

Starting Out Safely

Becoming Safer Road Users

A guide to using inquiry approaches to enhance road safety in early childhood education



Starting Out Safely



EARLY
LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA

Forward

Over the last 13 years Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) has delivered the Starting Out Safely (SOS) program. Our enthusiastic commitment to a safe transport system for everyone, especially children, is driven by the recognition that road trauma is one of the leading causes of serious injury and death for our youngest citizens. We also understand that being safe on our roads contributes to delivering outcomes for children in their early years. The Starting Out Safely Program continues to increase its reach, with more services than ever actively incorporating road safety education and safe transport policies into their practice.

At the commencement of ELAA's involvement in the program, services took children out on excursions, but through this program, these encounters have become richer learning experiences that support children in learning how to be safe road users. The Starting Out Safely Program now works with services and educators to deepen the learning potential of taking children outside of the gates to learn about road safety and to understand their place in their communities.

In support of this deeper understanding, ELAA's Starting Out Safely Program has had the privilege of working with a number of dedicated and enthusiastic early childhood leaders and their educator teams, to conduct road safety education inquiry projects that examine how we can think and act with children to make our roads safer for everyone.

These projects support our understanding of best practice in early childhood road safety education and have informed the development of the program for the Victorian early childhood education and care sector more broadly. Through their exemplary thinking and intensive research, we now understand that effective early childhood road safety education requires a locally orientated, long-term approach; with extensive collaboration with children, families, and local communities that results in the development of safer road use habits that will last a lifetime.

This Guide aims to share the process to empower early childhood educators to understand that through their inquiry work, they can help make children and their communities safer road users, pedestrians, and cyclists.

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This publication would not have been possible without the educators and early childhood services who took a leap of faith and accepted an invitation to undertake work never before conducted in Australia. We are confident that this approach will become one of the principal ways we ensure children and families are safer on our roads.

Numerous times during our work on these inquiry projects, we have been inspired by participants' resourcefulness, creativity, and determination to generate safer communities for and with children. Just when we thought the potential of road safety education to maximise outcomes for children and families had reached its pinnacle, these educators took the ideas to new levels. They engaged in deep reflective thinking and challenged themselves and each other to think differently about children's right to be safe in the communities where they grow and learn.

We are in their debt.

Thanks also to the project team, Zora Marko, Anita Valenzisi, Christina Martono and Catharine Hydon, who have supported the project by introducing the project brief to both the educators and their employers, coordinating the consultants and all the various logistic and administrative duties that

were required to undertake this exciting project. Catharine Hydon was the major driving force in developing the concept for the Inquiry Project through the facilitation and providing knowledge, sometimes challenging preconceived beliefs, and ultimately inspiring this group of educators to become future champions of early childhood road safety education.

Special thanks to each of the consultants (whose details are in the appendix) who expertly guided the educators' work in each of the services. The feedback provided by the participants demonstrates that their support was invaluable.

Thanks also to the Victorian Department of Transport and the Transport Accident Commission for supporting an innovative approach to the traditional scope of the Starting Out Safely program.

And lastly, thank you to the children and their families who enthusiastically participated in this research and permitted us to share their thinking.

They have and will help to create safer communities for everyone.





THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU

Whether you are a leader, teacher, or educator, this Guide is for you.

Whatever your role in the early childhood service, this Guide can help you explore road safety education in a deeper and more sustained way.

If you are a leader, this Guide will help you stretch your team to look more deeply at the safety challenges in your local community and use innovative ideas to develop strategies that engage educators, children, and families.

If you are a lead teacher or educator, this Guide will help you design programs for children that include rich learning opportunities that support children's road safety skills, attitudes, and behaviours. It will also assist you in using an inquiry approach to engage children as active agents in road safety.

If you are a teacher or educator working as part of a team, the stories and practical steps included in this Guide will support you in trying new ideas and inspire you to stretch your thinking.

If you are an approved provider, the Guide will support you in developing a culture of research amongst your team and a deeper level of engagement with your local community as your services contribute to a safer road environment.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Guide is a resource to enhance road safety education practice. It has been designed to support educators and leaders to think beyond a one-dimensional, theme-based approach to road safety education in early childhood to something more substantial long-lasting and in-depth – reflective of the road safety issues facing the communities where children, families and educators live and work.

Educators and leaders are encouraged to use the Guide to learn how to shift their practice to embrace a more embedded approach as well as find ideas, inspiring stories, and useful tips.

We hope that educators will try the process more than once. With practice, an inquiry approach will strengthen, and educators will gain confidence in their own and children's capacity to think deeply. The results, we promise, will be transformational.



Road Safety Education Matters

Road trauma is a leading cause of death and disabling injury for children in Australia (on average, each year, thirty-five 0 to 18-year-olds are killed, and 839 are seriously injured on Victorian roads). Rather than declining, road deaths are increasing. 2023 was the deadliest year on Australia's roads in more than half a decade¹.

But this does not have to be the case.

Developing safe habits early lasts a lifetime. Learning about road safety early supports individual and whole communities to take decisive action that can reverse alarming trends in road trauma and death.

Interventions that ultimately save lives and change communities for the better are equipping families and educators to develop the skills, behaviours, and attitudes we all need to become safe road users, ensuring we are safer now and into the future.



Road Safety Education in Early Childhood

Teaching about being safe on and near roads is part of quality practice in early childhood education and care (ECEC), and, along with families, educators have an opportunity to incorporate these important ideas into daily teaching practices.

Road safety education involves educators making intentional decisions about developing the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and behaviours young children

need to become safe road users and active citizens now and in the future. To be effective, road safety education must start early, reflect the experiences children have at home, and match their stages of development and levels of understanding as they evolve over time.

Children become safer road users when educators and families support and extend learning in the following domains.

SKILLS

- + Being able to stop
- + Listening
- + Gross motor
- + Motor planning
- + Self-regulation

ATTITUDE

- + Self-respect
- + Taking care
- + Respect and awareness of others

KNOWLEDGE

- + The language and vocabulary of road safety
- + What happens and what it means to be safe

UNDERSTANDING

- + Why we want to be safe and why it's important for our community
- + Cause and effect
- + Scientific concepts for example speed, distance, spatial relations



1. 2023 Annual trauma | National Road Safety Data Hub Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Adopting an Inquiry Approach to Early Childhood Road Safety Education

Professional learning plays an important part in the delivery of high-quality early childhood education. Traditionally, road safety, like many other initiatives to support children's learning, development and wellbeing, has been supported through one-off professional learning encounters that disseminate knowledge hoping for translation into everyday practice.

Adopting an inquiry approach, on the other hand, invites educators into a long-term thinking opportunity that investigates the understanding of road safety in their local communities and seeks to work with children and their families to find solutions. Road safety education shifts from something undertaken once to a process of problem-solving in real-time, reflective of the local community and the people who live there.

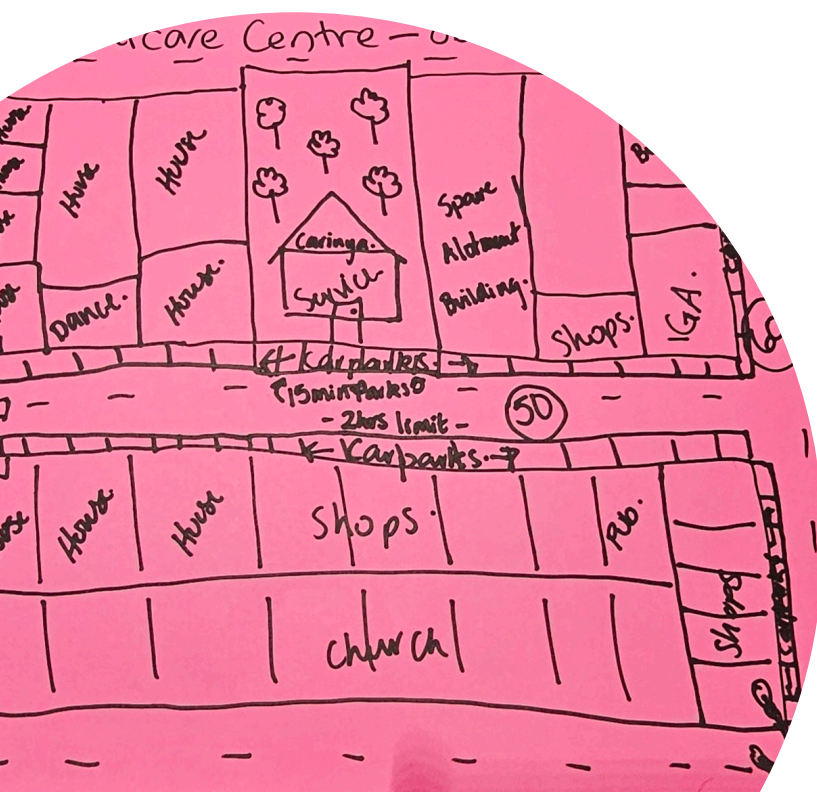
The process of inquiry or practitioner research outlined in this Guide is being used increasingly by educators across Australia and beyond. It aligns with the expectations of contemporary practice exceeding themes in the National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2023) that encouraged services to plan for quality improvements demonstrating that:

1. Practice is embedded in service operations
2. Practice is informed by critical reflection
3. Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community (ACECQA, 2023)

This resource outlines how educators embark on a practitioner-driven, research-orientated, inquiry project that looks at 'real-life' road safety issues or challenges in their service and using a range of curriculum and operational strategies deliver safer road user outcomes for children and their families.

