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The voice for parents and service providers

PRE SCHOOL MATTERS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR LIFE
TERM FOUR 2016

ELAA CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
AND DEVELOPMENT
FOR 2017

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS
PART 2



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Welcome to the Term 4 edition of *Preschool Matters*.

With the year's end approaching, it's time for ELAA members to celebrate and reflect on what has been achieved throughout the year and think about the challenges ahead.

2016 has been a productive year for ELAA, particularly with the approval and implementation of VECTEA 2016 and our campaign during the lead-up to the Federal election on key issues such as funding 15 hours; the National Quality Framework review; and the Federal Government's proposed *Jobs for Families* childcare assistance package.

ELAA will continue to focus on these issues in 2017 – and we will continue to advocate for the sector on key issues including the next stage in the implementation of the Victorian Government's Education State initiative.

As 2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the formation of ELAA (formerly Kindergarten Parents Victoria) this special end-of-year edition of *Preschool Matters* features a brief history of the Association along with reflections from former KPV/ELAA leaders (pages 8 and 9). On pages 12 to 15 members can preview ELAA's 2017

Professional Development program which is packed with practical and affordable professional development programs for service staff and management.

Also in this edition, Early Childhood consultant, Karen Glancy, reflects on the topic of end-of-year celebrations and considers what and why we celebrate at this time of year (see pages 10 and 11). There's a great story from ELAA member, Windsor Community Children's Centre Co-op, on their Community Garden Project – a program designed to assist families engage with the service's community (see pages 18 and 19).

Service managers should also read part two in our series on implementing the new Child Safe Standards on pages 22 and 23 to ensure you are on-track with implementing the standards in your service by 1 January 2017. We also have a Q&A with the Victorian Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, on pages 16 and 17 plus a great feature on Road Safety Education reader resources on pages 20 and 21.

Finally, I would like to confirm my intention to step down as ELAA President after a hugely enjoyable and challenging three-year term. I will be remaining on the Board and actively supporting the Board's chosen successor, our Secretary, Lee Cath.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with all my colleagues, with staff and with members in this role – and I look forward to continuing to pursue the interests of our sector, which I believe are best served by having a strong, independent peak body as our voice and our champion.

Jo Geurts President, ELAA

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Cover: Billie: four-year-old kindergarten. Image: Phil Roubin.



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NEWS & EVENTS



ELAA joins the 'fudge' revolution in Canberra

On Monday 17 October, ELAA CEO, Shane Lucas, joined Early Learning: Everyone Benefits campaign partners to deliver close to 700 'Don't Fudge Early Learning' boxes to Federal Politicians at Parliament House in Canberra.

Aside from containing some yummy homemade fudge, the boxes featured messages and facts about why resourcing Early Learning in Australia is vital to our children's learning and the prosperity of the nation.

Image: ECA CEO, Samantha Page, and ELAA CEO, Shane Lucas, delivering the 'don't fudge early learning' message in Canberra.



Former ELAA President speaks up for children

Danny Pearson, Member for Essendon and former ELAA Board President, gave an impassioned speech in the Victorian Legislative Assembly during October in which he commended the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Oversight and Enforcement of Child Safe Standards) Bill 2016 to the House.

Danny referred to his time on the Board of Kindergarten Parents Victoria / Early Learning Association Australia (2007–13). By serving on the Board, Danny said he began to develop an understanding of the early learning policy area and how a child's development in the early years impacts profoundly on his or her later life and ultimately impacts society and the economy.



Early Learning awards opportunity

Nominations are now open for the 2017 Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards.

The awards honour early learning educators and services across Australia plus there are State category awards.

This year, a number of ELAA member services received awards in the 2016 State categories including:

Early Childhood Director of the Year (VIC/TAS) – Toni Lepore, Benwerrin Kindergarten, Burwood East.

Early Childhood Educator of the Year (VIC/TAS) – Melindie Lane, Seawinds Community Kindergarten, Rosebud.

Early Childhood Service of the Year (VIC/TAS) – Indigo North Health OSHC, Rutherglen.

For more information on how to nominate go to australianfamily.com.au/earlyeducationandcareawards/nominations

Albert Park Preschool make final of Worksafe Awards

Congratulations to ELAA member, Albert Park Preschool, on being one of two finalists in the 2016 Worksafe Awards in the category of *Commitment to Workplace Health and Wellbeing*.

The winners were announced at a Gala dinner on October 7 and while Albert Park didn't take the final prize they did exceptionally well to get as far as they did.

Albert Park created a new role of Wellbeing Officer and established a wellbeing sub-committee to oversee their 'Wellbeing for All' policy and initiatives such as walking tours, training and professional development options with a health focus, OHS, and mindfulness as part of meeting agendas.



McArthur Early Childhood Volunteer of the Year Awards 2016

Congratulations to Elissa Simmons, President of the Glenroy West Kindergarten Committee of Management, on being selected as the winner of the 2016 McArthur Early Childhood Volunteer of the Year Award.

Elissa was selected from a competitive list of finalists for her organisational skills, hands-on leadership style and positive attitude – all qualities that played a big part in Glenroy West avoiding closure when faced with having to vacate their long-established site in 2013. Elissa assembled a coalition of staff, parents, local businesses and community organisations to source a new site and build an entirely new kindergarten from scratch in an extremely short time frame and with little in the way of funding.

Other finalists included:

Sarah Gofton – Fyans Park Kindergarten

Cecilie Munro – Goulburn Region Preschool Association and Murchison Preschool

Sheena Teeder – Albert Park Preschool

Christen Watkins – Evesham Road Kindergarten

Honourable mentions were also awarded to Katie Tonkin (Undera Kindergarten), Helen Delmo (East Sunshine Kindergarten), and Laura Coomber (Woodbine Road Preschool).

Our thanks to early learning recruitment specialist and ELAA preferred partner, McArthur, for supporting the Awards.

Image: McArthur Victorian State Manager, Matt Mullins, presents Elissa Simmons (President – Glenroy West Kindergarten) with the 2016 McArthur Early Childhood Volunteer of the Year Award.

CEO's REPORT



Term 4 is a time of transitions with educators and families preparing children for school. It is also the time of year when ELAA engages with members and stakeholders as we develop our annual budget submissions to State and Federal Governments.

ELAA has a diverse membership base across the independent, volunteer parent managed service sector and Early Years Management (EYM) organisations (formerly known as cluster managers). Our budget submissions are informed by research and by the feedback we receive throughout the year; through members' contact with our Member Services team; and through our regular consultations and member reference groups.

First cab off the rank is our submission to the Victorian Government. Through direct engagement and in-depth conversations with a cross-section of members, we are developing a submission that seeks both immediate and long-term funding and policy initiatives by government that will support a quality, sustainable early learning service system that will truly deliver on the Government's aspirations to build an "Education State".

We are also participating in the development of budget submissions by other peak bodies such as the Victorian Council of Social Services and Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare where we put forward the priority issues of our members, and the early childhood education and care sector as a whole.

