



# 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference

A fantastic conference for everyone involved in early childhood education from birth to the early years of school.

**The 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference, Together we grow – investing in our future, will be held on Friday 29 and Saturday 30 May, at Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne. The conference will inspire, engage and bring together over 1000 early childhood professionals that collectively provide quality early childhood education for children.**

The conference committee chose the theme for 2015, *investing in our future*, to acknowledge the importance of investing in quality early education and care for the benefit of children and the wider community. We think it is a particularly pertinent theme as the sector awaits the Australian Government's response to major policy and funding reforms.

The theme of *investing in our future* is applicable on many levels, including: investing in children's early years for life-long outcomes; investing in partnerships – educators and families; investing in community and services connections; investing in *yourself* – professionals and educators investing in themselves for positive outcomes for individuals and children.

We are thrilled to present one of the best, and most varied, conference programs yet; lead by high calibre key note speakers, Dr Charles Pascal, Dr Sharon Goldfeld, Paul Pritchard, Robyn Monroe Miller and Anthony Semann.

**Some highlights of this year's program include;**

***Nature-based Practice in Australia facilitated by Niki Buchan***

Niki Buchan, will facilitate an engaging presentation and panel discussion on children's experiences in wild nature

including beach, bush, creek, forest or desert and valuing the benefits of risk, which support lifelong learning. Such experiences are what a high quality childhood is about, children trusted, given the freedom to play, being allowed to judge and explore good risks and hazards.

Educators from Family Day Care, Long Day Care, Outside of School Hours Care, inner city and rural settings will share their personal experiences and the experiences of family and community through short presentations. Niki and the panel will talk about perceived versus real risk in taking children into natural spaces.

Niki Buchan is Forest school leader trained, helped to set up and was the Head of the first outdoor nature kindergartens in Scotland. She has a special interest in Nature-based practice, has supported Australian educators in setting up bush and beach schools and is the author of a practical book on working with children in wild nature. She is a Company Director and Senior Educational Consultant of Inspired EC Pty Ltd. She is joined by a panel of specialist educators who work across a variety of education settings.

***Playfully yours presented by Robyn Monroe Miller***

The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) lists play as a fundamental right and one that is recognised as important to children's development – but how can we ensure it remains relevant and meaningful in our work with children?

How can we be better advocates for free play? Be prepared to be challenged to think about play in a new context.

Robyn Monroe Miller is the CEO of Network of Community Activities in NSW. She has been an advocate for children at a state, national and international level for the past 25 years most notably as Chair of the National Out of School Hours Services





Association, the Board of the Children's Week Council of Australia and as Vice President of the International Play Association. In 2012 Robyn was part of the international delegation to the United Nations in Geneva to progress the development of the UN General Comment on Article 31 "The child's right to play" which was adopted in February 2013.

***Why is 'engagement' so easy to say but so hard to do PROPERLY presented by Paul Pritchard***

'Engagement' (of families and communities) is an overused term that lacks a clear and consistent definition. We most often use the term in reference to the way services engage each other or the families that keep coming back. However ***what would it take for our services to respectfully engage with disengaged families as co-planners, co-producers, co-implementers,***

***co-managers and co-researchers?***

The answer to this question is both embarrassingly simple and scarily complex! This presentation will use two current Australian case studies to pull apart the barriers and enablers to engaging the voice of disengaged families in the process of service design and implementation.

Paul Pritchard is the Training and Development Manager at Centre of Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital and is currently undertaking postgraduate research focusing on participants' experiences of peer-led parenting education. Prior to joining CCCH, Paul played a key role in the development of Good Beginnings Australia from its inception in 1997 to 2009 and was awarded a Centenary Medal by the Commonwealth Government for his work during this time.

To register on-line and to find out more about our program and speakers, visit our website **[www.togetherwegrow.com.au](http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au)**. Subscribe to ELAA's eNews for regular conference up-dates.

On-line registrations open in February; book early to receive an early bird discount – don't miss out on what promises to be our best conference yet!