



EARLY  
LEARNING  
ASSOCIATION  
AUSTRALIA

The voice for parents and service providers

# PRE SCHOOL MATTERS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR LIFE  
TERM THREE 2015

CHILDREN IN  
WILD NATURE

DIVERSE PLAYGROUPS

CELEBRATING  
ABORIGINAL CULTURE





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## Welcome to the Term 3 edition of *Preschool Matters*.

Our sector's commitment to quality practice and leading-edge research was on show in late May when over 1000 educators, service providers, academics and policy makers gathered to attend the annual Early Childhood Education Conference, *Together we Grow – investing in our future*.



ELAA is always proud to partner with Gowrie Victoria and the many organisations represented on the Conference Reference Committee to plan and host the Conference – and I want to thank all who participated and helped make this year's event our biggest ever. Please read the coverage of the conference on pages 14 and 15.

Our keynote speaker was Professor Charles Pascal – and we were also delighted to work with our partners to develop an extended program for Charles during his time in Australia. Charles visited with child and family services professionals in regional Victoria; met with new Victorian Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos; and participated in *A Conversation with Charles Pascal* at the Centre for Community Child Health with twenty leading executives, policy makers and researchers from our sector.

One of the other Conference highlights was an extremely popular and inspiring session presented by Niki Buchan and her team on *Nature-based practice in Australia*, including a discussion about real versus perceived risk when taking children into natural spaces. Read Niki's story on pages 12 and 13.

Also in this edition on pages 16 to 18, Judith Gray (Partnerships and Service Development Coordinator at VicSeg) explains the importance of facilitated playgroups in supporting culturally and linguistically diverse families.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Preschool Matters* and I wish you all the best for an enlivening term.

**Jo Geurts, President**



Cover: Doveton College.  
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CEO Shane Lucas  
President Jo Geurts  
Editor Sue Smith  
Creative Director Louisa Roubin  
Advertising Cass Marxsen

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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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Level 3, 145 Smith Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065  
PO Box 1246, Collingwood Vic 3066  
Phone (03) 9489 3500 Rural 1300 730 119 Fax (03) 9486 4226  
Email [elaa@elaa.org.au](mailto:elaa@elaa.org.au) Web [www.elaa.org.au](http://www.elaa.org.au)

# NEWS & EVENTS



## Caring for Kids 2015 Raffle results

Congratulations to the winners of the 2015 Caring for Kids raffle. The raffle was drawn at the ELAA office on Friday 26 June 2015.

### Winners

1ST PRIZE: \$10,000 Myer Shopping Spree won by ticket number 46930 – Sold by Bairnsdale Kindergarten

2ND PRIZE: \$2,000 Myer Shopping Spree won by ticket number 12852 – Sold by Ascot Vale Progress Kindergarten

3RD PRIZE: Family weekend at Silverwater Resort, Phillip Island won by ticket number 74902 – Sold by Strathfieldsaye Playgroup

Congratulations to Clare Court Children’s Service for winning the centre prize for the most tickets sold – 3,248 tickets!

Photo; Shane Lucas, ELAA and Mary Osrecak, Playgroup Victoria draw the prize winning tickets.

## Congratulations Emma

Emma Larsen from Avenel Preschool, Avenel, Victoria was named the *Educational Experience* Rising Star 2015 at the Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards announced in June.

State winners were announced for 2015 in the categories of Director of the Year, Service of the Year, Educator of the Year and the Rising Star Award. From a pool of 100 finalists from across Australia, 18 state winners were up for the national title in their respective category.

The national winners were announced on Friday 19 June at the 2015 Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards gala in Sydney. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists.

## Storypark – special offer for ELAA members

ELAA’s new preferred partner, Storypark, offers early childhood education services a secure, private online platform that can support children’s learning by strengthening collaboration between educators and families.

Invited teachers, parents and family members work together in an easy to use app, responding to children’s learning captured via images, video, audio and text.

A special introductory offer is available to ELAA members who purchase Storypark before 31 July 2015. In addition to 10% off the monthly and annual price of Storypark, members will get a further three month subscription for free.

