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AUSTRALIA

The voice for parents and service providers

# PRE SCHOOL MATTERS

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PREPARING CHILDREN FOR LIFE  
TERM TWO 2016

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



**Term 2 is an exciting time for our organisation as we make final preparations for the 2016 Early Childhood Education Conference at Caulfield Racecourse on 27 and 28 May.**

The *Together we grow* conference is a highlight on the early learning calendar and provides an exciting opportunity for our sector to come together and reflect on our professional practice and the important work we do with children.

This year's theme – *Together we grow – connecting communities* – is all about working together as a community of education professionals, teachers and families to support early learning and deliver positive social and educational outcomes for children.

The program this year has many highlights to inspire delegates with a huge variety of topics to explore including cultural competency, working in partnership with families, connecting with colleagues, and so on. Check out the extensive program on the conference website [www.togetherwegrow.com.au](http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au).

Opening our conference on Saturday morning is Toby Kent, Chief Resilience Officer at the City of Melbourne. Toby will share with us a big picture vision of what resilient cities look like and how we can work together to create successful communities. You can read Toby's thoughts on this subject and more about the conference on pages 10–12.

In this edition of *Preschool Matters*, the feature articles look at ways to support us in our roles as educators, parents or service providers. On pages 6–7, Karen McKinnon, Clinical Director of Autism Partnership Australia, shares with us her experience of working with preschool children on the autism spectrum and preparing them for school. And on pages 18–19, Emma Bruce of Healthy Together Victoria writes about an initiative which focuses on creating healthier environments for children, particularly in early childhood services and schools.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Preschool Matters* and I look forward to seeing you at the Conference.

**Jo Geurts**  
President, ELAA

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# CEO's REPORT

## ELAA'S Budget Submission to the Victorian Government 2016–2017



### PRIORITIES FOR A STRONG SERVICE SYSTEM

#### Priority 1: Fundamental review of the kindergarten funding model

In Victoria, the delivery of early learning programs in a kindergarten setting is a partnership between governments, service providers, and families. The essential funding to deliver these programs comes from a mix of State, Commonwealth and local government funding, parent/family fees, fundraising, and the significant but unquantified contribution made by parent and community volunteers.

We believe a “root-and-branch” review of the existing funding model that delivers early learning services in Victoria is a vital initial step on the critical pathway toward an Education State. It is time to assess how the ECEC service system has evolved over the past two decades, and to consider how the system has adapted to often changing community and government expectations. It is also timely to ask the fundamental questions that the community has of governments in any area of public policy and service delivery: what do we believe is necessary for social and economic prosperity, and what are we (as taxpayers) prepared to pay for it?

#### Priority 2: Funding support for Kindergarten Cluster Management

Over 55% of all funded kindergarten programs in Victoria are delivered by Kindergarten Cluster Managers. KCM has grown and evolved over the last decade into a holistic model of service delivery with high quality learning outcomes for children as its core focus. It is widely acknowledged that Victoria leads the nation in quality rating under the National Quality Framework, thanks in part to the professionally managed, not-for-profit organisations that deliver our KCM system. If the government is committed to making Victoria the Education State, ELAA strongly believes that it needs to review the funding support it provides service providers within the existing system.

#### Priority 3: Improve regulation of training providers

#### Priority 4: Support the professional development of educators

Early childhood teachers are now being appropriately recognised as educational professionals through the requirement that they be registered by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

The quality of ECEC service provision has a direct relationship to the long-term outcomes for children: children in high-quality early learning settings perform better in cognitive tests, and they have more advanced vocabulary and fewer behavioural problems.

Minimum benchmarks for training packages to ensure that students have adequate training, assessment and workplace experience are needed as part of steps to regulate training providers and provide quality and grounded educational experiences for educators.

Adequately resourced TAFE places are also needed to enable Certificate III trained educators to extend their training and qualifications and contribute to expanding the well-qualified workforce.

#### Priority 5: Prepare families and services for the roll out of the NDIS

The further roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme will have a significant impact on the early learning sector, providing much needed support to families and their children. The State Government needs to ensure that families and ECEC service providers are well prepared for the NDIS roll out, which will commence from 1 July 2016. ‘Readiness’ activities for families include helping families understand their rights and developing their ability to confidently set goals and choose services and support. Service providers need to be supported to understand the new referral pathways and how they can best encourage and support families to engage with the National Disability Insurance Agency.



On behalf of our members, ELAA presented its 2016–2017 budget submission to the Andrews Government in February 2016. We were also pleased to meet with Minister for Families, Children and Youth Affairs, Jenny Mikakos in early March and to have the opportunity to discuss our submission in detail.

In our continuing advocacy on behalf of parents and service providers, our submission identifies priorities for a strong service system, and a longer-term vision and objectives to achieve the government's Education State initiative. Our submission is based on the *Ten Principles for an Early Education State*, which were

developed with members, stakeholders and sector partners (see *Preschool Matters*, Term One 2016) and which support the further development of a viable, high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector that is universally accessible to children and families.

This edition's CEO Report provides an overview of the submission. The full submission is available in the News and Advocacy section of the ELAA website.

We welcome member contributions and feedback on our advocacy work around early childhood education and care policy issues. Please contact us at [elaa@elaa.org.au](mailto:elaa@elaa.org.au).

**Shane Lucas** CEO, ELAA

## LONGER-TERM VISION: UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBLE ECEC

### Objective 1: Lead a community debate about compulsory kindergarten

Victoria has high kindergarten participation rates – with 96.4 per cent of children attending in the year before school – and a long and proud history of regarding kindergarten as a critical component of every child's early learning journey. We believe the Victorian community is ready for the State Government to lead a debate about the benefits all children would derive from kindergarten being an entitlement, not simply an option.

### Objective 2: Attendance at kindergarten is universal with at least 20 hours funded in the year before school

#### 20 hours for 4 year olds

For many years, ELAA has called on both State and Federal governments to provide an ongoing funding commitment to the provision of 15 hours of kindergarten in the year before school. Regrettably, funding is currently only secured to the end of 2017 under the terms of the existing National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.

