

Educational Resources,  
Programs & Planning

Bonkers Beat's excellent rating celebrations

# Hitting the right note

By Freya Horton Andrews

In early 2018, the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) recognised Bonkers Beat Music & Childcare Aspendale's innovative curriculum and exceptional learning outcomes with an 'Excellent' rating – the highest designation that an early learning centre can achieve under the National Quality Framework.

**B**onkers Beat Music Kinder & Childcare Aspendale was Melbourne's only privately operated early learning centre to receive the rating. Bonkers Beat first opened as a sessional kindergarten in Brighton East, Melbourne, and Bonkers Beat Music Kinder & Childcare Aspendale opened in 2009. The service prides itself on a unique approach to early learning, which is founded on the developmental benefits of music.

*Belonging Early Years Journal* spoke to Galina Zenin, Founder and Program Director at Bonkers Beat Music Kinder & Childcare Aspendale, about the centre's achievement and philosophies.

**Belonging Early Years Journal (B):** What does this Excellent rating mean to the centre, and how do children benefit from this standard of teaching?

**Galina Zenin (GZ):** We are proud that our programs have been recognised at this level, and for the opportunity this now presents us to be able to reach more children with the benefits of the Bonkers Beat programs.

At Bonkers Beat, music is an integral part of all lessons, including physical movement, languages, literacy and numeracy. It has been proven that there is no other art form, hobby or activity that can produce the same level of lasting neurological benefits as music, which engages both halves of the brain equally.

When music and wellbeing are the foundation of learning, children show dramatic developmental progress, and improve their social and emotional skills, as well as overall wellbeing. The Bonkers Beat program uses the highly regarded teaching approaches of composers Zoltan Kodály and Carl Orff; incorporates Australian sign language, which promotes language acquisition and retention; and is beneficial for bilingual children, and those with speech or developmental delays.

The daily curriculum also incorporates yoga and meditation practices to help children to build resilience and self-esteem, and increase focus, energy levels and awareness of their bodies.

**B:** What distinguishes Bonkers Beat Music Kinder & Childcare Aspendale from other services?

**GZ:** Bonkers Beat is the first dedicated music kinder in Australia that provides a holistic approach to learning, and has music and wellness at the foundation of its curriculum. The program empowers

children, educators and parents by embedding music, yoga and meditation practices into the daily curriculum. We believe that this enhances children's wellbeing and instils a lifelong love of learning.

Educators guide children through daily wellness-focused activities, including breathing exercises, positive affirmations, stretching and yoga, mindfulness and meditation, music making, singing and dancing, and exercise to release emotion.

Critical to the success of the program is specialised and ongoing training for staff, which includes national wellness summits for professional and personal development, regular workshops, and a range of online resources.

**B:** Describe how Bonkers Beat achieves excellence across the seven quality areas that ACECQA assesses.

**GZ:** The Bonkers Beat philosophy is built on seven main areas, which we call stones. They are: music, wellbeing, creativity, relationships, environments, sustainability and engagement. The seven areas of our philosophy reflect and support all seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard, and the outcomes for children are consistently evaluated and linked to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The Bonkers Beat program draws on the progressive approach of Reggio Emilia, and the philosophies of Howard Gardner and Maria Montessori. According to Gardner, there are at least eight types of intelligence, of which musical intelligence is the first to become functional in children.

We encourage parents to engage in music and wellbeing practices at home with the support of educational resources, an online forum, a weekly blog and fortnightly newsletters, as well as invitations to join us for Adventure Days – weekly three-hour visits for children to have hands-on experiences with nature and the local environment, including local wetlands, beaches, parks and schools.

The Environmental Sustainability Program encourages children to be socially responsible and show respect for their environment by conserving water and electricity, re-using paper and recycling.

**B:** How does the centre foster collaborative relationships with families and the community?

**GZ:** Parental engagement is a very important element of the program. Parents are invited to get involved in many activities at Bonkers Beat, and are





encouraged to continue the music and wellbeing practices at home. Families are provided with take-home resources, including music, yoga and meditation CDs, to promote our service's culture as a lifestyle.

We also incorporate aspects of families' native languages and cultures into the curriculum, encourage parents to get involved in decision-making and policy reviews, and invite them to share their personal skills with the children (such as reading, cooking and gardening).

Bonkers Beat also has collaborative partnerships with many local organisations, including primary schools, aged-care services, businesses and libraries, which also provide regular excursion opportunities for children to explore their local neighbourhood.

**B:** How has Bonkers Beat demonstrated sector leadership?


**GZ:** Bonkers Beat is a sector leader that shares its practices and programs with other education and childcare services. Bonkers Beat's educational

programs are successfully run in other childcare centres across the country, and have been incorporated into more than 25 centres across Australia, improving the wellbeing of more than 2420 children, 2205 families and 3470 educators.

The program is sustainable as it is embedded into the curriculum and is practiced daily as a way of life. It can be replicated in remote areas as it is accessible online, and can be implemented at any preschool, kindergarten, early learning centre or school.

**B:** What does the future hold for Bonkers Beat?

**GZ:** By empowering and training more educators in different services across Australia, the benefits of Bonkers Beat's programs can reach more children. These include privately operated early learning centres, kindergartens, and before and after school care.

The aim is to equip educators, families and children with resources to use music as a language and lifestyle practice daily to enhance learning outcomes and overall wellbeing. 

**For more information, visit [www.bonkersbeat.com](http://www.bonkersbeat.com).**