The real value of engaging in teacher research at any level is that it may lead to rethinking and reconstructing what it means to be a teacher or teacher educator and consequently the way teachers relate to children and students therefore teacher research has the potential to demonstrate to teachers and perspective teachers that learning to teach is inherently connected to learning to inquire (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb 2007). The ultimate aim of teacher research is transformation enabling teachers to develop a better understanding of themselves their classrooms and their practise through the art of reflective inquiry. (Stremmel, 2002, p. 4; Unlocking Practitioner Inquiry Growing Professionally in Early Years Education, 2023)

Ultimately, the rationale for sharing an inquiry approach to the way educators incorporate road safety education in these resources, is to showcase the practice possibilities of early childhood education as a catalyst for positive change not just with children and families but beyond the service into the communities of which they are a part. We encourage you to use the ideas and strategies explored here to reshape road safety education in your setting.



Connecting to the Bigger Road Safety Picture

Acting locally to support children and families in becoming safer road users cannot be separated from the broader conversation about road safety.

Using an inquiry approach to road safety education for young children is supported when educators draw on the work of road safety across Victoria and locally in communities. As part of getting started, we encourage you to think about how your investigations connect to local, state and national initiatives that aim to create safer road environments.

Seeing and using the broader context can help you work smarter, not harder, and get more buy-in from decision makers. It may also offer opportunities to access resources and collaborate with other projects taking place in your community.

Take some time to map the connections with the following road safety initiatives and, as you proceed, try to align your work with these ideas. Not only will this help to strengthen your work, but it provides a strong evidence base for engaging in road safety education in a deeper way.

Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

The Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 'aims to halve deaths by 2030 and put us on a strong path to eliminate all road deaths by 2050. Most Victorians do the right thing on our roads, but when crashes happen, they have devastating impacts on individuals, families, communities and workplaces.'

The Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 commits to the ambitious target of eliminating death from our roads by 2050, with the first step of halving road deaths by 2030.

Victoria is a leader in road safety and has a track record in leading the introduction of lifesaving road safety policies including mandating seatbelts (1970), legislating random breath testing (1976) and introducing speed cameras in (1986).

Yet people continue to die or be seriously injured on our roads.

Since our last strategy, there have been changes in the way we live, work and play – along with advances in vehicle and road technology - which has been taken into consideration in drafting a revised strategy for the coming ten years.

Road Safety Victoria, situated in the Department of Transport, led development of the Strategy. The Strategy was developed in collaboration with the Victorian Road Safety Partnership, made up of the Transport Accident Commission, Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

[TAC.vic.gov.au - Victorian road safety strategy 2021-2030](https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/victorian-road-safety-strategy-2021-2030)

Aligning with Quality Improvement



Embarking on a road safety education inquiry project is a process of continuous improvement. It is important to think about this work as part of your quality improvement plan rather than separated from it.

As well as connecting the inquiry project to local and state road safety initiatives, make sure you take some time to include and identify how this work supports improvement in the quality

areas of the National Quality Standard. Again, not only will this help to strengthen the quality of your practice, but it will help you work smarter not harder.

In the following table, to assist in this thinking, we have included some examples how the quality areas are enhanced through an inquiry approach to road safety education and why. You may of course, think of others.

Quality Area	How a road safety education inquiry project progresses this quality area?
<p>Quality Area 2 – Children’s health and safety Element 2.2.1 <i>Supervision</i> At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.</p>	<p>A road safety education inquiry project enhances children’s learning about how to be and become safer participants in the physical environment of the immediate service and the wider community.</p> <p>By planning for and being aware of road safety hazards, educators can support children’s capacity to understand and respect the environment, solve problems and create and construct in challenging and safe ways.</p>
<p>Quality Area 3 – Physical environment Standard 3.1 <i>Design</i> The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.</p>	<p>Environments that are well designed, support children’s understanding of being and becoming safer road users and ensure that children learn the skills, attitudes and behaviours that last a lifetime.</p> <p>Educators can provide environments that extend children’s understanding of being safe pedestrians, passengers and cyclists, for example providing spaces for children to ride bicycles and scooters with ready access to helmets.</p>
<p>Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities Element 6.1.3 <i>Families are supported</i> Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.</p>	<p>Services provide a range of up-to-date materials and resources to inform families about how to keep their children safe as they use roads in the community. These resources including information on child restraints, safe arrival and departure from the service, and use of helmets when they ride their bicycles and scooters.</p> <p>In this way educators support families in their parenting role and enable families to make safe decisions about being safe road users.</p>
<p>Standard 1.2 Practice Educators facilitate and extend each child’s learning and development. Element 1.2.1 <i>Intentional teaching</i> Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.</p>	<p>When educators use an inquiry approach to road safety education they deliberately, purposefully, and thoughtfully include decisions about how children become safer road users within the curriculum design.</p> <p>Using intentionality in play-based programme design, educators support children’s development in the specific knowledge, skills, and behaviours required to be a safe road user.</p>



Using the QIP

As we have noted previously, embarking on a practitioner inquiry in road safety education, or any other area, should not be considered separate from strategies to improve the quality of the care and education offered to children. In every way engagement with practitioner research is engagement with high quality care and education for young children because it asks us to think deeply about what we are offering and seeks to change practice for the better.

As you begin this process, it is helpful to include this project in your quality improvement plan. The experience in this project may well feature in the service's strengths and become a story of exceeding practice.

An example of a QIP that includes a road safety education project is included in the appendix.

The Big Underpinning Ideas

Before starting any research or inquiry work with children and their families, it is helpful to pause and reflect on the big ideas or concepts that underpin or shape a project such as this. These ideas act as a signpost that keeps the thinking and actions – the work of the inquiry project – on track. They remind us about what is important and ensure that our decisions are purposeful and focused.

While the expectation of the National Quality Framework and, in some cases, your local philosophy statements support a shift to this way of thinking, it is helpful to specifically identify the ‘big ideas’, theories or concepts that guide your practice as you get started.

A road safety inquiry project, at its best and based on our experience with our project participants, is underpinned by four big ideas or concepts.



To the best of our knowledge, these concepts, while not new to the early childhood education sector or to the Starting Out Safety program, represent a new and innovative step forward in the practice of road safety education for young children. When combined, they provide clear direction to our work and help us decide what we will do more or less of.

Below, we explore each concept or big idea. As you get started, it might be helpful to discuss these ideas with colleagues, families, and even the community. The reflective questions at the end of each idea can support the discussion.

Children as capable and competent



Central to adopting an inquiry approach that involves children is a commitment to an image of children as competent and capable, with the right to exercise a sense of agency over matters that affect them. We recognise

children's capacity to understand safety issues in their community—speeding cars, dangerous crossings, or not being in child restraints—as well as their ability to find new and innovative solutions to these real-life problems. This image is now a defining feature of our Framework documents and an expectation of contemporary early childhood education.

The Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 2022

Viewing children as active participants and decision-makers opens possibilities for educators to move beyond preconceived expectations about what children can do and learn. This requires educators to understand, respect and work with each child's unique qualities and capabilities.

(Australian Government Department of Education, 2022, p. 8)

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The VEYLDF guides early childhood professionals to work together with families in support of their children, embracing and responding to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Victorian community and diverse approaches to child rearing.

In particular, the VEYLDF seeks to recognise all children as rights holders and full members of society, capable of participating in their social worlds through their relationship with others. These rights, expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), are:

- *the right to life and development*
- *the right to be heard*
- *the right to non-discrimination*
- *the right for the best interests of the child to be upheld.* (Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2016)

This image challenges adults (educators, families, and members of the community) to abandon the view that children are passive recipients of adults' ideas and increasingly see children as active collaborators with adults in their own and others' learning.

Reflective questions:

- How do we define our image of the child?
- In what way are children already active agents in our setting?
- What might need to change if we adopt an image of children that is capable and competent?



Children as capable and competent

Building on an image of the child as capable and competent is the understanding that

children are rights holders and, as such, able to make decisions in matters that affect them, including how to make their communities safer for everyone. Again, the Framework documents, that guide early childhood practice, require educators to recognise children as citizens from birth with ideas and opinions and the capacity to contribute to the democratic functioning of their community.

All children have a right to respectful treatment and the inclusion of their perspectives in decision making. Children have a right to participate in decisions that affect them. This requires professionals to provide opportunities and challenges that afford children the space, time, voice, audience and capacity to make a difference in their environment. Children may show ingenuity, creativity and skills that were previously unnoticed. Children construct their own understandings and co-construct understandings with both adults and children, contribute to the learning of others, and initiate and lead their own learning.

(Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2016)

Inquiry projects that provide opportunities for children to not only share their ideas but also make a meaningful contribution to their communities and the well-being and safety of themselves and others can demonstrate children's rights in action.

Practitioners, therefore, must create a space where young children, with their families, led by educators, are accepted as active agents of their own and others' safety, capable of investigating and influencing safer road use in their local community. Rather than being passive recipients of pre-determined programs, working in this way reorients us to share decision-making and planning for learning with children.

Reflective questions:

- What does it mean to provide opportunities for children to contribute?
- How and where can children currently contribute? Could this be strengthened?
- How can you offer children their right to make decisions in matters that affect them?



Educators as Researchers

Just as children are seen as capable and competent, this approach accepts educators as researchers in their own right,

instrumental in shaping their own understandings of early childhood education. Working in this way is an opportunity to participate at a deeper level of learning that does not just impart knowledge but invites educators to construct new understandings of ideas and develop practice through a process of reflection and collaborative thinking. This is particularly important for projects focused on matters of safety for children, as the ideas that emerge have the capacity to make a tangible difference in children's lives.