However, when we look beyond our national borders, we see that in China, Europe and elsewhere, the value of ECEC is being

recognised through increased investment, and increased dosage. Without a similar increase in investment, Victorian children are placed at a disadvantage when compared globally.

ELAA recommends increasing the number of hours of kindergarten in the year before school to 20 hours, i.e. a minimum of three days per week.

### Objective 3: At least 5 hours of funded early learning for all 3 year old children

With the increased costs of new educator-to-child ratios being passed on in full to parents for unfunded three-year old programs, feedback from ELAA members suggests that the viability of these pre-kindergarten programs is at risk, whilst other programs are continuing with reduced enrolments or significantly increased parent/family contributions.

The evidence of the benefits of early engagement in formal ECEC is widely known. We therefore call on the Victorian Government to develop a plan – as part of the Education State – to fully fund a minimum of five hours per week (for forty weeks) of quality early learning programs for all three-year old children to ensure they are able to derive the maximum benefit from their access to high quality early learning.

## LONGER-TERM VISION: VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTED

### Objective 4: Address barriers to participation in Early Start kindergarten

Vulnerable children in particular benefit from quality early childhood programs. Children who attend high quality pre-school are protected against some of the risks associated with multiple disadvantages in early in childhood.

In a resource-constrained environment, investing in high quality education for children experiencing disadvantage will dramatically improve outcomes for those children across important life areas including employment, health and community engagement.

### Objective 5: Establish a Vulnerable Children's Fund

Building on the work of ELAA's Early Childhood Education Foundation, we call on the Government to create a Vulnerable Children's Fund with an initial \$10M investment that would provide the necessary financial assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged families to ensure their children can access quality ECEC services.

Looking for a great fundraising idea in 2016? The 'Caring for Kids' raffle is on again in Term 2, 2016



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# Q&A



**ff** *The Fair Work Commission approval process for the new agreement is anticipated to take several weeks."*

Glenda Glover, Manager,  
Member Services

## What is the new Industrial agreement for early childhood services in Victoria and what does it mean for our service?

The Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement (VECTEA) is the result of comprehensive negotiations between employers, represented by the Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) and teachers and educators in Victorian early childhood services, represented by the Australian Education Union (AEU) and United Voice.

If approved by the Fair Work Commission (FWC), the new Agreement will replace VECTAA 2009, the current enterprise agreement.

The FWC approval process following the successful ballot is anticipated to take several weeks.

The new Agreement will come into effect seven days from the date of approval of the agreement by the FWC.

ELAA will be providing extensive support to members to assist them with the implementation of the new Agreement by providing:

- A comprehensive implementation kit
- Information sessions
- Unlimited telephone and email advice.

These services are available only to ELAA members. If your service is not currently an ELAA member and would like to access support to implement the Agreement at your workplace, please contact ELAA to discuss membership.

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](mailto:elaa@elaa.org.au)

## PUTTING A FACE TO THE VOICE



*Tania De Carli, our Administration Manager, is in the hotseat in this edition; providing a glimpse of the myriad tasks she performs each day behind the scenes at ELAA.*

**My work day entails...** The both beautiful and challenging characteristics of my job are that no one day is ever the same. I have responsibility for all administrative processes, making sure the office is running smoothly and even running the raffle. In reality, that means my job encompasses a whole range of activities and you can never be quite sure what will come along next.

**I am most inspired by...** My children – they remind me to slow down and breathe.

**What I like most about my job...** I get to tell to the CEO what to do!

**If I wasn't doing this job I'd be...** Travelling around Australia with my family in our caravan. When that ended I'd go around again. And when that ended I would sit down to write a Maltese cooking book. I've already got plenty of taste-testers, I just need a little more time to work on the recipes!



## LITTLE SCHOOL – A NEW APPROACH TO LEARNING

*Preparing children with autism for schooling can be incredibly challenging. Karen McKinnon, Clinical Director of Autism Partnership, has seen this first hand in her 20 years of working with children on the autism spectrum, leading to the development of a new pre-prep program, Little School. This program is the first of its kind in Australia. Karen shares more about Little School and how it helps children with autism prepare for school.*

Many children on the autism spectrum are entering school without the skills they need to be able to learn in the classroom and to form meaningful friendships with their peers. Although we know that children on the autism spectrum have the potential to have a positive school experience, this is not always the case. That's why Little School was created.

Little School is tailored specifically to the needs of children on the autism spectrum. It bridges the gap between early childhood services and formal primary schooling, providing a transitional period of highly focused learning to prepare children for all of the experiences of primary school.

### **The difference between kindergarten and Little School**

Little School is designed to provide a highly individualised curriculum experience for each child. While many children naturally learn via play-based activities, this mode of learning can be challenging for some children on the autism spectrum.

Sometimes, children on the spectrum are not attuned to the lessons and experiences which occur naturally in the play-based learning environment. These children require a more structured learning environment, where skills and behaviours can be taught explicitly and revised frequently. Once children are “cued in” to learning and have come to understand how to acquire new information from the world around them, the goal is to return to a more natural mode of teaching and learning. This process is completely individualised to the learner.

Little School utilises the techniques of early intensive behavioural intervention (EIBI). There is a huge body of scientific evidence supporting the use of EIBI and its



**ff** *At Little School we can practice targeted skills 10 or 20 times a day (or as many times as needed) in a fun, interactive environment. This results in our students learning things much faster than they would in a regular classroom setting."*



behavioural principles are used in many classrooms throughout Australia and around the world.

At Little School, students have the opportunity to practice skills more intensively to speed up their rate of learning. At school or kinder, children might practice the skill of putting up their hand to answer a question once or twice a day. For many typically-developing children this is enough practice to know how to perform this skill in the classroom. However, for many children on the autism spectrum, more teaching is required. At Little School we can practice targeted skills 10 or 20 times a day in small groups (or as many times as needed) in a fun, interactive environment. This results in our students learning things much faster than they would in a regular classroom setting.

#### Program structure

Little School provides two, three or five day a week programs based on the Victorian curriculum. The broad scope of the Little School curriculum allows our students to learn across multiple developmental domains, including academic, social skills, communication and behaviour.