Enter the promotional code **ELAA2015Special** when registering for Storypark to take-up this introductory offer. Go to the preferred partners section of the ELAA website [www.elaa.org.au](http://www.elaa.org.au) to find out more about the offer.



# REGULATIONS IN FOCUS



This new regular feature will focus on specific Education and Care Services National Regulations to ensure that services and staff are clear about their particular responsibilities.

## SERIOUS INCIDENTS

In this edition we shine the spotlight on *serious incidents*. We look at **what** needs to be reported to the Regulatory Authority, **when** and **how** this needs to happen and **who** is responsible.

### What is a serious incident?

The definition of a serious incident is provided in National Regulation 12. It relates to:

- the death of a child while being educated and cared for by the service or following an incident while being cared for by the service
- an incident involving serious injury, trauma or illness of a child that a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention by a registered medical practitioner or hospital treatment. Examples include: whooping cough, broken limb or anaphylaxis reaction
- an incident that requires, or should have required, attendance by emergency services
- circumstances where a child appears to be missing, is unaccounted for, has been removed from the service contrary to the Regulations, or has been locked in or out of the service premises.

If any of these incidents occur at the service, the approved provider needs to notify the Regulatory Authority. In Victoria, this is the Department of Education and Training (DET). Contact details for the Regulatory Authority in each state and territory are listed on the ACECQA website.

### When does a serious incident need to be reported?

Serious incidents need to be reported promptly and this is outlined in Regulation 176. The approved provider must notify the Regulatory Authority (DET) as soon as possible but **within 24 hours** of the incident or within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident.

### How should a serious incident be reported?

A serious incident needs to be reported to the Regulatory Authority **in writing** in accordance with Section 174(4) of the National Law. A *Notification of serious incident* form is available on the ACECQA website. In Victoria and NSW this form must be completed and submitted online using the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS).

### Who is responsible for reporting?

It is the responsibility of the **approved provider** to report a serious incident to the Regulatory Authority. However, it is essential that the nominated supervisor, certified supervisor, educators and other staff inform the approved provider immediately on becoming aware that a serious incident has occurred at the service.

There are a number of other events that may occur at a service that will also need to be reported promptly by the approved provider to the Regulatory Authority. The more serious of these are when:

- there is a complaint alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child at the service has been, or is being, compromised. Notification must occur within 24 hours.
- there is an incident that requires the closure of the service or a reduction in hours, such as a flood or fire. Notification must occur within 24 hours.

If you are in doubt about whether to report a matter to the Regulatory Authority, ELAA recommends that you contact them for advice. It is much better to be cautious in situations concerning a child's health and welfare.

# ADVICE



## WITH THE NEW RATIOS IN 2016 WHAT DO WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT WHEN PLANNING OUR GROUP SIZES?

**Louise Hennessy, Member Services Officer**

In 2016, the new ratios for four year old kindergarten programs (one educator to every eleven children) come into effect as a key change under the National Quality Standards in the delivery quality early learning programs. When planning for your kindergarten group sizes for 2016, you will need to consider your service's financial situation, your community's needs and the current make-up of your educator team.

### **Financial considerations**

The Department of Education and Training (DET) has recently announced that funding is available to services to support the new ratios. Go to the DET website to for more information [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au). Ensure that whatever group size you chose, the service can maintain financial viability. As an Incorporated entity, committees of management must ensure, amongst their other obligations, that the service does not continue to operate when insolvent or knowingly trade into insolvency. In circumstances where a service is part of a cluster management model it is the obligation, or a shared obligation, of the cluster manager to ensure the service remains solvent.

### **Community considerations**

Think about how many children in your community will need a place. Contact your local council for more information on the number of young children in your area. Will dropping to groups of 22 children mean that families will be unable to find a place in a program for their child in your area? Are there children in your current three and four year old groups that will need a place next year? Will there be room for all these children if group sizes drop

to 22? Will there be enough places for children that may need a place at short notice such as children that may move into the area or from vulnerable and disadvantaged families?

### **Educator Team considerations**

If the needs of your community are such that you will need to maintain or even increase your group sizes, then you will need to employ another staff member.