Educator research is important because it repositions the meaning of [educator] from one who simply performs or acts to someone who generates and contributes to the knowledge on which [our] practice is based and how decisions are made.

[Educator] research is liberating and empowering inquiry that allows ... [educators] to take their lives as teachers seriously, to generate knowledge and understanding that can improve teaching and potentially create a more democratic and equitable learning community.

(Meier & Perry, 2012, p. 114)

Reflective questions:

- Why do you think teachers and educators might consider embracing an image of researcher?
- How might this challenge the way others understand the role of early childhood professional?
- What might need to change if we adopt an image of educators as researchers?



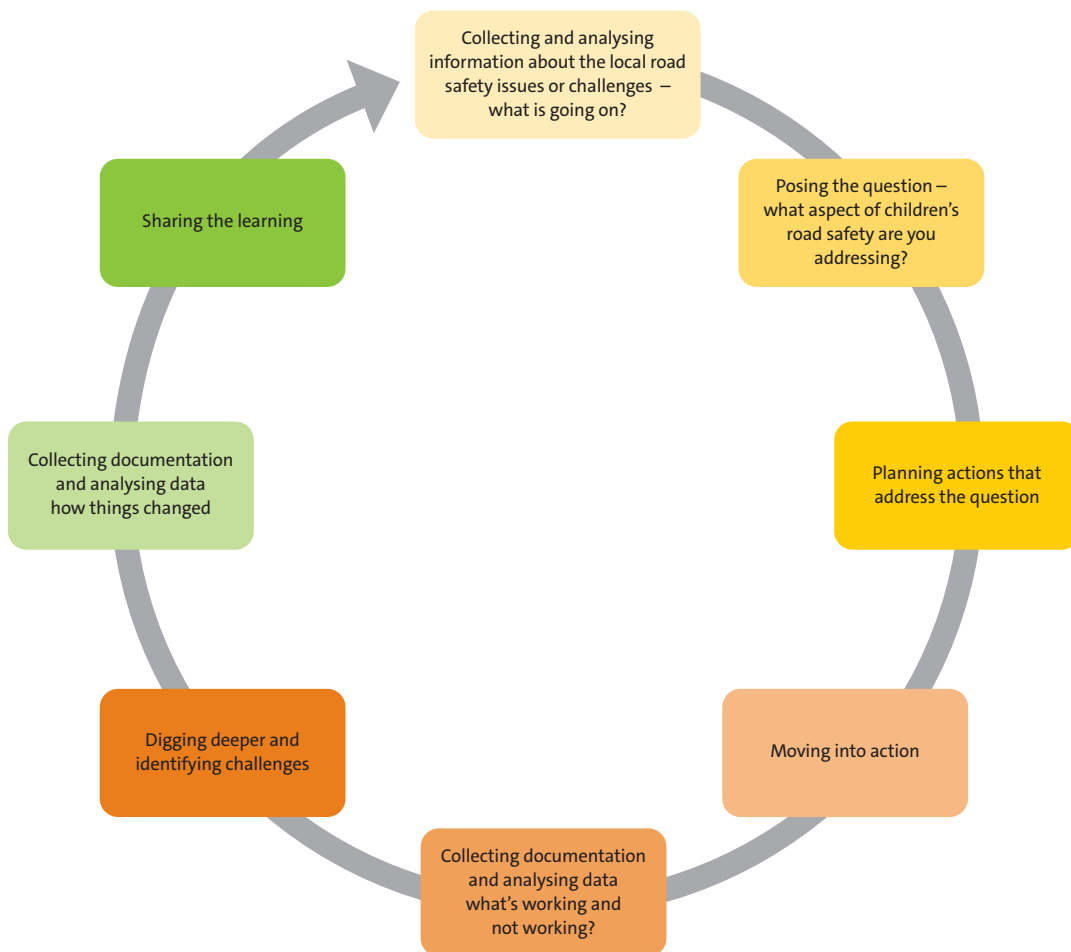
Practitioner Inquiry (Action Research)

Action research aims to be, and for better or for worse, it always is, a practice-changing practice. (Kemmis, 2009)

Action research as an accessible, responsive, and empowering approach to practice research. It is both a philosophical attitude and a technical process. It invites educators to dive deeper into teaching and learning practice with realistic expectations that some things will work, and others will not. The process focuses on noticing, reflecting, planning, observing, and acting in a continuous cycle (reflective of the Early Years Learning Framework Planning Cycle).

This Guide uses a modified version of the Inquiry Cycle as outlined in a recent Australian publication – *Unlocking Practitioner Inquiry – Growing Professionally in Early Years Education* (2023), which invites educators to think about a particular challenge around children and road safety education through reflection, documentation, and data collection.

The process reflects on and develops understandings, identifies possible actions, and implements change.



(Unlocking Practitioner Inquiry Growing Professionally in Early Years Education, 2023)

Using these ideas and concepts as the basis, or underpinning foundation, will support you and your colleagues to consider early childhood education as pathway of change. Change that makes for safer and stronger communities where children and families flourish.

The Road Safety Inquiry Process

Launching into an inquiry process requires patience and planning. It might seem overwhelming initially, but by using the steps outlined below, and taking a deliberately slow and intentional approach, you can explore ideas and possibilities at a deeper level. Like many things worth doing, the *Road Safety Inquiry Process* takes time and practice. The more you use the ideas and work through the steps of inquiry to support children to be safer road users, the more your confidence and success will evolve.

Using this approach to promote and sustain deep engagement with road safety supports more robust pedagogical practice and ensures that children and their families are safer now and in the future.

The Guide encourages everyone who undertakes an inquiry approach to their work to consider themselves and the people they work and collaborate with as capable and competent, rich in ideas and problem-solving skills about how to make our roads safer. This image also challenges the taken-for-granted idea that only people with years of road safety research practice can undertake research that delivers better outcomes for everybody.



Understanding the Inquiry Process



The following table details the steps of the inquiry or action research cycle applied to road safety education in early childhood. Over the last five years, early childhood educators from diverse child education and care settings across Victoria have trialled each step with great success through the Road Safety Education Inquiry Project.

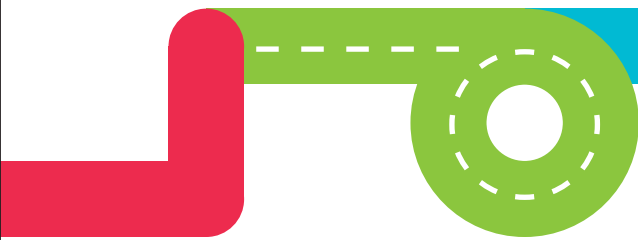
We invite you to try this process in your setting.

Step	Application to Road Safety	Documenting
<p>1. Collecting and analysing information about the local road safety issues or challenges – what is going on?</p>	<p>Collect information from a number of sources (children, families, educators, local community and possibly local government) about the biggest or most concerning road safety challenges in your immediate community.</p> <p>Consider this question in terms of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and families as passengers • Children and families as pedestrians • Children and families as cyclists (or wheeled toy users) <p>Analyse the findings and decide which areas you will focus on, for example, children walking with their family from the car to the centre door or finding a safe path to the local shops across a busy road.</p>	<p>Recording the findings notes, surveys, and digital information, including photos and videos.</p> <p>Using a reflective notebook.</p> <p>At this point, it is helpful to share the project aims with families and gain their consent for their children’s involvement—especially if you want to share the findings later.</p> <p>Remember, children should also be asked about their participation.</p>
<p>2. Posing the question – what aspect of children’s road safety will you address?</p>	<p>Develop and decide on the question you will be investigating.</p> <p>The question supports the inquiry process – this is the problem or challenge that you are trying to understand.</p> <p>Make the question SMART</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific – what particular aspect of road safety? • Measurable – how will you know if you have made a difference? • Achievable – can everyone be involved, especially children? • Realistic – is it reflective on the context? • Timely – is it doable in the timeframe? <p>An example of a question: <i>How can our car park be safer for children walking into the centre?</i></p>	<p>Notes or discussions and brainstorming are recorded in a reflective notebook.</p> <p>The final question could be recorded and noted in a reflective notebook.</p> <p>Share the question and why you chose it for everyone involved, especially the families, leadership and the staff team.</p>



Step	Application to Road Safety	Documenting
3. Planning actions that address the question	<p>Identify the range of actions that might be used to explore and address the questions.</p> <p>These must involve children and their families as well as the educators and the community.</p> <p>They might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going on a ‘fact-finding’ excursion? • Meeting with children. • Creating a map • Setting up play spaces or providing learning materials that support children to explore key concepts and ideas. 	<p>Notes or discussion and brainstorming could be recorded in a reflective notebook.</p> <p>Refer to the final and agreed question to keep you on track.</p> <p>Emails and other correspondence to those who are involved.</p>
4. Moving into action	<p>Decide which of the ideas identified in the previous steps will be tried, with who, and by when.</p> <p>Pace yourselves – you can’t do everything at once.</p> <p>Add this idea to the program plan and share it with everyone so that all participants know what will happen.</p>	<p>Notes and observations about how actions are experienced could be recorded in a reflective notebook or group journal.</p> <p>Risk assessment and permission forms. These could also be included in children’s files.</p> <p>Emails, digital posts, and other correspondence could be sent to those who are involved.</p>
5. Collecting documentation needs formatting to be on one line and analysing data on what’s working and not working.	<p>Collect documentation and observations about the actions taken.</p> <p>Look for ideas and actions that support children in deepening their understanding of road safety. It’s also helpful to note what didn’t quite work so you can discuss why and come up with new ideas.</p> <p>Remember to pace yourself.</p> <p>Add these ideas to the program plan (in the evaluation and reflection steps) and share them with everyone so that all participants know what has happened and what’s working.</p>	<p>Notes or discussion and brainstorming could be recorded in a reflective notebook.</p> <p>This could include children’s work – drawings, conversations etc</p> <p>These could also be included in children’s individual files.</p> <p>Emails, digital posts, and other correspondence could be sent to those who are involved.</p>





