didn't spend my weekends working and making everything perfect.*

*I am happy to say that since October I have a renewed outlook on my personal and professional life. I do not work from home as a self-imposed rule and I approach challenges in the workplace with a cautious confidence as my belief in myself continues to grow. I have been able to become much more assertive through this program and instead of becoming introverted and frustrated, have been able to approach challenging conversations more openly and with conviction – being more comfortable asserting my leadership, knowledge, ideas and skills. I have learnt that doing this doesn't mean I'm being horrible to the other person; it means I'm exercising my professional right to an opinion, which should be valued just as much as any opposing views.*

*My overall accomplishment from this program is that I have learnt I am not the energizer bunny. I deserve personal time, and it is ok to listen to my body and take time out when I need to. I am a creative person and I felt my personality was being squashed by paperwork and unrealistic expectations in the beginning of this year. I am now able to explore and share my creative skills with children, which has been unbelievably rewarding.*

*This mentoring program allowed me space to have honest and open communication about my practice, and has been invaluable as I have grown both personally and professionally throughout this year and believe I am now a stronger person as a result.”*

## **Mentee B**

*“On commencement of my project, I was very unclear about what I would investigate. This confusion surrounded the process of undertaking both the mentoring program and seeking full registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The Mentoring Program Coordinator, emailed out clarification about the program guidelines and clarified that focusing on a practice principle under the Early Years Learning Framework would guide our project. I chose to look at ‘Assessment for teaching and learning’.*

*I felt that my assessment of students focused around learning stories and was parent focused and didn't really mean anything to me when planning for children's learning. I was just pumping out learning stories and not considering the FOR, AS and OF of assessment. I met with my Mentor, looked at a format that would guide me in assessing students and referred to the Early Years Exchange Newsletter for ideas.*

*Midyear I presented a document to parents in an exchange session that provided a guide to the five learning outcomes and each child's learning in these areas. I also sat with individual children and asked them to look through their folio and tell me about what they had learnt at kindergarten. I jotted notes and shared their ideas in their folio. Later in the week, the students presented their folios to their families. The parents and children drew and wrote their ideas and thoughts in the folio. In term three, I began to run small workshops, assessing students as I interacted with them. I wanted to make sure that all of the ideas of student knowledge weren't just in my head but down on paper and in the form of different assessment methods. Along the way I had many questions about my process and discovered that assessment could be quite shallow if it is not carefully planned and recorded.*

*At the start of term four I began to write transition statements and began talking with schools. I realised that many primary school teachers have little understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework. I devised my*

statements with a small section under each outcome explaining how it connected with children's learning. I also wrote to schools asking what information they would find useful in the statements. I had 2 responses from the 11 I sent out, most conversations of student assessment occurring with a phone call. During the process of writing the statements I found a 'Professional Development Booklet' entitled 'How to write and interpret Transition Learning and Development Statements' on the DEECD website. This document has a great deal of information on assessment and the varying methods we can use to assess students.

*I realise that I am a lifelong learner and this is only the beginning of where I am going, and next year I will be able to continue to reflect on my practice and implement new ideas and strategies in relation to assessment. I discovered that no matter how intentional our teaching, every student learns something different and we can't assume that our teaching focus will be grasped the same way."*

## 2.9 Post-mentoring program evaluation (POMPE)

Number of respondents: Mentors = 14 / Mentees = 27

### Overall rating of the Program:

- All Mentors rated the Program as either 'Excellent' (11 votes) or 'Good' (3 votes).
- Mentees rated the Program as 'Excellent' (15 votes); 'Good' (11 votes); 'Fair' (1 vote) and one Mentee didn't answer.

### Recommending the Program:

All Mentors and Mentees who responded to this question stated they would recommend the Program as they felt the Program was important for graduate teachers. Mentors found the Program provided collegial support; the opportunity for individual learning; reflection and giving back to the field.

