

RAISING STRONGER KIDS: NEW FRAMEWORK CALLS FOR SPIRITUALITY IN THE EARLY YEARS

For the first time in Australia, a practical guide has been developed to help educators nurture spirituality in the early years — a proven, yet often overlooked, foundation for children’s lifelong growth and mental health.

Launched in Perth on Wednesday (28 May 2025), *A Framework for Young Children’s Spiritual Capabilities* is designed to equip early childhood professionals with age-appropriate strategies to foster 0- to 8-year-old children’s sense of identity, belonging, connection and meaning – the core elements of spirituality.

The result of 20 years of ground-breaking research, the framework has been developed by three experts in early childhood education and spirituality: Associate Professor Christine Robinson (Edith Cowan University), Dr Brendan Hyde (Deakin University and Chair of the International Association for Children’s Spirituality), and Dr Megan Best (University of Notre Dame Australia).

Speaking at Wednesday’s launch hosted by leading early learning provider, MercyCare, Associate Professor Robinson said by nurturing children’s spiritual capabilities, educators can build their inner strength and set them up to thrive from the very beginning.

“The research is clear: when educators actively support children’s spiritual development, they’re helping to strengthen resilience, boost self-esteem, and promote positive mental health — all critical outcomes in today’s world,” she said.

“The Early Years Learning Framework already calls on us to nurture the whole child — including their spiritual wellbeing and our new spiritual capabilities framework offers educators practical tools to meet that obligation.”

Associate Professor Robinson said it was important to understand that spirituality is different from religion and lives in every child, regardless of religious background.

“It’s about wonder, connection, identity and meaning - and it deserves a place in every early learning environment,” she said.

“Our hope is that the early learning sector recognise spirituality beyond religion, to understand the connection between spirituality as a part of being human.

“If this can happen, we really can attend to the whole child.”

Vicky Gonzalez Burrows, Executive Director Mission and Ethos at MercyCare said the organisation will support its early childhood educators to embrace the framework across its 12 early learning centres.

“Each of our early learning centres will receive tailored guidance to bring the capability framework to life in their daily practice,” she said.

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Photo caption one (left to right): Dr Brendan Hyde and Dr Christine Robinson.

Photo caption two (left to right): Rosina Smith (Executive Director of Child Care Early Learning Management, MercyCare), Courtney Barnard (Mission and Strategy Project Lead of Child Care Early Learning Management, MercyCare) Jennie Burns (Executive Director of Family & Youth Services, MercyCare).

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