Step	Application to Road Safety	Documenting
6. Digging deeper and identifying challenges	<p>Stretch your thinking.</p> <p>What else could you try?</p> <p>How else could we explore these questions?</p> <p>Consider why something is working, or not, and use critical reflection questions to investigate the ideas.</p> <p>Use theories and practice stories from other processes to inspire new ideas.</p> <p>If you have a critical friend, contact them and ask for their advice.</p> <p>Read some of the publications from the Starting Out Safety program (including the stories below) to identify new ideas.</p>	<p>Notes or discussion and brainstorming could be recorded in a reflective notebook.</p> <p>This could include children’s work – drawings, conversations, etc.</p> <p>These could also be included in children’s individual files.</p> <p>Emails, digital posts, and other correspondence could be sent to those who are involved.</p>
7. Collecting documentation and analysing data about how things changed	<p>Bring the process to a conclusion by examining all the material you have collected about how the question was explored.</p> <p>At this stage, having the question you started with in front of you is essential—what can you now say about this question that you didn’t know before?</p> <p>For example, if your question was: <i>How can our car park be safer for children walking into the centre?</i></p> <p>You should be able to discuss the steps you took to address this, what happened, and where you are now.</p>	<p>Notes and observations about how actions are experienced in a reflective notebook for example:</p> <p>This could include children’s work – drawings, conversations, etc that provide evidence of children’s learning (thinking, behaviour changes, knowledge, skills)</p> <p>These could also be included in children’s individual files.</p> <p>Emails, digital posts, and other correspondence to those who are involved.</p>
8. Sharing the learning	<p>Inquiry work is something to be proud of and should be shared.</p> <p>Take a moment to think about how you might share the investigation and the outcomes.</p> <p>Start with your immediate community, the families, the organisation, and other staff. Then go further—the local paper, an early years’ award, conference presentation or a national publication.</p> <p>Remember these stories are an invaluable part of your QIP.</p>	<p>Notes and observations about how what happened.</p> <p>The actions you took and how they were implemented.</p> <p>These could be in a reflective notebook made into an article or blog or post.</p> <p>This could include children’s work – drawings, conversations, etc</p>

Applying the Inquiry Process

Applying the inquiry process is a dynamic process that encourages curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The work of the Road Safety Education Inquiry Project has identified a collection of ideas and examples that bring some of the key steps to life. As you begin your own inquiry, you are invited to use (and modify) these strategies as you strengthen the skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitudes children need to become safe road users.



Ideas for collecting and analysing information about the local road safety issues or challenges – what is going on?

The first step in the Inquiry process involves gathering data about the road safety challenges and opportunities in your local community. The following questions will help you gather this information.

What is the road safety issue or challenge?

Why is it a problem?

What is the impact?

Whose responsibility is it?

What has been tried to fix it?

What would a successful solution look like?



What is the road safety issue or challenge?

What specific issue or challenge in relation to the safety of children and families as road users is occurring at or near the service?

The issue could relate to children as passengers, pedestrians or wheeled toys users and could be identified by children, families, or educators?

Why is it a problem?

Why is this an issue or problem for the service?
Has it been identified by educators or families?

What is the impact?

How does it affect the children and families, or how could it affect them?

What is the impact on learning?

What is the impact on safety?

Whose responsibility is it?

Who does this space belong to?

Who maintains and regulates this space?

What has been tried to fix it?


What strategies if any, have been implemented to address this issue?

What would a successful solution look like?

What would a long-term solution look like?

How would children's safety best be prioritised?

A mapping tool is available in the appendix, as are the examples of the completed tools below.

Tool 1: Mapping the Issue  Starting Out Safety


Name of Service: |

Number of children and families: 3yr old → 22 4yr old green 27, 4yr old orange 29.

Location (describe in detail): Suburban Street. Kindergarten set in park. Residential housing on one side of wide street. Kindergarten side is mainly park land. Street is relatively quiet except for am when families are leaving for work or dropping chr at child care around the corner.

What is it?	Why is it a problem?	What is the impact? Who does it effect, or could it effect?
→ Why are families driving to kinder when majority live ~1-2 km away?	→ Are children learning and getting a sense of road safety as a pedestrian?	→ Flow on effect of when children are older and may be walking to school on their own, catching public transport, etc. → Are chr active?

Road Safety Inquiry Project Plan Tool 1 Mapping the Issue

Tool 1: Mapping the Issue  Starting Out Safety

Who responsibility is it?	What has been tried to fix it?	What would a successful solution look like?
→ Responsibility of family to create opportunities for children to be pedestrians → Early childhood service to support families in educating children to be safe pedestrians. → Local council → Ensure services are accessible by foot, cycling and public transport.	→ To the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of any attempts to change this.	→ Move families walking, riding/scooting to kinder. → Confident families in the community using getting from A→B without using their cars. → Cha who are confident in the community and are able to be safely pedestrians

Road Safety Inquiry Project Plan Tool 1 Mapping the Issue

Applying the Inquiry Process

Gathering the opinions and perspectives of children and families

A critical part of the initial phase of an inquiry approach to road safety education is gathering the opinions and perspectives of the children and families attending the service. This process reflects the big idea or concept outlined earlier: that children (and families) are rights holders with the capacity to contribute their ideas to making communities safer for everyone.

At this early stage, seeking children's and families' perspectives about what makes their community safe or unsafe helps guide the actions that will be investigated and trialled as the inquiry project progresses. If these are not gathered early (and indeed throughout the project), the process will likely have less meaning for those involved.

There are many ways to gather this information, including the following:

Families

- A question on the enrolment forms
- Formal survey completed online or in writing
- A 'graffiti-style' feedback process where thoughts are shared using sticky notes on a large piece of paper
- Informal conversations recorded at *drop off* and *pick up* time
- Consulting a small focus group or committee
- Comments from an online social media post
- Comments collected from a digital documentation story

Children

- Intentional conversational style discussions with children in small or larger groups
- Direct interviews seeking individual children's views on road safety issues and possible solutions
- Drawings and other creative expressions
- Observations collected by educators of children's play and engagement in road safety learning contexts (e.g. dramatic play spaces or a road mat set up with cars)

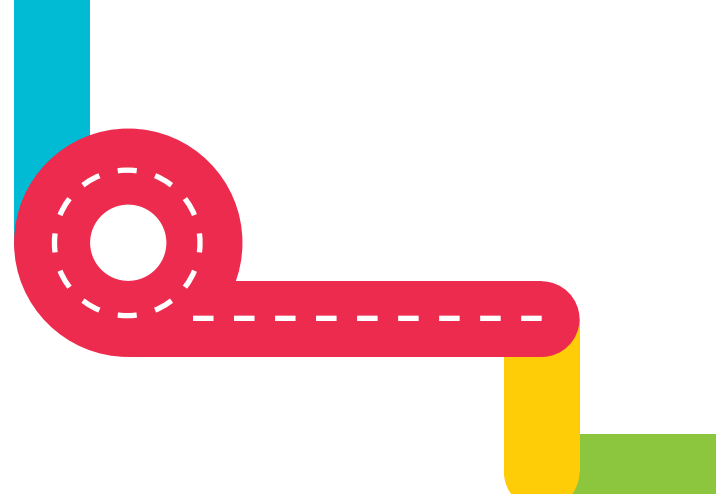
This data informs the inquiry process and can contribute to the required pedagogical documentation as part of the planning cycle referenced in the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard.

For more information about the planning cycles refer to the guide material on the VCAA website

Early Years Planning Cycle Resource for the VEYLDF
VCAA.vic.edu.au – Early Years Planning Cycle Resource

The Planning Cycle
ACECQA ACECQA.gov.au – Documenting assessment and planning cycle





As identified above, surveys or questionnaires can be a way to gather more specific data about families' perceptions and understanding of road safety issues and challenges and, in some cases, to identify solutions or pathways for change. Here is an example.

1. **Were you able to walk to kinder during 'Walk to School Month'?** (if you walked a sibling to school please include this, just indicate it was a school)

1. Yes

2. **Did 'Walk to school Month' have an impact on your family?** (e.g. create conversation, inspired an effort to walk more in the community, bring an awareness to road safety, etc.) Yes, there was lots of talk the night before kinder explaining we need to get ready earlier if we wanted to walk. Flynn has noticed lots more road safety signs around our community and enjoys explaining to us what they mean.

2. **Have you noticed a change in your child's behaviour around the road and while out and about? Yes he is a lot more knowledgeable and vigilant to what the signs are and why they might be**

3. **Has your child discussed road safety with you at home?** (e.g. seat belts, car seats, crossing the road safely, something they have learnt, etc) yes lots of discussion, even asking me if I know what the safety signs are.

