**[Catharine Hydon]:** So, I want to go now to Kate again and ask Kate a little bit more about the educator's role here. So, we've thought lots about the conceptual ideas, but can we move it into how educators might participate in that? So, I think, hopefully, we can hear you well, now, Kate, so I think you've got that microphone in a good position, so thank you for that. But, Kate, can you take us into that sort of opportunity to talk about the educator's role?

**[Kate Noble]:** Sure. You know, everyone will have very different ideas and experiences to share on this, I think, and probably some of those experiences will be around one-off events that could have been really meaningful and connections that were built on by a service and by families, or perhaps they just ended up being one-offs, you know. And you were talking about visiting aged care homes before, Catharine - you know, that's one that does spring to mind. You know, a connection between a kindergarten, for example, and an aged care home can be as straightforward as an annual visit. And the kids practise some songs and they sing some songs and everyone has a great time, you know, absolutely. But, you know, there are ways of building on that relationship that don't have to involve huge numbers of visits and they don't have to involve, you know, a huge amount of admin. But, you know, things like just talking about those relationships and weaving those in as kind of consistent themes and, you know, perhaps, you know, a session where the kids think about the artwork that they're producing and who might like what, and, you know, send some of those down. So, it's really...what we're not suggesting here is that...this is about the volume of effort and the number of connections. It's really about the quality of those connections and how we think about them and how we build on existing connection and really focus in on how they can be made meaningful to kids. And, you know, another great idea is to ask the kids, because they'll often have some brilliant ideas.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Yes.

**[Kate Noble]:** And they'll want to build on this instinctively. So, it's not about doing more. It's about thinking about, you know, how we can do them a bit better and in a way that's really meaningful to the children and to the members of the communities that you're connecting with. You know, something you said earlier...In fact, I had this down as the one thing that I really, really wanted to talk about tonight that you've already touched on, Catharine.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Oh, good! We're in agreement. (LAUGHS)

**[Kate Noble]:** You know, I've been doing some work lately looking at connection, contribution, citizenship and engagement right throughout the whole education system, from early childhood through to early adulthood, and something that I found really fascinating is that so much of the language is around, you know, supporting and equipping children to become active citizens and to be something in the future, at some point in the future. And this sense that actually even in early childhood, children have the capacity and interest and capabilities to BE citizens, to be...

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Now.

**[Kate Noble]:** And to be active participants right now.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** And, yes, absolutely. But how they engage and connect and contribute changes over time and the restrictions on how they can engage and contribute in communities and in more formalised political systems, for example, certainly changes. But looking...you know, and this comes back to Hart's participation ladder as well. You know, looking at how we can construct our classroom and our early learning centres and our children's centres in ways that reflect the real world and enable kids to actively contribute and participate to how decisions are made and how things are run and how things work, you know, is perhaps the most important lesson of all that any child will ever learn. It's the lived experience in their own setting of how decisions are made and how negotiation happens and how you settle on an outcome and how you all contribute to building on that outcome and making it happen. And I think there's probably lots of people, Kate, who are all nodding fiercely now and also feeling very supported about some of the decisions that they've made about leaving the gates of the early childhood service, going to visit the library and being a part of those community connections and shaping what happens in those communities. And I think if you haven't explored that, everybody, the people who are online now listening away, this body of work might be something to dive into to support your thinking, because you can hear how much thinking is going on here -some reflective practice about challenging your ideas of who children are and thinking about how we might understand that as children learn and grow. It's a really powerful reminder, Kate. Thank you for that.

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