

BENDIGO BANK - PARADISE POINT

THE ACCELERATING INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

FINAL REPORT
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A/PROF GAERY BARBERY
A/PROF JENNIFER CARTMEL
EM PROF ANNEKE FITZGERALD
LISA IRENE JONES



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Introduction

The Accelerating Intergenerational Programs is a community-based pilot initiative made possible through the generous support of Paradise Point Financial Services Limited, a Community Bank branch of Bendigo Bank. This funding supported a collaboration between Griffith University, Little Scholars School of Early Learning – Parkwood, and BUPA Villages and Aged Care – Runaway Bay.

The generous funding by Bendigo Bank Paradise Point enabled the delivery of a structured program designed to bring together young children and older adults through regular, planned experiences. The program reflects a shared commitment to fostering stronger community connections and enhancing wellbeing across generations. It also demonstrates the value of partnerships between early childhood education, aged care, and research institutions.

As a pilot initiative, this program was intentionally designed to explore not just outcomes, but also implementation — allowing space for learning, reflection, and adaptation throughout its delivery. The pilot aimed to better understand how intergenerational programs evolve in practice, shaped by the insights and experiences of children, older adults, and professionals involved. This approach provided valuable opportunities to test and refine strategies in a real-world context, and to gather early evidence to guide future program development.

This report outlines the activities and outcomes of the pilot program. It begins with a summary of the data collection process, followed by an overview of the program's design, delivery, and initial findings. Key learnings are then presented, drawing on reflections from participants, early childhood and aged care staff, and researcher observations. The report highlights broader themes that emerged, including the role of activities in fostering connections, the need for staff training, the developmental gains observed in young children, and the potential for intergenerational initiatives to support workforce development and encourage flexible career pathways across sectors. The report

concludes with a discussion of opportunities to sustain and expand intergenerational work within the local community and beyond.

Program overview

The Accelerating Intergenerational Program successfully ran across three terms in 2024, facilitating weekly visits between young children (aged 3–5 years) from Little Scholars School of Early Learning – Parkwood and older adults residing at BUPA Villages and Aged Care – Runaway Bay. Every Wednesday morning between 10.30-11.30am during term time, the children would arrive at the aged care home, where they were warmly welcomed by their ‘grand friends.’ One session in the final term also included older adults visiting the Little Scholars campus.

The program evolved across the three terms, delivering structured, engaging, and meaningful sessions — each designed to foster connections, encourage participation, and build confidence and joy across generations.

Participation and Implementation

The research of the program was approved by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number: 2024/060) and followed a pre–post mixed-methods design, primarily implemented during Term 1. Evaluation tools and methods were selected to align with the practical realities of intergenerational program delivery and evolved over time in response to emerging learnings and logistical constraints. In Term 1, more comprehensive data were collected, including:

- Older Adults: Basic demographic information, the Brief Resilience Scale (a six-item measure that assesses the ability to recover from stress), the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale (a validated tool measuring emotional and social loneliness), a rating of ‘health’ today i.e. 0-100 scale rating how your health is today, and the EQ-5D-5L (a standardised instrument measuring health-related quality of life across five dimensions). Short interviews were also conducted at the end of the term, focusing on participants’ experiences, perceived benefits, and favourite moments.

- Aged Care Staff: Semi-structured interviews explored preparation and delivery of sessions, the skills required, and reflections on the value of intergenerational engagement.
- Children: Parents were surveyed to collect basic demographic information about their child, including the frequency of their child's regular contact with older adults.
- Early Learning Staff: Reflective journals were kept after sessions in weeks 1, 4, and 8, and children's engagement was assessed using the Leuven Scale for Emotional Wellbeing. The Leuven Scale (Laevens, 1994) provides a structured 5-point observational rating of children's emotional wellbeing (how comfortable, confident, and relaxed they appear) and their level of involvement (how focused, engaged, and persistent they are in activities).
 - For wellbeing, scores range from 1 (extremely low wellbeing, where a child shows signs of distress, discomfort, or withdrawal) to 5 (extremely high wellbeing, where a child is at ease, confident, and expressive).
 - For involvement, scores range from 1 (very low activity or disengagement) to 5 (sustained, intense concentration, creativity, and absorption in activities).
- High levels of wellbeing and involvement are seen as key indicators of positive emotional development, readiness to learn, and mental health.