Each child has an individualised learning plan, with clearly documented goals that target the specific areas he or she needs to learn to get ready for school.

We follow a weekly school schedule and work on a range of skills including:

- Learning daily school routines
- Following teacher directions
- Participating in mat time activities
- Fine motor skills, such as writing, colouring, cutting
- Pre-academic skills, such as shapes, colours, letters and numbers
- How to learn in group settings
- Transitions between classes and learning environments
- Working independently
- Social communication and play skills
- Classroom behaviours
- Attending specialist classes, such as art, music and PE

#### A typical day at Little School

The day starts with mat time, where we may talk about the date, the weather, and share any exciting news. It may seem the same as any other pre-school program,

but Little School also focusses this time on teaching appropriate classroom learning behaviours. When we talk about the news of the day, we're also working on topical conversation skills, appropriate eye contact, waiting until the teacher calls on you, and showing behavioural self-regulation. Each lesson has a unique range of goals that are designed to teach our students to 'learn how to learn' in a classroom setting.

We then get started on the lessons, each of which are developed to suit the needs of the children. We teach maths, literacy, music, art and inquiry, alongside social skills and speaking and listening. We also have a weekly library session where we share some of the books we have been enjoying. Within these lessons many skills are targeted. For example, during art class the focus may actually be responding to your friend, or following two-step instructions.

In every lesson we practice school readiness skills, such as lining up, putting your hand up, sticking with a friend and working independently. We are always working on joint group skills as well as the independent targets which are continuously reassessed and developed for each child.

At the end of the day we come back together to discuss what we have achieved for that day, and to share what we thought was the best part of that day. No two days are ever the same – we feel confident in changing and developing the lessons in order to suit the needs and interests of the children.

#### Transitioning to school

Towards the end of each year, we invite school staff to attend Little School, observe the children and talk to the Little School teacher about goals and strategies that may assist the child to learn in the school setting. Parents are also supported through the process of preparing for school entry, so they know what to expect in the coming school year.

# 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.*

## Get up and Go; a story about our kindergarten's journey outside the gate

By Jenny Whelan,  
Albert Park Preschool

In 2014 our staff had the opportunity to hear Reggio Emilia Approach caretaker, Ms Carla Rinaldi, speak in Melbourne. She shared an inspirational story about the children of Reggio Emilia, their walking excursion to a local park, a tree, and a present the children made to give to the tree on their next return.

We started to think about a wonderful old tree just outside our kindergarten gate affectionately called, "the climbing tree". Generations of preschool children have hurried to the tree after session time

whilst their families chat together. As they grow older, the children still retain fond memories of climbing the tree with their friends. We began to realise that the tree outside was an important part of the children's kindergarten experience. Like the children of Reggio we realised how grateful we were for the tree.

In 2015 our Educational Leader attended a study tour at Reggio Emilia in Italy. On her return, she inspired a research project at our kindergarten that we called "What's over the fence". Incursions and excursions had always been strengths of our program, but it was with the introduction of the "What's over the fence" project that our commitment to local walking excursions was expanded and strengthened. We became very curious and needed to venture outside.

### What challenges did we face?

#### • Time

Scheduling the walking tours within the calendar, along with the time necessary to plan and implement them, was not quite as easy as we might have hoped.

#### • Safety

We undertook a risk assessment, altered staff rosters to create additional supervision and sought the support of our

family community to provide the extra help we needed to give us the confidence to proceed.

#### • Weather

In Melbourne where it can be challenging to plan around the weather!

### So what did we do?

We started small. Our three year-old groups explored the street in which the kindergarten is located. We realised our little street is actually very exciting! In addition to the kindergarten and the houses in which people live, we have a library, a medical centre and a dog wash – lots of things to see, hear, and talk about. Based on this success, we planned to take our four year-olds a bit further afield to the local park.

Meanwhile, one of our parents arranged for the children to complete an art project at a local studio, close enough to walk to. We involved the children in planning the trip. The trip involved crossing two major roads – the first at a pedestrian crossing and the second at traffic lights. We began to realise how important our walks outside were in supporting the children's awareness of road safety.



**“ Having the annual walking tour excursion permissions in place at the beginning of the year has been a big contributor to the program’s success. In addition to the scheduled walks, we have the opportunity to include more spontaneous opportunities.”**

#### What did we discover?

Our local walks are contributing to a number of positive outcomes:

- the children’s sense of belonging and safety in their community
- the children’s enjoyment at experiencing an outing with family members and teachers
- strengthening of our relationships with families by increasing opportunities for family involvement
- strengthening of links with the local community
- visiting green spaces to promote the children’s connection with nature
- learning what the children see, hear and value in our local community
- promoting road safety by experiencing the footpaths and crossing roads rather than limiting ourselves to talking about them within the kindergarten walls
- promoting health & wellbeing for all our children, staff and families by taking a break from the inside to explore the outside.

We are currently pursuing our Physical Activity badge under the Healthy Together Achievement Program and as we proceed through the benchmarks, we have come to realise just how important our walking excursions are in promoting and modelling

healthy behaviours (see pages 18–19 for more about the Healthy Together program).

#### In reflection:

At the end of 2015 we reflected on the success of our walking excursions and took three important steps that have been implemented in 2016.

1. We set a minimum number of local walking tour excursions in the 2016 calendar in advance and distributed these dates at our family orientation sessions. Our 2015 experience taught us that as the year progressed, it became harder to find available times in the calendar so we made sure we claimed that space in advance.
2. Staff attended “The Outdoor Educator” PD with Gowrie to strengthen our outdoor programming. We had postponed some of our walking tour dates in 2015 due to poor weather, but we now aim to be prepared for walking and playing in all sorts of weather!
3. We made our annual Walking Tour Excursion form part of the enrolment process, so that the necessary permissions would be in place at the beginning of the year.

Having the annual walking tour excursion permissions in place at the beginning of the year has been a big contributor to the program’s success. In addition to the

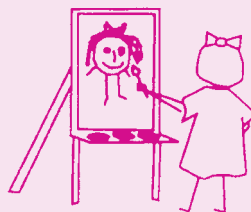


scheduled walks, we have the opportunity to include more spontaneous opportunities. An online communications tool that we introduced in 2015 provides opportunity to SMS our families with invitations to join us at short notice. The capacity to communicate quickly and efficiently with families is a big help.

