



EARLY
LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA

The voice for parents and service providers

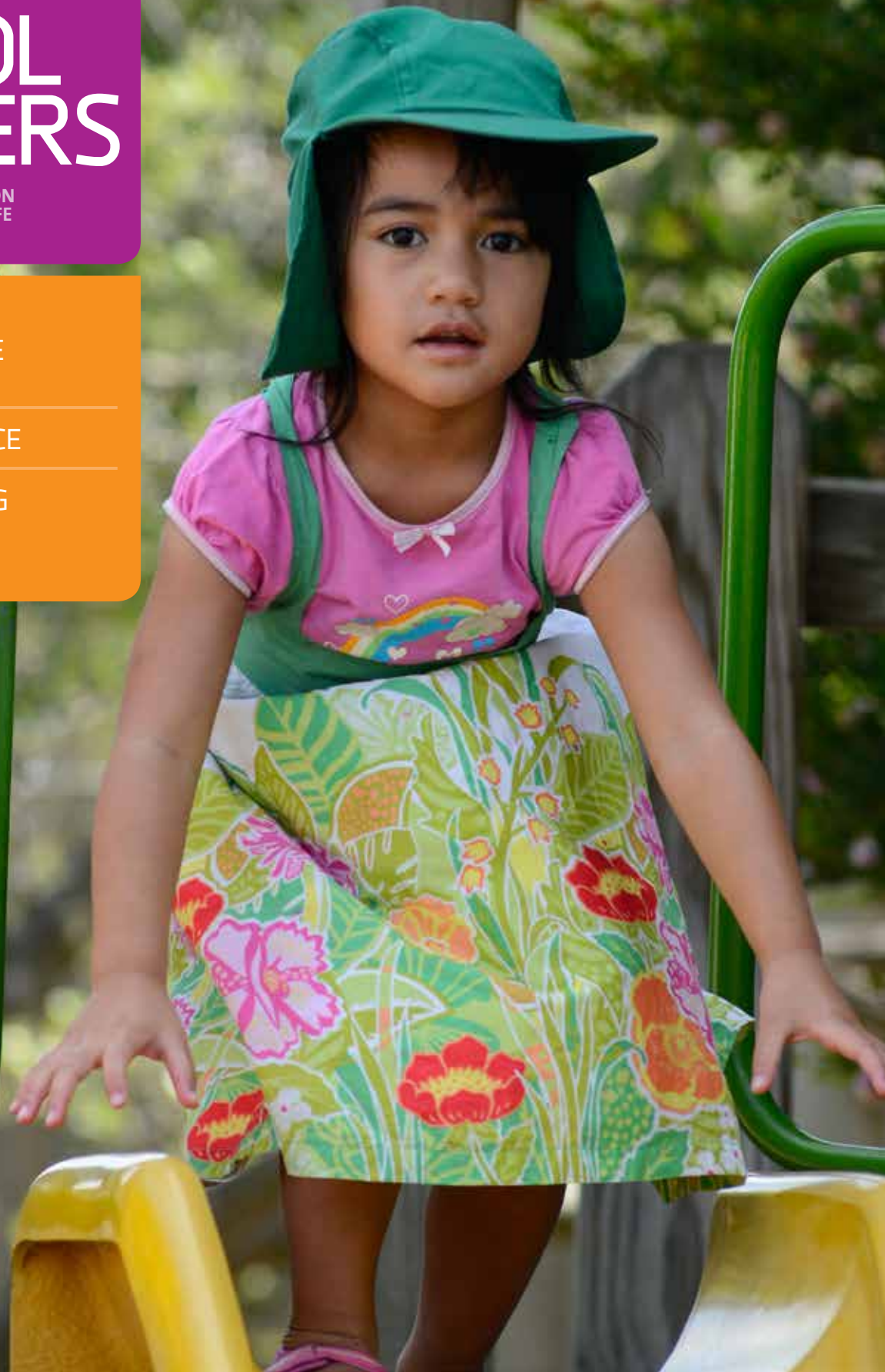
PRE SCHOOL MATTERS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR LIFE
TERM ONE 2016

BUILDING A CULTURE
OF LEARNING

2016 ECE CONFERENCE

MYTIME SUPPORTING
FAMILIES





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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Welcome to *Preschool Matters* for 2016.

The start of a new year is always an exciting time for ELAA members as they welcome new children and families into their communities. It can also be a challenging time for service providers and educators, as change is a constant in our sector and this year services are implementing new educator-to-child ratios as part of the National Quality Framework.

As we know, the body of Australian and international research is emphatic: access to quality early childhood education and care forms a critical part of establishing a child's life-long educational and social development. It is also significant in assisting a child – and families – to become part of a community.

In this edition of *Preschool Matters*, we have explored the theme of *community* and the need for quality early learning programs to be responsive to diverse communities.

Delivering high quality, accessible and sustainable early learning programs

across all settings – kindergarten, long day care, family day care, out of school hours care – underpins the National Quality Framework. Nicole Pilsworth and the Victorian Advancing Early Learning Study (VAELS) team from the University of Melbourne provide some insight into the importance of educator leadership and team work in being truly responsive to the needs of children and communities (pages 14–16).

Connecting Communities is also the theme of the 2016 Early Childhood Conference: *Together we grow*, delivered by ELAA in partnership with Gowrie Victoria and the organisations represented on the Conference Reference Committee. This year's program has been finalised and registrations will open soon. On pages 12–13, we preview some of the inspiring conference speakers and look at how they are approaching the conference theme.

On pages 26–27, there is also a fantastic story about how an ELAA member – Lorne Kindergarten – won major sustainability and science awards for their innovative program which engages children, families and the community in exploring sustainable practices.

As ELAA celebrates our 25th anniversary in 2016, we look forward to an exciting year and to continuing to support a strong, vibrant and evolving early learning sector.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Preschool Matters* and find it a useful resource in preparing for the year ahead.

Jo Geurts, President

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Cover: Family Day Care, City of Greater Dandenong. Photo: Reg Ryan.



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Preschool Matters is a quarterly magazine which communicates issues and developments that concern and assist members in the effective management of early childhood services.

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CEO's REPORT

Towards an early childhood Education State



As an independent peak body, ELAA seeks to represent the views and advocate on behalf of members, and for the evolving early childhood education and care sector as a whole.

We also look to maximise opportunities for our members' and stakeholders' voices to be heard by Federal and State Governments. Through presenting these views in submissions and public statements or through creating opportunities for members and stakeholders to be represented directly in policy and strategic forums.

In September 2015, ELAA brought together a united group of early childhood peak bodies, service providers, community sector organisations and research institutions to develop *The Ten Principles for an Early Childhood Education State*.

The Ten Principles are intended as a framework to guide the Victorian Government's reform agenda in early childhood education and care (ECEC) over the next ten years – but these principles are equally applicable to our discussions with the Commonwealth and in other States and Territories.

THE TEN PRINCIPLES FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STATE

An outstanding early childhood education and care system...

- 1 is founded on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and respects and collaborates with families and the community to ensure accessibility for all children.
- 2 is 'child-ready', focused on the learning and development opportunities for children from birth to 8, and supports families and practitioners to better understand the knowledge, tools and practices that most encourage overall learning.
- 3 builds on a solid, sustainable and universal foundation to ensure it is viable, high quality, affordable and accessible into the future.
- 4 is evidence-based, integrated, positively, proactively and ethically engaged with children and families, and reflects community expectations that governments will support and fund excellence in ECEC.
- 5 is experienced by a range of community members, and reflects and responds to the expectations of children, families, communities, practitioners, researchers and policy makers, and governments.
- 6 requires governments to play a strong leadership role – in collaboration with the sector – to share knowledge with the wider community about the critical importance of quality early learning for the nation's social and economic health and well-being.
- 7 facilitates greater collaboration between child-centred and adult-centred services; better understands and overcomes barriers that result in disadvantage for vulnerable children and families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups; supports socially, culturally and linguistically inclusive practices; and expands inclusion support.
- 8 is made up of sustainably resourced organisations, working within an enabling policy and regulatory environment.
- 9 develops outcomes frameworks for learning, and builds integrated governance and reporting frameworks that are child-focused, and support workforce professionalization.
- 10 broadly defines families in order to provide greater support and recognition of the resources and skills that families offer as a child's 'first educators.'