As the program continued into Terms 2 and 3, implementation and delivery of the sessions were increasingly affected by a range of logistical and operational challenges. Illness outbreaks (notably COVID-19) within the aged care home led to cancellations, and children were occasionally absent from the early learning centre due to sickness. On some occasions, older adults chose not to attend on the day, while competing Wednesday activities at the early learning centre further impacted children's availability. Transport inconsistencies—particularly the occasional unavailability of the Little Scholars-owned bus used to bring children to the aged care home—added another layer of complexity. Staffing time pressures, especially within the aged care setting, also affected program coordination and the ability to maintain consistent participation across the terms. Despite these disruptions, valuable insights were still captured:

- Basic demographic information of older adults and children in Term 2.
- Reflective journals and staff interviews of early learning staff resumed in Term 3.

- The Leuven Scale was again used in Term 3 to monitor children's emotional wellbeing.
- Informal feedback and observations from aged care and early learning staff continued to shape program adaptations and highlight perceived outcomes.

Throughout all three terms, research staff from Griffith University were present at most of the sessions, playing an active role in observing, supporting activities when needed, and documenting the program through photographs. This ongoing presence allowed for deeper contextual understanding and real-time reflection to support program development.

These real-world implementation challenges—affecting both program delivery and research—limited some aspects of data collection but also offered valuable insights into what makes intergenerational programs adaptable and sustainable. They also underscored the importance of designing flexible evaluation strategies that reflect the dynamic, and at times unpredictable, realities of aged care and early learning environments.

Term 1: Launch and Early Learnings

Before the program commenced, early childhood and aged care staff were offered an opportunity to participate in the 'JOY 1 – *Introduction to Intergenerational Practice*' course, a self-paced professional development program delivered by the Australian Institute for Intergenerational Practice (AIIP). While uptake of the course was optional, it provided a valuable resource to support foundational knowledge of intergenerational practice and promote collaborative reflection through cohort-based coffee chats. Further, a co-design session was held with aged care and early learning staff to collaboratively plan the structure and content of the intergenerational sessions. This planning process helped ensure the program was contextually relevant, flexible, and responsive to the needs of both children and older adults.

The program launched with an 8-week term from 24 April to 12 June 2024, involving 8 children and 8 older adults. Older adult participants were born between 1929 and 1944 (2 males, 6 females), while participating children were born between 2019 and 2020 (4 males, 4 females). Many children had limited regular contact with grandparents or older

adults outside their families, highlighting the importance of providing opportunities for intergenerational connection.

Initial sessions focused on simple activities such as reading, drawing, and even holding baby chickens being hosted by the aged care home (see Figure 1). A key early observation was the absence of structure across sessions. This included the lack of a clear beginning (e.g., a welcoming song), middle (a shared activity), and end (free play, closing song, and farewell). Barriers such as the room setup—with large chairs that hindered collaboration—were also noted by both aged care and early learning staff.

These reflections sparked discussions about how to introduce a gentle structure that could support engagement between children and older adults without diminishing the spontaneous, joyful nature of their interactions. Over time, a light framework—anchored by a clear beginning, middle, and end—was embraced. This wasn't about scripting the sessions, but rather about creating a consistent rhythm that helped participants feel more confident and connected, while still leaving space for organic, playful moments.

Engagement significantly improved once sessions were more intentionally designed around this structure. Shared activities became more hands-on and collaborative, deepening interaction and enjoyment. One standout experience from this term was a hand painting session, where children and older adults worked together to create shared artwork. Staff expressed surprise and delight at how enthusiastically the older adults participated, particularly in activities that invited them to “get dirty” alongside the children.