Here is a snapshot of some of the emerging priorities to be communicated to the Victorian Government:

Keep Funding 15 Hours

With Federal Government funding of one-third of the 15 hours of preschool education due to conclude at the end of 2017, the sector is once again experiencing uncertainty about what lies ahead. Along with other sector partners, ELAA has campaigned for over a decade to secure an ongoing funding commitment from the Commonwealth and we are continuing to advocate to the Federal Government through our Keep Funding 15 hours campaign www.keepfunding15hours.org.au

The State Government has made a pledge to make Victoria the Education State and has repeatedly acknowledged that the best start for children is dependent on their participation in quality early childhood education. The partnership between the State and Federal Governments is critical to delivering this, with each level of government having an important role to play. Our submission to the State Government will advocate strongly that we need their strong support and advocacy to maintain 15 hours of preschool in the year before school.

Early Years Management Framework

The recently released EYM Framework articulates the Government's vision for the strengthened management and delivery of early years services. In our discussions with EYM members, it is clear that the vision provided by the Framework is supported – but that the real challenge will be ensuring Early Years Managers are enabled to fully implement the framework and to drive quality outcomes for children and families.

The Framework raises a number of issues:

- many organisations are not able to provide services to kindergartens within the existing funding envelope and are dependent on being able to cross-subsidise their costs from other programs or make savings that can diminish capacity to deliver quality programs. This is less than optimal and it is not sustainable in the long-term.
- EYM organisations want to work with parents and families to create best practice engagement and governance structures that will deliver quality learning and development outcomes for

children. To do this also requires additional funding support from government. Our submission argues strongly that the new Framework must be positioned for success.

Reform environment

Members have also spoken about the challenges of managing change through the Government's *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children* initiative, and the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, both of which are reshaping expectations of services. These reforms place a strong emphasis on the role of universal services with a potentially broadened range of responsibilities. Priorities identified include:

- increasing the capacity of secondary and tertiary services such as family and child welfare, child protection and specialist disability services to meet the demand of families and children in need
- creating opportunities for ECEC staff to connect in meaningful ways with these services
- facilitating access for vulnerable families to early childhood education and care services.

Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards provide services with a framework to promote the safety and wellbeing of children. It is expected over time that organisational capacity to prevent and respond to instances of child abuse will be built. We are especially mindful of the challenge this may pose for kindergartens managed by independent parent committees, and our submission calls on the State Government to provide tailored support so that services are able to fulfil their obligations.

Our submissions are made on behalf of members and we are always keen to hear your views. Please contact ELAA if you would like to raise an issue as part of the State or Federal Budget Submission or in relation to other advocacy and member support activities.

Shane Lucas, CEO, ELAA

REGS IN FOCUS

This regular feature focuses on specific Education and Care Services Regulations to ensure that services and staff are clear about their responsibilities



Legislation, regulations and funding in focus

As we approach the end of the year, early childhood funded service providers need to be aware of their obligations in regards to a range of legislative and funding requirements.

Funding agreement

Funded service providers have signed an agreement with the Department of Education and Training (DET) that requires them to abide by a number of conditions in return for funding. One of these requirements includes providing a kindergarten program offering at least 15 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year or a minimum of 600 hours per year, planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. Services should consider the impact on your total hours before cancelling sessions or deciding to close the service before the end of term.

Child free days

Industrial Agreements that cover the employment of teachers and educators include provision for child free days (for organisational purposes), which are usually the last day of the year and the first day of the year (VECTEA 2016, Clause 35 or VECTAA 2009, Clause 15.1.2). Employers will need to consider the implementation of these requirements when making end-of-year arrangements.

Gifts and bonuses

Although it is important to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all those involved in the provision of the program at the service, employers and managers of early childhood services should carefully consider whether or not excessive gifts or bonuses to employees/committee members are consistent with managing a not-for-profit association which also relies on parent fees and fundraising to balance the budget.

The Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012, clause 83 (2) states that 'An office holder of an incorporated association must not make improper use of that office ... to gain an advantage for himself or herself or any other person'. Committee members should keep this in mind when considering how they would like to celebrate the end of their term of office and achievements for the year.

Employers who decide to give a gift or bonus should be aware of potential tax implications of gifts and bonuses.

Bonuses, in the form of payment, are part of an employee's taxable income and must be taxed at the time the payment is made. Therefore they must be processed through the payroll system.

Gifts may be subject to Fringe Benefits Tax depending on the value and frequency of the gift. A minor gift is exempt from fringe benefits tax. A minor gift has a value less than \$300 and is given infrequently. The tax office does not specify what constitutes frequent but clearly an annual Christmas gift is

infrequent. The Australian Taxation Office website www.ato.gov.au has more information on fringe benefits tax.

While offering bonuses and other one-off financial rewards is a way of recognising hard work and achievements they do not always build a motivated work environment or enrich the employment relationship in the long term. The culture of exemplary performance is achieved by continuous recognition and reward not just a bonus at the end of the year.

Employers should consider and identify actions that will motivate staff, make them feel rewarded and recognised for the effort they make. A reward and recognition program should also bring benefits to the children and the program.

There are many creative ways in which this can be done such as:

1. Encouraging great performance from staff: when staff give exemplary performance it is vital that you tell them. It is important for staff to know that their employer appreciates their hard work and effort. Most employees are grateful for positive feedback and encouragement; this is vital for good morale.
2. Investing in the future of staff: contribution to professional development is a great investment in your employees and should be part of any recognition and reward program. You may also want to consider providing additional resources for the service to make the workplace better for staff and children. This is an investment in the future of your service and an investment in staff.
3. Recognising and celebrating achievements: it is important to celebrate good performance and recognise achievements with an event that is suitable for the individual employee being rewarded. An award may also be offered to an employee for exemplary performance and valuable achievements.

ELAA members should contact the Member Services team if they would like to discuss any of the information in this article.

Make a difference to a child's future.

Over 60,000 children access kindergarten programs across Victoria each year. Many of these children miss out on the opportunity to attend a quality kindergarten program in the year before they commence school because their parents are unable to afford the fees.

Since 1997 the Early Childhood Education Foundation has helped children from families experiencing financial difficulties to access a funded kindergarten program and enjoy the same opportunities to succeed in life as any other child. You can make a difference to a child's future by donating to the Foundation.

HOW TO DONATE

The ECEF contributes approximately \$350 per term to a recipient's kindergarten fees – allowing a child to attend at little or no cost.

All contributions will be issued with a receipt and donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

If you would like to donate please:

1. Download the donation form from ela.org.au/ecef
2. Print out and complete the form
3. Return the form via post or email (see form for address details).

Alternatively, call ELAA on 03 9489 3500.

Jack's parents, John and Suzie, value the importance of early childhood education for their children. They witnessed the positive effects of attending kindergarten on their eldest child, Katie, as her confidence grew prior to starting school.

They wanted the same experience for Jack but a cancer diagnosis for Suzie meant that she could not work and John had to take time off to support her during treatment which made meeting kindergarten fees difficult.

