

## Flexible wellbeing time for all

### Early Childhood Australia – 70 staff

*Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is the national peak body for early childhood, acting in the interests of young children, their families and those in the early childhood field. ECA advocates to ensure quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children aged birth to eight years.*

After implementing initiatives to support staff for four years, ECA's healthier work culture is now well embedded into their daily work habits.

"It only takes one idea and one person to create change, but the value of having a team to develop a vision and champion healthier work for us has been invaluable," says Paige Pollard, ECA Media Manager. "It is so important to recognise and understand different people have different things that motivate them, so you need to find what motivates people in your organisation and use that to get them on board with what it is that you're trying to achieve."

For ECA, their focus is on helping staff make smarter choices by offering alternatives to the way things have always been done.

"We recently swapped our cookie jar for a healthy alternative and we now have a nut jar," explains Paige. "Another recent hit included purchasing second-hand puzzles and creating a space for mindfulness puzzle activities."

Staff had also provided feedback via a survey that indicated the first thing people sacrifice when they feel stressed is wellbeing, including exercise. Restoring balance can be difficult during busy times, yet this is often when people need to be reminded of options for their health and wellbeing.

"Management have been really proactive in tackling this challenge and have introduced flexible wellbeing time," says Paige. "The idea is that two to three times a week, staff can take time to practice wellness, whether this is going for a walk, doing mindfulness activities, going to the gym over lunch, or joining groups such as the ECA Bookclub."

"The hope is that this initiative will lead to a better balance, increase socialisation and collaboration at work, and reduce stress – both mental and physical."

A couple of other popular features of their most recent plan is their filtered water cooler, which has brought back the 'watercooler chat' for greater cohesion, as well as a scheduled reminder to stand up regularly.

"It has been so pleasant to hear the change in workplace conversations!" says Paige. "Everyone has started to use their standing desks more often with the encouragement of 'stand o'clock'. We have seen an increase of walking meetings and more conversations sharing healthy eating tips and recipes."