Figure 1. A collection of photos taken across the sessions in Term 1



Terms 2 and 3: Evolving Engagement and Shared Joy

Running from July to November 2024, Terms 2 and 3 saw the program continue to evolve into a more engaging and creative intergenerational experience, despite some implementation challenges. Term 2 saw 8 new older adult participants born between 1931 and 1946 (2 males, 6 females), and 6 new participating children born between 2019 and 2020 (4 males, 2 females), while term 3 saw a blend of Term 1 and Term 2 participants for participating older adults and children alike. While efforts were made to retain the same eight participants in both groups across each term, this was not always feasible due to illness and logistical constraints.

Staff from both early childhood and aged care settings worked closely to refine the sessions throughout the year. Small adjustments — such as the introduction of name tags and welcome songs — proved important in supporting connection, particularly in early sessions of the terms. Staff also embraced co-design, an approach that focuses on working ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ (Davis et al., 2023), by incorporating input from children and older adults into weekly planning, deepening engagement and shared ownership of the program. This was a learning shared by one of the early learning staff, noting, *‘I have found that working more collaboratively in planning experiences has really helped...*

finding experiences that both the residents and children are familiar with has benefited both and has helped the residents feel more connected with children, and the children have been amazed to find that the grand friends are also familiar with the songs and activities. We often had discussions on the drive back about how particular games have been known for generations'

Sessions from these terms almost always followed the beginning, middle and end structure. They often started with a welcoming song, sung by the little scholars to their 'grand friends.' The session then would break out to a planned activity, with activities ranging from portrait painting, storytelling, ball games (such as passing a ball with a spoon), yoga (hosted by a qualified instructor), garden walks, and other collaborative art projects including painting leaves that were collected after walking through the garden, and biscuit decorating with colourful icing. A clear favourite for both generations was music and movement — including reciprocal performances of *Itsy Bitsy Spider* and a joyful group rendition of the *Hokey Pokey* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A collection of photos taken across the sessions in Term 2



Key learnings

Across both early childhood and aged care settings, the pilot program offered insights that extended well beyond individual participant experiences. It illuminated the broader value of intergenerational engagement as a mechanism for community connection, a meaningful contributor to children's social and emotional growth, and a platform for workforce learning and development. These learnings help to position intergenerational programs not just as “nice to have” activities, but as impactful, community-embedded approaches to care and education. Below we discuss the key learnings.

1. Activities as Vehicles for Connection

Rather than viewing structured activities as the core purpose of each session, a key insight emerged across the year: the most meaningful moments often happened between the activities — during conversation, laughter, and quiet companionship. When activities were framed as opportunities for connection rather than outcomes to complete, intergenerational engagement flourished. Over time, a flexible but familiar structure — with a beginning, middle, and end — helped to support this engagement, creating gentle rhythms that allowed relationships to build naturally across generations.

One early learning staff member reflected that offering even greater freedom for children to connect informally in the early sessions could further enhance this process — highlighting the value of balancing a soft structure with open exploration. This approach echoes principles of relational pedagogy, which is defined within the approved learning frameworks as ‘underpinning the ways educators build trusting, respectful relationships between children, families, other educators and professionals, and members of the community’ (National Education Leader, 2025), emphasising learning and growth occur through relationships rather than instruction (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE], 2022; Cliffe & Solvason, 2022; Hickey & Riddle, 2024). Activities such as painting, reading aloud, or playing simple games provided a shared focus — but their true value lay in the organic moments they made possible.