Assistance from the ECEF meant that Jack could continue from the 3-year-old program into the 4-year-old program during 2015–16 which helped to reduce the stress on Jack's family. It also meant that Jack could continue learning and avoid the potential effects on his social and emotional development that could result from being isolated from his peers.

* names changed to protect applicant's privacy.

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OF MAKING QUALITY
EARLY LEARNING POSSIBLE
FOR CHILDREN WHO MAY
OTHERWISE MISS OUT

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\$128,000
WORTH OF KINDERGARTEN
FEES SUPPORT PROVIDED

Q&A



“ *The Education and Care Services Regulations 2011 requires the approved provider of an education and care service to review and revise the QIP for the service at least annually and at any time when directed by the Regulatory Authority.*

Pat Rustad, ELAA Member Services Officer

What is a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)?

The QIP is a document that all early childhood service providers are required to have in place as outlined in the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. The purpose of this important document is to encourage systematic self-appraisal and continuous improvement of service delivery. Reviewing current practice will highlight and confirm the service's individual strengths and provides direction for ongoing continuous improvement. The provider is encouraged to develop a QIP that reflects the unique circumstances of the service and its community. Educators, children, families and the community should all be involved in the self-assessment.

Reviewing your Quality Improvement Plan

The Education and Care Services Regulations 2011 requires the approved provider of an education and care service to review and revise the QIP for the service at least annually and at any time when directed by the Regulatory Authority. Regular reviews will ensure the QIP is a dynamic and evolving document. It is recommended that services include the QIP as a regular agenda item at both committee and staff meetings. This will ensure the reflections of educators and the contributions of all staff, families and children are considered and feed into the continuous process of service improvement. Committees of Management are also reminded to include the QIP, as one of the many relevant documents, in their handover to new committee members each year.

Questioning how and why certain practices occur is the most effective way to critically examine all aspects of service practice. The Guide to the National Quality Standard includes a set of reflective questions that serve as prompts to explore actual practice at the service. The questions can assist the service to think about and review how and why things are done while reflecting on specific practices to determine the:

- effectiveness of practice for all children and families
- relevance of the practice to the service and its stakeholders
- equity and fairness of the practice for all children, families and educators (ACECQA, Guide to Developing a Quality Improvement Plan, p 6).

Quality improvement plans have the greatest potential for improving service quality when responsibility for development and review is shared between the management team, staff members, families and children.

**Does your service need help with a governance or management issue?
Contact ELAA on (03) 9489 3500, rural 1300 730 119 or elaa@elaa.org.au**

PUTTING A FACE TO THE VOICE



James Gardener joined ELAA in May 2016. New to the Early Learning sector but with 15 years experience in communications and marketing, James wields the pen on eNews, Preschool Matters, the Annual Report, campaign collateral, and other communications to keep members and media up-to-date with the many ELAA services and resources on offer. He is also co-coordinator of the Early Childhood Education Conference.

My work day entails... writing, editing, proof-reading, planning, coming up with ideas, pretending I know how to take photos, organising, and more writing.

I am most inspired by... my kids – I just love watching them grow and become more sensible than me!

What I like most about my job... the times when I manage to come up with neat communications solutions that turn complex information into messages and content that can be easily and quickly understood by ELAA members.

If I wasn't doing this job I'd be... forever claiming to be “working on an idea for a novel!” or fishing in the Mitta Mitta River (probably more fishing to be honest!).

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SERVICE TO MEMBERS

Kindergarten Parents Victoria (now Early Learning Association Australia) was formed in the early 1990s to ensure that kindergarten education thrived in Victoria.

The organisation sprang from the vision and dedication of two key founders – Marg Stephens and Karen Weston who, with other parents passionate about the right of children to access high quality education, formed a group called *Parent Action for Kindergartens* over 25 years ago.

The group worked with Victorian members of Parliament; the Office of Preschool and Childcare; and a variety of organisations such as the Australian Early Childhood Association and the Anglican and Uniting Churches Early Childhood Industrial Council toward the formation of a State-wide organisation. In May 1991, KPV was officially launched by the then Premier, Joan Kirner, at the Collingwood Children's Centre.

From initially representing parent volunteer kindergarten committees to a current membership representing the broader early childhood sector, ELAA continues the mission of KPV and has grown in its capacity to support the needs of members through advocacy; industrial relations and management advice; professional development programs; training for committees; management resources; plus a range of member benefits and sector specific communications.

MILESTONES

- **1989/90:** Marg Stephens and Karen Weston form Parent Action for Kindergartens (PAK) to ensure Victorian kindergartens survive the economic recession.
- **1990:** October – December, PAK work with parliamentarians; Office of Preschool and Childcare; employer, and other early learning organisations on the formation of a State-wide organisation.
- **1991:** May, Kindergarten Parents Victoria (KPV) officially launched by Victorian Premier, Joan Kirner.
- **1992:** First paid KPV staff appointed – Executive Manager, Kathy Boyle, and Committee Support Coordinator, Sue Morrow.
- **1994:** Kindergarten committees now have complex administrative responsibilities changing from a salary subsidy model to per capita funding.
- **1995:** ECMS (Early Childhood Management Services) established in response to local governments need for KPV to manage preschool enrolments and fee collections.
- **1997:** First Kindergarten Parents Victoria/Lady Gowrie Conference for Early Childhood staff and committee members.
- **2001:** Kirby Review acknowledges administrative burden faced by parent-run kindergarten committees.
- **2003:** ECMS formally separated from KPV. Funding to support cluster management of kindergartens introduced.
- **2009:** Australian governments agree to implement national changes to improve quality and consistency of early learning and care.
- **2012:** National Quality Framework takes effect. KPV members vote to become Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA).
- **2013:** All Australian four-year-olds funded to access 15 hours of kindergarten a week (for 40 weeks a year) delivered by a tertiary qualified early childhood teacher.



KPV staff circa 1997.



1992: KPV Board celebrating KPV's first birthday.



2011: KPV 20th Anniversary (L-R) Karen Weston (KPV founding member and Board member), Carol Allen (Executive Director 1993–2002), Danny Pearson (Board member/President 2007–13) and Emma King (CEO 2009–13).

“KPV for a long time was seen by other key players in the sector as the new kid on the block and I think over the years we ruffled a few feathers. Advocacy and promoting the value of Early Childhood education became a key strategy as we grew and evolved into a mature organisation.”

Carol Allen, Inaugural Committee member, Executive Director 1993–2002, KPV/ELAA Life Member, now CEO, Sapphire International Holdings

“The diverse skills, clear vision and commitment of Board members combined with the practice knowledge of the staff and their ability to connect and respond to the needs of the organisation’s members has made ELAA the vibrant and relevant organisation it is today.”

Pauline Ogden, Board Member 2005–2011, KPV/ELAA Life Member, now early learning consultant

“I loved every minute of my time at ELAA. I had the opportunity to work with some of the greatest people on one of the most interesting policy areas going around.”