The additional early childhood staff member will:

- Bring new expertise, experience and knowledge into the existing educator team
- Allow the educator team the time to build relationships with families and children within the program
- Impact positively on program development, for example allowing more time to develop specific projects enhancing children's learning

The Department of Education and Training has engaged ELAA to support early learning services to develop practical and financially viable models that can be applied to accommodate the new ratios.

To access this support, please contact the Members Services team on 9489 3500 or via email [elaa@elaa.org.au](mailto:elaa@elaa.org.au)

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

# TRAINING IN 2015

## SEMESTER 2 SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

ELAA provides training, workshops and seminars for a range of audiences in the sector.

### FREE COMMITTEE TRAINING

in partnership with the Department of Education and Training and local councils

#### Ending the year on a high – Planning your Annual General Meeting and successful handover to the new committee

*Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management*

In these sessions we will discuss:

- AGM planning and management (including legal requirements)
- strategies for recruitment of new committee members
- how to ensure a smooth transition to the new committee.

**Wednesday 12 August**, 6.30pm – 9.00pm  
ELAA offices, Level 3, 145 Smith St, Fitzroy

**Thursday 27 August**, 7pm – 9.30pm  
Stonnington City Council, The Committee Room  
Prahran Town Hall, 180 Greville Street, Prahran

**Monday 31 August**, 7pm – 9.30pm  
Nillumbik Shire Council, Council Chambers  
Civic Drive, Greensborough

#### Free Hot Topic workshops

*Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management*

ELAA presents workshops on specialist topics that are important to volunteer committees as managers of early childhood services.

All Hot Topic workshops are at the ELAA office, Level 3, 145 Smith Street, Fitzroy.

- **Planning and conducting a successful AGM – including strategies for recruiting new committee members and ensuring legal compliance, Wednesday 2 September**, 10am – 11.30am (Registration from 9.45am)
- **Passing the Baton – tips for a smooth and effective handover to the new committee, Wednesday 21 October**, 10am – 11.30am (Registration from 9.45am)

#### Welcome to the Committee (for all new and continuing members of your committee)

*Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management*

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.

**Wednesday November 25**, 6.30pm – 9pm, (Registration from 6.15pm)  
ELAA, Level 3, 145 Smith St, Fitzroy

or

**Thursday November 26**, 7pm – 9.30pm, (Registration from 6.45pm)  
Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster  
(Free car parking on site but must get a permit from reception)

### FOR EDUCATORS AND MANAGERS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

#### Taking you to “Excellence” – Leading to Exemplary Practice

*Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management*

*“If you’re any good at all, you know you can be better”*  
Lindsay Buckingham.

This 3 part series, presented by Catharine Hydon is designed for directors, educational leaders, committee members, cluster managers and educators and will explore the nature of continuous improvement in early childhood services as a hallmark of quality and excellence. During the series we will be discussing our understanding of ‘quality’ and its relationship to continuous improvement. We will also examine the markers of exemplary practice and the processes and structures to support leaders to sustain exemplary practice.

This 3 part series will be held at the Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough. (Free car parking available on site).

**Session 1: Friday 24 July**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Session 2: Friday 21 August**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Session 3: Friday 11 September**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Total cost for all 3 days:** ELAA Member \$400 / Non-member \$600

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](http://www.elaa.org.au)

## The practice of educational leadership: a bridge to improved teaching and learning

*Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management*

Presented by Catharine Hydon, this one day session is especially designed for those educators who have been appointed as the Educational Leader for their service and want to gain a deeper understanding of their role. Catharine will provide participants with an opportunity to explore the potential of this role and the practices of educational leadership that results in positive and innovative changes in teaching and learning.

This one day workshop is being offered in two locations

**When: Tuesday 4 August**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough (Free car parking available on site)

or

**When: Friday 4 September**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster (Free car parking available on site but must get a permit from reception)

**Cost:** ELAA Member \$150 / Non-member \$225

## Becoming an Educator

*Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements*

This session, presented by Catharine Hydon, is especially designed for educators in assistant roles and will explore what it means to be an early childhood educator in the 21st Century and how we can all take an active role in providing quality education to children!