*'It is a great way to give back to the field/sector and to guide and develop new educators in the sector. It is a wonderful way to develop one's own skills of reflection and self-assessment.'*

*'Fabulous opportunity to acknowledge strengths, learn, be challenged, support others and make a positive contribution to our important profession!'*

Mentees found the tailored support helped them with individual challenges and issues, with the opportunities it afforded for networking noted as equally important.

### Useful features of the Program:

For Mentees visits (18 responses), Shared Learning Days (13 responses), and networking (six responses) were considered useful features. The order of useful features changed for Mentors. Shared Learning Days attracted nine responses, visits six responses, and networking two responses. These nominated features reflect the subtle alterations to the Shared Learning Days content and the tailored template to guide the site visits from previous cohort feedback. Both Mentors and Mentees noted that it was or would also be a good feature if there were reciprocal visits to others workplaces (Mentees to visit their Mentors and other Mentees workplaces), as this would allow all to see practices and interactions with other staff. Both Mentors and Mentees saw the value of networking opportunities at Shared Learning Days, however Mentors commented that there should have been more opportunity for discussions with Mentees. Following is a summary of Mentee and Mentor comments.

The **Mentees** noted as follows:

- Visits: Mentor knowledge of the individual Mentee and his/her work; sharing; opportunity to reflect, discuss and set goals; finding out how others work; “kick around ideas”; “reassurance helped bolster my confidence”; “got to share 'real' life applications of my teaching experiences”.
- Shared Learning Days: sharing similar experience of being a new graduate; “embracing ideas of others”; opportunity to discuss issues arising during the mentoring program.
- Networking: meeting other professionals in the field; building a network; learning from others, networking.

The **Mentors** noted as follows:

- Shared Learning Days: “gave the field a voice”; upskill self; real networking opportunities with other professionals with similar goals (both Mentees and Mentors); part of a “learning community”; way to keep on track.
- Visits: provided context for learning; relationship building; opportunity to see actual practice and other staff.
- Networking.

#### **Least useful feature of the Program:**

Both Mentees and Mentors noted the least useful features as forum/website (14 Mentees, six Mentors); Shared Learning Days (four Mentees, one Mentor) and Resources (two Mentees, three Mentors). As with the first cohort, participants noted that the forums were the least useful feature overall. In some instances, both Mentees and Mentors linked website/forums together in their responses when asked a subsequent question specifically about the usefulness of the website. This made it difficult to ascertain which ‘feature’ they were referring to as the forum is part of the website. For this reason, the comments are noted under ‘website’ where they may have been accessing information or ‘forums’ where they may have been discussing some form of communication. Following is a summary of Mentee and Mentor comments. Please note that whilst some Mentees chose resources as a least useful feature they did not provide comments.

The **Mentees** noted as follows:

- Forums: forums were difficult to access; there should have been alerts; it was inconvenient, and other Mentees in the group did not use it.
- Website: more resources would be useful and or could not find resources; used other websites and blogs to remain updated with current practices.
- Shared Learning Days: needed more practical information before 1st Shared Learning Day; not enough practical information on the day; need to have proformas and ideas to develop project topic; and the content of the second session of the day be reversed.

The **Mentors** noted as follows:

- Forums: didn't do much on it and neither did Mentees; not accessible; not used to it; difficult to navigate; "they wouldn't use it no matter how hard I tried".
- Shared Learning Days: a bit wafy; needed more time to talk.
- Resources (handouts): didn't read or look at them.

### **Networking opportunities:**

In response to a question about whether the program enabled the participants to network, 84.6% of both Mentees and Mentors considered that it did. However, two Mentors and four Mentees did not feel they were able to network, but no reasons as to why were given.

### **Time commitment to mentoring relationship:**

The majority of Mentors found the time commitment to the mentoring relationship was what they had expected. Comments about the time commitment from Mentors could be summarised around the following aspects: they wanted to do more but ran out of time; just able to fit it in (lots of travel which was time consuming); some juggling (but worth it); sometimes difficult to find mutual planning opportunity; need to plan/diarise ahead. For two Mentors the time commitment was greater than expected, with one not being able to commit any time to the Program in Term 4.