“ The Ten Principles are intended as a framework to guide the Victorian Government’s reform agenda in early childhood education and care (ECEC) over the next ten years – but these principles are equally applicable to our discussions with the Commonwealth and in other States and Territories.”

Shane Lucas, CEO

Through the principles, our broad sector coalition is calling on governments at all levels to develop an ECEC system founded on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; to make new investments in a child’s early years (from birth to 8 years); and to build a future ECEC system that is viable, high quality, universally accessible, and affordable.

At ELAA, we also advocate that governments must act quickly and effectively to ensure that a future ECEC system is built on a solid and sustainable foundation.

At a critical time for service providers in the pre-school/kindergarten sector particularly, there are core funding issues that need to be addressed in the short term to ensure early learning programs for children in the year before school remain viable and affordable for families, especially low income households.

Similarly, Long Day Care providers are keen to ensure that the Federal Government’s proposed Child Care Assistance reforms support access to affordable, high quality ECEC for as many children as possible.

The Ten Principles are much broader than any one segment of the ECEC system or any one immediate reform or funding priority. The principles reflect what we – as a sector – believe a truly outstanding ECEC system should look like.

In 2016 and beyond, ELAA will continue to advocate publicly, and work in partnership with State and Commonwealth Governments – and with families and communities – to develop and implement an ECEC reform agenda that delivers excellence in early learning for every child.

Shane Lucas, CEO



ELAA WILL KEEP YOU ON TRACK IN 2016

In addition to assisting our advocacy work, your ELAA membership helps support our work across the early childhood sector to provide practical advice, news and information, up-to-date resources and training for service providers, parents, and educators.

Thanks to our members, we provide the information and support that you need to successfully deliver a quality early childhood education and care service for your community.

Advice to members

Our Member Services team has extensive and varied experience in the early childhood sector including: the management and good governance of early childhood services; industrial relations with an early childhood focus; regulation assessment; policy development; and early childhood teaching qualifications.

Our knowledge and experience enables us to provide members with relevant, contemporary and accurate advice on a range of issues including:

- employment and management of staff
- governance
- managing meetings
- decision making
- dealing with conflict
- policy development
- budgets and financial management
- rostering and program development
- relevant legislation
- Occupational Health and Safety.

Training and resources

ELAA has a range of resources to assist cluster managers, parent committee members and service providers to understand their role in good governance and delivering quality education and care programs to children and families.

ELAA is funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training to deliver free training to services on various governance topics, including committee roles and responsibilities, AGM preparation, and succession planning. A customised version of this training is also available for cluster managed sites.

In 2016, we will also be launching a new online training program which will provide flexible access to service providers and committee members on these topics.

Through our consultancy service, we are able to assist with more complex and specialist services such as operational reviews, policy reviews, performance appraisals, recruitment etc.

ELAA has also partnered with other organisations and early childhood specialists to develop an extensive training program for educators, managers, parents and committees on topics such as supporting children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, working with vulnerable families, child behaviour guidance, sustainability, OHS and educational leadership. Go to pages 7–9 to read our exciting training program for 2016.



“As we start the New Year, ELAA will be looking to action some of the suggestions made by our members, particularly in making training more accessible. We hope this will enhance access to specialist governance training for members, particularly in rural areas. We will also explore other online platforms to bring our suite of training and seminars to members.”

Managers who attended the ELAA Cluster Management Reference Group and Industrial Relations Reference Groups found these forums especially valuable for providing an opportunity to engage in key sector issues with colleagues at high level.

Suggestions for improvement from Cluster Managers included delivery of more tailored, cluster specific training especially for rural and regional members, and access to online training.

As we start the New Year, ELAA will be looking to action some of the suggestions made by our members, particularly in making training more accessible. ELAA is in the process of implementing a new online governance training program in 2016 targeted at committees/boards, and focusing on the National Quality Framework. We hope this will enhance access to specialist governance training for members, particularly in rural areas. We will also explore other online platforms to bring our suite of training and seminars to members.

Our specialist Member Services team is always at hand to assist our members with any issues, small or complex. In July 2015, ELAA received funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Training to assist services in understanding and planning for ratio changes in 2016 and services can contact the Member Services team for free assistance.

We would like to thank our members for participating in the survey and telling us how we can improve our services to you. Your feedback is critical to our work, and we encourage you to contact us at any time with your suggestions for improvement, and look forward to your continued participation in the annual member survey.

MEMBER SURVEY 2015... WHAT YOU TOLD US

ELAA's 2015 member survey sought feedback from our members about how they use their membership and what they think about the services we provide – we were delighted with the response.

Over 35% of our independent members responded to an online survey in 2015 and 95% of our Cluster Management members were surveyed in person or via phone. The results were very positive with members rating us highly on our service delivery and as well as on our advocacy work. We received many great suggestions on ways in which we can better assist you.

Our independent members reported an across the board increase in satisfaction for ELAA's key services compared to the previous year, particularly for our free committee training, PolicyWorks, Early Childhood Management Manual, Employee Management and Development Kit and Committee Basics.

The take-up of ELAA's advisory services has risen since 2014, with an increase in members seeking and implementing our advice on governance and industrial relations matters.

Our members' engagement with ELAA and their rating of our advocacy work has also been more positive, with overall satisfaction ratings higher than 2014. Our members have overwhelmingly indicated that they place high value on continued ELAA membership.

We are very pleased that ELAA's efforts to implement suggestions provided by members in the 2014 survey are starting to reflect in the positive feedback we have received from our members in this year's survey.

In the 2015 survey, members have told us that they would like to see ELAA focus more on the following:

- training targeted to rural and regional members
- online training
- assistance in understanding complex policy and management documentation, including implementing the new ratios and funding.

Our Cluster Manager members told us that they valued ELAA's advice and expertise in the areas of industrial relations, governance and Occupational Health and Safety in particular. Cluster

NEWS & EVENTS

ELAA's Advocacy work

ELAA, along with our colleagues in the sector, has been busy preparing submissions to government on a range of issues that impact early childhood education and care services and Australian families and carers of young children.

We would like to thank ELAA members who have generously given their time to provide feedback via consultations and surveys to inform this work. The following ELAA submissions can be downloaded from the ELAA website;

- Submission to the Education State Early Childhood consultation
- Submission on the Regulation Impact Statement in relation to the Childcare Assistance Package
- ELAA Budget submission to the Australian Government 2015–2016



Increased funding for Victorian rural kindergartens in 2016

The Victorian Government has recognised the financial challenges for some of Victoria's small rural kindergartens and has increased their funding for 2016 by providing a Small Rural Grant. While many regional kindergartens continue to provide high-quality education to their communities they often face low or fluctuating enrolment numbers from one year to the next which challenges the viability of the service.

Early Childhood Education and Care services can contact their Department of Education and Training regional office for more information on the Small Rural Grant which came into effect on 1 January 2016.

Digital stories for educators

The Victorian Department of Education and Training released a series of videos or digital stories for early childhood services to assist educators, kindergarten managers and service providers to implement new educator-to-child ratios in 2016.

There are five themed videos, as well as a suite of resources and information packs, which deal with topics such as planning, collaboration and team building. Access the videos and resources from the website education.vic.gov.au.



Term dates 2016

The Victorian school term dates for 2016 are;

Term 1 Wednesday 27 January to Thursday 24 March

Term 2 Monday 11 April to Friday 24 June

Term 3 Monday 11 July to Friday 16 September

Term 4 Monday 3 October to Tuesday 20 December

Information on school term dates for all Australian States and Territories is available at www.australia.gov.au/topics/australian-facts-and-figures/school-term-dates.

REGS IN FOCUS

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

What is new in 2016?