**When: Tuesday 15 September**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster (Free car parking available on site but must get a permit from reception)

**Cost:** ELAA Member \$150 / Non-member \$225

## Sustainability – a step further

*Quality Area 1: Education Program and practice*

*Quality Area 3: Physical Environment*

*“Sustainability implies a way of thinking and being that is integral to who we are and how we think” Tracey Young and Dr Sue Elliot (Ways of thinking, acting and relating about sustainability).*



Karen Glancy will engage participants in discussions to encourage them to think more deeply and act more consciously when making curriculum decisions, with sustainability and environmental responsibility as a lens. Strategies to engage colleagues, children, families and the community in the development and implementation of a sustainability strategy and examples of how educators, children and the community have worked to create change will be shared.

**When: Friday 31 July**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** National Archives of Australia (Victoria Archives Centre) 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne (Free car parking at the rear of the building)

or

**When: Thursday 3 September**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** Manningham City Council, 699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster (Free car parking available on site but must get a permit from reception)

**Cost:** ELAA Member \$150 / Non-member \$225

## Learning environments to support positive behaviour

*Quality Area 1: Education Program and Practice*

*Quality Area 5: Relationships with children*

Join Karen Glancy in an engaging professional development session about creating learning environments that influence children's behaviour in obvious and subtle ways.

This session will explore how educators can support children's behaviour development and their endeavours to manage their own feelings, thoughts and behaviours; ultimately becoming kind, thoughtful and considerate members of our community, through reflective practice and intentional teaching.

Examples of pedagogy and practice including practical strategies to support children's behaviour development will be discussed (workshopped).

**When: Thursday 10 September**, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** National Archives of Australia (Victoria Archives Centre) 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne (Free car parking at the rear of the building)

**Cost:** ELAA Member \$150 / Non-member \$225

## Making Sustainability Part of Everyday Learning

*Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice*

*Quality Area 3: Physical Environment*

Presented by Karen Glancy, this engaging session will explore how to embed sustainable thinking and practice into children's early learning programs.

It will provide practice ideas as well as link sustainable practices with the National Quality Standards (NQS) Quality Areas.

Session topics include:

- intentional teaching and assessing children's learning about the environment and sustainable practices
- practical and inspiring ideas for embedding sustainable practices and environmental education into your curriculum

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](http://www.elaa.org.au)**



- how NQS Quality Areas provide opportunities for critical reflection on 'doing sustainability' in early childhood settings
- linking community involvement, environmental responsibility and sustainable practices.

**When:** Thursday 29 October, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough (Free car parking available on site)

**Cost:** ELAA Member \$150 / Non-member \$225

### Working with vulnerable children and families

*Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children*

*Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities*

ELAA, with the Children's Protection Society, proudly present a one day seminar for educators, early childhood service providers and other early childhood professionals that work with vulnerable young children and their families.

This seminar will support educators to:

- understand and work effectively with vulnerable children and families
- understand the impacts of trauma both with children and their families
- enhance the educational outcomes of children with vulnerable backgrounds
- manage the specific cultural, developmental or cognitive requirements of children and young people who have traumatic backgrounds
- work with families to ensure optimal education outcomes.
- develop strategies to work with children with challenging behaviours
- understand the vital role of the educator and the early learning service in the lives of vulnerable children and their families
- respond appropriately to disclosure of abuse by a child or young person; the roles and responsibilities of the Educator and mandatory reporting
- manage self-care in relation to a disclosure of abuse (including supervision and access to agency support mechanisms).

**When:** Thursday 8 October, 9.30am – 2.30pm

**Where:** Southern Golf Club, Lower Dandenong Road, Keysborough (Free car parking available on site)

**Cost:** ELAA Member \$150 / Non-member \$225

### Supporting staff safety – OHS & Return to Work seminar for the early childhood sector

In partnership with Recovre, ELAA is presenting a one day seminar on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Returning to Work (RTW) in the early childhood education and care sector. The course is specifically designed for employers and managers from early childhood services who are responsible for the occupational health and safety of their staff. The first seminar in this program was held in Melbourne in May and received fantastic feedback as an event not to be missed.