While quantitative measures such as the Brief Resilience Scale, the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale, the health rating scale, and the EQ-5D-5L showed little change across Term 1 for older adult participants, the qualitative stories revealed deep emotional resonance. Participants spoke warmly of the bonds they formed with the children, with some relationships extending beyond the program itself. In one case, a follow-up visit was organised after an older adult recognised their *“little friend”* out in the community — a spontaneous connection that endured. As one older adult shared, *“It was good to be on their level and be able to play again.”* Others described how the sessions reawakened memories of their own childhoods or prompted reflection on how childhood experiences have changed over time. One participant recalled, *“I grew up during the war years in London. So I knew lots about bombs falling around us, but not much about playing with toys because we didn’t have the opportunity. So it was good to be on their level and be able to play with them.”*

Importantly, the pilot program, developed overtime, a flexible, relationship-centred approach allowing for emotional bonds to grow gradually. Children who were initially hesitant slowly opened up, with one participant noting, *“They take a while to accept you, but once they do, they’re over you like a rash.”* Photos taken across Term 2 captured this evolution — from tentative first meetings to increasingly expressive, joyful interactions. In one early session, children and their ‘grand friends’ attempted portraits of each other. An older adult, instead of painting a child, created a self-portrait and cheerfully declared himself “the teapot man” — a playful nickname that delighted the Little Scholars and quickly stuck. From that day forward, he was affectionately known as the Teapot Man, a light-hearted identity that helped spark a lasting bond (see figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Painting self-portraits – the start of the ‘Teapot Man’



Figure 4. A collection of photos taken across the last few sessions of Term 2





These moments highlight the central insight of the program: activities serve as vehicles for connection, not endpoints in themselves. However, enabling this approach requires a workforce that is equipped, confident, and united in its understanding of intergenerational practice. The program experience underscored the importance of providing not only an initial orientation for aged care and early learning staff but also ongoing, fit-for-purpose education anchored in a shared relational model of care. While an initial introduction to key intergenerational principles is valuable, it was observed that greater clarity around roles and facilitation responsibilities during sessions was needed. One early learning staff commented, *'I found that we were encouraging the residents a little more to get up and move with the children rather than sitting back and watching. This proved to be beneficial as both parties connected.'* Without clear, ongoing guidance, staff were sometimes uncertain about when to step in, when to step back, and who should take the lead.

This highlighted another important opportunity for co-design — not necessarily in reimagining activities, but in shaping how the two sectors work together. Flexibility around

facilitation, clear role expectations, and mutual support could help bind two distinct workforces, strengthening intergenerational engagement through shared understanding. Future workplace preparation could build on the program's relational care model, offering cohesive training that draws on both early childhood and aged care philosophies.

Despite some educational gaps, implementation by staff was overwhelmingly positive, marked by enthusiasm and goodwill. Many learnings emerged organically throughout the year, such as the realisation among early learning staff that stepping back — resisting the impulse to “help” — often enabled richer, more natural interactions between children and older adults. The notion of just how flexible these types of programs can be also was highlighted when both aged care and early learning staff arranged a visit for the older adults, to the Little Scholar campus. Staff were not aware this was an option, and one early learning staff commented that it was, *‘a great experience to be able to introduce grand friends to the rest of the class, and to be able to show them the children’s spaces. The grand friends were discussing what their preschool and school were like.’* Future programs would benefit from embedding these insights earlier, through workshops and active discussion spaces that build shared understanding, strengthen staff confidence, and reinforce the role of activities as vehicles for connection.

2. Building relational confidence and communication

The program meaningfully fostered spontaneous and authentic interactions between young children and older adults. A key observation was the transformation of children who initially appeared reserved or less verbal, but who became noticeably more communicative and confident as the program progressed. These growing relationships not only supported the children's social resilience but also strengthened important skills in self-regulation and emotional literacy — capacities increasingly recognised as foundations for lifelong wellbeing and active citizenship (Cliffe & Solvason, 2022). By nurturing opportunities for connection, the program created a platform for these developmental outcomes to emerge.