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2010

- New child/staff ratios for children 3 years and over commenced on 1 January 2016. Early childhood services are now required to provide one staff member for every eleven children aged 3 years and over and at least 50% of those staff must be qualified.
- ACECQA must be notified of any changes about the *approved provider*, including; changes to executive members of the committee (new members and/or retiring members); current (no more than 6 months old) criminal history check; current Working With Children Checks; copy of the minutes from the Annual General Meeting electing the new committee members; and a copy of the Incorporated Association Certificate. All forms must now be completed online via the NQAITS system.

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

As of 30 September 2015, all early childhood teachers in Victoria are required to be registered as an early childhood teacher with The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) if they want to be employed in an Early Childhood Service.

It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that they are registered.

However employers should only engage a person in the role of an early childhood teacher if:

- they are registered with VIT as an early childhood teacher, **OR**
- they hold a temporary approval granted by the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training, **OR**

- they are taken to be an early childhood teacher under regulation 242 of the National Regulations (not applicable to funded programs as they must be fully qualified for the service to be eligible to receive funding from the Department of Education and Training), **OR**
- they are replacing a registered early childhood teacher for a period not exceeding 12 weeks under regulation 135 of the National Regulations.

Teachers who have registered will be given a VIT registration card for employers to sight and employers will also be able to check a prospective employee's registration status on the VIT website. Registered teachers are exempt from requirements to hold a Working With Children card or Police History check as these checks are all part of the registration requirements. All registered teachers will be required to complete 20 hours of professional development which must reference the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). (ELAA provides training for teachers with links to the APST, see pages 7–9 for details.)

More information, including regular newsletters can be found on the VIT website www.vit.vic.edu.au

'No jab, no play' legislation

This legislation was gazetted by the Governor on 15 December 2015 and came into force on January 1 2016. All children attending an early childhood service other than outside school hours care or school holiday programs must now be up to date with their immunisation schedule upon enrolment at the service. Enrolment is defined as having been offered a place. To ensure that vulnerable and disadvantaged children are still able to access an early childhood service some exemptions apply and provisions are in place to enable these children more time and support to update their immunisation status. Further information is available from the Vic Health website www.health.vic.gov.au

New Industrial Agreement

A new Agreement for teachers and educators will be implemented in 2016

following a number of years in negotiation. When approved by the Fair Work Commission following a successful ballot by teachers and educators, this Agreement replaces the current Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants Agreement 2009 for employers who have nominated ELAA as their bargaining agent. ELAA will be providing a comprehensive implementation kit and additional support for its members during this implementation process. Therefore, it is important that ELAA members continue to monitor the ELAA website, register for ELAA's regular eNewsletter and update ELAA with your authorised committee members' details.

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015

Victoria is introducing compulsory minimum standards that will apply to organisations that provide services for children to help protect children from all forms of abuse.

The child safe standards will aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. The standards will be compulsory for all organisations that provide services to children, but not prescriptive. This will allow a diverse range of organisations some flexibility in how they implement the standards to meet the requirements.

This Bill has passed through Parliament but is yet to be proclaimed. If the Act is not proclaimed before July 1 2016 then it will come into operation on that day. Many organisations have existing policies and procedures which aim to keep children safe. The child safe standards are intended to build on these measures to improve child safety and increase awareness and consistency across all sectors.

For more information about the child safe standards see the *Overview of child safe standards* on the Department of Health and Human Services website, www.dhs.vic.gov.au.

TRAINING IN 2016

Keep up to date, learn new skills and achieve your professional standards for 2016.

ELAA provides free training for committees and managers, as well as specialist professional development presented by some of Australia's most respected early childhood experts.

Each seminar is linked to the National Quality Standard and early years learning frameworks, as well as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). ELAA provides certificates of participation for all ELAA training sessions which can be used as proof for annual professional development requirements with VIT. ELAA members are eligible for discounts on sessions.

FOR EDUCATORS, EDUCATIONAL LEADERS AND MANAGERS

Settling and supporting anxious and agitated children – evening seminar

APST 1.5, 4.3, 6.4
Quality Area 1, 5 & 6

Presenter: Jo Lange

Date: Tuesday 1 March 2016

Time: 7 – 9.00pm

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

Cost: Member: \$65 / Non member: \$80

Re-thinking events & celebrations

APST 1.3, 1.5, 2.2, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1, 6.2, 6.4, 7.3, 7.4
Quality Area 1, 5 & 6

Presenter: Karen Glancy

Date: Thursday 3 March 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Making indoor/outdoor programs work – two part series

APST 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 3.2, 3.5, 4.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.4
Quality Area 1 & 3

Presenter: Karen Glancy

Dates: **Part 1** Wednesday 9 March 2016 and **Part 2** Wednesday 20 April 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Victorian Archive Centre, 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne. Free parking on site (enter via Macaulay Street).

Cost: Member: \$300 / Non member: \$450

I'm a teacher not a manager – the educator with two hats

APST 1.2, 6.1, 6.3, 7.4
Quality Area – 1, 4 & 7

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Wednesday 23 March 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Darebin Art Centre, Cnr Bell St & St Georges Rd, Preston. Free parking on site.

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Responding to child abuse & talking to children about safety

APST 4.4, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
Quality Area 1, 2, 5, 6 & 7

Presenter: Children's Protection Society

Dates: Thursday 14 April 2016 –

Victorian Archive Centre, 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne. Free parking on site (enter via Macaulay Street).

or

Wednesday 13 July 2016 – Victorian Archive Centre, 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne. Free parking on site.

or

Friday 9 September 2016 – Hobson's Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Pde, Altona. Free parking on site.

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

FOR EDUCATORS, EDUCATIONAL LEADERS AND MANAGERS *continued*

Defending our pedagogy & practices: how do we convince others to care about what we care about?

APST 1.2, 3.7, 7.3, 7.4

Quality Area – 1, 6 & 7

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Friday 22 April 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Conversations & collaborations with families

APST 3.7, 5.5, 7.1, 7.3

Quality Area 1, 5 & 6

Presenter: Catharine Hydon

Date: Friday 29 April 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Loose parts play

APST 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.4, 4.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.4

Quality Area 1 & 3

Presenter: Karen Glancy

Date: Wednesday 4 May 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Practical physical & outdoor play – evening seminar

APST 1.1, 1.3, 3.1, 6.4, 7.4

Quality Area 1, 3 & 5

Presenter: Paul Pennisi

Dates: Wednesday 11 May 2016 – Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Rd, Doncaster. Free parking on site.

or

Tuesday 19 July 2016 – Hobson's Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Pde, Altona. Free parking on site.

or

Wednesday 12 Oct 2016 – Knox Civic Centre, 511 Burwood Highway, Wantirna South. Free parking onsite (enter via Capital City Blvd).

Time: 6.30 – 9pm

Cost: Member: \$65 / Non member: \$80

Engaging & nurturing learning environments for babies and toddlers

APST 1.2, 1.5, 2.1, 3.3, 3.5, 4.1, 6.3, 6.4, 7.4

Quality Area 1, 3, 5 & 6

Presenter: Karen Glancy

Date: Thursday 9 June 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder and positive behaviour support – an overview

APST 1.5, 1.6, 4.1

Quality Area 5 & 6

Presenter: ELAA and Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)

Date: Friday 10 June or Friday 7 October

Time: 10am – 12pm

Venue: Victorian Archives Centre, 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne. Free parking (enter via Macaulay Street).

Cost: \$50

Supporting pre-schoolers with conflict resolution

APST 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 7.4

Quality Area 1, 5 & 6

Presenter: Jo Lange

Date: Thursday 16 June 2016

Time: 7 – 9.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$65 / Non member: \$80

I'm no counsellor: How to support people in times of need and change

APST 1.2, 6.1, 6.3, 7.4

Quality Area 4 & 7

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Friday 24 June 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Curriculum & pedagogy: exploring practice possibilities. A two part learning opportunity

APST 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 4.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4

Quality Area 1 & 5

Presenter: Catharine Hydon

Dates: Part 1 Friday 29 July and Part 2 Friday 26 August 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Victorian Archive Centre, 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne. Free parking on site (enter via Macaulay Street).

