



# 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference



**The 2015 Early Childhood Education conference will be held on 29 and 30 May at Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne. It promises to inspire, engage and bring together the early childhood sector that collectively provides quality early childhood education, with a special emphasis on investing in our future.**

**High calibre speakers from Australia and overseas will share their views and expertise with our audience – everyone involved in early childhood education from birth to the early years of school. Inspiring speakers include:**

#### **Charles E Pascal**

Charles E. Pascal is an internationally recognized educator with expertise in early and higher education, public policy, leadership/organisational development and strategic philanthropy. His 2009 seminal report to the Premier of Ontario – *With Our Best Future in Mind* – is informing policy and practice in early childhood education within and outside of Canada.

A former college president and Ontario deputy minister, Charles is currently Professor of Applied Psychology & Human Development at the University of Toronto where he is coordinator of the PhD. Program in Early Learning.

Charles and his teenage daughter, Tai Pascal Notar, have recently published their book, *Too Far from Perfect: A Father-Daughter Conversation about Public Education*. [www.toofarfromperfect.com](http://www.toofarfromperfect.com). He is currently writing a book on leadership, *Confessions of a Public Servant: Hard Earned Leadership Lessons*.

Charles has a PhD. in Psychology (Michigan) and has received recognition from many organisations to date, including five honorary diplomas and doctorates. He was appointed a member of the Order of Canada in December of 2014. Website: [www.charlespascal.com](http://www.charlespascal.com).

Read Charles recent article on the Australian Early Childhood policy debate and Productivity commission report on page 18.

#### **Sharon Goldfeld**

Associate Professor Sharon Goldfeld is a paediatrician and public health physician at the Royal Children's Hospital's Centre for Community Child Health (CCH) and Co-Group leader of Child Health Policy, Equity and Translation at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. She has a decade of experience in state government as a senior policymaker in health and education including Principal Medical Advisor in the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. She has been the recipient

of the prestigious international Harkness Fellowship in Health Care Policy and the Aileen Plant Medal in Public Health Research.

Associate Professor Goldfeld has established a child health equity and policy research group. Her research focus of developing data and indicators, investigating community based systems change and implementing equity based community intervention trials in health and education, has aligned with her substantial policy experience focusing on projects that keep child health on the policy and political agenda in Victoria and nationally.

#### **Anthony Semann**

Anthony is a Director at Semann & Slattery. Anthony has a degree in education, a masters qualification in sociology and is currently completing a PhD investigating the relationship between courage and leadership. He has authored and co-authored books and other publications, including a recent chapter on race and identity, and has been an editor and reviewer for education and cultural studies journals.

Anthony has recently co-edited a special edition journal on cultural amnesia, loss and sexual identity. He has been acknowledged by his peers as advocate of the year as well as manager of the year.

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*together we grow investing in our future*

### **Robyn Monro Miller**

Robyn 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. Highlights of this advocacy include her work on the development of the first National Quality Assurance system for OSHC Services in Australia and the development of the first Australian school age care framework "My Time, Our Place." 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.

Robyn's work has been recognised at a number of levels with the presentation of a South Sydney Council Community Achievement Award, a NSW Children's Week Award for services to children and the awarding of a Commonwealth Government Centenary Medal for services to Australian Children's Services. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance and an Alumni of the NSW Benevolent Society's "Sydney Leadership" program. In 2012, Robyn was awarded The Allan

Laughlin Perpetual Award for excellence in leadership from the Australian College of Educators, followed by a Fellowship in 2014.

Robyn remains passionately committed to social inclusion and the development of communities that nurture and support children, and offer opportunities for them to engage with their local community.

### **Jo Lange**

Jo has worked for 18 years as a behaviour specialist, after a career of over 30 years as an educator in a diverse range of settings. Jo has worked teaching early childhood in the TAFE sector as well as writing national curriculum & teaching in the areas of child development & psychology. She has also been a primary school teacher,

extending her experiences to co-ordinate & teach within 'at risk' youth programs. She has also worked in community education in welfare areas such as the alcohol & drug sector, as well as the disability services area.