Danny Pearson, Board member 2007–2013, President 2010–2013, now State MP for Essendon



Circa 2009: KPV staff member, Glenda Glover, delivers a ‘Solutions Project’ briefing to parent committee members.



1999: former Victorian Premier, Joan Kirner, reads to children during Preschool Foundation day.

“The word I think of most when I look back on my wonderful time at KPV is ‘passion’. The passion of our Board members, the tremendous and passionate KPV staff who always went beyond what was asked of them and of course the amazingly passion filled Committees of kindergartens across the State.”

Gerard Mansour, Industrial Relations Manager 1996–2002, CEO 2002–2006, KPV/ELAA Life Member, now Commissioner for Senior Victorians

“It was a time of significant and long standing change with the introduction of quality standards and the overdue true recognition of the incredible value of early childhood education. Changing our name from KPV to ELAA honoured the founding goals of supporting volunteers at local kindergartens while recognising our important role as the voice of parents and providers of early childhood education at a state and national level.”

Emma King, CEO 2009–2013, now CEO, VCOSS



2006: Make Kindergarten a Priority Victorian Election Campaign billboard.



Preschool Matters circa late 1990s.



REFLECTING ON CELEBRATING

The end of the year is on the horizon with the usual flurry of celebrations and events within early learning services. Karen Glancy considers what and why we celebrate at this time of year...

As term four progresses, many educators are turning their attention to transition reports, summative assessments and planning for the new year ahead. The end of year is a reflective time where questions such as “what has been achieved?” and “what are the plans and goals for the new year?” are pondered. The ending and beginning of a new year also sparks the conversation of ‘celebrations’. Christmas celebrations, kindergarten graduations and end-of-year concerts are some of the most common celebrations held at this time. But these are not the only celebrations experienced in the early years; children’s milestones, educator’s successes, birthdays, remembrance days and cultural celebrations are some of the other events that are celebrated.

Although there can be a buzz and excitement to celebrations, others can bring a level of stress and conflict for educators, children and families. How often do we reflect on why and how we celebrate certain events, or why we are not celebrating others? A colleague recently described a moment when an Early Years Teacher had begun discussions in a staff meeting about the Christmas activities they were planning – this was in August! While planning ahead and developing learning intentions are important, why is Christmas privileged with so much time, preparation and resources? Are other events and celebrations given the same time and effort and planned so far in advance? Who are the events and celebrations really for?

Whilst ceasing or banning any particular event or celebration is not the answer, we do need to consider what we are privileging with time and resources. We need to ensure we don’t revert back to tokenistic activities, the use of template artworks or taken for granted practices, but that we consider what we want the children to do, know and understand about particular events, celebrations or topics. Celebrations are an opportunity to bring communities together and it is crucial that children are supported to be active contributors in the planning and execution of celebrations. Sheir’s (2001) *ladder of participation* invites us to reflect and explore how children participate in our programs and encourages us to take more opportunities for children to participate in genuine and meaningful ways.

When provided the space, encouragement and resources, children are more than capable of exploring ways that celebrations can go beyond the expected and support inclusiveness of all. Danielle Seymour, from South Melbourne Mission Kindergarten shares a story of how a new tradition of making birthday posters for children on their birthdays began.

“A child overheard me talking to a family and learning that it was another child’s birthday, the child decided it would be kind to draw a birthday cake for the birthday child, this led to a small group of children working together to make a birthday sign. This was a celebration for us! We don’t have cakes at kinder due to a no sugar policy but we certainly acknowledge the child and we value kindness, we talk of it often. The children have chosen to continue to decorate a poster for each child’s special day. The children do sing happy birthday and we acknowledge the importance of the day and the child, not so much the cake.”

In another service, Debbie Roper, from GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten explains how children in their four-year-old program are learning about each other in her term newsletter to families. “The children have really been enjoying this and it is a fantastic way of acknowledging that we may have different customs or beliefs but that is what makes our group so rich and special. We have also been reading books about Australia’s history such as *Sorry, Sorry* – a beautiful book about reconciliation written in a way that children can easily relate. We had such an insightful conversation while reading the book. We discussed how it feels when you are told to leave your place of comfort as the ‘first people’ were told to leave their homes. They related this to how they feel when someone says ‘go away’ to a friend or ‘you can’t play here’. They talked about how acknowledging your actions and asking for forgiveness so that you can ‘be friends again’ is so important.”

Many of the families from GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten have shared important parts of their family culture and tradition with the children and educators this year. Debbie acknowledges that this has created a sense of belonging and community at the kindergarten.

So perhaps it’s time to rethink our celebrations and events? By moving away from traditional concerts, and the more recent graduation ceremonies we can ensure our celebrations are inclusive of all children and families. Celebrating the successes of a learning community, such as reaching a sustainability goal, or simply celebrating the year’s learning, enables us to reflect on the work we have done and keeps us focused on the future plans we have for our learning community. Children are powerful decision makers and should be encouraged to plan and execute events that are inclusive of their peers. If they know a peer has a fear or worry, they may find solutions to this. Not every party needs a clown. Not every Christmas celebration needs a Santa. Every celebration should be unique, a reflection of the children, their learning and the community they live in.

Karen Glancy is an early childhood trainer, consultant and mentor with extensive experience and is a regular presenter in ELAA’s professional development program.



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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN 2017

FOR EDUCATORS, EDUCATIONAL LEADERS AND MANAGERS



Strategies for improving participation and inclusion of children with disability

Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2

Presenter: Yooralla

Date: Friday, 3 March 2017

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: to be confirmed

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Working with vulnerable children and families

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6
APST: 1.3, 3.7, 4.1, 6.2, 7.3

Presenter: Children's Protection Society

Date: Tuesday, 7 March

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Safety – not just child's play

Quality Area: 3, 4 & 7
APST: 4.4, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4

Presenter: Zora Marko & Emma Morgan

Date: Tuesday, 14 March

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$323.50 members \$367.50 non-members



Developing relationships as the foundation of the curriculum in infant/toddler learning environments

Quality Area: 1, 3, 5 & 6
APST: 1.2, 1.5, 3.5, 4.1, 6.4

Presenter: Karen Glancy

Date: Thursday, 16 March

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Darebin North East Community Hub, 35 Copernicus Crescent, Bundoora. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Going deeper with the revised VEYLDF

Quality Area: 1, 5, 6 & 7
APST: 2.3, 3.6, 7.1, 7.2

Presenter: Heather Barnes

Date: Friday, 24 March

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Positive behaviour guidance for 3–5 year olds

Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6
APST: 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 4.3

Presenter: Jo Lange

Date: Monday, 27 March

Time: 6.30pm – 9.00pm

Venue: Hobson's Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Parade, Altona. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



New frontiers for planning: taking assessment for learning to the next level

Quality Area: 1, 6 & 7
APST: 2.1, 2.2, 3.6, 5.1, 5.4, 7.2

Presenter: Catharine Hydon

Date: Friday, April 21st

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Digital technology in the early years

Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 2.6, 4.5, 6.2, 6.4

Presenter: Daniel Donahoo

Date: Thursday, 27 April

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Hobson's Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Parade, Altona. Free parking on site

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



What is Autism Spectrum Disorder and Positive Behaviour Support – an overview

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2

Presenter: ASPECT

Date: Monday, 1 May

Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

Venue: To be confirmed

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



Collaboration in teams: the make or break of greatness in teams

Quality Area: 1, 4 & 7
APST: 1.2, 6.2, 6.3, 7.4

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Friday, 5 May

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Digital technology in the early years

Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 2.6, 3.4, 4.5, 6.2, 6.4

Presenter: Daniel Donahoo

Date: Tuesday, 9 May

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Eastern Hub Geelong, 285a McKillop Street, East Geelong. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Using positive relationships and the EYLF to plan for and support children with challenging behaviours

Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6
APST: 1.3, 3.5, 4.1, 4.3, 6.2

Presenter: Children's Protection Society

Date: Thursday, 11 May

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Anthony Semann



Health and wellbeing for early years professionals

Quality Area: 4 & 7
APST: 6.2, 6.3, 7.4

Presenter: Dr Lyn O'Grady

Date: Friday, 19 May

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough. Free parking on site

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Safety – not just child's play

Quality Area: 3, 4 & 7
APST: 4.4, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4

Presenter: Zora Marko & Emma Morgan

Date: Tuesday, 6 June

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).

Cost: \$323.50 members \$367.50 non-members



Exploring the EYLF – starting from the beginning

Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6
APST: 2.1, 2.3, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4

Presenter: Catharine Hydon

Date: Wednesday, 7 June

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Heather Barnes



Strategies to include physical education and wellness in the 1-5 years program

Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, & 5
APST: 1.1, 1.5, 3.3, 6.4

Presenter: Paul Pennisi

Date: Wednesday, 14 June

Time: 6.30am – 9.00pm

Venue: Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



Brave leadership in the everyday – living life on the edge

Quality Area: 4 & 7
APST: 2.3, 3.3, 6.1, 6.2, 7.4

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Friday, 16 June

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Knox Civic Centre, 511 Burwood Highway, Wantirna South. Free parking onsite (enter via Capital City Boulevard).

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Resilience, independence and self-esteem – a 3 to 5 year old focus

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5, & 6
APST: 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 6.3, 6.4

Presenter: Jo Lange

Date: Monday, 19 June

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Eastern Hub Geelong, 285a McKillop Street, East Geelong. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Indigenous perspectives in children's programs

Quality Area: 1, 5, & 6
APST: 1.4, 2.4, 6.2, 7.4

Presenter: Annette Sax (Yarn Strong Sista)

Date: Thursday, 22 June

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: To be confirmed

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

Sign-in for these sessions is 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the session.

Prior registration for all sessions is essential. Register at www.elaa.org.au/services_resources/training



Catharine Hydon

27 JUN Literacy, numeracy and science in the outdoors
Quality Area: 1 & 5
APST: 1.1, 2.5, 3.4, 6.2, 7.4

Presenter: Karen Glancy
Date: Tuesday, 27 June
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Hobson’s Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Parade, Altona. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

21 JUL Music and movement in early childhood programs
Quality Area: 1, 2 & 5
APST: 1.1, 2.1, 3.2, 3.4, 6.2

Presenter: Anne Belcher
Date: Friday, 21 July
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

25 JUL What is Autism Spectrum Disorder and Positive Behaviour Support – an overview

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2
Presenter: ASPECT
Date: Tuesday, 25 July
Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm
Venue: Hobson’s Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Parade, Altona. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members

28 JUL Myths and realities of documentation and planning
Quality Area: 1
APST: 2.3, 5.4, 5.5, 7.2

Presenter: Heather Barnes
Date: Friday, 28 July
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: To be confirmed
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

31 JUL Strategies for improving participation and inclusion of children with disability
Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2

Presenter: Yooralla
Date: Monday, 31 July
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

4 AUG Digital technology in the early years
Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 2.6, 3.4, 4.5, 6.2, 6.4

Presenter: Daniel Donahoo
Date: Friday, 4 August
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

9 AUG Strategies to include physical education and wellness in the 1–5 years program
Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, & 5
APST: 1.1, 1.5, 3.3, 6.4

Presenter: Paul Pennisi
Date: Wednesday, 9 August
Time: 6.30am – 9.00pm
Venue: Darebin North East Community Hub, 35 Copernicus Crescent, Bundoora. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members

16 AUG Resilience, independence and self-esteem – a 3 to 5 year old focus
Quality Area: 1, 2, 5, & 6
APST: 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 6.3, 6.4

Presenter: Jo Lange
Date: Wednesday, 16 August
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

22 AUG Indigenous perspectives in children’s programs
Quality Area: 1, 5, & 6
APST: 1.4, 2.4, 6.2, 7.4

Presenter: Annette Sax (Yarn Strong Sista)
Date: Tuesday, 22 August
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Eastern Hub Geelong, 285a McKillop Street, East Geelong. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

25 AUG Health and wellbeing for early years professionals
Quality Area: 4 & 7
APST: 6.2, 6.3, 7.4

Presenter: Dr Lyn O’Grady
Date: Friday, 25 August
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster. Free parking on site.
Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members