In short, the introduction of local walks has been a great success and it’s easier than you might think to just “get up and go”. With a bit of planning at the beginning and a commitment to ongoing improvement, we have introduced something that felt like a challenge at first but is now becoming embedded in our day-to-day practice.

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# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN OUR CHILDREN AND OUR COMMUNITIES

*Australia is one of the most urbanised nations on Earth, with more than 80% of us living in cities and towns. Providing a taste of his presentation at the 2016 ELAA Conference, the City of Melbourne's Chief Resilience Officer Toby Kent describes how early childhood education programs are pivotal to creating better futures as communities around the world become increasingly urbanised.*

As a response to the impacts of accelerating urbanisation, the Rockefeller Foundation has created the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) initiative. 100RC exists to help cities around the world adapt, survive and thrive in the face of whatever chronic stresses and acute shocks they encounter. These same aspirations equally apply to communities within cities and the individuals that make up those communities.

The Resilient Melbourne initiative operates across the 32 councils that make up metropolitan Melbourne, covering 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The population already totals more than 4.3 million – with around one in five Melbournians under the age of 15.

After extensive consultation, Resilient Melbourne has developed long-term objectives which go to the heart of what enables us to flourish as a society. These objectives have specific implications for early learning.

## Stronger together

Across Australia, we see increasing emphasis on resilience in schools. Despite this, too often our programs, interventions and market mechanisms foster a culture of dependency, rather than equipping people with the capacity to feel empowered and to take responsibility for their own and others well-being.

From a broader resilience perspective, this is critical, because we are looking at a future which is likely to be more hazardous, in which events may occur simultaneously and people may not be able to rely always on emergency services and immediate government action.

***Point to consider:** From a biological perspective, 'diversity' is a critical element of resilience. Broadening our concepts of 'our communities' will also become more important as our society continues to diversify culturally. When elements of our community are excluded, not only does this tear away at the fabric of our society over time, but shock events can amplify divisions, exacerbating the consequences of events.*

**“ We need to much more closely involve children in planning our cities and the places we inhabit. After all, these are their cities, their shared spaces.”**

Of course, there is only so much that one can demand of our youngest students, but as ELAA's members know, it is not the specific skills but the culture and expectation that is set at young ages that determine how we act as individuals in later life and collectively as a society.

### Our shared places

As VicHealth notes in its Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2015–2019, “the environments where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with others are powerful influences on our mental wellbeing”.

We need to develop our cities, neighbourhoods, streetscapes and public spaces in ways that encourage social interaction – not by children alone but also between adults, setting positive examples for future generations. This requires attitudinal shifts and a willingness to invest differently in property and infrastructure. This will include breaking away from the car-dependent, community-remote development models that are increasingly prevalent today.

The resilience of our young people will be enhanced by increased exposure to older generations, and will also make our society better connected and more robust overall and requires a shift in perceptions as well as changes in the built environment.

**Point to consider:** *A city that is accessible to an eight year-old is also likely to be accessible to an 80 year-old. If we are to foster a society that looks after itself better, we need to break the trend towards age segregation, where children are cocooned and our senior citizens too often isolated.*

### A dynamic economy

The purpose of education is to equip our young for fulfilling lives in a wide variety of fields. For many people, a job is important in contributing to their own resilience, be it in the bonds they form, options they create, or resilience tools it allows them to access, such as healthcare and household insurance.

Technology is enabling international learning, exposure to international culture, talent and innovative ideas, making educational experiences richer and more rewarding for many. However, technology also increases competition and places new demands on young people. Education

needs to help children be prepared to operate in this new environment, which is a challenge for adult educators, who are also experiencing this new environment for the first time.

Inequality is a further inhibitor of economic dynamism and collective resilience, and while Australia has enjoyed over 20 years of economic growth, inequality in pay and economic participation between different groups in Australia indicates our economy is not resilient. Resilience will come from economic diversification and, perhaps more fundamentally, from enabling all of our collective human potential to

contribute to the economy. This starts with equality of access to learning.

**Point to consider:** *Our economy is changing and our young students need new skills. PwC analysis suggests that 39 per cent of Melbourne's current workforce is in jobs at risk of disappearing in the face of technological change and automation. More specifically, 75 per cent of Australia's fastest growing occupations now require science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills. Yet STEM university completions are flat, the number of Year 12 students studying STEM subjects is declining and businesses are struggling to find STEM-skilled employees.*

## A RESILIENT FUTURE

Resilient Melbourne has developed four inter-generational objectives:

**Stronger together –**  
empower communities to take more responsibility for their own and each other's safety, well-being and health

**Our shared places –**  
create and maintain places that promote social cohesion, equality of opportunity and well-being

**A dynamic economy –**  
enable diverse local economies, equipping an agile workforce prepared for the jobs of the future

**A healthier environment –**  
protect and enhance our natural environment alongside a growing population





### A healthier natural environment

We have the knowledge and technology to alter the way we build our cities, but the development of resilient individuals, communities and cities depends on how we use it.

We can enhance the natural environment and meet human development needs, as cities like Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Washington DC are beginning to show.

We need to develop our cities, and the country at large, so that we make greater use of nature.

At present, we are set to bequeath today's children with a more barren, species-poor natural environment. Given the wealth of literature that highlights how children's development – including creativity and problem solving, social relations and even academic performance – is improved by regular exposure to nature, a more restorative approach to nature should align with a more nurturing and successful learning environment.

**Point to consider:** *When the Asian Tsunami struck on Boxing Day 2004, areas that had retained their mangroves were significantly less impacted, than where mangroves had been removed. In Australia, we continue to develop in 20th century ways, acting as though human development and environmental protection are necessarily at odds.*

Finally, in all of the above, we need to much more closely involve children in planning our cities and the places we



inhabit. After all, these are their cities, their shared spaces. Decisions taken today will be lived by the children in early learning now, be it where they live and raise their own families, their commute to work, or the way they interact at work and in their recreation time.

Do all children need to be thinking about resilience issues in the ways laid out above? No.