4. **Has your child spoken to you about our community walks?** (if yes, what have they said?) Flynn's loves the community walks. When we go out as a family he talks about the walks he does at kinder and things they have noticed and learnt

4. **Why do you think it is important to teach children road safety at a young age?** For them to be vigilant of why the safety signs are there. Flynn is desperate for responsibility so I make sure that he's update to date with road safety

5. **Are there any other comments you would like to share about road safety and early childhood education?** (What could be included in our road safety curriculum, what could be done better, are you happy with the road safety curriculum, does it reinforce what you teach your children) I think it's great the kids get the chance to do the community walks. They are so lucky to be inner city and able to go walk down by the creek and learn about our environment

Applying the Inquiry Process

Engaging children in matters that affect them is not only a right (Article 12 UNCROC) but also a powerful way to support children's connection with and contribution to their community (Outcome 2 EYLFV2.0 and the VEYLD).

Children's connection and contribution to their world is built on the idea they can exert agency in ways that make a difference and build a foundation for civic and democratic participation. Educators assist all children to explore notions of sustainability (social, economic and environmental) where children learn what they do can make a difference.

(Australian Government Department of Education, 2022)

There are many resources that canvas the importance of including the voices of children in the planning, design and evaluation of strategies, environments, and programs. The following collection of resources are an example of those available:

Commission For Children and Young People

Victorian Child Safe Standards Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

CCYP.vic.gov.au – [The 11 child safe standards:standard-3](#)

ACECQA

Supporting Agency: Involving Children in Decision-Making

ACECQA.gov.au – [QA1: Supporting Agency Involving Children in Decision Making](#)

Cities of Maribyrnong, Melton, Brimbank, Wyndham, and Ballarat

Engaging Children in Decision Making: A Guide for Consulting Children.

maribyrnong.vic.gov.au – [Engaging children in decision making \(June 2023\)](#)

Commissioner for Children

Involving children in decision making – Your quick, practical guide

childcomm.tas.gov.au – [Guide to making decisions booklet](#)

Parenting Research Centre

Practical strategies for engaging children in a practice setting

EmergingMinds.com.au – [practical strategies for engaging children in a practice setting](#)

Be You

Decision-making early childhood

BeYou.edu.au – [decision making earlychildhood](#)

Save the Children

So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice

SaveTheChildren.net – [So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice](#)

Early Childhood Australia and Human Rights Commission

Supporting young children's rights STATEMENT OF INTENT (2015–2018)

HumanRights.gov.au – [Supporting young children's rights](#)





Ideas for creating a meaningful road safety question

Once the initial information has been gathered the inquiry process can move to the next step. *Posing the research question or confirming what aspect of children's road safety you are addressing?* This step will be supported by having opportunities to meet and discuss ideas with your colleagues.

Developing the question is about focusing on the road safety issues that are most important in your context. This could be in the service itself – the car park for example or the surrounding community – the lack of a safe place to cross to get to the local shops. Remember the questions should be manageable (not too big) and specific to your setting or community. If the question is too big it will be hard to maintain focus and take actions.

If the question is too small, the idea will not support deeper thinking and the opportunity for children to contribute to safer communities.

Finding the just-right question takes time, but when you do, it will feel meaningful and energising—trust the process.

Researchable questions are not aimed at 'quick fix solutions' rather they are 'problems of meaning that developed gradually after careful observation and deliberation about why certain things are happening in the classroom'. Researchable questions have the power to profoundly change practice - they evoke wonder and investigation and are a vehicle for embedding new ideas theories and research... They encourage wonder about the space between what is known and what is knowable... (Papic 2023)

The focus may be easy to identify because families or educators, had previously raised the issue such as safety in the car parks. For others, choosing the focus was a matter of prioritisation and determining the capacity of the project to tackle specific issues. For example, addressing the bicycle riders that sped past your service might be too big to tackle.

It may also be helpful to consider which aspect of road use you wish to prioritise.

Children as
Passengers

Children as
Pedestrians

Children as
Cyclists

Here is a collection of some questions that have worked in the **Road Safety Education Inquiry Project...** feel free to borrow the words.

- *How can we encourage families to be safer and more active pedestrians in our community?*
- *How can we support all children to become safer pedestrians on excursions?*
- *How can we address the safety issue of finding a car park near our city service?*
- *How can we make crossing the street safer for all community members?*
- *How could the car park be safer for pedestrians as they access the building and safely exit?*
- *How can we help our children and families stay in their booster seat? Can we reword this question and use their seat belts? How can we support children and families to be safely restrained in their car?*

Applying the Inquiry Process



Ideas for planning and exploring ideas and actions that investigate the road safety question

Having determined the question or focus of the project, you can begin to consider the types of actions and strategies that help you and the team—along with children and families—address the road safety issue. Depending on the setting, different ideas might be more appropriate or possible than others. Road Safety Education Inquiry Project participants tried many strategies, from meetings with parents or local government officers to discussions with children to gain their perspective on the safety issue.

Central to this step is the importance of including children’s perspectives and suggestions. Children are enormously capable of planning with adults (educators, carers, and other professionals) to identify, design, and evaluate strategies, environments, and programs.

These actions and strategies can be broadly grouped into these key areas:



Capacity Building for educators

Supporting educator's knowledge, understanding and confidence

Building the capacity of educators to explore road safety is an important first step as you embark on an inquiry project that aims to enhance the skills and behaviours of young children and their families. When educators feel confident about their understanding of contemporary road safety approaches, they will be more able to plan for and implement actions that support safer road use.

While some educators may have extensive experience incorporating road safety into their programming work, others may feel very uncertain about how to teach children about being a safer road user, where to find up-to-date information and how to safely support children's practice of being a safer road user in the local community.

One of the first actions to support capacity building might be to meet with the educator team to determine your shared understanding and confidence in embedding road safety into everyday programming decisions. Through a reflective conversation, you can reveal how road safety is currently practiced and where the shared capacity needs to be strengthened.

Educational leaders are well placed to lead this process and discuss questions and concerns that educator teams might have about road safety. They can also facilitate opportunities for the team to meet and talk about what they know and plan learning opportunities together.



Starting Out Safely Professional Learning opportunity *Embedding Road Safety Education into Curriculum*

The free Starting Out Safely professional development training is presented by some of Australia's leading early childhood experts. We share practical strategies to support young children's learning about road safety, based on the latest evidence-based research. The sessions identify how road safety education links to the EYLF, the National Quality Standard and the National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education. You need to complete this Professional Development as part of the eligibility to access the associated ThingleToodle education session for funded 3-4 year old kindergarten programs.



Program Decisions

Offering powerful learning experiences

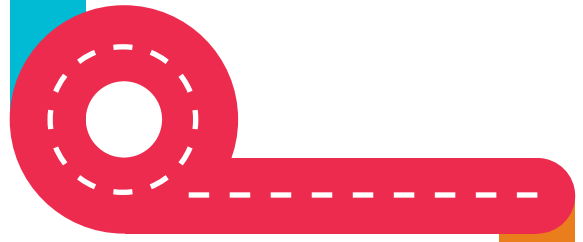
Rich and varied learning experiences that build children's knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes are one key action educators can take to progress an inquiry approach to road safety education. Throughout the inquiry process, it is essential to identify and implement learning experiences that support children in learning about the content and concepts identified in the inquiry question.

For example, if the inquiry question was focused on children becoming safer pedestrians, it might be helpful to set up a dramatic play learning experience where children practised the process of safely crossing the road. Similarly, if the inquiry question was focused on children learning to be safer passengers, a dramatic play experience might include seatbelts for soft toys and dolls. Again, if the inquiry question was focused on children's stopping, looking, listening, and thinking skills, it might be appropriate to design a learning experience that supported children in strengthening their listening skills, for example, songs and action rhymes.

While, of course, this is a strength of many educators, expanding the range of learning experiences to target skills, behaviours, and attitudes in relation to road safety education can be more challenging. Educators who work collaboratively using observations and understandings of each child create meaningful and engaging experiences that offer children opportunities to explore road safety and expand their understandings.

It is helpful to ensure that the program decisions are included in the appropriate planning documents. This supports the implementation of the strategies in the planning cycle. For example, educators might decide that a car mat in the block area is an effective way to support children in exploring what they know about being safe pedestrians. Writing that action in a publicly available program plan ensures that educators and families know how the inquiry project is implemented in daily practice.





Thinking with children

Inviting children to explore ideas and concepts



Adopting inquiry approaches in early childhood education invites educators to explore ideas and concepts in collaboration with learning community members. When the inquiry aims to enhance children’s understanding directly, they must be included in meaningful and inclusive processes. This process reflects a commitment to children’s agency (that they have the right to be consulted in matters that affect them) and the belief that children’s education and care service are places where we can exercise democracy (the process in which everyone is treated equally and has the right to participate).

Planned opportunities for children to meet and think with educators (ideally in small groups) offer one of the most powerful ways to explore what children know about road safety and their ideas for addressing challenges and risks. Recording their perspectives and ideas in a range of different documentation can generate new actions and support children to assess their own learning.

As part of their process, children’s educators may choose to record children’s ideas directly in conjunction with methods that invite children to record what they know and find out as part of the inquiry.