**Exploring curriculum and pedagogy***Quality Area: 1**APST: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.3, 6.2, 6.3, 7.4***Presenter:** Catharine Hydon**Date:** Thursday, 31 August**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** To be confirmed**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**Educational leadership – now I have the title what do I do next?***Quality Area: 1, 4 & 7**APST: 1.1, 2.1, 6.1, 6.3, 7.4***Presenter:** Anthony Semann**Date:** Wednesday, 6 September**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** To be confirmed**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**Music and movement in early childhood programs***Quality Area: 1, 2 & 5**APST: 1.1, 2.1, 3.2, 3.4, 6.2***Presenter:** Anne Belcher**Date:** Friday, 8 September**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** Hobson's Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Parade, Altona. Free parking on site.**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**Demystifying your assessment and rating visit***Quality Area: 1 to 7**APST: 6.2, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4***Presenter:** Heather Barnes**Date:** Monday, 11 September**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**Being an ethical professional – embedding ethics in our everyday practice***Quality Area 1 to 7**APST: 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2***Presenter:** Catharine Hydon**Date:** Tuesday, 19 September**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster. Free parking on site.**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**What is Autism Spectrum Disorder and Positive Behaviour Support – an overview***Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6**APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2***Presenter:** ASPECT**Date:** Wednesday, 20 September**Time:** 10.00am – 12.00pm**Venue:** Knox Civic Centre, 511 Burwood Highway, Wantirna South. Free parking onsite (enter via Capital City Boulevard).**Cost:** \$80 members \$95 non-members**Safety – not just child's play***Quality Area: 3, 4 & 7**APST: 4.4, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4***Presenter:** Zora Marko & Emma Morgan**Date:** Thursday, 21 September**Time:** 9.00am – 5.00pm**Venue:** To be confirmed**Cost:** \$323.50 members \$367.50 non-members**Positive behaviour guidance for 3 to 5 year olds***Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6**APST: 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 4.3***Presenter:** Jo Lange**Date:** Wednesday, 11 October**Time:** 6.30pm – 9.00pm**Venue:** Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster. Free parking on site.**Cost:** \$80 members \$95 non-members**Indigenous perspectives in children's programs***Quality Area: 1, 5, & 6**APST: 1.4, 2.4, 6.2, 7.4***Presenter:** Annette Sax (Yarn Strong Sista)**Date:** Monday, 16 October**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**Using positive relationships and the EYLF to plan for and support children with challenging behaviours***Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6**APST: 1.3, 3.5, 4.1, 4.3, 6.2***Presenter:** Children's Protection Society**Date:** Friday, 20 October**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**Strategies to include physical education and wellness in the 1–5 years program***Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, & 5**APST: 1.1, 1.5, 3.3, 6.4***Presenter:** Paul Pennisi**Date:** Wednesday, 1 November**Time:** 6.30pm – 9.00pm**Venue:** Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.**Cost:** \$80 members \$95 non-members**Working with vulnerable children and families***Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6**APST: 1.3, 3.7, 4.1, 6.2, 7.3***Presenter:** Children's Protection Society**Date:** Thursday, 16 November**Time:** 9.30am – 2.30pm**Venue:** Hobson's Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Parade, Altona. Free parking on site.**Cost:** \$175 members \$250 non-members**Safety – not just child's play***Quality Area: 3, 4 & 7**APST: 4.4, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4***Presenter:** Zora Marko & Emma Morgan**Date:** Friday, 24 November**Time:** 9.00am – 5.00pm**Venue:** Eastern Hub Geelong, 285a McKillop Street, East Geelong. Free parking on site.**Cost:** \$323.50 members \$367.50 non-members

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Q&A FEATURE

WITH THE MINISTER
FOR FAMILIES AND
CHILDREN AND
MINISTER FOR
YOUTH AFFAIRS –
JENNY MIKAKOS MP



Minister Mikakos and ELAA CEO, Shane Lucas.

How are your two portfolios – early childhood and children and families – working together?

I see the work of both departments being driven by the same objectives – to make sure all Victorian children are getting the support they need, when they need it, regardless of their circumstances. We know that our mainstream services offer enormous potential in terms of addressing disadvantage so it makes sense that the one minister oversee early childhood, child protection and youth affairs so that these services are working in concert to help Victorian families.

We want a system that fits in with families and not the other way around. This is ongoing work, but the aim is to develop a system of continuous support for children and families across this spectrum of services. This includes my departments working together to design service-level reforms, such as our new intensive in-home parenting support service, and take a shared approach to workforce development, as well as sharing information and examples of best practice.

Our two key reform pieces – Roadmap for Reform and the Education State – also intersect. The Roadmap is part of our broader efforts to tackle the priority social challenges and to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. It is helping us to shift the system towards early intervention and prevention, which is where the Education State reforms, which are strengthening early childhood services, come in.

What's on the agenda for the next year for your portfolio?

Our sector is in a critical phase: the public conversation has turned to the role early education and care plays in the lives of Victorians. It's our chance to push past common assumptions to talk about the tremendous value of quality early learning programs, and their potential to lift up kids to shore up bright futures for them.

The Victorian Government is running an ambitious reform agenda to address some of our most pressing social issues. We've invested and acted to address some of the conditions we know can lead to family violence, including working on a new intensive home-visiting service for families facing significant challenges.

Later this year, we'll be releasing our Education State – Early Childhood Development Reform Plan. Making Victoria the Education State is about investing in the early years to give all children a better start in life. We know that the first thousand days of a child's life are critical and that we have a rare opportunity to make a lasting impact on the direction of children's lives.

The needs of Victorian families are changing, and we are working to make sure we adapt with them. The sector is strong but there's always room for improvement, and I'm excited about the big-picture reforms we'll be bringing in. Stay tuned.

What do you see as the key opportunities for the sector?

Because our universal services have regular contact with families we can use the services to prevent and intervene in incidences of family violence.

For example, the maternal and child health service can identify risks at a very early stage, and connect people with additional support before problems are entrenched or reach a crisis point. We're creating a new intensive support service that will provide much greater support for children and parents experiencing significant challenges during pregnancy and a child's first years. The service will build parenting skills and help families create happy, safe and supportive home environments for their children.

We know that education about creating respectful relationships can help tackle the broader conditions that lead to family violence: attitudes around equality, gender and resilience inform behaviour, and the early years are when these attitudes take root.

We are developing training for up to 4000 early childhood educators to help children learn about respectful relationships through practical activities relevant to young children. This will mean teachers and educators will have the support they need to help children develop positive traits that last a lifetime.

What is your proudest achievement since taking on the EC portfolio?

It's hard to nominate only one thing!

Meeting the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence with real action was a landmark moment. The Royal Commission identified that prevention and early intervention are our best hope and strongest measure to make sure no more women or children are harmed in situations of family violence. The services we are providing to families in the early years of a child's life play a particularly important role and we have a once-in-a-generation chance of making the sorts of changes that puts our society on a different track. The reforms we've invested in and are delivering will make a real difference to many lives. There is still work to be done, but we've made a positive start.

I have to mention a few other achievements:

- The rural kinder funding from this year's budget, saving families and staff having to rely on fundraising



Minister Mikakos releases the revised Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework at the 2016 Early Childhood Education Conference.

- A \$60m investment into capital for early education infrastructure
- The kindergarten Pre Purchased Places (PPP) pilot, which has helped many children access kindergarten who would otherwise have missed out.

What are some of the key challenges that the Victorian Government foresees in ensuring that initiatives underpinning the Roadmap for Reform are supported by the mainstream service system?

The recent Royal Commission into Family Violence has far-reaching implications for children's and family services. The Royal Commission found that to address and prevent family violence, action must go beyond that taken by child protection services or those used by families in crisis. In fact, the Royal Commission highlighted that we can support our universal early childhood services to play a much stronger role in identifying family violence because these services have regular contact with so many families. This creates opportunities to identify risk and provide help early, giving us the greatest chance of ultimately eliminating family violence.

In light of the recent Federal election result, what is your view on the future of Commonwealth funding support for 15 hours of preschool beyond 2017 (being the life of the present National Partnership Agreement on Universal access to Early Childhood Education)?

All children deserve access to high-quality, affordable early education and care. Victoria stands alongside states and

territories across the country, calling for 15 hours of kindergarten to be funded and protected. The Prime Minister must end the uncertainty for Victorian parents and kinders and commit once and for all to funding 15 hours of kindergarten. We know that the quality of, and access to, early childhood education has significantly improved since 15 hours of kindergarten became the national standard. Having it enshrined and secured will improve Australia's productivity and global competitiveness.

The Government's Education State agenda is ambitious and long-term – what do you think Victoria's early childhood education and care service system should look like in ten years' time?