Quantitative data collected through the Leuven Scale (Laevers, 1994), completed by early learning staff, reinforced these observations. In Term 1, baseline data indicated relatively

low levels of engagement among participating children, despite reasonable wellbeing scores. Among the eight participating children, complete data were available for seven, and these are reported below. In Week 1 of Term 1, the median wellbeing score was 4, while the median involvement (engagement) score was 2. By Week 8, wellbeing remained at 4, while engagement increased slightly to 3, suggesting modest improvement. This trend was also reflected in the increase in sum scores from 16 to 24 (see Table 1). However, Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks tests indicated that these changes were not statistically significant for either wellbeing ($Z = -1.41$, $p = .157$) or engagement ($Z = -1.34$, $p = .194$). While the results suggest that children generally felt secure in the environment, they were not consistently highly involved or intrinsically motivated throughout the program.

Table 1. Term 1 Leuven Scale Scores (completed by one early learning staff member for 7 children)

	Week 1 Wellbeing	Week 1 Involvement	Week 8 Wellbeing	Week 8 Involvement
Sum of score (max 35)	28	16	30	24
Median score (max 5)	4	2	4	3

By Term 3, improvements were more marked. Full paired data were available for 8 children (see Tables 2 and 3). In Week 1 of Term 3, one early learning staff member recorded a median wellbeing score of 4.0 and an engagement score of 3.5. By Week 8, these had increased to 5.0 for both wellbeing and engagement. Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Tests indicated these improvements were statistically significant (wellbeing: $Z = -2.333$, $p = .020$; involvement: $Z = -2.121$, $p = .034$). Another staff member recorded a median wellbeing score of 4.0 and engagement score of 2.0 in Week 1, which rose to the maximum score of 5.0 for both domains by Week 8. These changes were also significant (wellbeing: $Z = -2.828$, $p = .005$; involvement: $Z = -2.549$, $p = .011$).

These findings indicate consistent improvements in both wellbeing and involvement across the term. The significant gains suggest that children's emotional security and engagement deepened as the program progressed. The rapid increases — particularly in involvement scores — may reflect refinements made by Term 3, such as improved session structure and enhanced relational scaffolding. The relatively high scores already present in Week 1 compared to Term 1 further suggest that familiarity with the environment and pre-existing relationships supported a quicker adjustment and more immediate engagement among children.

Table 2. Term 3 Leuven Scale Scores (scores of one early learning staff member for 8 children)

	Week 1 Wellbeing	Week 1 Involvement	Week 8 Wellbeing	Week 8 Involvement
Sum of score (max 40)	33	30	40	39
Median score (max 5)	4	3.5	5	5

Table 3. Term 3 Leuven Scale Scores (scores of one early learning staff member for 8 children)

	Week 1 Wellbeing	Week 1 Involvement	Week 8 Wellbeing	Week 8 Involvement
Sum of score (max 40)	32	17	40	40
Median score (max 5)	4	2	5	5

Journal reflections from early learning staff further illuminated these developmental gains. Staff noted the formation of "*beautiful relationships*," particularly valuable for children without close relationships with their own grandparents. One staff member commented, "*It was a rewarding experience seeing everyone involved having fun and laughter, and*

engagement looked natural, as if they were spending time with people they had known for a long time." Staff consistently described how the program brought "*relationship-building to a different level,*" offering relational experiences often unavailable in traditional early childhood settings for example one on one dialogic reading which involves elaborating on a story by asking questions throughout the reading activity to create a conversation with the child about the story (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020). This type of reading has stronger effects on children's oral language skills than traditional shared reading.

The significance of these findings aligns with broader research, which highlights that young children benefit from dialogic reading. By offering regular opportunities for meaningful conversation in a supportive, low-pressure environment, the intergenerational program created conditions that may help close developmental gaps in literacy development. The small group structure — with a lower child-to-adult ratio than typical childcare environments — allowed for richer and more individualised interactions, better supporting children's communication, social learning, and cognitive development.