“Maybe you can stand in the middle of the road with STOP sign and stop the cars”. (William)

“I showed my mum the footpath on which you can walk but she decided to walk in the middle”.(Alex)

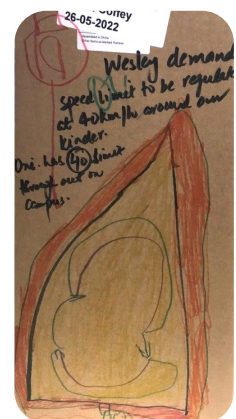
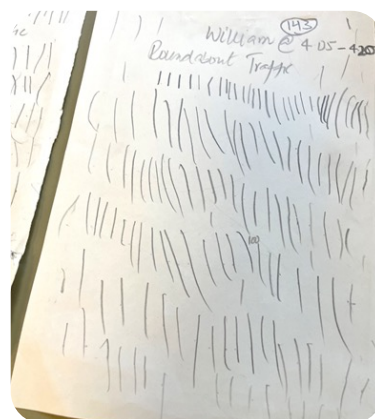
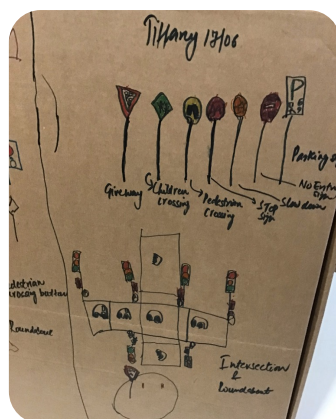
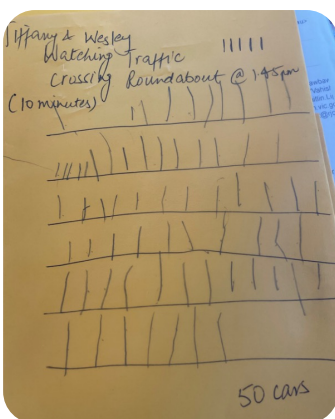
“There are so many cars crossing the Roundabout, we really have to wait”. (Tiffany and Wesley)

“The speed limit should be down to 40 as it is on Uni Campus”

Charlie: you know you can only sit in the front when the car is stopped and you are parked and your mum is there, not when you’re driving.

Mia: ‘I’m going to draw a picture of a brain as you need to think, when you Stop, listen, Look, think.’

Max: You have to be 145 to sit in the front.



Meetings with key people and organisations

Creating opportunities to advocate for children's road safety

Road safety involves several key players. Local government, including specific traffic departments and road maintenance teams, and Victorian State authorities collaborate to ensure that road safety remains a high priority within communities. Sometimes, your road safety inquiry will uncover an issue or problem that is beyond the capacity of your individual service and the children to solve.

To progress action and to advocate effectively for children's and families' safety on our roads, it might be appropriate for you to raise safety concerns about your local roads and road safety with the appropriate authorities. This process may be challenging because you might not have advocated for children's safety in such a formalised way before. But, be assured, seeing children as citizens with the right to make decisions in matters that affect them means you can reach out to local people and organisations responsible for road safety education and invite them to join your endeavours.

Drawing from the experience of the road safety inquiry project participants, this process might take some time, but it is surprising how often your requests are met with positive

responses from professionals and organisations working in this space. For example, early on in our work, one of the project participants identified that a pedestrian crossing would be beneficial on the road immediately outside their early childhood service. This was beyond the capacity of the early childhood service, and the children and families needed help.

The service contacted the local government and their local member of parliament and, through a number of opportunities to meet with traffic engineers the local member of parliament and the mayor, managed to put the establishment of a pedestrian crossing on the schedule for future work.

Another example was a service that contacted the local traffic engineering team at the local government and invited them to visit their early childhood service to show them the complexity of the current car parking arrangements. The children and families met with the traffic engineers, and after additional meetings with the children, families and the educator team, the signage in the car park was changed to provide a safer way for cars to arrive and depart from the service.

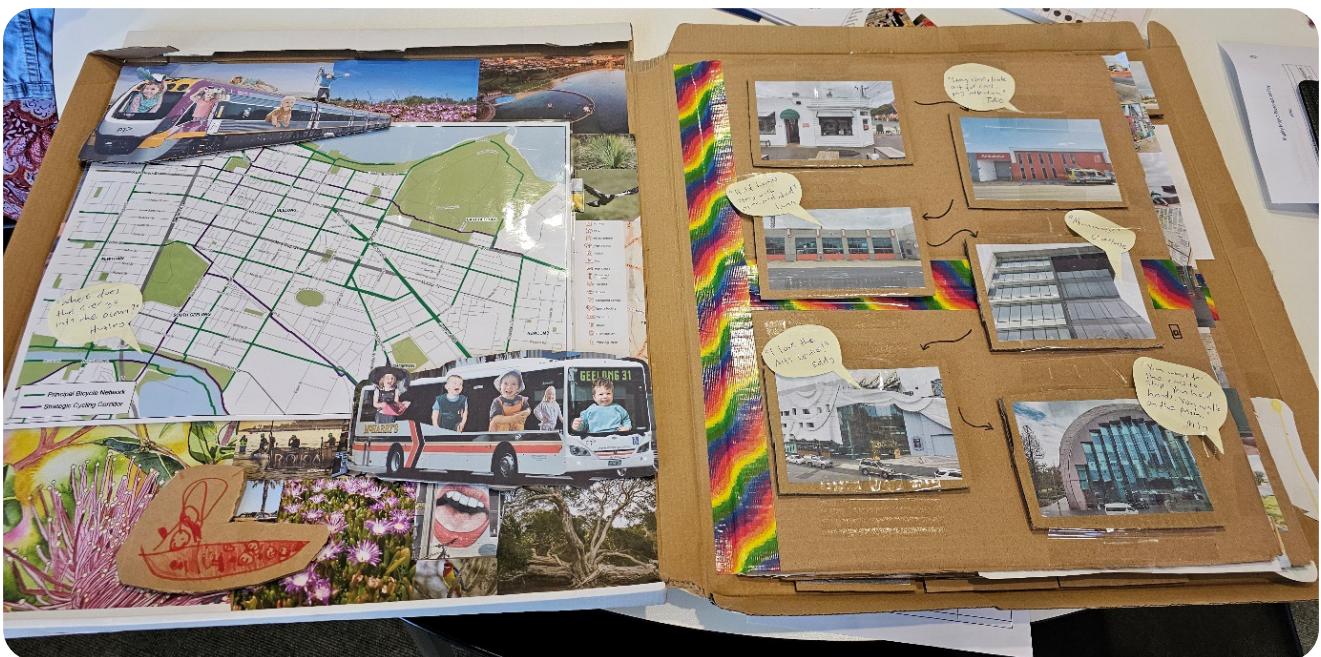


Thinking with children

Ideas for Collecting documentation and analysing data

A large project book is one of the most effective ways to collect information. It not only serves as a place to keep your notes and records of key discussions and decision-making, but it is also a powerful way to support children and families to understand their own thinking and learning (assessment as learning) throughout the inquiry project.

It can also be a useful piece of evidence that can be used in the assessment and rating process to demonstrate the depth of reflection, engagement with families and community and innovative decision-making in relation to the safety and well-being of children.



Ideas for Sharing the Learnings

Sharing the learnings from your road safety inquiry project work is not only a celebration of the significant work and efforts by everyone involved – children, their families, educators and the community - but an opportunity to encourage further action to ensure that all members of the community are safe on our roads.

Communicating the project's findings and lessons can involve a formal presentation process in which you share the story with a gathered audience of interested parties, such as families and local community representatives, in the hope that this will drive sustained change.

On the other hand, this process can be more informal and incidental, communicating stories of children's and families' efforts to create safer communities through conversations, local publications and changes in everyday practice. For example, the addition of a safe car park protocol in the family handbook communicated on service tours and in the enrolment pack.

Whether the communication is formal or informal, it is very important to share the learnings from the inquiry work, as each action taken by small groups can inspire others to help our communities create safer road environments.

Getting “Out and About”

Exploring local roads and how to use them safely

Getting “out and about” into your local community is one of the most powerful ways to support children to understand how to be safe road users. But, before you decide to take children into the local community to practise being and becoming safer pedestrians, it is important to ensure that children and educators are ready to maximise this learning experience and that families are confident that you have put in place the appropriate safety and risk assessment measures.

In recent times, ACECQA and the Department of Education in Victoria have clarified the responsibility of educators under the national law and regulations regarding children leaving the building and going on excursions. It is critical that as part of the inquiry process, if you are considering an excursion, that there is a comprehensive understanding of the expectations in the regulations and that there are appropriate policies and procedures and risk assessments to ensure that children are safe at all times.

Once those important processes are completed and the educators have identified that they are confident in their practices regarding children’s safety, you are now ready to apply your road safety understandings in your local community.

The Starting out Safely programme has long advocated that one of the most effective ways to become a safe road user is to be a safe road user in your local community. This means that you plan for learning opportunities that recognise children’s current skill levels (what they currently know, can do, and understand) and scaffold them to practise new skills safely. For example, if the group of children you are working with are only just learning how to listen and stop, it would be appropriate to take a smaller group of children to practise crossing the road in a quiet local street where there might be a crossing supervisor or a set of pedestrian lights. Similarly, if the group of children you are working with have become very confident and skilled you might consider walking across a busy street to go to a neighbouring park.

There is no doubt that being out in the community, practising being a safe road user not only benefits children but also demonstrates to other members of the community that children’s safety on our roads matters and that we all need to pay attention to safe road use practises, ensuring our community is safe for everyone.

Before you go “out and about” it is critical to ensure that the correct processes have been completed and that the educators team understand how to keep children safe at all times.

Remember that risk assessments and appropriate permissions are required as you begin to plan for actions that involve children leaving the building. You can find information to assist you in the policies and procedures of your service as well as the Department of Education and ACECQA.