I see a sector that has built on its existing strengths, with Victoria continuing to lead the way bringing inclusive, high-quality learning programs to all Victorian children. Our vision is not only to have the country's best quality education and care service, but to see that service valued by the public as the foundation for lifelong wellbeing and learning. Our sector is strong and full of dedicated, talented people. I want us to keep supporting our workforce, including with professional development opportunities and training. I want also to see the kinder participation gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kids closed for good.

GROWING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WINDSOR COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CENTRE CO-OP COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

In 2015, Monique Lewis led an action research project at Windsor Community Children's Centre Co-op to look at engagement for all our families. We were noticing time after time that it was the same groups of families that were attending social events and things like the working bees, trivia nights, information evenings, BBQs and excursions.

One of our bilingual Early Childhood teachers had a conversation with one of our ESL families to see how we could better support and engage their family. What came out of that conversation was that this parent felt uncomfortable being in a social environment with other parents because of her limited English; the parent also said that one her favourite things to do with her family was to garden. So we thought if this true for one family perhaps it could be a similar thing for many of our families. That's when the Community Garden idea was developed.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Would developing a community garden within the early childhood setting increase family engagement?

We wanted to involve the children and families in the process and have them take ownership of the project as well as provide a space where all families could feel comfortable and make a contribution, while in engaging with the curriculum and with the children's learning.

Each family was given a small pot with a seed/seedling to care for at home for a few weeks. Families then brought their plant back to the centre. Families planted their seedling into the prepared garden beds as they came into the centre. The area became the centre's Community Garden.

Laying the project foundations:

1. Survey parents and children on the types of produce they would like to have.
2. Present idea in staff meeting. Ask for volunteers to be on an organising committee.
3. Meet with maintenance coordinator to organise planting materials, e.g., seedlings, potting mix, recycled containers, etc.
4. Advertise mini working bee event in the centre newsletters.
5. Put attendance sheet for event at main entrance for parents to fill in.
6. Arrange organising committee event to inform staff of their plan for the day.

PROJECT REFLECTION

What have I learnt about community engagement and engaging with diverse families and children?

I have learnt that many parents view us as the 'expert', and this portrayal can be based on our physical appearance, our interactions, our language and our cultural understandings. It can be based on families' experiences and families' perceptions of Australian society and history.

Through this project I have broken down many perceptions of me as the 'expert', particularly because I know very little about gardening. Through the creation of a community garden I have united families to partake in the centre's philosophy of sustainability. I asked parents questions about what they would like in the community garden and how best to manage it as well as asking for their opinions and advice. I have conversed with many parents possessing ample knowledge on gardening; they have offered suggestions and advice as well as their time.

I have learnt that even though not every family filled in the questionnaire, or kept their plant alive, or returned their plant, every family is aware of this joint venture. Community engagement is not about one-off events to engage families. Community engagement is an ongoing thing that strengthens the commitment, trust and understanding that each stakeholder has towards each other and the children attending a service.

I have learnt that creating something not just for the children but for the families too has a positive effect. Growing fresh produce instils a sense of achievement within the community. The staff, families, children and local community have all played a part in caring for the garden and consequently we can each take a part of it home and share with our families.

Overall, I have learnt that community engagement and engaging with diverse families through Action Research can break down the boundaries where we (educators) are automatically viewed as the 'experts'. It helps establish a relationship where ideas are respected, a stronger partnership is built, and where differences of language, culture, background and heritage can transcend the shared goal.

Monique Lewis ECT and Rose Kelly (Director and Educational Leader) Windsor Community Children's Centre Co-op (Formally Swinburne Prahran Community Children's Centre Co-operative)



On the first day, we planted seeds...



And then we waited... and waited...



And then waited some more...



Until our seeds grew into little seedlings ready for us to take home and look after until they were bigger! The families were asked to foster a seedling for two weeks. The seedlings were planted in biodegradable pots so that we could plant them straight into the garden beds in the community garden.



With the help of some handy parents, our community garden came to life...



Families were invited to plant their foster seedling with their child/ren.



In February 2016 we installed our water tank for the community garden, so educators, families and children can water the plants throughout the day. We have placed a combination lock on the gate (that can be accessed from the centre car park) for families to be able to utilise our fresh produce at all times.

CELEBRATING BOOK WEEK WITH ROAD SAFETY READING RESOURCES



The Children’s Book Council of Australia Children’s Book Week is celebrated all over Australia during August and the children of Canterbury Norwood Baptist Kindergarten focussed a part of their Book Week activities on two road safety education (RSE) resources – That’s the Sound the Street Makes and Click Clack – created specifically by VicRoads to help preschool children become independent learners about road safety.

The children were first treated to a visit from Professor Eric Speriment and his friend ThingleToodle where important messages about road safety were creatively and clearly illustrated by the Professor. The children had numerous opportunities to be actively engaged in the session through their interactions with the Professor by suggesting ideas, singing songs, answering questions and movement.

After this session, each child received, in recognition of Book Week, their own copy of either *That’s the Sound the Street Makes* or *Click Clack* – both authored by Danny Katz and illustrated by Mitch Vane. Canterbury Norwood Baptist Kindergarten also received large format versions of each book for their educators. Educators who attend ELAA’s *Starting Out Safely* educator professional development receive a free large format version of the books as part of their resource pack.

Developing confident road safety learners

With research indicating that children under ten are most at risk of being injured as pedestrians, *That’s the Sound the Street Makes* was developed as an aid to support children to learn about pedestrian safety. The main character, Ella, models the correct behaviours toward pedestrian safety to her “flu-foggy” father with the comic effect of the role reversal providing a great premise for getting the key road safety messages across.

Through *Click Clack* Danny Katz and Mitch Vane encourage children to associate their booster seats with fun by imagining that they are riding in more than just booster seats but imaginary camels, thrones, roller coasters and rocket ships.

WHAT OUR ROAD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRESENTERS SAY...

“ The use of literature in early childhood education is well understood to support children to become effective communicators. The RSE children’s books enable educators to not only enhance children’s expressive and receptive language; they expose them to important road safety messages relevant to their daily lives. Because the books are of a consistent high quality (story content and illustration), the stories draw children in and allow the educators to present ideas in imaginative and compelling ways. They are a valuable addition to any early childhood library.” – **Catharine Hydon:** Early Childhood consultant and professional development presenter for the *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Education program.

“ The main character in *The Sound the Street Makes* is Ella; a capable and competent child who knows all the road safety rules and has to remind her Dad. The style of writing encourages the children to be part of a call and response experience – they become active participants. Children learn best when they are enjoying themselves and both books foster an immediate sense of fun with rhyme, repetition and rhythmic prose.” – **Louise Dorrat:** Early Childhood consultant and professional development presenter for the *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Education program.

More than just books

Both books are also complemented with free smart phone and tablet apps that bring the characters to life and reinforce the key safety messages with sounds, colours and other features that help to engage readers.