Cost: Member: \$300 / Non member: \$450

Collaboration at its best: Team teaching that rocks the world

APST 1.2, 3.3, 6.3, 7.4

Quality Area 4 & 7

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Thursday 4 August 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Engaging with the EYLF: a professional learning session for educators who want to start from the beginning

APST 1.5, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 5.1, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4

Quality Area 1, 5 & 6

Presenter: Catharine Hydon

Date: Friday 5 August 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Intentional teaching in the outdoor program

APST 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 3.3, 3.4, 6.2, 6.3, 7.4

Quality Area 1, 2 & 3

Presenter: Karen Glancy

Date: Friday 12 August 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

Curriculum that changes the world. Big ideas that make education matter

APST 2.3, 3.2, 7.4

Quality Area 1, 5, 6 & 7

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Thursday 1 September 2016

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Darebin Arts Centre, Cnr Bell St & St Georges Rd, Preston. Free parking on site.

Cost: Member: \$150 / Non member: \$225

FOR MANAGERS

Safety – Not just child's play

Quality Area 7

Presenter: ELAA and Recovre

Dates: Tuesday 8 March, 9am – 5pm,
Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong
Road, Keysborough. Free parking.

or

Monday 18 April, 9.30am – 5pm,
Allianz meeting rooms – Level 5/360
Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

or

Thursday 21 July, 9.30am – 5pm, Preston
Reservoir Bowling Club, 75 Leamington
Street, Reservoir. Free parking.

Cost: Member: \$313.50 / Non
member: \$357.50

FOR PARENTS

Talking to children about safety – evening seminar for parents

Presenter: Children's Protection Society

Date: Thursday 28 April 2016

Time: 6.30 – 9pm

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

Cost: \$50



2016 FREE COMMITTEE TRAINING

Free Committee training in partnership with the Department of Education and Training and local councils

Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management

Welcome to the Committee

Join us for a comprehensive introduction to the roles and responsibilities of committees of management of early childhood services.

In this free session we will discuss your role:

- in providing good governance as a member of a committee of management of an Incorporated Association
- as an employer
- as an Approved Provider of an early childhood service
- as the manager of a funded organisation.

Tuesday 16 February 7pm – 9.30pm

Maroondah City Council, Croydon Office – Yarra Valley Room, 7 Civic Square, Croydon

Thursday 25 February 7pm – 9.30pm

Darebin Council Offices, 274 Gower Street, Preston

Saturday 27 February 9.30am – 1pm

Hobson's Bay City Council, Civic Centre, 115 Civic Pde, Altona

Monday 29 February 7pm – 9.30pm

Yarra Ranges Council, 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale

Thursday 3 March 7pm – 9.30pm

Mornington Peninsula Council Chambers Cnr Queen & Main Street, Mornington

Tuesday 8 March 7pm – 9.30pm

Banyule Council Chambers, Nellie Ibbott Room (no disability access please advise if needed), 275 Upper Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe

Thursday 17 March 7pm – 9.30pm

Stonnington Council, Prahran Town Hall, 180 Greville Street, Prahran

Hot Topics

ELAA presents workshops on specialist topics that are important to volunteer committees as managers of early childhood services. These are all conducted at the ELAA Office, Level 3, 145 Smith Street, Fitzroy.

Wednesday 24 February

10 – 11.30am & 6 – 7.30pm

Understanding your responsibilities

as a member of the committee of an Incorporated Association

Wednesday 16 March

10 – 11.30am & 6 – 7.30pm

Financial management – Key practices and procedures to protect your organisation and its members

Wednesday 27 April

10 – 11.30am & 6 – 7.30pm

Budget & Fees – Developing and understanding your budget and its impact on the sustainability of your service

Sign-in for these sessions is 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the session.
Registration is essential for all sessions. Visit the training section at www.elaa.org.au

THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING A SAFE ROAD USER

Starting Out Safely – Victoria's Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program

Starting Out Safely, funded by VicRoads, is Victoria's early childhood road safety education program which ELAA has successfully delivered since 2011.

The Starting Out Safely program works on the premise that effective road safety education delivered during early childhood plays an important role in laying the foundations for safe road use throughout life. The early childhood road safety education program has been developed through evidence-based research, in collaboration with leading early childhood experts and is based on best practice principals.

Educators and early childhood professionals, working collaboratively with families, can help children become safe and independent road users.

The Starting Out Safely program has four main objectives

1. **Advocacy** – To improve road safety outcomes for children through advocating for the value of early childhood road safety education and influence early childhood policy at state and national levels.

2. **Professional education** – To improve road safety outcomes for children through delivering road safety education professional development sessions to early childhood professionals across Victoria.
3. **Child car restraint education** – To improve road safety outcomes for children through delivering child car seat and booster seat education sessions across Victoria.
4. **Preschool education** – To improve road safety outcomes for children through delivering *ThingleToodle* education sessions at preschools across Victoria.

Free education resources for teachers and families

The Starting Out Safely program has some fantastic free resources for services and educators including **best practice policies** and **resources for educators** and early childhood service providers which support the current quality principals in early learning including the Early Years Learning Framework, the National Quality Standards and the National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education.

There is also a range of story books, puzzles and playmats available for order and newsletter items and information about road safety.

Resources are available to families which complement the road safety education program delivered at early childhood services. These resources include information about choosing and using the most appropriate child car seats for your children and are available in over 22 languages.

For more information on the Starting Out Safely program and to access the free policies and resources go to the Starting Out Safely website childroadsafety.org.au.



Free Professional Development presented by Australia's leading experts

Starting Out Safety professional development training is presented by some of Australia's leading early childhood experts.

We share practical strategies to support young children's learning about road safety, centred on the latest evidence-based research. The sessions identify how road safety education links to the Early Years Learning Frameworks, the National Quality Standard and the National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education. Early childhood professionals and teachers are encouraged to take-up this fantastic opportunity to learn from some of the best and most sought after early years experts. The content of these engaging sessions have applications beyond road safety education and cover children's rights and children's active participation in their community.

OUR PRESENTERS



Catharine Hydon

Catharine has a Masters in Early Childhood Education specialising in early childhood practice, policy

and governance, the delivery of integrated services and the exploration of innovative programs to engage vulnerable children and their families. Catharine's involvement in the early childhood field is an important part of her commitment to the sector. Catharine is a dynamic speaker and is skilled at engaging professionals in professional dialogue and reflective conversations.

"Starting Out Safely has engaged the early years sector to explore a new understanding and contemporary perspective on road safety education. Through its innovative approaches and imaginative responses road safety education in Victoria and nationally, it has expanded in scope to become an important enabling factor for children's safe and ongoing participation in their community."



Louise Dorrat

Louise has taught at Swinburne and Victoria University and currently teaches at Deakin in the Bachelor Early

Childhood Education Institute of Koorie Education program. She has been a key presenter of the Starting Out Safely Professional Development sessions. Her extensive background in teaching and management of early childhood services contributes to the ongoing development of the program. Louise is a sought after key note speaker and her energetic workshops have taken her around Australia.

"The educators have been surprised that the PD has not resulted in 'something extra that we have to do in an already busy program' but has given educators increased knowledge in embedding road safety in their everyday curriculum. It is the shift in thinking from previously 'doing' a week of road safety every year to children being active learners through participation and meaningful experiences... it gives the educators new ideas and also the practices link to the National Quality Framework."



Nicole Pilsworth

Nicole is an Early Childhood Educator who has worked in Children's Services for over 20 years in a

variety of childcare and preschool settings in both NSW and Victoria. She worked with local government with educators across family day care, long day care and preschool as well as planning for the implementation of the National Reform Agenda, including National Quality Standards and Universal Access. Nicole has completed her Masters of Education and is currently working on the Victorian Advancing Early Learning Study project at the University of Melbourne.

"Feedback from participants in the professional development sessions has been consistently positive with many educators noting that there were elements of road safety education that they had not considered within their curriculum prior to the session."

"The PD session has inspired me to think more about how to incorporate road safety into the program."

Training session participant

"The program has given me an awareness of taking spontaneous learning opportunities when they occur which I may have overlooked."