Is there a value to equipping our people from the earliest times to be consciously active citizens, able to withstand personal stresses and shocks and willing to step in to help others deal with theirs? Absolutely!

#### Key Points

- > More than 80 % of Australians live in urban areas
- > More than one fifth of Melbourne's 4.3 million people are under 15
- > Developing resilience in communities and cities requires long-term strategies which necessarily start with early childhood education

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# 2016 Early Childhood Education Conference



**The 2016 Early Childhood Education conference will be held on 27 and 28 May at Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne. It promises to inspire, engage and bring together the early childhood sector with a special emphasis on connecting communities.**

**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:

### Charlotta Öberg

Charlotta Öberg has dedicated 15 years to equipping professionals around the world with Cultural Intelligence to help them succeed in global business. With cultural diversity experience from three continents, she develops global mindsets in business and organisations in Australia and Asia.

**Keynote session: Educating in the global village – connecting across cultures with cultural competence**

*Australia is one of the most multicultural nations in the world, with over one in four*

*people born overseas and more than 200 languages spoken in our communities.*

*This interactive, inspiring session provides delegates with validated tools and practical tips to succeed at work. Delegates will be equipped to thrive in their part of the global village – and to help children and families do so to.*

### Dr Helen Bilton

Dr Helen Bilton is Associate Professor of Education at the University of Reading, England. She trained as an early years teacher and published the first book on the outdoor play environment in 1998: *Outdoor Play in the Early Years*. Her most recent publication: *Exploring Outdoors* is about a whole school approach to children working outside.

**Conference session: Do we really see what we think we see? Girls and boys – ensuring equality of opportunity**

*We may think we are giving equal time and attention to all children but how do we know if we are?*

*In this session, Helen will share research about interactions between staff and children and show how staff can measure the interactions they have with children.*

### Dr Noella Mackenzie

Dr Noella Mackenzie is a Senior Lecturer in literacy studies at Charles Sturt University, Albury. For the past eight years, Noella has focused on the teaching and learning of writing. Her research has included the examination of the relationship between drawing and learning to write; the transition experiences of early writers; and writing development in the early years.

### Conference session: Draw-Talk-Write

*Early childhood educators who encourage and value children's drawing and talking can build a bridge between these existing modes of communication and writing.*

*In this session, I discuss how drawing and talking can support children's introduction to writing with reference to EC educators from preschools and schools.*

### 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 ECE organising committee will review applications and select the recipients. Send your applications to Tania De Carli at [tdecarli@elaa.org.au](mailto:tdecarli@elaa.org.au) by **Friday 6 May 2016**. Please note the assistance is available to new applicants only.

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



# 2016 Early Childhood Education Conference

## Don't miss Saturday morning's Great Debate!

Moderated by Dr Anne Kennedy, join Anthony Semann, Director of Semann & Slattery and Madame Zelda, (aka Louise Dorrat) Kindergarten Director of Fountain Lakes, to tackle the big issues;

### **"Risky business in early childhood: What do the experts have to say?"**

Early childhood education and care settings are not immune to the fast pace of our society and the issues that face our communities. One of the pressure points in families, communities and ECEC settings is how we protect children from risks and possible harms without wrapping them up in cotton wool.

The challenge for educators and parents is to balance child safety with the right of children to play freely and to engage in risk-taking. Connecting children with their community can trigger questions about risks and risk management. Experts, including our panel debaters, are divided in their opinions about this risky business.

The debaters, well known early childhood experts – Anthony Semann and Louise Dorrat – will share their strong but opposing views on the issue of risk and risk management in ECEC and why children should or should not be out and about in their communities. Anne Kennedy will keep the conversation rollicking along, Q&A style.

## Win \$500 and a resources pack!

Nominations are now open for the Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Award. The Award is sponsored by VicRoads and will be presented on Saturday 28 May 2016 at the conference.

Nominations are open 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@ela.org.au](mailto:rse@ela.org.au) by **12 May 2016**.



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**

### DET, the Gold Sponsor, offers accommodation support

Victorian children's services employees and early childhood educators of kindergarten, Prep, Years 1 and 2 children who work in a rural area will be eligible for rebates for their conference accommodation costs from the Department of Education and Training.

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

DET will pay for one nights' accommodation (up to \$180 standard room rate – Thursday or Friday night only) for delegates attending one day of the conference, and 2 nights' accommodation (up to \$360 standard room rate – Thursday & Friday nights only) for delegates attending both the Friday and Saturday sessions. Transport to and from the conference venue will be provided from both hotels 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 or Mercure Melbourne Albert Park, then email your request for a rebate and a copy of the hotel booking confirmation to [tdecarli@elaa.org.au](mailto:tdecarli@elaa.org.au). 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 #2016twg and @togetherwegrow.

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

The *Together we grow* conference will take a greener approach this year.

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. Gifts for conference presenters will include a donation to education programs which support vulnerable children and families and chocolates from the Mildura Chocolate Company, which provides work-skills for its supported workforce.

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



### The Conference App

The 2016 *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 latest 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/togetherwegrow](http://eventmobi.com/togetherwegrow) 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)**



# TRANSPORTING CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

BY CLARE KENNEDY



*Every child has the right to travel comfortably and safely. But until recently, that has posed a challenge for families who have children with additional needs.*

*Research shows that children with a disability have a greater risk of injury or fatality as a result of a car collision and many parents and carers find it difficult to find a suitable car seat that suits their child's needs.*

Sarah\* was born with an abdominal wall defect requiring surgery and ongoing medical attention. After a long hospital stay, it was time to go home; but the question was how to transport her safely and comfortably and in a way that met regulations.

The compliant baby capsule exerted pressure on her abdomen, but due to her condition, she was not allowed to have any pressure in that area and, in particular, on her liver region. As a result, the baby

capsule had to be modified. But were the modifications safe and compliant?

Joy Goubbran is the manager of occupational therapy at The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Melbourne, and has seen first-hand the challenges that arise around transporting children with additional needs.

"Children with additional needs can present in many different ways, with challenges that may be temporary or life-long.

Behavioural issues, difficulties with posture or head control and restrictions following surgery or injury may mean they have to travel in a particular way. Some life-limiting conditions may require ventilation or other equipment.