*"Thanks for presenting such an amazing session! It was great to be able to have input and also work alongside other people in the industry".* Dimitra Stamell – Buckets ELC

**When:** Tuesday, 28 July 2015, 9am – 5pm

**Where:** Marcus Oldham College, 145 Pigdons Road, Waurin Ponds, Geelong

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

### FOR EDUCATORS, PARENTS AND ANYONE WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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

*Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children*

Join ELAA and ASPECT (Victoria) for a special two hour presentation on autism spectrum disorder and how it impacts upon young children's learning and behaviour.

**When:** Friday 6th November, 10am – 12pm

**Where:** National Archives of Australia (Victoria Archives Centre) 99 Shiel St, North Melbourne (free car parking at the rear of the building)

**Cost:** \$50

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](http://www.elaa.org.au)

# CEO REPORT

We have worked closely with the Victorian Department of Education and Training to work through issues relating to implementation of new ratios, and to make the case for additional funding to maintain service viability.

Shane Lucas, CEO, ELAA.



Early Learning Association Australia is a strong supporter of the National Quality Framework as a means of driving and delivering quality in early learning programs for children.

A core component of the NQF has been the requirement for higher level qualifications for educators and an increase in educator-to-child ratios. From 1 January 2016, services will be required to employ 1 educator per 11 children (over the age of 3) to provide children with an improved standard of education and care.

While ELAA acknowledges the importance of these reforms, we have also been acutely aware of the concerns raised by our members regarding the practical implementation of new ratios.

Concerns raised have included overall staffing requirements, including the capacity to recruit and retain qualified educators especially in regional areas; program structure, including the

importance of engaging with families to explain the relationship between changed ratios and quality; and the capacity of existing service infrastructure to support a variety of group sizes.

We have worked closely with the Victorian Department of Education and Training to work through these issues, and to make the case for additional funding to maintain service viability, thus ensuring that outcomes for children and communities are not adversely impacted.

We were therefore delighted by the Victorian Government's recent announcement that an additional \$83.7 million will be invested over the

next four years to support services to meet the new ratio requirements. This funding is in addition to the \$50 million that was allocated in the May State Budget to help address the infrastructure needs of the sector.

The funding will be provided on a per child basis as supplementary funding for group sizes of 23 or more. The funding is intended to ensure service viability and enable services to hire the extra educators required to meet the ratio requirements, while at the same time meeting the demand for kindergarten places within their communities.

A core component of the NQF has been the requirement for higher level qualifications for educators and an increase in educator-to-child ratios. From 1 January 2016, services will be required to employ 1 educator per 11 children (over the age of 3) to provide children with an improved standard of education and care.





At the national level, we also welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of a 'Jobs for Families' package to improve access and affordability, and reduce complexity, in our child care system. The much-anticipated \$3.5 billion package of reforms was developed in response to the Productivity Commission inquiry into childcare and early childhood learning – and also included a welcome extension of the National Partnership on Universal Access ensuring Commonwealth funding for 15 hours of kindergarten continues in 2016 and 2017.

The Commonwealth announced that the principal component of the new, simplified child care payment system – the Child Care Subsidy – will be means-tested and paid directly to approved early childhood education and care providers. As we said publicly at the time, anything that makes the current complex system fairer and simpler – we support. And if means-testing the new subsidy ensures that low income working families get

We remain concerned about the impact on children of proposed changes to the activity test that requires parents to undertake a certain amount of work or study each week to be eligible for the new subsidy. We understand that the Government wants to encourage more parents to return to, or commence, work or study – but we do not believe that children should be used as leverage to achieve that outcome.

more financial help to place their children in quality early education and care – well, we support that too.

However, we remain concerned about the impact on children of proposed changes to the activity test that requires parents to undertake a certain amount of work or study each week to be eligible for the new subsidy. We understand that the Government wants to encourage more parents to return to, or commence, work or study – but we do not believe that children should be used as leverage to achieve that outcome.

Australian and international research supports our view that all children should have access to at least two days of quality early learning, as this will improve their social and educational outcomes. The proposed activity test could mean that children from single income families or non-working or casually employed parents might miss out on the subsidy altogether.

So on balance, while we welcome many components of the 'Jobs for Families' package, we really want the Federal Government to understand that quality early learning is of enormous benefit to *all* children – it is so much more than just a method of trying to increase workforce participation.