Training session participant



Gilda Howard

Gilda currently consults to the early childhood sector and has managed a number of major projects including

the Business Services Review of an LGA children's service, the mentoring and coaching of senior management in a number of early childhood services. Gilda was CEO of Gowrie Victoria from June 2005 to June 2011. Gilda also held the role of Manager, Workplace Programs at Gowrie from 2000 to 2005.

"Participants from the RSE PD sessions have told us that the sessions are contemporary, practical and engaging. After experiencing a PD session, educators and students recognise how easy it is to embed road safety education into their programs and can link the road safety education learnings to the National Quality Standards."

Professional development sessions are tailored to suit early childhood professionals in any early childhood setting including, preschools and childcare, early childhood education students and Family Day Care educators and providers. Contact the RSE team on (03) 9489 3500 or rse@elaa.org.au to organise a session for your organisation.



2016 Early Childhood Education Conference



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

The 2016 Early Childhood Education Conference, *Together we grow – connecting communities*, will be held on 27 and 28 May, 2016 at Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne. The conference will inspire, engage and bring together early childhood professionals across the wide spectrum of early childhood education.

This year's conference theme, *connecting communities* was chosen by the Conference Reference Committee to reflect the importance of community connections to improve life-long outcomes for children. As the old adage says – it takes a village to raise a child – so we have explored themes of connections with families, other services, the ECEC community and colleagues.

Early childhood is a vital period in children's lives. The experiences and quality of interactions in the early years provide the foundation for all subsequent learning and behaviour. High quality early education and care programs benefit children now and into the future, with ongoing health, education, and social impacts. The Early Years Learning

Framework views children's lives in the context of belonging, being and becoming – “knowing where and with whom you belong... recognising the significance of the present... and learning to participate fully and actively in society.”

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.

We are thrilled to present one of the best, and most varied, conference programs yet; lead by expert key note speakers, Charlotta Oberg, Robyn Monro Miller, Anne Kennedy and Anthony Semann.

Thank you to our Gold Sponsor the Department of Education and Training, our Major Sponsors AustralianSuper and VicRoads, our exhibitors and delegates for their support and contribution towards the conference and acknowledge members of the 2016 Conference Reference Committee for their invaluable contribution.

Some highlights of this year's program

Educating the global village presented by Charlotta Oberg

Australia is one of the most multicultural nations in the Western World, with one in four people born overseas, and over 200 languages spoken in our communities.

When we consider that every family is a culture, the mix becomes even richer.

It asks a lot of all who work in Early Childhood, to connect across cultures with children, families and communities. This interactive, inspiring session equips delegates to think and act in productive ways that bridge cultural gaps.

Topics include:

- Cultural Competence – the three key things you need to be effective in a culturally diverse environment
- Seeing Culture at Work – the global smorgasbord of approaches to child rearing, child care and learning
- Understanding the Differences that Matter – How culture impacts expectations, preferences and practices
- Bridging Cultural Gaps – connecting across cultures, by applying Cultural Competence to real-life examples
- Cultivating Multicultural Mindsets – in ourselves and others

Charlotta Oberg is a social entrepreneur with a decade of cultural diversity experience on 3 continents. Originally from Sweden, she began traveling the world with international education program Up with People. Since then, she has been a “cross-cultural junkie”, focusing her Masters degree on Cross-Cultural Communication, making it her life's work to ignite Multicultural Mindsets and generally going global – if not physically so much at this time in life, so through other people's minds and experiences. Her vision is for a society where cultural diversity goes from being a curiosity and a challenge into a true source of richness.

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

27–28 May 2016, Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne

together we grow *connecting communities*

Listening when you cannot hear their voices presented by Robyn Monroe Miller

Educators spend a lot of time identifying the needs of families and children, in fact all educators have a responsibility to do so!

This presentation challenges educators to think differently about what listening to families and children really means and how to hear the voices of others who don't appear to engage using traditional methods.

Through adopting a rights based approach with a twist of practical down to earth logic, and a splash of interactive fun, educators will be empowered to change the way they think about how they engage with families and children. The key message is all families and children have

a voice – the skill is identifying it and creating an environment for it to occur.

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.

To register on-line and to find out more about our program and speakers, visit our website 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!



BUILDING AND SUSTAINING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Nicole Pilsworth, Jane Page and Collette Tayler, from the University of Melbourne explain the Victorian Advancing Early Learning Study which is proving to have positive impacts on educator practice, educational leadership and learning outcomes for children.

It is well recognised that a central determinant of quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is the knowledge, skills and capacities of its educators (Sheridan, Pope Edwards, Marvin & Knoche, 2009; Chu, 2012; OECD, 2005). In addition, increasing the capacity of staff has been shown to have the most direct impact on improving children's learning and development outcomes (Hattie, 2003). The critical role of educators in optimising young children's learning, and the importance of building staff capacity, is acknowledged in the National Quality Framework, most notably Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard (NQS) where the Educational Leader is seen as the key agent to enact these imperatives. The Educational Leader is defined as the professional who 'leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning' (ACECQA, 2011, p. 172). The Educational Leader is critical to providing support to educators as they enhance young children's learning outcomes through their educational programs and pedagogical practices.

The NQS further defines effective leadership as 'a relationship between people' (ACECQA, 2011, p.171) and speaks to the importance of leaders having the capacity to empower colleagues. In this way the NQS recognises that effective leadership builds a positive organisational culture and professional learning community where every educator



When an organisation nominates an Educational Leader and commits to ongoing professional learning and development for staff it not only adds value to the organisation but also plays a critical role in attracting and retaining good quality staff.

shares experiences and expertise, and learns from colleagues. Enhancing the knowledge, skills and capacities of educators to offer quality learning experiences for young children and their families is fundamental. The concept of lifelong learning is an important construct to support this ongoing evolution and organisational success (Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley & Shepherd, 2012). Research emphasises the role of positional leaders in motivating and supporting staff in ongoing learning.

The designated Educational Leader is a vital part of any effective early childhood organisation (Hadley, Waniganayake & Shepherd, 2015). When an organisation nominates an Educational Leader and commits to ongoing professional learning and development for staff it not only adds value to the organisation but also plays a critical role in attracting and retaining good quality staff. ECEC settings are increasingly complex and dynamic organisations that must continually evolve and adapt to the changing policy landscape. The Educational Leader can help set into place cohesive, effective early childhood programs and pedagogical practices.

A small-scale research study in metropolitan Melbourne is investigating the role of the Educational Leader in supporting the implementation of evidence-based strategies, and establishing what strategies and techniques Educational Leaders apply to improve the quality of pedagogy in their ECEC settings. The Victorian Advancing Early Learning Study (VAELS) is a three-year research project funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The study is conducted by researchers from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) at the University of Melbourne in partnership with Moonee Valley City Council, Hume City Council and Mission Australia. As part of the VAEL study the team designed a professional learning program that provides sustainable effects on educators' practice as well as outcomes for children's learning and development. The Educational Leader



plays a key role in this ongoing professional learning and works collaboratively with the leadership team to mentor and coach educators in reflecting on their practice, setting goals that focus on the frequency and intentionality of the educator-child interactions within their programs.

An element of the capacity building is based on embedding evidence based teaching strategies from 3a (Abecedarian Approach Australia) that place high priority on language and cognition into the educational program and practice to optimise children's learning and development outcomes. There is growing evidence that participating in single in-service training sessions has minimal sustained effect on increasing the quality of teaching practice (Sheridan et al, 2009; Brown & Inglis, 2013). Therefore the approach to professional learning in the VAEL study is focused on collaborative, sustained engagement based on the needs of individuals and the service as a whole to build a shared language around teaching and learning, for educators and the children and families. In the first year of implementation – the Treatment Year – Educational Leaders and Educators are offered professional learning and interactive coaching from MGSE. In the second year – the Sustainability Year – the Educational Leader continues to work with colleagues to improve the quality of their teaching and learning, with reduced support from MGSE.