Finally, this experience also underscored the value of using measurement tools like the Leuven Scale to track developmental outcomes. In other research, this scale is also being used to assess wellbeing and involvement among older adults, showing positive results (Radford et al., 2019). In future iterations, extending the use of the Leuven Scale to assess the wellbeing and involvement of older adult participants could offer a more holistic view of the program's impact across generations.

3. Opportunity for a shared workforce

A powerful narrative to emerge from the program was the natural alignment between early childhood education and aged care through a shared "pedagogy of care." Despite supporting different age groups, staff across both sectors demonstrated common principles of promoting wellbeing, fostering development, and cultivating relational care. This overlap has important implications for workforce development, suggesting that

intergenerational initiatives can serve as catalysts for more flexible, responsive career pathways across sectors.

International examples, such as Scotland's proposed dual-registration model for care workers, highlight how cross-sector training can create career mobility while meeting evolving community needs. This model allows care workers to be simultaneously registered in multiple care settings, such as early learning and childcare, adult social care, and other related services (Care Inspectorate, n.d.). This workforce flexibility — enabling staff to move between age groups and care settings will strengthen sectoral capacity and also offer individuals greater career aspirations and resilience.

The early childhood sector's use of structured frameworks, such as Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework in Australia 2.0 (AGDE, 2002) further demonstrates how shared approaches to practice can support professional adaptability. These frameworks encourage critical reflection, collaborative leadership, and ongoing learning. In contrast, aged care homes often work without a consistent or universally adopted framework, with participation instead depending on individual organisational models such as the Eden Alternative. While the Eden Alternative is a philosophy of care that focuses on eliminating loneliness, helplessness and boredom in older adults living in aged care homes by creating opportunities for meaningful engagement and spontaneity (Eden in Oz & NZ, 2023) – it is not mandated across aged care homes in Australia. This inconsistency can undermine confidence, limit collaboration, and affect the quality of care across the workforce. As such, there is a clear opportunity for improvement through the introduction of a shared pedagogy of care and framework, which could bridge the gap between sectors and ensure more consistent, high-quality professional practices.

Nonetheless, the development of a shared set of professional standards may offer a way forward. Notably, the Australian Standards for Intergenerational Practice—introduced in February 2025 by the AIIP (2025)—outline ten key standards to guide high-quality intergenerational work. These include promoting reciprocal learning, fostering social cohesion, and preventing age discrimination, alongside practical considerations such as effective program management, inclusive environments, sustainable relationships, and a

commitment to leadership. These standards not only provide a practical benchmark for quality but also offer a unifying tool that could support greater consistency across sectors. If implemented more broadly, they could serve as a foundation for a shared pedagogy of care and help bridge professional cultures between early childhood and aged care.

Findings from the program also highlighted practical considerations that must be addressed to fully realise the potential of shared practice across sectors. Early childhood educators noted that documentation tasks, such as journaling required for this program evaluation, often felt burdensome and competed with other priorities. However, reflective practices, like journaling, are essential not only for evaluating program outcomes, but also for supporting ongoing professional learning. Without seamless integration into daily programming practices, these tasks can be perceived as an additional burden rather than an inherent part of practice. This speaks to a broader challenge in professional learning.

The Australian Government Department of Education (AGDE, 2022) emphasises that critical reflection and learning are essential practices in early childhood education, underscoring the need for reflective practices to be integrated into daily programming. Additionally, if this approach were embedded within a shared framework and pedagogy of care, it could enable aged care staff to engage in similar reflective practices. Such cross-sector integration could enhance professional development across both fields, ensuring that critical reflection serves not only as a tool for program evaluation but also as a vital element of professional growth and high-quality practice. Notably, reflection can also foster resilience in the workplace (ADGE, 2022, p.18). Reflection is key to transforming practice and improving quality; by fostering a shared approach to critical reflection, professionals across sectors would be better equipped to drive sustainable improvements in their work.

Ultimately, the program illuminated how intergenerational initiatives can foster more than connection between generations; they can also drive system-level change. Investing in shared frameworks and cross-sector career pathways offers an opportunity to build a more flexible, resilient, and interconnected workforce — one that is better equipped to

meet the complex and changing needs of individuals and communities across the life course.