Jo undertakes a diverse range of workshops & seminars. These range from behaviour guidance, resilience and self-esteem building, to working with anxious and easily agitated children.

Jo's passion is supporting early childhood settings, and homes, to positively manage those on-going 'tricky' issues with children. Jo also conducts programs focused on educator well-being, leadership and team dynamics.







# 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference

## DET, the Gold Sponsor, offers accommodation support

The Department of Education and Training will provide Victorian children's services employees and early childhood educators of Kindergarten, Prep, Years 1 and 2 working in a rural area with rebates for their conference accommodation costs.

Please note that this assistance is limited and will be provided on a first come, first serve basis, at the Pullman and Mercure Melbourne Albert Park.

DET will pay for one nights accommodation (up to \$175 standard room rate – Thursday or Friday night only) for delegates attending one day of the conference, and 2 nights accommodation (up to \$350 standard room rate – Thursday & Friday nights only) for delegates attending both the Friday and Saturday sessions.

In addition, transport to and from the conference venue will be provided on both days of the conference.

To apply for this assistance, you must register for the conference, book and pay for your accommodation at the Pullman and Mercure Melbourne Albert Park, then email [cmarxsen@elaa.org.au](mailto:cmarxsen@elaa.org.au) your request for a rebate along with a copy of the booking confirmation from the hotel. Your rebate cheque will be mailed to you after the conference.



## Conference social networking

Updates on the conference will be posted regularly on the ELAA Facebook page and via Twitter @ELAAustralia. Don't forget to follow the action during the conference on twitter by using the hashtag #2015twg and @togetherwegrow.



## The 2015 Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Award

The Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Award, sponsored by VicRoads, will be presented on Saturday 30 May 2015 at the conference.

Nominations are now open for the Award and are available to all Victorian early childhood educators and services. The Award recognises and celebrates the achievements of early childhood educators in providing exemplary road safety education.

The winner will receive \$500 and a resource prize pack for their nominated service. To apply for this Award please share a practice example or learning story (approximately 200 words) highlighting how road safety education is embedded into your curriculum and prepares children for life.

Please email your nomination to [rse@elaa.org.au](mailto:rse@elaa.org.au) by **12 May 2015**.

## ELAA and Gowrie Victoria offers assistance to disadvantaged services

ELAA and Gowrie Victoria are pleased to announce that we are offering assistance to disadvantaged services to attend the conference this year.

To apply for this special funding, tell us in 250 words or less what type of early childhood service you provide, why your organisation requires this assistance and who you would like to attend the conference. A panel of members from the ECEC organising committee will review applications and select the recipients. Send your applications to Cass Marxsen at [cmarxsen@elaa.org.au](mailto:cmarxsen@elaa.org.au) by **Friday 8 May 2015**. Please note the assistance is available to applicants that have not previously received this funding.

For more information go to [www.togetherwegrow.com.au](http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au)

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### The ECE conference organisers committed to a greener event

ELAA and Gowrie Victoria work with the *Together we grow* Conference Reference Committee to develop the themes of the conference and put together a program which is filled with local and internationally renowned speakers. The Conference Reference Committee comprises a group of experts representing a diverse range of early childhood and family organisations.\*

We work with the presenting partners to improve the conference experience for everyone attending, including taking a greener approach to organising the conference and creating some socially responsible initiatives.

We have substantially reduced our use of paper. Presentations will be available on the conference website after the event. We will not be including inserts in our conference pack this year and have sourced bags which are ethically manufactured using renewable materials.

The water at the conference will be supplied by Thankyou™ which is a social enterprise that funds life-changing and sustainable water projects in developing nations. Thank you gifts for conference presenters will include a donation to programs supporting vulnerable children and families and chocolates from the Mildura Chocolate Company who provide work-skills for its supported workforce.

\* The *Together we grow* conference reference committee includes representatives from Community Child Care, Centre for Community and Child Health, City of Melbourne, City Of Monash, Department of Education and Training, Early Learning Association Australia, FKA, Gowrie Victoria, Noah's Ark, Playgroup Victoria and Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.