As the program was established the development of clear guidelines outlining the expectations of the process as well as the responsibilities associated with each role assisted in clarifying the purpose and structure. This gave an opportunity for educators as well as those in leadership positions to ask questions and make suggestions as to how the program may work best with individual educators. In addition, shared professional learning sessions with all educators supported the development of a professional learning community across the centres. Importantly the Educational Leader is supported by a coach from MGSE who provides one-on-one sessions that reinforce knowledge of the evidence-based strategies, attend to change management and identify and evaluate the 3a implementation practices and targets. The Educational Leader also maintains evidence records related to ongoing development, including the specific details for supporting individual educators.

Research has identified mentoring and coaching as effective models for strengthening educator knowledge and to rethink practice, and these are strategies that Educational Leaders can incorporate into their practice to support continuous improvement (Twigg, Pendergast, Fluckiger, Garvis, Johnson & Robertson, 2013). However, it is important to consider the readiness and commitment of each educator to change. Coaching and

“ Research has identified mentoring and coaching as effective models for strengthening educator knowledge and to rethink practice, and these are strategies that Educational Leaders can incorporate into their practice to support continuous improvement.

mentoring are strategies that can utilise individual educators' strengths as a way of reflecting on and improving practice, rather than 'fixing' people. The aim of the mentoring and coaching is to build relationships based on trust rather than simply managing performance. Both formal and informal interactions within the service can strengthen relationships within teams and encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility for team members. Focusing on mentoring and coaching as strategies to engage educators provides a structure to elements of these relationships, a way to monitor the progress, and to show the impact of their interactions with young children. This emphasis on collaborative partnerships developed through the program will influence how successful the process will be, with greater potential for sustained changes in practice (Barber, Cohrsen & Church, 2014).

The ultimate goal of introducing such a program is to embed reflective practice and the concept of continuous improvement among the team of educators for the purpose of building greater personal and professional capacity. Such a program can lead to increased job satisfaction as well as more positive outcomes for children and families.

Professional learning programs, such as the program outlined in the VAEL study aims to involve educators in ways that stimulate not only their knowledge and practice, but also their motivation and engagement.

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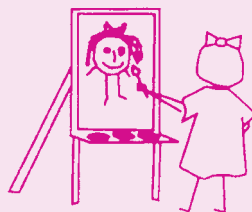
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PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

The end of September 2015 signalled the beginning of the requirement for all qualified early childhood teachers employed or engaged in Victorian early childhood education and care services or children's services to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (the Institute). The Institute is the regulator of teachers in Victoria and the inclusion of early childhood teachers recognises their importance in developing positive educational outcomes for Victoria's children.

To hold registration with the Institute, early childhood teachers must be qualified and suitable people to teach. These requirements mean that parents can be assured of the professionalism of those who are teaching their children.

Meeting high standards

Being a suitable person to be a teacher is a central requirement for registration. All registered teachers must hold a current and satisfactory National Police History Check that, like the Working with Children Check, is updated every five years. This is a comprehensive check on the fitness of a person to be a registered teacher. The Institute also requires applicants for registration who have lived overseas for a period of time to provide a satisfactory criminal record check from the countries where they have resided. Once registered, teachers are subject to a weekly check with Victoria Police. This regulation of teachers provides strong public protection for Victorian children and their parents.

The knowledge and practice of registered teachers is articulated in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). The seven standards are used by teachers throughout Australia and are a foundation for the qualifications recognised for teacher registration and the on-going requirements to maintain registration. These standards are consistent with the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework and are described in Table 1.

Renewing registration every year

Registered early childhood teachers will confirm that they have continued to uphold high standards of professional practice and participate in an annual process to renew their registration. This is due by 30 September every year and is a requirement to continue to be registered.

To satisfactorily renew, early childhood teachers will have to undertake at least 20 days teaching and 20 hours of professional development (PD) activities in the previous twelve months. The PD activities must reference the standards in Table 1 and show an early childhood teacher has kept up-to-date with their professional knowledge and practice. Currency of practice is a hallmark of being a professional.

Table 1: The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)

KNOWLEDGE

- 1 Know learners and how they learn
- 2 Know the content and how to teach it

PRACTICE

- 3 Plan for an implement effective teaching and learning
- 4 Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments
- 5 Assess, provide feedback and report on learning

ENGAGEMENT

- 6 Engage in professional learning
- 7 Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community

As part of PD in 2016 and 2017, early childhood teachers will be required to further develop their capacity to support the participation of learners with a disability. The Victorian government is committed to improving educational outcomes for children with a disability and this regulatory requirement recognises the significance of teachers in reaching that goal.

New early childhood teachers

Newly graduated early childhood teachers are provisionally registered by the

Institute, providing them with time to develop their practice and meet the professional standards at the Proficient Teacher level.

During 2016, experienced early childhood teachers will be offered training as mentors for provisionally registered early childhood teachers. This will provide new teachers with supported entry into the profession through opportunities for professional collaboration, discussion and reflection on practice. The Institute's mentoring initiative is supported by the Department of Education & Training and has been in place for many years. It is one of the measures ensuring the high quality of teaching in Victoria and has been recognised internationally.

Professional and public recognition

The ability for the qualifications and suitability of early childhood teachers to be easily recognised through registration has benefits for both the employers of these teachers and the Victorian public. The names of all registered teachers who are able to teach in Victoria can be found in the online extract of the Register of Teachers available on the Institute website at www.vit.vic.edu.au/search-the-register and accessible by everyone. If a teacher is registered then they are qualified to teach and have met all criminal record checks and suitability requirements. This is important information for employers of teachers, parents and other interested community members.

The Institute publishes a regular early childhood circular providing information about registered teachers and information for employers of registered teachers. If you haven't already done so, you are encouraged to sign up for this publication. Back copies of the circular and subscription information can be found on the Institute website at www.vit.vic.edu.au.

ELAA training seminars and the 2016 Early Childhood Education conference, *Together we grow* sessions are specifically targeted at teachers, educators and educational leaders. Each seminar and conference session is linked to the National Quality Standard and early years learning frameworks as well as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). ELAA provides a certificate of participation for all sessions, which can be used as proof for VIT annual professional development requirements.

McARTHUR 2015 EARLY CHILDHOOD VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

“ Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.”

William James

The annual McArthur Early Childhood Volunteer of the Year Award recognises the significant contribution that volunteers make to early childhood services, and celebrates volunteerism as the backbone of our community, and our economy.

The 2015 McArthur Early Childhood Volunteers of the Year was announced at ELAA's Annual General Meeting last year and it was a highlight of the night. The award ceremony is a celebration of our members work and an opportunity to thank our dedicated volunteers.

Every year ELAA receives a number of high quality nominations, making the job of the selection panel very difficult, however we found eight outstanding nominations. The three shortlisted candidates are recognised for their contributions to their kindergartens and their community. They are; Pamela Foo from Bestchance; Tammy Logan from Poowong Kindergarten, Poowong; Geraldine Ramselaar from Farm Road Kindergarten, Mentone.

The 2015 finalists...

Brea Gray from Clare Court Children's Service in Yarraville

Brea Gray was a volunteer and executive member of the Board of Management at Clare Court Children's Service for four years.

During this time, Brea demonstrated exceptional commitment, outstanding leadership and made a significant contribution, including donating her company's resources to create the Service's website. Brea has made considerable improvements to the Service including overhauling of financial reporting system, developing a strategic plan and reviewing and updating policies and procedures to improve governance and service delivery. She has also been involved with campaigning for the creation of an integrated kindergarten program and improved the outdoor spaces at the service.

Brea's tireless work for Clare Court is greatly appreciated by the Board, the parents and the Educators alike. The children have reaped the rewards of her involvement over the past four years.

Elissa Simmons from Glenroy West Kindergarten, Glenroy

Elissa lead the community of Glenroy West Kindergarten during a challenging time when the kindergarten was relocated and rebuilt – many believe that without her true leadership the move would never have eventuated successfully. As a leader, Elissa was hands on in every department – planning, payments, timelines, DET and council regulations, delegation of tasks, co-operation and collaboration between skilled and unskilled volunteers and physical hard work in extreme heat through long days into nights. Throughout this process Elissa maintained the momentum and positivity.

The kindergarten was proud to achieve an Exceeding rating from their NQS assessment during 2014. Elissa developed relationships and partnerships with many of the families in the Moreland area – the community would like to acknowledge and celebrate her contribution.