Next steps

This partnership has highlighted the power of community-driven solutions and the positive outcomes that emerge when local organisations collaborate towards shared goals. Importantly, the program has shown that intergenerational initiatives not only work but also meet a vital need in the community. Looking ahead, there is significant opportunity to broaden the impact of such programs by expanding participation to include adolescents, such as high school students, in intergenerational initiatives with older adults. Extending the model across multiple age groups could further strengthen community ties and deepen the social connections that research has already shown to be beneficial across Australia (De Bellis et al., 2023).

Future opportunities

In addition to involving other age groups, the following key learnings should be considered in the development and implementation of future intergenerational programs:

1. **Fit-for-purpose training:** Providing ongoing, fit-for-purpose education is essential for both early childhood and aged care staff. While initial orientations to intergenerational principles are valuable, clearer and more consistent training could strengthen engagement. This includes role-specific guidance, flexible facilitation strategies, and setting clear expectations for staff during sessions. Programs such as JOY 1 – Introduction to Intergenerational Practice, offered by the AIIP, provide a useful foundation and could be integrated more formally into staff onboarding and professional development to support intergenerational program delivery.
2. **Measuring Emotional Support and Self-Regulation:** Future evaluations should prioritise capturing outcomes related to emotional support and self-regulation, as these are critical for exploring successful (or the lack thereof) intergenerational interactions. While tools like the Leuven Scale offered initial insights into child wellbeing, future

programs could make more deliberate use of such measures across both children and older adults.

3. **Developing workforce:** The program revealed the natural alignment between early childhood education and aged care, underpinned by a shared pedagogy of care. Future workforce development efforts should focus on strengthening this alignment through shared frameworks and cross-sector collaboration. Importantly, reflective practices (such as journaling) need to be integrated seamlessly into daily programming practices to support professional development and foster resilience in the workplace.
4. **Implementing the standards:** The introduction of the Australian Standards for Intergenerational Practice (AIIP, 2025) offers a timely opportunity to enhance consistency and quality across intergenerational programs. These Standards complement existing Standard in the early childhood and aged care sectors. These standards provide a practical, evidence-informed framework that supports shared professional values and practices across early childhood and aged care sectors. Embedding these standards into staff training, program planning, and evaluation processes can help build a common language, strengthen collaboration, and ensure a more unified approach to care and learning across settings.

Looking Ahead

Finally, the support of community bank funding has been pivotal to the program's success. As one early learning staff member reflected, *"We were able to develop a stronger understanding of what intergenerational programs and practices really look like and mean. We developed relationships with our community, Griffith University, and BUPA, and worked collaboratively to achieve some amazing outcomes — and importantly, shared this learning with our team."* Little Scholars School of Early Learning – Parkwood has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustaining and evolving the program, with plans to continue delivering intergenerational sessions into future terms. Furthermore, Little Scholars' intention to embed intergenerational practice across its

multiple Gold Coast sites shows how locally driven innovations can become integral to the community, supporting long-term impact in one of Australia's largest urban areas.

The AIIP continues to advocate for the growth of intergenerational programs, alongside researchers at Griffith University. However, further funding and policy support are crucial to extend the reach and deepen the impact of this work. By embracing these next steps intergenerational programs can not only persist but expand to meet the evolving needs of communities. In doing so, we can foster a more connected, empathetic, and resilient society, where generations learn with and from each other across the life course.

Research Team and Partners

Project Team

Associate Professor Jennifer Cartmel

Adjunct Associate Professor Gaery Barbery

Emeritus Professor Anneke Fitzgerald

Lisa Irene Jones

Partners

Paradise Point Financial Services Limited, a branch of Bendigo Bank Community Bank

Little Scholars School of Early Learning – Parkwood

BUPA Villages and Aged Care – Runaway Bay

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