### The Conference App

The 2015 *Together we grow* app is designed to enhance your conference experience. It enables you to create your own schedule, record your program selections, access the program, session and speaker information, browse the trade fair exhibitors and receive up-date alerts.

To download free to your mobile or tablet simply go to [eventmobi.com/togetherwegrow2015](http://eventmobi.com/togetherwegrow2015) in your mobile or tablet browser and the app will download automatically.

**To register on-line for the conference and to find out more about the program and speakers, visit our website [www.togetherwegrow.com.au](http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au)**



## 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference

# QUALITY COUNTS FOR CANADA'S EARLY LEARNING MODEL

**By Professor Charles E Pascal, Professor, Applied Psychology & Human Development at University of Toronto**

As a Canadian researcher, it was good to read Prime Minister Tony Abbott's recent reference to my country as justification for investing more in childcare. Unfortunately, he seems to be focusing on only half of what's needed.

He said if Australia could shift its low rate of female workforce participation to Canada's rate – one of the highest in the world – the Australian economy would be A\$25 billion a year better off.

It's true. In 1997, Quebec, for example, decided to tackle its low rate of maternal workforce participation by subsidising low-cost childcare. As a result, 70,000 mothers were able to return to work. And the policy that cost \$2 billion a year actually ended up saving the government money because of the taxes generated by this workforce increase.

While it is important to note that raising workforce participation is key to a nation's productivity, this is only half of the economic benefit that a country can achieve from investing in high-quality early learning and care.

In order to build the human capital required for a creative and flexible "all hands on deck" economy, governments must also pay attention to the human development side of things. The neurological science and economic research is clear about the remarkable return from the right investments in the first 2000 days of a child's life.

Our countries have much to learn from each other. We share, for example, the use of the Educational Development Index, a Canadian invention that measures how many children start school developmentally vulnerable. Frankly, its effective and widespread use in Australia (AEDI) trumps our own application. The Index tells us,

that in both countries, more than 20% of children start school with challenging vulnerabilities, well behind their peers. Many of them never catch up.

But measuring is one thing. Doing something with results is another.

In Australia, there are many examples of AEDI results driving local community action.

Canada's largest province of Ontario, when faced with a vulnerability rate of 27% in 2009, introduced two years of free universal high-quality full-day preschool for all children. After four years of implementation, the results are startling. The vulnerability rate is rapidly moving downward as social, emotional and language development indicators are rising dramatically.

And what about the economic return? Research sponsored by the Business Council of British Columbia notes that for every 1% drop in the vulnerability rate, a 1% increase to the GDP will accrue as a result over the working life of each 1% of the cohort no longer vulnerable. This is a massive multi-billion-dollar gain but only if the quality of non-parental early learning and care is improved.

### The quality counts

The key to these results is the quality of the education and care, including an evidence-based curriculum delivered in a consistent manner across all learning centres by well-qualified early learning professionals. Improving the relationships between parents and early learning professionals is also key, as is the dire need to improve the quality and availability of our early learning and childcare for children aged 0 to 3.

While it is promising to see the new Minister for Social Services, Scott Morrison, recognising the critical importance of

Australia's National Quality Framework as a major quality lever, affordability seems to hold priority prominence. A healthier and more prosperous Australian future requires equal attention to affordability and quality, not a war between the two.

Abbott is correct in encouraging policy that enables an increase in the participation of women in the workforce. But he must keep in mind that who the children are with and what they are doing while mums are working, is the other half of a winning equation. And this means investing in high-quality early learning and care centres, not subsidising the use of nannies for the well-off.

In these challenging times, with budget choices increasingly difficult, we hear about the value of attending to a nation's infrastructure – roads, public buildings, the digital highway. In this context, there is no more important "infrastructure" than quality early child development, the very best social and economic choice with Australia's best future in mind.

*Originally published in The Conversation, March 12, 2015.*

## THE CONVERSATION

Charles E Pascal is the keynote speaker on Friday 29 May at the 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference, *Together we grow – investing in our future*. Register on-line at [www.togetherwegrow.com.au](http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au)