Suzie Hotchin from Summerhill Park Kindergarten, Glen Iris

In her two years as Grants Officer, Suzie achieved and project managed numerous

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grants for the kindergarten – most notably, two grants that have completely changed the outdoor landscaping, significantly enhanced the kindergarten's ability to manage water sustainably, and enhanced the kinder program immeasurably by creating sustainable, natural play spaces.

Throughout her tenure, Suzie participated to the whole of her ability in every aspect of kinder life: often working very long hours at home or on-site at kinder. She willingly took on leadership roles and was also a collaborative and supportive team player. Suzi worked above and beyond the call and the Kindergarten community would like to thank her hard work.

Renae Whiting from Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten, Fairfield

Renae successfully lead the Kindergarten community, including committee, families and staff, through a period of great change. As President, she showed outstanding leadership through her collaboration with other committee members to support them in their roles.

Renae worked tirelessly on a number of major projects including reviewing self-assessments, policies and procedures as part of the Kindergarten's Quality Improvement Plan, working with the local government and other early childhood services through the process of investigating a proposed hub development and negotiating a new lease with the council – just to name a few. The community of Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten would like to thank Renae for her fantastic contribution.



Finalists of the 2015 Volunteer of the Year award with winner Jaime Rae (front left) and Tracie Burwash (front right) from McArthur.

And the winner of the 2015 McArthur Volunteer of the Year is...

Congratulations to Jaime Rae from Seaford Kindergarten, Seaford

Jaime's contribution to Seaford Kindergarten over the past 5 years cannot be overstated. During this time, the kindergarten has seen a significant increase in the numbers of children attending the kindergarten, in both 3 and 4 year old programs. Jaime played a key role in recruiting, managing and supporting staff, liaising with council to manage a substantial renovation and lead the staff and committee through their first NQF assessment program.

She worked with the Committee to improve governance procedures, reviewed policies and many more major undertakings.

Jaime continued as Treasurer of the Committee during 2014 despite not having a child attending the program. She did all this while raising her 3 children, giving birth to her fourth child, running a family business and undergoing treatment for a serious illness. Jamie is congratulated on the immeasurable difference she has made to Seaford Kindergarten and the wider Seaford community.

The ELAA Board and staff would like to congratulate all the 2015 nominees and finalists. Nominations for the 2016 McArthur Volunteer of the Year Award will open in July this year.

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MEMORIES OF EASTER WEEKEND, 2015

The importance of MyTime support friendships

Rachel Shambrook shares the story of the amazing support her family received from her MyTime friends during a traumatic and high profile event.

Few parents could imagine what it is like to go through the experience of your child, particularly a child with additional needs, going missing in the bush – the unknown of “Where is my child...?”, “Why hasn’t he been found...?”, “What if he doesn’t make it...?” and “What will I do if he is never found...?”.

For me and my family, such were the events of our 2015 Easter family holiday when my son Luke Shambrook went missing at Fraser Camping Ground, Lake Eildon National Park. The traumatic experience lasted five days and four nights.

We were camping with family and friends, all of whom know Luke very well. Luke, despite his significant additional needs, is just another member of our group; he very much belongs, enjoys the regular holiday and being part of the group. When Luke went missing on his adventure, it became a much publicised, national and global media event.

By the end of the first day my anxiety, stress and the ‘what ifs...’, were heightened, followed by thoughts of what will he do over-night, lost, all by himself, in the dark, with no food, shelter or drink. As parents, going to bed on that first night somehow just didn’t seem right when our child was somewhere out in the bush, cold, wet, hungry and thirsty. Yet to sit up all night wondering about his whereabouts was not right either, given that rest (sleep was unlikely) was much needed to ensure we were able to get through whatever was to eventuate the next day.

The escalating stress and anxiety was such that I went into survival mode, not really thinking, just operating on ‘automatic pilot’ and hoping against all odds that Luke would be found alive.

Over the five days, I really just existed by focusing on remaining calm outwardly, while inwardly dealing with the rising stress levels, and yet also hoping ‘against all odds’ and praying. I also passed on every ounce of information about Luke and his additional needs, in the hope it might just make a difference to him being found.

So what was it that got me and my family through the experience of Luke going missing for 5 long days?

Initially, it was the quick response and rallying around by our friends; so many of them from my local MyTime groups.

I belong to two such MyTime groups which meet fortnightly and from week to week I greatly look forward to our get-togethers. The MyTime members have become very good friends and I ‘wouldn’t be without them’. The support my family and I received from these friends when Luke went missing for almost 5 days was amazing to say the least; almost beyond words.

When Luke went missing at 9.30am, on Good Friday, our ‘MyTime’ friends travelled several hours to be beside me and my family to offer much needed hugs, practical support and share our emotional load. I didn’t need to explain our situation or how I was feeling as they too have children with additional needs.

They know the challenges and complexities of having a child with additional needs and can relate to the difficulties of daily life. This was so evident over those 5 days when Luke was missing and hope of finding him alive was fading fast. They were in for the ‘long haul’, ready to help and support in any way possible.

I asked myself, why did they drive all that way, putting their own holiday weekend on hold and sacrificing their own precious family time? Why did they come, with their support of food and activities for Luke’s siblings and the other kids in our group? Why did they?

Because they understood. They had something in common!

When Luke was found alive after 5 days, hypothermic and dehydrated, my MyTime friends were there to celebrate with us. If the outcome of Luke’s adventure had not been the miracle that it was, I have no doubt that these same friends would have been there then as well.

In the days, weeks and months since, our MyTime friends have continued to stand by me, offering practical support, gifts, friendship and so many other things. They have continued to be there for me during the ‘aftermath’ which has been long and hard, offering a ‘listening ear’ and that shared understanding. My heartfelt thanks goes to each and every one who continue to support me and my family to this very day.

MyTime groups provide support for mothers, fathers, grandparents and anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition. MyTime groups provide facilitated peer support to families raising children with complex needs. Peer support groups provide an opportunity for people who are living similar experiences to share those experiences and support each other. They typically consist of a group of people who share a similar – but not necessarily identical – life experience. Peer support groups expose people to varied ways of reacting to and coping with their challenges, give them a chance to share positive experiences, and lead to an increased sense of belonging and wellbeing.

For more information about MyTime or to find a group near you go to the website www.mytime.net.au or contact Genevieve O’Connor on 03 9388 1599 or email gen@playgroup.org.au.

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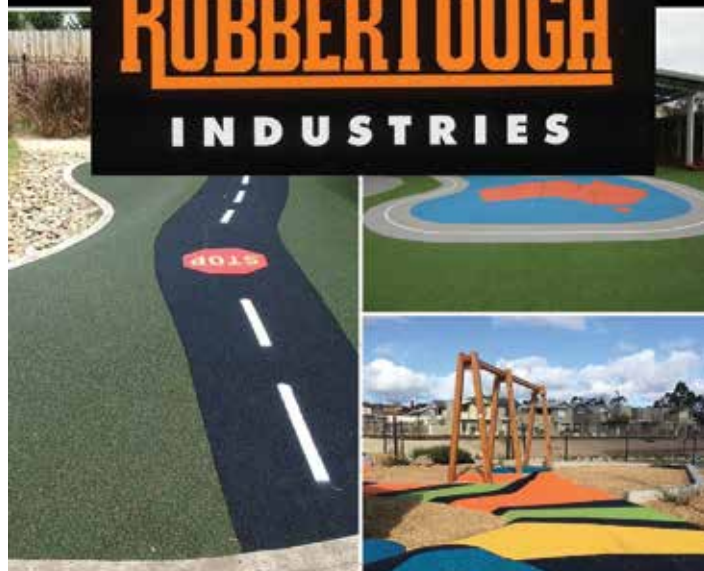
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Q&A



“ Unless the committee has delegated authority to the president or to the executive as a sub-committee, it is only the committee that can make decisions.”

Carrie McCluskey, Member Services Officer

Can the president and/or executive make decisions between committee meetings?