Eight Mentees agreed that they found the time commitment as expected, however, one Mentee found the time was less than expected (but adequate) and noted the Program should be as lengthy as needed. Other Mentees comments related to a request for more time if needed; the generosity of Mentors with their time; the difficulties encountered to provide all the required documentation for the Program at a busy time of the year (i.e. SAM, evaluations); and that the time commitment was not easy due to the demands of running a kindergarten and all that this role entails.

### **Comments / suggestions for future Mentoring Programs:**

The most suggestions from Mentors and Mentees related to the Celebration Day followed by the Shared Learning Days and visits and are noted as follows:

- Celebration Day: change the Saturday to another day; would like to hear more about Mentee's journeys; display projects for teachers to use as examples; have longer to mingle; reschedule to end of October/ start of November. The Beyond the Canopy presentation attracted mixed feelings with some seeing it as inspirational yet others seeing it as 'tokenistic' and advertising for the centre who produced the accompanying video.
- Shared Learning Days: Content for Shared Learning Days in wrong order and Mentees to write Project goal before the end of the first Shared Learning Day so as not to waste time on 1st visit; as people travel a long way and have so much to offer there needs to be lots of opportunities to network with a facilitator (to keep on track); more group opportunities for both Mentees and Mentors so that everyone can hear the issues; may help to have collegial support from group (especially in the beginning).
- Visits: Compulsory/essential to complete by end of Term 3 – too busy/not interested in Term 4; extend visits to six; Mentees visit other Mentees and Mentors workplaces.

One other general comment was noted as: Could link Mentors and Mentees based on skill areas/challenges.

Both Mentors and Mentees noted their support for the Program as follows:

- Mentors: keep it going; an excellent professional platform for supporting the quality of our very important professionals; very well organised with learning and developing gains offered continuously.
- Mentees: Very positive experience; very organised/professional and endless learning opportunities; believe this is crucial and consider hub development in ECEC should be considered with links to Primary School to encourage/promote collaboration and professional relationship; I think it should be compulsory that new graduates have a Mentor to work with, especially in remote areas; I have begun to think of other projects that I can pursue next year.

### **Understanding of Mentoring:**

The majority of Mentors (70%) stated their understanding of Mentoring had changed, while just over half the Mentees (57%) found this.

Both Mentors and Mentees found the following essential skills/characteristics of a Mentor to be important:

- Listening - active and reflective;
- Knowledgeable – up to date with research, frameworks and trends in the field;
- Empathic - to have empathy and be supportive.

Mentors felt they should have emotional intelligence, be understanding and open minded and understand the relationship between both being teachers and now having a different role / relationship.

Mentees were looking to their Mentors for inspiration; to be leaders in the field; to be open and non-judgemental; to have respect and passion for professional relationship building, and to be organised and have good time management skills.

### **Changed perceptions of self as an early childhood professional:**

Eight of the 14 Mentors found that their perceptions had changed. One Mentor noted no change but stated that the Program had reinforced her perceptions. Another Mentor agreed stating that the Program had reinforced her perceptions. Mentors noted that they were more confident in their skills, knowledge, qualities and leadership abilities, and acknowledged they had the opportunity to reflect on their professionalism and commitment to early childhood practices and the profession.

*'It has shown me another side to being a professional and belonging to a profession that I honour. It has been a journey of self-discovery.'*

Mentees stated the Program had changed their perceptions of themselves as a professional. Two Mentees found this did not really apply to them, rather, *'Just reminded me of why I do what I do and how I go about it and I feel that ongoing reflection and professional development are vital to building a career.'*

Half of the Mentees noted that they were more confident; had a more analysed approach to teaching, and they had learnt a lot about themselves. They noted that as teachers they were: calmer and more assured; with some mentioning that they felt able to take on a leadership role. On a personal level they were more involved, reflective and less stressed; had confidence in their own identity; felt empowered; were more responsible and better positioned to make change; were recommitted to ownership of personal growth and autonomy.