"These children are more vulnerable on our roads because they cannot necessarily travel in the same child car seat as other children. Often the knowledge and skills, and even the range of possibilities of what can be done for these children is limited," she said.

"It is an area that several occupational therapists and other professionals have struggled to address due to limited knowledge and skills in the area, and so children may have travelled in sub-optimal child car seats or avoided vehicle travel as it was too difficult," she said.

**“ Concern about the lack of knowledge and expertise around the safe transport of children with additional needs led to the development of the Transportation of Children and Youth with Additional Needs Partnership known as TOCAN, in 2009. TOCAN is a partnership of several key stakeholders, committed to the safe travel of children and youth with additional needs.**

The RCH have been assisting in reviewing and updating Australian/NZ standards.

Concern about the lack of knowledge and expertise around the safe transport of children with additional needs led to the development of the Transportation of Children and Youth with Additional Needs Partnership, known as TOCAN, in 2009.

TOCAN is a partnership of several key stakeholders committed to the safe travel of children and youth with additional needs. Partners include ELAA, representatives from the RCH Safety Centre, the RCH Occupational Therapy Department, The Victorian Paediatric Rehabilitation Service, the School of Occupational Therapy at La Trobe University, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, VicRoads, the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV), Britax Childcare, the Australian Child Restraint Resource Initiative, Autism Victoria and the Association for Children with a Disability.

TOCAN has become an invaluable resource for parents, carers and health professionals, providing the information they need to assess and prescribe appropriate child car seats.

The TOCAN website, which went live last year, sets out the legal standard for an appropriate child car seat, booster seat or seat belt, as well as listing the modifiable restraints and specialised restraints that are available.

It also shows where to find an occupational therapist who can identify a restraint that's appropriate, whether that involves identifying a mainstream child car seat, a modifiable one, or prescribing a special purpose restraint.

“Apart from the TOCAN website, and development of the standard, we are constantly trying to expand our resources with education seminars for therapists and professionals who service these children in the community,” Ms Goubran said.

The aim is to train and empower professionals so they can give the appropriate advice to families, she explains.

As a partner of TOCAN, ELAA is a strong advocate for the safe transport of children.

Zora Marko is ELAA's representative on TOCAN, as well as ELAA's early childhood road safety program manager.

“Over the years we've developed expertise in child car seats, and worked with educators in child care services. We play a significant role in relaying the latest restraint information to early childhood educators,” she said.

“We want to ensure that practitioners who are assisting families with children with additional needs know where to go and what to do.”

ELAA delivers the *Starting Out Safely* program, which is funded by VicRoads and provides information for parents, carers and educators about children becoming safe and independent road users. It includes practical information and resources about the transportation of children with additional needs.

You can find the *Starting Out Safely* program by going to the ELAA website and clicking on 'Road Safety Education'. This takes you to a range of resources

on the appropriate use of child car seats, including an information brochure, *Travelling with Children in Cars*, available in 22 languages and 10 audio versions.

The site includes information on choosing and using the safest restraint for your child and has links to the TOCAN website, as well as downloadable resources by the RACV and VicRoads.

So what happened to baby Sarah? Using current resources, Sarah's occupational therapist was able to resolve the issue of transporting Sarah safely. The solution was a compliant baby capsule, which included modifications such as added padding to the seat and side of the capsule. Her parents were educated about the importance of positioning the belt buckle in the nappy region; and a medical exemption to the standard was signed off by medical staff and given to parents to keep in the car.

Tools, tips and information are available at the website [www.rch.org.au/tocan](http://www.rch.org.au/tocan).

\* a different name has been used to protect the child's privacy.







# CREATING A HEALTHIER EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE

BY EMMA BRUCE

*Healthy children learn better. By promoting healthy behaviors, you can give children a great start to their learning and development.*

*Poor health is a problem across the State. Approximately one quarter of children in Victoria are overweight or obese and just 12 per cent consume enough vegetables.*



**“Excursion locations have included a lighthouse, beach and a market, where the children purchased fresh fruit to enjoy. “Their learning started at the front door, crossing the road and catching the bus with members of the community,” Maree said.**

The Victorian Government’s Healthy Together Achievement Program gives early childhood services a framework, tools and resources to create a healthier physical and social environment.

Achievement Program Manager Anthony Bernardi said that creating a healthy environment in your early childhood service can help children learn, play and reach their full potential.

“Playing and learning in a healthy social and physical environment can have a huge impact on a young person’s wellbeing,” Anthony said.

Ada Mary A’Beckett Children’s Centre in Port Melbourne is using the Achievement Program framework to make improvements in healthy eating and oral health, physical activity, sun protection and safe environments.

Centre Manager Maree Leslie said the framework has helped them identify and focus on areas of need.

Healthy eating was one of the first priorities identified. In an effort to offer children the best options, the Centre submitted the Centre’s menu to the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) for assessment, to see how close it was to meeting Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Maree said the assessment gave them lots of new ideas, particularly for increasing the nutritional content of morning and afternoon teas.

“We got rid of some foods and increased others. It was about finding the right balance,” Maree explained.

The Centre has a new focus on excursions and active travel as part of their initiatives to improve physical activity.

“We did a lot of walking in the community in 2015 and it’s a focus again for us this year,” she said.

Excursion locations have included a lighthouse, beach and a market, where the children purchased fresh fruit to enjoy.

It’s an exercise which has exposed the children to multiple learning opportunities. “Their learning started at the front door, crossing the road and catching the bus with members of the community,” Maree said.

“It helps them make connections in the community. A lot of the children live in the area and were able to identify locations and make connections with community members. It’s important that we embed safe messages for children.”

The lessons have been enthusiastically embraced by both children and families at the Centre.

The changes have not been implemented by Maree alone. The Achievement Program encourages and requires a team approach, which involves engaging and involving staff, children, parents and the whole community.

The Centre has set up a health and wellbeing team which comprises five

staff members from different areas of the service. Maree said that this ensures that everyone is represented. “It’s about getting the right people,” she explained.

Maree encourages others starting their health journey to be prepared, have a plan and not to do it alone.