The tablet versions have bonus games to further learning about road safety and can be downloaded from either iTunes or Google Play or from www.roadsafetyeducation.vic.gov.au/resources/early-childhood

Resources, training and more information

Books – to order *That’s the Sound the Street Makes* or *Click Clack* call VicRoads on (03) 8391 3255.

RSE Professional Development – to register your interest in a *Starting Out Safely* early childhood road safety educational professional development session contact ELAA at rse@elaa.org.au

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IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

LISA MINCHIN, ELAA POLICY OFFICER

This second article of a two-part series focuses on actions services can take to implement the Child Safe Standards and resources available to services and staff.

Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards that apply to all Victorian early childhood education and care services, schools and organisations that provide services or facilities for children. The standards prepare services to protect children from abuse and neglect through measures designed to:

- prevent abuse from occurring and
- intervene early about child safety and wellbeing concerns thereby preventing further harm.

Services are required to include the following principles as part of each standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

Cultural safety is defined as an environment where there is shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.

Services must be able to demonstrate the deliberate steps they have taken to implement the seven standards.

Implementing the seven standards

Complying with the standards takes regular planning and engagement with all involved in the service. Below are some examples of practices that would contribute to complying with each of the Child Safe Standards.

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements

Leadership is critical to creating the culture of child safety at a service.

Child safe organisations cultivate transparency and openness and leaders can do this by encouraging feedback about how the service can improve.

A climate of openness allows all who are involved in the service, be it staff, parents and family members, children or volunteers, to feel comfortable to raise concerns about child safety (or indeed any aspect of the service) and to know that they will be taken seriously.

For example, effective leadership can begin with an Approved Provider undertaking a child safety review in conjunction with staff, parents and families and children and developing a plan to address the gaps. The actions a service chooses to take should be prioritised based on areas identified as requiring further work.

2. A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Public statements that draw attention to the organisation's commitment to child safety puts everyone on notice about the service's values and commitment to identifying and responding to abuse.

The revised Child Safe (formerly Child Protection) Policy in ELAA's PolicyWorks Manual identifies the responsibilities of the Approved Provider and all staff to contribute to a child safe organisation.

The policy includes processes for reporting suspected child abuse from within a service or where it is from within the family or community.

3. A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

Clear expectations about the kinds of relationships and behaviours expected can contribute to creating a culture of accountability. Discussing the code of conduct and what it means to staff and parents and putting it on display makes it easier to discuss unacceptable behaviours when they arise.

The Code of Conduct Policy in PolicyWorks has been revised to incorporate the Child Safe Standards and has a new code of conduct for parents, families and visitors.

4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

The Department of Education and Training's PROTECT portal education.vic.gov.au/protect provides valuable resources, including guidance on how to identify signs of abuse and respond to incidents, as well as an eLearning module on Mandatory Reporting.

ELAA's revised Child Safe (formerly Child Protection) Policy has guidelines for the incorporation of child safety into the recruitment and management of staff as well as for the recruitment and management of contractors, students and volunteers.

5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

The Approved Provider and all staff must know what their responsibilities are to report signs of risks and concerns about harm. Services should ensure that children know who to talk to if they feel unsafe or have a concern.

6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Staff should be encouraged to speak up about the risks of abuse and to propose suggestions for identifying and reducing or removing risks. Keeping a log of lessons learned will inform staff training and policy review.

7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children include:

- Informing children of their rights and discussing with them how to raise safety concerns
- Gathering children's ideas about what would help them to raise safety concerns and making improvements.
- Giving staff access to training about how to empower children and encourage their participation.
- Raising awareness within the organisation and the community about the rights of children.



USEFUL RESOURCES

The Victorian Commission for Children and Young People has resources available at www.ccp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards. These include *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation – Version 2.0 December 2015* and the following tip sheets:

- *Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*
- *Safety of children with a disability*
- *Empowerment and participation of children*
- *What to look for in a child safe organisation (for parents)*

The Department of Education and Training has developed resources for Early Childhood Services available at education.vic.gov.au/protect:

- *Early Childhood Online Learning* – an eLearning module for staff of early childhood services to increase their capacity to respond effectively to children whose safety, health or wellbeing may be at risk
- *Early Childhood Guidance* – provides guidelines to support early childhood providers to take action if they suspect, or are witness to, any form of child abuse (to be released shortly).

PolicyWorks Manual v2. 2012 – National Quality Framework developed by ELAA supports early childhood services to meet the legal requirements to have specific policies and procedures and includes best practice policies. *PolicyWorks* can be purchased from the ELAA website and includes free access to all updates to policies.

MEMBER PROFILE



GLENROY WEST KINDERGARTEN

Bernadette Garden (Director) and Elissa Simmons (President)

Our kindergarten has been operating since... 1981, serving the local community. This was mostly from the site of Glenroy Primary, however, the kindergarten had to relocate at the end of 2013. Fortunately, Glenroy West was able to find a new home – on the site of the Meadowview Baptist Church. Thanks to the commitment, skill, energy, and generosity of staff, parents, the Baptist Church and local community, the kindergarten was able to re-open its doors in 2014.

Our approach to early learning focuses on... the children and families who attend our kindergarten, encouraging participation and input into all areas of learning and areas of governance. We recognise and respect parents as children's first educators and encourage communication and friendship with them, thus, building positive relationships to ensure the best learning outcomes for their children.

Our proudest moment was... successfully rebuilding our new kinder over the summer holidays in time for the children to attend in February 2014. We were very fortunate in finding a fantastic builder, who stuck to the budget and the crazy 12 week time line. Our kindergarten was relocated and rebuilt with only the money we had saved, a small grant from our local council, the generosity of the local church and lots of very, very hard work from our families and the community who undertook painting, tiling, landscaping and installing the outdoor play elements. Our kinder staff worked right alongside our community volunteers, through the hot summer holidays.

Lately we've been working on... the Lighthouse Community Play Space in our car park in collaboration with the church. We have created a lovely new car park which doubles as a play space that could then be used by our local community. It has a combination netball/basketball tower, bench seats, drinking fountain, BBQ, and colourful playground line marking. So, after school and during the holidays, our car park can be enjoyed by the local

kids and teens. And thanks to the new safety boundary fencing, we can also take the kinder children out into this new play space during the sessions to really stretch their legs!

It has been a collaborative effort realised through funding from Moreland Council and a Wills Strengthening Communities Program grant. We were also assisted by parent and Lions Club fundraising and donations from local businesses and individuals. The play space will be of true value to the community.

We are inspired by... our families and their belief in our right to continue to serve our community in the future, as we have done in the past. Ours is a story of collaboration and co-operation – with the Baptist Church (who are happy for the kinder to remain unaffiliated religiously), our parents, and the local community. It is a story which encapsulates the very essence of the National Quality Framework and that is why we have full enrolments and enjoy the sound of children's laughter and the happy smiles of parents.

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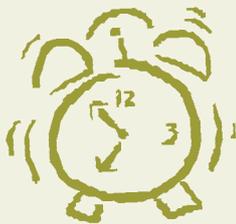
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