*'I feel I am a lot more professional when it comes to talking to families and community. I am aware that I represent the kindergarten in our town and that my position is important for the children and the families. I have also improved many areas in running the sessions and how and when to engage in play.'*

**Impact on practice:**

The following Table illustrates responses of Mentors and Mentees when asked 'Has mentoring changed your professional practice in any of the following areas?' Participants were able to choose all that they considered applied to their practice. It is interesting to note that only one Mentor chose all seven responses, while three Mentees did the same.

**Table 2: Impact of Mentoring on Professional Practice**

<b>Aspect of Practice</b>	<b>Mentors (14)</b>	<b>Mentees (28)</b>
Ways of teaching and assessing for learning	6	14
Ways to create effective learning environments for children	4	10
Your relationship with children	2	12
Your relationship with families	2	16
Your relationship with colleagues	8	13
Building a 'community of practice' with other Early Childhood teachers	10	17
Building a professional identity and self-efficacy	6	20

**General comments about the Program's impact:**

Four Mentees also provide additional responses such as:

*'Wow, all of the above. My mentor didn't just look at my project, we discussed so many other aspects. The program has encouraged me to reflect and I have a very different approach to 2013, thanks to the program.'*

*'Building stronger, mutual and respectful relationships with children and families. First a relationship with children and then family. Parents are child's first teacher and respect and acknowledge that.'*

*'It's opened my eyes to the importance of a strong professional network and allowed me to view my strengths in a positive light. I don't feel like a floundering newbie anymore.'*

*'Focused on reflection and programming; great opportunities to discuss issues.'*

While three Mentors didn't note any impact of mentoring on professional practice, they did note that the Program had reinforced their practice giving examples such as 'program is simplified; better assessment'; 'improved leadership and engagement skills'; and 'I certainly have always been a reflective person - but now value this and realise how important it is in all aspects of life.'

Seven Mentors also provided additional responses when asked the impact that the Program had on their practice. These were:



*'Professional identity - advocate and commit to outcomes for children, families, the community and FOR MYSELF! Having a voice within the profession is a key.'*

*'Given me heaps of examples of professional learning to draw upon for my training programs.'*

*'Through evaluation of my own and others' practice, I have evolved and changed.'*

*'Still thinking and reflecting on where the changes are - need time to put it all together.'*

*'Gained much more than expected! Learnt so much from my mentees and the learning community.'*

*'I think any conversation with other professionals opens my eyes to the multitude of possibilities for me and those in my practice.'*

*'Documenting children's learning, conversations with children on projects inspired by Reggio Emilia; resources on pedagogy and VEYLDF and embedding this into my practice; visits as a group to a Mentee's kindergarten to observe effective and enticing play environments.'*

## **2.10 Overall reflections on what we have learnt**

There is much to learn from this cohort. On the whole they were more positive about the Program. This is a result of changes made as we had listened to and acted on the feedback from the previous cohort in the interest of best outcomes for participants, the DEECD, the research and the children. Mentees and Mentors found that they had gained what they hoped to from participating in the Program which added to the positive vibes experienced on the Celebration Day and echoed within the data sets. The timelines for the second roll-out of the program were not so tight, and we were able to plan information and recruitment processes more effectively. However, generally recruitment remains problematic due to sending out advertising material at a busy time of the year, and many new graduates not knowing if they have secured a job until the new year begins. Numbers of interested applicants build slowly which means that cut-off dates for expressions of interest need to keep being modified, and it makes it hard to plan ahead, such as being proactive and pairing Mentees and Mentors by geographic location.

The focus on reflective practice has been well-received by participants in this second cohort, and this has assisted Mentees to see this as part of their practice, not as 'extra work'. The willingness of Mentees to participate has shown to be important to how successful the experience is for both the Mentee and Mentor. For example, if it is the workplace who deems it appropriate for the Mentee to participate then, as has been shown in both cohorts, this does not translate well into engagement, which then makes it difficult for the Mentor to stimulate enthusiasm in the Mentee.