The Achievement Program framework provides tools and resources that are available to help Victorian early childhood services focus on the health areas that are important to their community.

Focus areas may include:

- healthy eating and oral health
- physical activity
- mental health and wellbeing
- safe environments
- tobacco control
- sun protection.

Members are encouraged to meet best-practice benchmarks in each of these areas.

Maree said that the benefits of meeting the benchmarks are broad and ongoing – and benefit both the service and the community.

“Your efforts helping children learn healthy behaviors at a young age will benefit them for many years to come.

“As an added bonus, your efforts will be recognised by the Victorian Government,” she said.

The Victorian Government recognises and awards services that demonstrate leadership and meet the benchmarks in each health area.

To get involved, visit [www.achievementprogram.healthytogether.vic.gov.au](http://www.achievementprogram.healthytogether.vic.gov.au) or call 1300 721 682.



Children from Ada Mary A’Beckett Children’s Centre enjoy an excursion at the beach.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION MAKING A DIFFERENCE



*With the end of the financial year approaching, the Early Childhood Education Foundation offers a way to make a tax-deductible donation that contributes to a child's first steps in their educational journey.*

The Early Childhood Education Foundation was established in 1997 by Dr Terry Nienhuys with an endowment of \$20. The sole purpose of the Foundation was to provide funding to enable financially disadvantaged children to attend kindergarten where their parents did not have the money to enable them to do so.

ELAA was appointed as the Trustee of this endowment fund. Over the past 17 years, under ELAA's management, the Foundation has provided more than \$125,000 in kindergarten fee support to nearly 200 families.

## **How we work**

The Foundation provides funding to families to cover kindergarten fees where families are experiencing financial hardship. Service providers also make a commitment to assist families to attend programs when access or transport is a problem.

## **The Foundation strives to...**

- Ensure that children from families experiencing financial difficulties have access to early childhood education services which will enhance their opportunities to succeed in life
- Provide funding for intensive support to ensure ongoing access and engagement to services for children and families with complex issues
- Develop programs that help services to support the needs of CALD children and their families

## **Who we've helped**

Since its inception the Foundation has provided more than \$125,000 to nearly 200 families throughout Victoria, from Portland in the West to Chiltern in the North East.



EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION  
FOUNDATION

## ECEF STORIES

### Give Ryan a chance

Ryan\* is nearly five years old and is the youngest child of Christine, who at 32 has a psychiatric disability. Ryan's older brother and sister are in permanent foster care, however Christine is committed to keeping Ryan in her care.

Christine is linked with several agencies that assist her with improving her parenting skills. Christine has been hospitalised a number of times due to her mental illness, but through the support of a mental health worker she has not been hospitalised for four years.

Ryan and Christine both need help. Ryan has a developmental delay in the area of speech and language, gross motor skills and his social ability is immature for his age.

Through Christine's careful budgeting from extremely limited funds, Ryan has been attending long day care for two days a week but she urgently needs to increase Ryan's attendance at a kindergarten program at the centre. Financially this is impossible for Christine.

The benefits for Ryan from attending a kindergarten program are enormous. The social, emotional and physical advantages of a kindergarten education for children in high risk family situations are well documented. A quality early childhood program will provide significant cognitive, social and economic benefits in the short and long term. The extra program for Ryan is also essential to enable Christine to cope on a day-to-day basis.

Children like Ryan and his family need extra support to enable them to attend a kindergarten program that they would otherwise not be able to afford. Providing assistance and intervention to these families will not only benefit individuals but will provide significant benefits to the community.

Through the Early Childhood Education Foundation, Ryan will now have the opportunity to access a kindergarten program. For families like Christine's, this provides a lifeline and support, and a chance for Ryan to develop to his full potential.

### Helping Karim

Karim\* is the youngest of three children of refugee parents Mohammed and Abdula. The family arrived in Australia in 2013 after spending some time in refugee camps.

Karim's parents are extremely keen for their children to attend kindergarten and school to improve their lives and access opportunities that were not available to them when they were children. However the family is not in a financial position to pay the kindergarten fees. As the family are not Australian citizens, they do not have a concession card and although Mohammed works as a cleaner, his wage is not enough to pay the school fees of his older two children and Karim's kindergarten fees.

Aged five, Karim should be starting school next year, but with no previous early learning experiences, Karim is showing signs of developmental delays. Karim has very little English – making it difficult for him to communicate with his peers; is lacking social skills and is showing signs of other cognitive and behavioural issues.

Attending a kindergarten program will provide Karim with opportunities to socialise with other children and to develop his language skills. He will also be better positioned to commence school next year and will be at lower risk of ongoing physical, social, emotional and intellectual issues.

A donation of \$1500 helped Karim receive the full year of kindergarten that is critical to his development. Larger donations will help many other children from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds to access high quality kindergarten programs within a safe, stimulating and caring program – something that not all children receive at home.

By donating to the Foundation you can assist Victorian children, especially those from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, receive a year of kindergarten.

More information about the Foundation is available on the ELAA website [www.elaa.org.au](http://www.elaa.org.au).

\* names have been changed to protect privacy.



# 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

### 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:** 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

### 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.

**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

**Time:** 10am – 12pm

**Venue:** Victorian Archives Centre,  
99 Shiel St, North Melbourne. Free parking  
(enter via Macaluan 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

## FOR MANAGERS

**Safety – Not just child's play**

Quality Area 7

**Presenter:** ELAA and Recovre

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

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



Sign-in for these sessions 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the session. Registration is essential for all sessions. Visit the training section at [www.elaa.org.au](http://www.elaa.org.au) to register online.

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ASSOCIATION  
AUSTRALIA**

# 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*

In recognition of the importance of access to quality early childhood services for all children in the year before school, the Victorian Government provides per capita grants to eligible early childhood service providers.

The funding amount is based on the annual information provided to the Department of Education and Training through the electronic Kindergarten Information Management (KIM) system.

**Early childhood education and care services in receipt of funding from the State Government must meet certain eligibility and operational requirements as well as comply with relevant legislation.**

If your service receives funding from the State Government you need to ensure that your service:

- is providing a program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours per week (600 hrs per year);
- has a budget and fees policy in place which ensures that the service is viable, affordable and accessible to all children; and
- has a process in place to ensure that children meet eligibility requirements and are only accessing funding at one kindergarten location.