Parents, staff and members of the association sometimes believe that the President makes all decisions pertaining to the service and therefore will target that person with their questions and complaints. It is, however, the entire committee that has been elected by the membership of the association to manage the affairs of the association. Unless the committee has delegated authority to the president or to the executive as a sub-committee, it is only the committee (as per the requirements of the constitution) that can make decisions. As presidents do not have any more or less authority than any other member of the committee it is important for them to remember that they are the first among equals. Presidents may need to also remind people that it is the committee who makes the decisions so that they are not unfairly targeted when difficult decisions have to be made. It may be helpful to try using language such as; “thank you for your suggestion I will put it on the agenda for the next committee meeting”, “here is a copy of our complaints policy, please put your concerns in writing as per the policy”, “the committee decided”.

However, from time to time, unusual situations arise that need a quick response. ELAA recommends that committees give some delegated authority (clearly outlined in a Terms of Reference which should be reviewed by the new committee every year) to the executive or to the president to make urgent decisions between committee meetings. The executive members or the president, when using this delegated authority should try to “read the mind” of the committee and predict the decision that the committee would make if in full possession of all information related to the situation. If the executive or president makes a decision that the committee would not approve, the decision is still valid until such time as it is revoked by the committee. Wherever possible all committee members should be consulted and decisions made between meetings must be reported and ratified at the next committee meeting.

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



In this edition we have some burning questions for Sarah McNeill, our receptionist and the friendly voice that greets our members and colleagues when they call ELAA.

My work day entails... answering calls from members and the general public, as well as processing the mail, data entry and other general administration tasks. I am also the unofficial well-being guru at ELAA and I create our monthly staff health and wellness newsletter called *The Wellness Buzz*.

I am most inspired by... people who overcome adversity to achieve great things in life

What I like most about my job... speaking to such nice people on the phone

If I wasn't doing this job I'd be... doing something related to health and wellness. My personal interests include music – I sing, play guitar and write songs. I am passionate about health and wellness and I have almost completed a one year certificate course in nutrition. I also love to travel, my favourite region being South East Asia.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

This new regular feature is an opportunity to share everyday practices from quality early learning programs which promote inspiring learning experiences for young children.



Lorne kindergarten at the top of sustainability education

Lorne Kindergarten may be small but it likes to aim high when it comes to engaging and educating children and their families about science and sustainability.

Such lofty aspirations have paid off in the two years since the kindergarten introduced its unique, award-winning *Junior Earthlings* sustainability and science program.

Developed by the kindergarten's educators, Michelle Danks and Alyce Stribling, in collaboration with the voluntary parent committee, the program brings together key scientific and sustainability concepts under one interactive, fun umbrella.

"Our goal is to actively engage the children in learning about the three core branches of science – natural, social and formal – to ensure their understanding of sustainability is much broader than simply recycling, tree planting and managing water," explains Michelle.

"The program seeks to instil lifelong sustainability skills underpinned by comprehensive scientific knowledge of the natural world.

"It focuses on embedding sustainable practices in all our programs and involving educators, children and families, which supports the development of lifelong attitudes and values in relation to caring for our environment," Michelle says.

Examples of how the kindergarten has embedded sustainability in its activities include:

- actively sorting rubbish for recycling and food scraps for composting
- undertaking long-term, soil-based biodegradability experiments to illustrate how materials break down
- encouraging children to become 'energy savers' by turning lights off
- reminding each other to be water wise by turning off taps and tipping water play troughs onto the garden after play
- instilling 'reduce, re-use and recycle' behavioural concepts by reusing posters, paper, boxes, cylinders, cardboard and other materials donated by local businesses, or sourced during the kindergarten's annual trip to Bayswater's Resource Rescue service
- propagating, planting and caring for shrubs, herbs and vegetables

- learning 'paddock to plate' techniques by using produce from family vegetable gardens and eggs from the kindergarten's resident chickens to make soups, healthy cakes and other dishes
- using sustainable toys purchased from opportunity shops, swapped between other services or donated by local families
- making ethical purchasing decisions, including sustainably sourced timber products, and
- ensuring teachers role model sustainable practices.

"Little eyes watch our every move, so showing strong leadership and environmental awareness is vital to engendering long-term sustainable behaviour in our children," says fellow educator Alyce.

The children also learn scientific concepts in various ways. For example:

- recycling initiatives provide lessons in chemistry and biodegradability
- rockpool rambles teach them about oceanography, ecology and palaeontology
- feeding food scraps to resident animals focuses on biology and nutrition

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- indigenous stories present topography, geography and cultural science concepts, and
- water play tests the theories of celebrated physicists.

Introduced in 2014, the program proved so successful in its first 12 months that it was recognised in Sustainability Victoria's 2015 ResourceSmart Education Awards, winning the prestigious Early Childhood Service of the Year Award.

With more than 180 entries from some 100 education services across Victoria, the award places Lorne Kindergarten at the top when it comes to exceptional environmental awareness and education projects.

"We knew we were on to something very special with this program but to be recognised on a statewide level has been exhilarating and vindicating," Alyce says.

"In fact, we were overwhelmed that a small regional kindergarten could make such giant waves in the sustainability sector."

The kindergarten has continued to build on the *Junior Earthlings* program throughout 2015 by transforming a disused space into a practical bush learning space.

Featuring a produce garden, this 'wild space' enables children to explore the natural environment while practicing the various sustainability and science concepts they've been learning about.

The year ahead will see more work undertaken to enhance the *Junior Earthlings* program and further develop the wild space. Plans include planting indigenous species, fruit trees and other edible produce, and establishing a bush tucker garden.

"We will also be working toward being the first kindergarten to achieve Sustainability Victoria's five-star rating," says Michelle.

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MEMBER PROFILE



“ Another rewarding aspect of my role is watching families who were initially apprehensive about sending their children to our kindergarten quickly become happy with their decision.”

Jaime Rae, President, Seaford Kindergarten

Jaime Rae, President, Seaford Kindergarten (and winner of the 2015 McArthur Volunteer of the Year Award)

The most rewarding aspect of my involvement with the Kindergarten has been... watching our kindergarten go from strength-to-strength. We were a very small kindergarten and we have turned it into a kindergarten where people really want to send their children. When I started as President we only had 2 teachers; we now have six teachers. Although it has been tricky, we have found a group of teachers that work well together and complement each other.

Another rewarding aspect of my role is watching families who were initially apprehensive about sending their children to our kindergarten quickly become happy with their decision. At the recent Christmas break up, I loved hearing about new friendships that had been formed not just between the children but also the parents. It was great to see all of the children laughing and enjoying themselves.

Have you driven changes at your service or faced any challenges? When I started at Seaford Kindergarten the teacher, who had been there for 37 years, left due to illness. Everyone loved what she did, so it was a big loss and a big change, as she had been responsible for the kindergarten for a very long time. When I started I was thrown in the deep end but with the help of the other committee members, we came out the other side. During this time we had to complete our first Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). This was a very daunting task as it was new for both the committee and teachers. We spent many hours going to information sessions as well as holding regular QIP meetings – we are really happy with the results.

One of the biggest challenges for the kindergarten was looking at how maintain our 3 year old program, which we see as a great stepping stone for children, while providing 15 hours of the 4 year old program. The kindergarten had used a rotational model for many years but when the demand for the kindergarten was so high, we needed to try separate groups. There were lots of discussions between teachers and the committee to work out a program that was suitable for children, parents and teachers, and in 2015 we provided three separate groups. I am so proud of what the committee and teachers have been able to achieve over the last few years.

I'm most inspired by... my family. My husband has been very supportive of me over my years that I have been on the committee. Even when I was sick with breast cancer, he didn't tell me to step away from the committee but instead helped me work out a way to reduce the amount of time required. I do this for my children. I love to hear them talk about their kinder experiences, years later. My 4 year old loves kinder so much that he is dressed and waiting at the door an hour before we need to leave. This makes me smile and I think I have had a role in developing this kindergarten into a place that children feel safe and parent feel happy leaving their children in our care. Lastly my parent and sisters have always been there for me. I watched my mum and dad go on many committees and, as a child, thought they really care about my education and this was an inspiration for me as well.



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