Department of Education Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD)

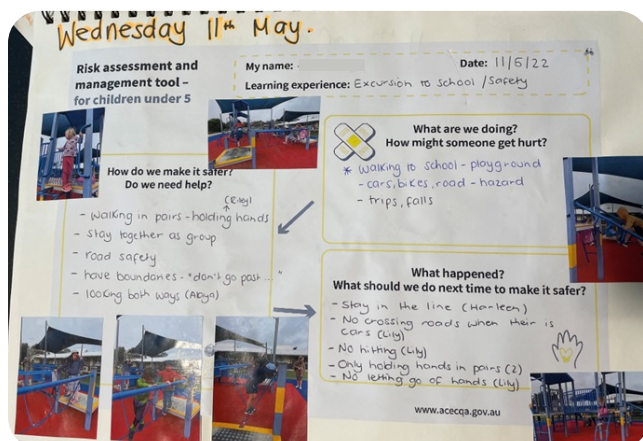
[Excursions and regular outings in early childhood services](#)

ACECQA

[Excursions Policy Guidelines](#)

ACECQA

[Risk assessment and management template – Excursions](#)



Practice reflection: Jess at Oxley Kids

I'm not sure if you know, but road safety education can be a tough sell, so we needed to package it in a way that parents and educators could get on board with it. The common perception I was initially getting about this was, "Big deal, talk about how to cross a road, maybe do practise in class and sing a song. How hard is it??" We had to broaden our understanding – no, actually, this is about children being valued members of our community. This is about children being out in the real world, knowing how to act in dangerous traffic situations. This is about others acknowledging children as having a place in our community. This matters!

So, we're at the tail end of the Road Safety Inquiry Project – but it has made an ongoing difference at Oxley Kids. We now have access to the fantastic

facilities that surround us and are beginning to see ourselves as part of the broader Oxley community. Regular outings are now, in fact, regular. This is across all the rooms, with some groups getting out weekly. This is to the facilities we've been talking about (the stadium booking is used every week), as well as other places on the property.

There is now a new path connecting the path at the front of our centre with the path at the back. I had nothing to do with this, but because of this project, I'm excited by it! This helps our people move from one place to another when they're out and about. Again, children need to experience using pathways to know that this is where it's safe to walk.

Jess Oxley Kids





Road Safety Inquiry in Practice

Even though each road safety inquiry project should be unique, practice stories can capture innovative ideas, and creative approaches are always inspirational.

The following collection offers you a range of practice approaches that might serve to stimulate your thinking as you design opportunities for children and their families to think about being safer on our roads, and as their passengers.

Sunnyside Kindergarten's Road Safety Education Inquiry Project

Sunnyside Kindergarten's project led by Angie Bromley (Early Childhood Teacher) demonstrated how an inquiry-based approach to road safety education, especially one that respects children as powerful agents of change, brings about lasting change and increased capacity.

Angie, in collaboration with children, educators and families identified the car park and driveway of the service as particularly problematic for children's (and adults) safe road use. The narrow laneway leading to the kindergarten, the small space allowed for access and drop off parking, multiple driveways and an open park area all contributed to the complexity of maintaining road safety at the kindergarten.

These factors informed their inquiry question:

How can we support all children in becoming good pedestrians, in finding a safe place to walk?

The implementation phase of the project included engaging with children and families in a discussion about what they knew about road safety and the safety challenges of the car park. It became evident through their deliberations that children were not only aware of the safety challenges in the kindergarten car park but had worked out a way to solve the problem.



The story of the Secret Path (see image below and copy in the attachments) was the result. Children collaborated to share their solutions to safely navigating the distance between the front door and the open grassed area. In their own words, they share their understandings of why being safe on our roads is necessary and develop a set of *Kindergarten Rules to be Safe* that demonstrate clear links to the key messages in the Starting Out Safety program.

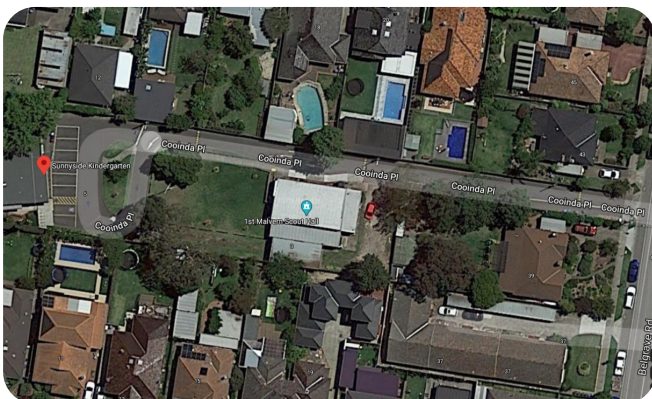
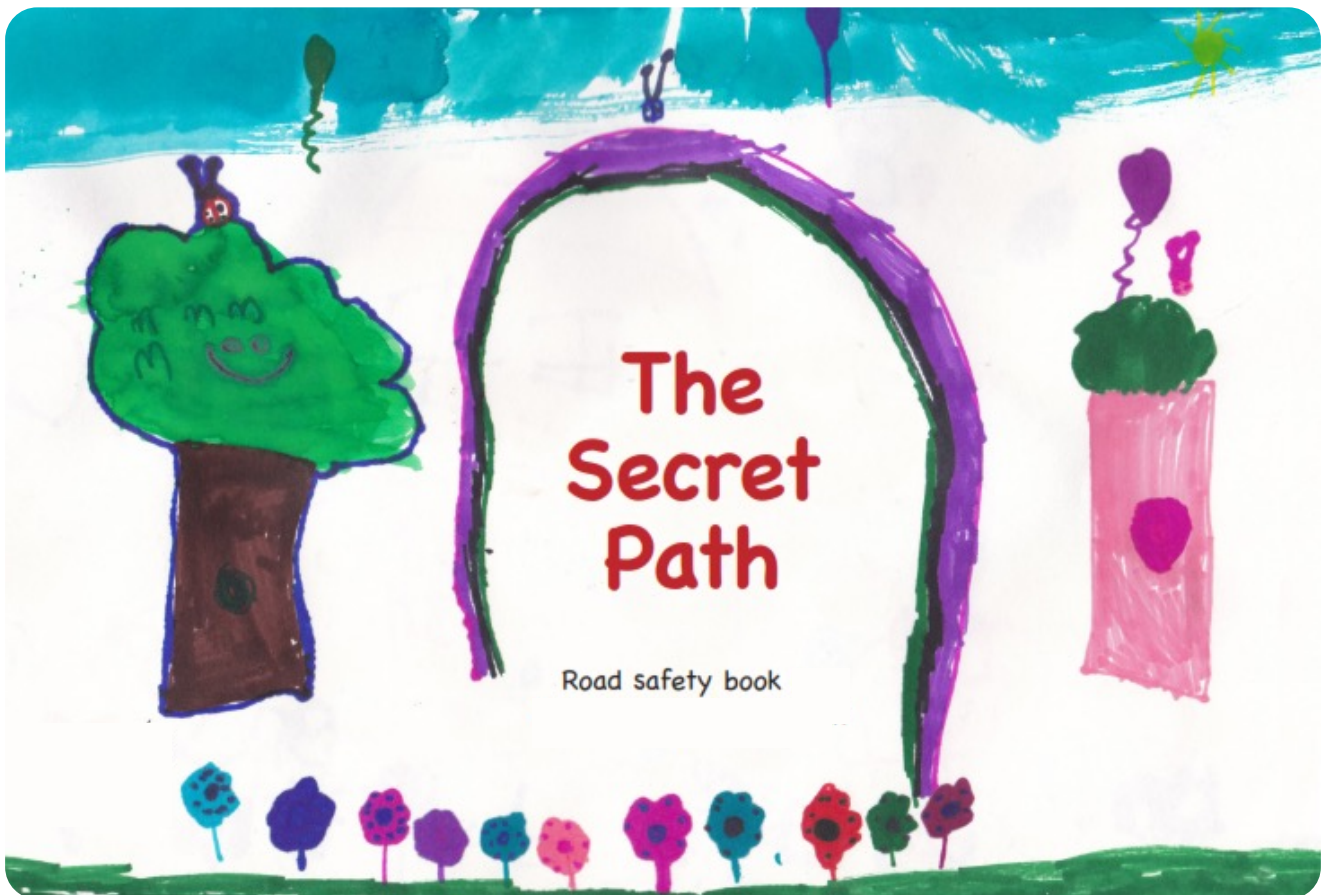
Angie has since moved to another role, taking with her a commitment to children's active community participation through road safety education. She also reports that the service continues to engage in the ideas around road safety using the Secret Path story as inspiration.

Figure 13





Road Safety Inquiry in Practice



The Practicalities

Starting any new endeavour requires planning. Embarking on a road safety inquiry project is no different. It may be as simple as making sure you have a notebook to record your ideas and the date of the project meetings in your calendar. But it might also mean more substantial consideration(s), such as ensuring you have the support of your approved provider and have communicated with all those involved. Planning will make sure you have the support you will need to collaborate with others and the community.

The following is a list of practical suggestions from the Starting Out Safely team and former participants that will support you to make the most of using an inquiry approach to explore how children and families can be safer on our local roads.

AIMS

It is crucial to understand the project's expectations clearly. Discuss these expectations for involvement in the inquiry project and keep the relevant documents handy for easy reference throughout the project.

SEEK ASSISTANCE

If you are unsure about how to proceed, reach out to your leaders and other support, including the Starting Out Safely team. Even if they cannot help you immediately, they can point you in the right direction.

SUPPORT

Secure the support of your approved provider and leadership team. Before you begin any inquiry project, make sure you have discussed what is involved in the project, including the expectations of your participation, and how your involvement will benefit the children and families in your community

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

As the project progresses, establish what roles are required. What support could you draw on from the educational leader, and how could you allocate time and resources to participate in available professional learning opportunities and other meetings.