Committees should also be aware of their obligations to:

- *manage quality* – fulfill legislative requirements, maintain learning frameworks, work towards excellence, maintaining Child Safe Standards;

- *manage enrolments* – meet accessibility and affordability requirements, manage priority of access, maintain enrolment flexibility, manage optimisation of space;
- *manage the service* – maintain good governance, ensure financial viability, financial management (budgets and provisions accounts), use an approved payroll system;
- *manage the teachers* – validate qualifications, ensure teachers are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), ensure professional standards are upheld;
- *maintain engagement of children and families* – maintain a welcoming environment, provide improved access for vulnerable children and children with additional needs, ensure cultural inclusion;
- *display information and communicate effectively to parents* – provide information regarding funding support, fees and waiting lists, Transition and Learning statements; and
- provide accurate and current reports and data – provide Financial Accountability Reports (FAR), annual data collection and August census information accurately and on time to the Department of Education and Training (DET).

## Kindergarten fee subsidies, deposits and levies

It is important to note that any children who are eligible to attend the funded program and who hold or who have a parent that holds a current Health Care Card or relevant Visa are to be provided access to the 15 hours of funded kindergarten **at no cost**. When determining charges to attend the program, service providers must ensure that there are no financial barriers such as refundable levies which may prevent children from accessing the program.

## Additional grants available and subsidies

- Small rural grant
- Ratio supplement funding
- Early Childhood Teacher supplement

- Early Start Kindergarten grants
  - Aboriginal early Start Kindergarten grant
  - Early Start Kindergarten grant for children known to child protection
- Early Start Kindergarten extension grants
- Parental Leave allowance
- Travel allowance
- Pre-1994 long service leave and sick leave payments
- Second year of funded kindergarten
- Kindergarten Inclusion support (KIS) packages
- Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) program

For further details regarding the conditions and types of funding available, refer to The Kindergarten Guide 2015/6 published by The Department of Education and Training (DET).

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

If you have questions regarding your service's funding, please contact your regional DET office.

### North – Eastern region

Glen Waverley: 8392 9300  
Benalla: 8392 9500

### North – Western region

Coburg: 9488 9488  
Bendigo: 5440 3111

### South – Eastern region

Dandenong: 8765 5600  
Moe: 5127 0400

### South – Western region

Footscray: 8397 0300  
Geelong: 5225 1000  
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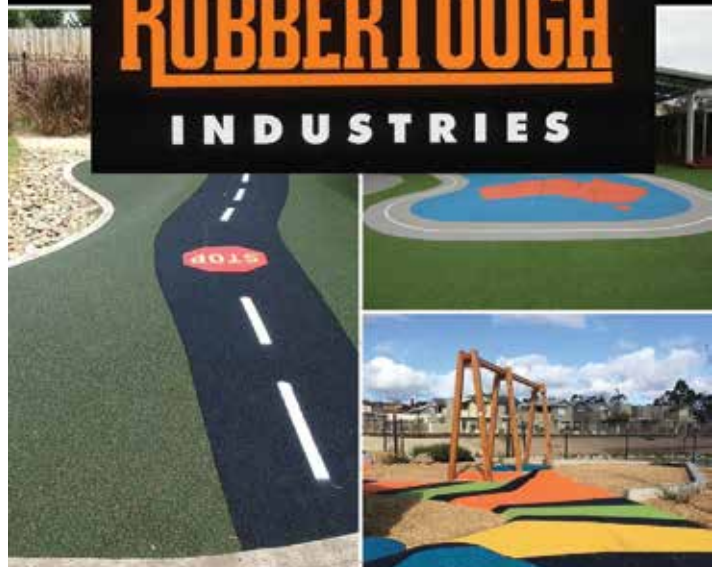
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# MEMBER PROFILE



## Julia Cambage, TRY Australia CEO

TRY Australia is a not-for-profit social enterprise that makes a meaningful difference to families and communities by providing affordable kindergarten and childcare. TRY Australia also provides Kindergarten Cluster Management, operating preschools, occasional care, and long-day centres in Victoria and South Australia.

**I have been in this role since...** I have been fortunate enough to be the CEO at TRY for the past 3 years.

**My career path to this role has been...** I think that every role I have ever worked in was preparing me for TRY. I have been a CEO now for twenty years and spent time in education, training, hospitality, administration, sales, procurement and business start-ups. TRY is an extraordinarily diverse social enterprise. No one role has ever been as challenging or rewarding and that's what makes TRY so special to me.

**My work day entails...** Lots of meetings! The complexity of the business demands that I am flexible and fluid in my approach. Generally, I meet with members of the Executive to review what they are working on and how they are looking to achieve that. Strategy is essential. I spend time working on our new projects visiting sites or meet with suppliers or partners. No two days are the same.

**I am most inspired by...** The commitment of our volunteers is inspirational and every day reinforces my faith in human nature.

**What I love about my job...** I love it all! The good, the bad and the sometimes not so good. Every day in small and sometimes large ways we make a meaningful difference to the lives of those we work with. When you go home a night and know that you have given it all and made a difference... it doesn't get much better than that.

**If I wasn't doing this job I'd be...** Very sad! I would probably be doing something similar but probably not having as much fun

**What makes me laugh...** Our footy tipping comp and Hawthorn supporters...

**“ I have been a CEO now for twenty years and spent time in education, training, hospitality, administration, sales, procurement and business start-ups. TRY is an extraordinarily diverse social enterprise. No one role has ever been as challenging or rewarding and that's what makes TRY so special to me.**

Julia Cambage, TRY Australia CEO

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Developed by Early Learning Association Australia, this website includes:

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- ThingleToodle visits – education sessions for Victorian pre-schoolers
- Road Safety Education Policies for early childhood services and Family Day Care
- Child car seats – information on keeping children safe
- Child car seats – multilingual information
- Research and publications about road safety

**Visit the Child Road Safety website, [childroadsafety.org.au](http://childroadsafety.org.au).**