A lot rides on the organisational skills of the Mentors who must secure and complete paperwork, arrange visits, and correspond regularly with Mentees. If these tasks are not attended to in a timely manner then a more negative experience can be felt by Mentees and the program administrative staff. Tying payment to the completion of all paperwork has not acted as an incentive. It has become evident that participation in the Program adds another layer to personal and professional commitments for both Mentees and Mentors, and at times personal, family health and wellbeing issues have taken precedence over the follow through of administrative tasks.

More resources are needed to further develop the website so it can generate alerts when posts are uploaded, as participants are still frustrated by the lack of this feature. This will be addressed for the next cohort. Also developing topics for the forums did not occur but is planned to begin with the new cohort.

Having now run two Celebration Days, we have learnt that Saturday is perhaps not the best day to choose due to this being deemed as 'family time' or when people have other commitments such as sporting commitments. The Celebration Day for Cohort 3 will be held on a weekday and we will be able to gauge if this is a better fit for participants.

While the overall feeling about the Program has been positive, the collection of data through the completion of the templates and evaluation has been quite difficult and unfortunately only reflects the feedback of half of the participants. The Project team have encouraged all participants to provide this information and we have indicated that "in fairness to all participants, we are unable to provide a 'Certificate of Completion' until all feedback forms are completed and returned", however this strategy hasn't been a major incentive. It is acknowledged that this is a busy time and we will be sending the 'Certificate of Completion' and pursuing the collection of data in January 2013 when participants may have had some time to pause and reflect and be in a better position to provide feedback. Any additional findings from this extra data will be added to the Final Report for Cohort 3.

### **3. MOVING FORWARD**

The Mentoring Program will continue in 2013 with an anticipated number of 150 Mentees and 30 Mentors. Original Program numbers proposed have not been met for various reasons, leaving room to pickup more participants next year. Past participants have been actively promoting the Program which has resulted in some early interest from prospective Mentees and Mentors.

Announcements by both the Project Coordinator and the DEECD of the continuation of the Program and recruitment for the next cohort commenced in October. While it appears that information is being disseminated to services and is being accessed by management and teachers, a more intensive approach will also be required. It is envisaged that a mail out and/or personal calls will be undertaken to ensure that all teachers who may be eligible are provided with information. Promotional materials now include positive statements about the value of the Program from previous participants as a method of attracting additional applicants.

Training resources will again be reviewed in light of feedback from the second cohort participants and modified or changed where this is identified as being beneficial to participants in the third cohort. These may include: introducing topics such as 'time management' – particularly where it relates to workplace visits, and allow more time in which to identify and group Mentees with similar Reflective Practice Projects which can be followed up as topics in the on-line forums.

VIT has once again graciously agreed to allow the Early Childhood Mentors to join their first VIT Mentor Training Day, with members from the Mentoring Project Team facilitating the early childhood content at points throughout the day. VIT colleagues who have been included as guests at Shared Learning Days have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in discussions with early childhood teachers and have acknowledged the difference in working conditions across the sectors.

## **4. CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS**

The Mentoring Project Team has presented the Mentoring Project at the following conferences/seminars since July 2012 by invitation:

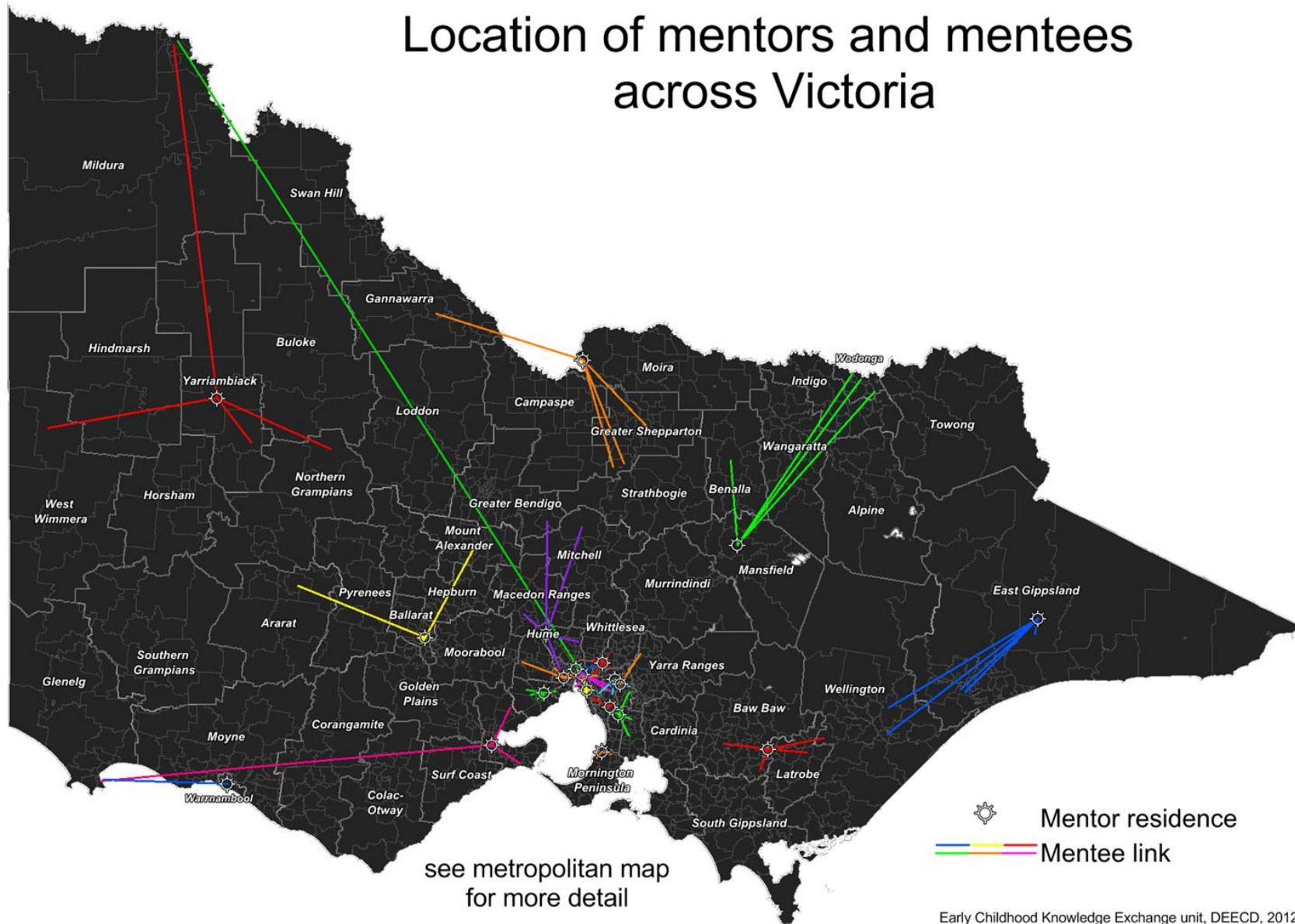
- 2012 ECMS Conference. Beyond Tomorrow. 'The Statewide Professional Mentoring Program for Early Childhood Teachers: Creating Opportunities for Discovery. 16<sup>th</sup> August, Melbourne.
- 2012 AEU K-6 Education Conference. Quality: Defining, Achieving and Celebrating the Best of What we do. 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> August, Abbotsford, Melbourne.
- 2012 Victorian Preschool Field Officers Association In-service: Mentoring Others and Supporting Ourselves' 30<sup>th</sup> November, Melbourne.

## **5. APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A: Locations of Mentors and Mentees across Victoria**

**APPENDIX B: Location of Mentors and Mentees across metropolitan Victoria**

# Location of mentors and mentees across Victoria



Early Childhood Knowledge Exchange unit, DEECD, 2012