CONSENT

Use the available permission forms (see APPENDIX or your version) to secure consent from the educators and children involved in the project. If other members of the community are also involved, for example, a member of the local government traffic team, they will also need to give consent if any information about them is to be shared in the project

TIMELINES

Setting out the time frame of the project will help to maintain momentum and identify how ideas can be implemented. Be sure to map out the project's time frame (6month or maybe a year) along with key dates as you identify them. This helps the team to understand what to expect and when actions will take place. These can be added to your QIP. Make sure you share these dates with your team and your leaders.

Making the Inquiry Project Stronger

Based on our experience, some important ideas and strategies can strengthen and enhance a road safety inquiry project. These features are best described as landmarks in the process that can facilitate deeper insights or enable more detailed and targeted responses in local settings.

Reflective practice with colleagues

Positioning the inquiry project as a reflective practice exercise with colleagues will be central to success. The process of thoughtful dialogue is as much about increasing our knowledge about road safety and its impact on community life as it is an opportunity for reflection about ourselves as safe road users. The conversation at inquiry meetings should focus on our understanding of children's role in road safety, the ongoing impact of road trauma on communities, and the current thinking on road safety, all of which have shaped individual projects. As the project unfolds, plan for many discussions about how change occurs with early childhood services and the community and how power and influence determine safety outcomes.

The reflective discussions can be planned using John Dewey's three attitudes for reflective practice:

- **open-mindedness** – a willingness to consider new evidence as it occurs and to admit the possibility of error. It involves being open to other points of view, appreciating that there are many ways of looking at a particular situation or event and staying open to changing one's own viewpoint. Part of open-mindedness is being able to let go of needing to be right or wanting to win.
- **responsibility** – the careful consideration of the consequences of one's actions, especially as they affect students. It is the willingness to acknowledge that whatever one chooses to do (for example decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment, organisation, management) will impact the lives of students in both foreseen and unforeseen ways.
- **wholeheartedness** – a commitment to seek every opportunity to learn and a belief that one can always learn something new. Adapted from (Reflective practice, 2020)

Being ready for new ideas

Throughout the road safety inquiry project, new ideas will most likely emerge.

- They come from questions children ask or ideas they have on how to solve a problem, for example: "we could make a sign, so everyone knows how to stop".
- They can be suggested by families: "add clearer signage to the car park".
- Or designed by educators: "writing a letter to a local councillor".

Welcome them as one of the most exciting aspects of shifting to this way of exploring curriculum and using them to inspire deeper investigation.

In our experience working with numerous services and educators in the road safety inquiry project, we have discovered many new ideas and aspects of road safety that have been neglected or under-explored. We encourage you to look out for new road safety issues and ideas, especially those that challenge the way things are done or fail to support all children and families.



Following are some ideas we have discussed.

Children with additional needs

Road safety education seldom addresses the complex needs and best interest of children with disabilities and medical conditions and that resources and ideas were needed to support educators to include all children in road safety education actively.

Reflection questions:

How might the actions be broadened to include children with diverse needs and rights?

What assumptions need to be challenged?

Approved providers

Approved providers (managers, parent committees and owners) require targeted communication protocols about supporting and resourcing a service embedded engagement with a road safety education program.

Reflection questions:

How might the actions in the project be broadened to include advocating to approved providers?

Connecting Roads Safety to access to Country

First Nations people have been keeping children safe on the paths and waterways for thousands of years. We must acknowledge keeping children safe is not a recent idea.

Reflection questions:

What is the relationship between road safety and being on Country?

Engaging with families

Ensuring families had a more robust understanding of the importance of road safety education was also identified as critical to finding pathways to changed behaviours, including notifying families when road safety education is taking place and the key messages being taught to children.

Reflection questions:

How can we make road safety more about sharing information rather than telling families what to do?

How do we empower families to make safer decisions?

Children under the age of three

Participants questioned the emphasis on supporting older children (3 – 5 years) with road safety and challenged the Starting Out Safety team to consider how younger children could be encouraged to develop road safety behaviours.

Reflection questions:

How might the actions in the project be broadened to include children under the age of three?

What are the road safety challenges faced by families as they transport their very young children to and from the service?

Road safety in communities experiencing vulnerability

Many children and families experience challenges in their daily lives. Economic and social pressure sometimes detract from children's safety.

Reflection questions:

How can we progress road safety with families without judgement and or placing undue pressure?

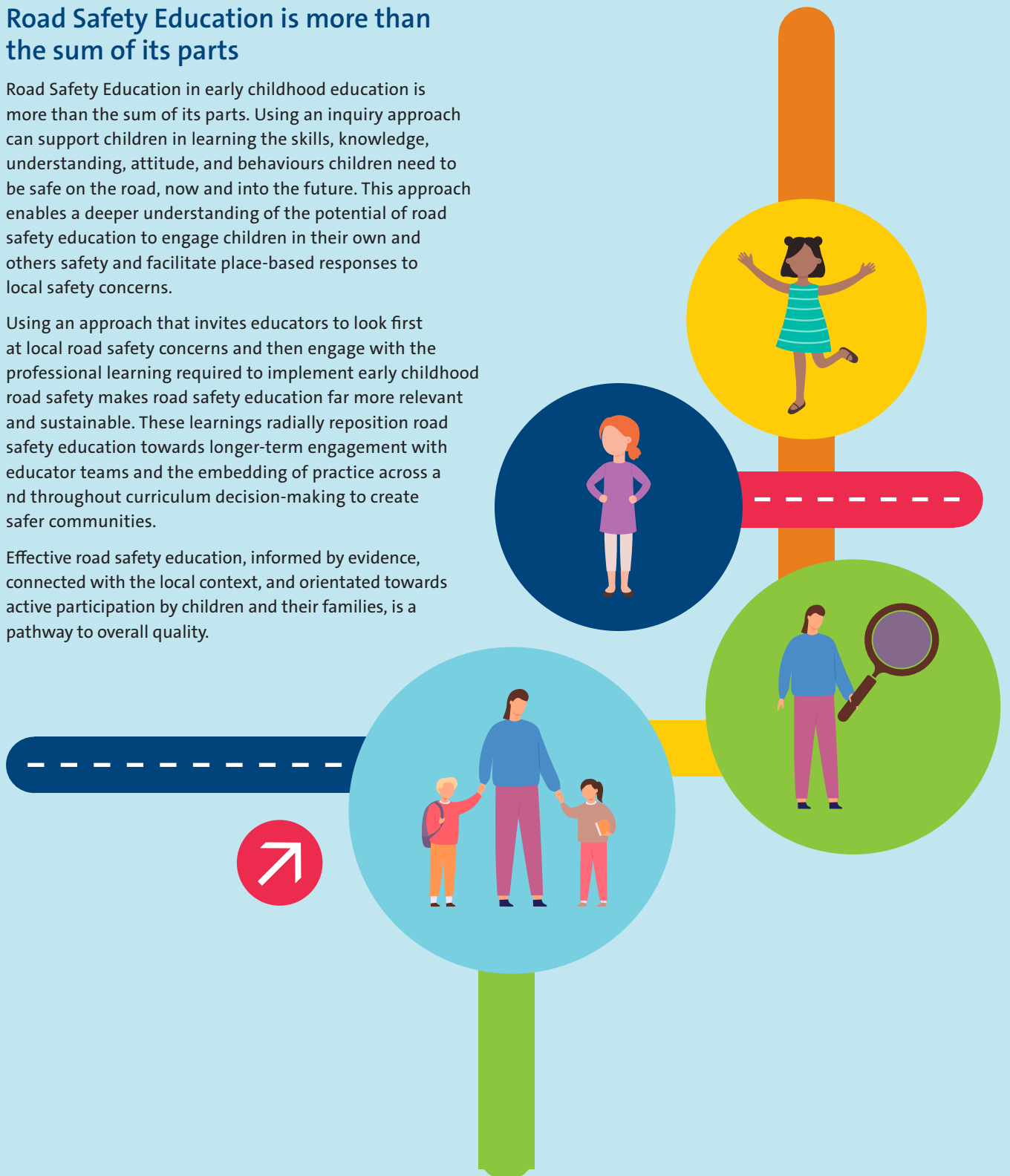
Making the Inquiry Project Stronger

Road Safety Education is more than the sum of its parts

Road Safety Education in early childhood education is more than the sum of its parts. Using an inquiry approach can support children in learning the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitude, and behaviours children need to be safe on the road, now and into the future. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the potential of road safety education to engage children in their own and others safety and facilitate place-based responses to local safety concerns.

Using an approach that invites educators to look first at local road safety concerns and then engage with the professional learning required to implement early childhood road safety makes road safety education far more relevant and sustainable. These learnings radially reposition road safety education towards longer-term engagement with educator teams and the embedding of practice across a nd throughout curriculum decision-making to create safer communities.

Effective road safety education, informed by evidence, connected with the local context, and orientated towards active participation by children and their families, is a pathway to overall quality.



Where to find out more

Starting Out Safely is Victoria's early childhood road safety education program. Starting Out Safely is about children, parents, carers and early childhood educators working together to guide children's learning in being and becoming safe and independent road users.

Road safety education of young children is an enabler for their active participation in their community.

Road safety education during early childhood and the school years plays an important role in laying strong foundations for safe road use throughout life.

We are committed to the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

All children have a right to be transported in a child car seat that is appropriate and fitted correctly for their height and size.

www.childroadsafety.org.au

www.carseatssavelives.com.au

[email rse@elaa.org.au](mailto:rse@elaa.org.au)



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