Ahead of the package being implemented in 2017, ELAA will continue to advocate for all children to have access to at least two days of quality early learning to improve their social and educational outcomes regardless of their parents' work or study status.





## GETTING OUT AND ABOUT – AWARD WINNING PRACTICE

***McKinnon Kindergarten's Margaret Chua has won Victoria's top early childhood road safety award. Margaret won the Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Award, sponsored by VicRoads, which was presented at the 2015 Early Childhood Conference, Together we grow – investing in our future, in May.***

Educator, Margaret Chua, won the 2015 Road Safety Education Award through her commitment to supporting children reach their potential and ensuring children are getting out into their community whilst learning valuable skills as road users.

McKinnon Kindergarten is part of the Glen Eira Kindergarten Association (GEKA) whose underlying philosophy is to equip

children to be part of the community. This philosophy underpins the premise of the Starting Out Safely program which is about educators working with children and their families to develop skills, behaviours and attitudes that assist children to be safer on our roads as passengers, pedestrians and users of bicycles/wheeled toys.

“At GEKA, our philosophy supports children to develop important life skills that will benefit them well into their future years. We believe that by supporting children to regularly visit the community, they will learn in a ‘real life’ way how to be safe and responsible in the wider world. McKinnon’s philosophy views children as *“capable and resourceful*

*learners who are active contributors to their own learning.”* With that in mind, it is the belief of all GEKA educators that children are capable of learning about the local and wider world by being an active part of it” said Melissa MacMaster, Manager, Education and Curriculum at GEKA.

Margaret won the award due to the way she and the teaching team incorporate road safety education into day to day activities, story-telling, group time and engaging with children when playing with toys and toy vehicles. However it is the regular excursions in the local area, including trips to the local supermarket or to the park and using public transport that make a real difference to children practicing their road safety skills.

“Winning this award is a huge achievement for the Kindergarten and the whole GEKA organisation. I was proud to deliver an acceptance speech with Margaret that acknowledged the hard work of the team at McKinnon and all our kindergartens for their commitment to safety awareness in the local community”,  
**Elana Trevaks, Executive Officer, GEKA**

She uses Google maps and street directories with the children to plan the excursions and identify local landmarks, as well as look at places to cross the road and potential traffic hazards. The children then use the *Stop! Look! Listen! Think!* song when they are out and about. They particularly like taking public transport and waiting for the boom gate at the train crossing.

Road safety education is part of the broad curriculum at other GEKA services too.

“At GEKA, we believe it is essential that children are a part of the wider world. It helps to build their capacity as an active citizen of the world, enables the curriculum to be extended in authentic ways and also advocates for the capabilities of young children as competent co-contributors in the here and now” says Melissa, “In order for us to explore the world with children, we firstly need to ensure that children understand how to keep themselves safe.

“We embed and promote road safety education into the everyday curriculum; children learn to walk on the footpath away from the road side; to look both ways before crossing the road – and to cross at designated crossings; they even learn how to ‘walk’ responsibly and to take care of the person with them (holding hands in pairs). Children talk about what they know, with each other and with their families – the education we provide has a ‘ripple effect’ within the community as everyone learns from each other!”

The educators at GEKA take the time to support children to question and make sense of new information so they can apply it in real life. All GEKA educators eagerly participated in the Road Safety Education Professional Development session facilitated by ELAA. This provided them with an opportunity to get ideas and strategies for supporting children and families to participate in regular outings into the community and to be ‘road safe’.

After the session, GEKA provided information to families about the correct way to use child car seats and the recommended age/height requirements around when children should use a booster seat or can sit in the front seat. The educators found it a really worthwhile session and recommend it to everyone working with young children.

Families at GEKA services are provided with road safety education, via their children and also through the regular GEKA Newsletter. However, GEKA believes that the best way to educate families is having them participate in regular outings in the community. Educator’s lead by example when talking about road safety with the children and families join in.

GEKA has received wonderful feedback from families about the excursions and how getting children out into the

community makes a real difference to their knowledge of road safety and the wider world. A parent at one of their services commented after a local excursion “this is a day the children will never forget!”

Congratulations to Margaret, the team at McKinnon Kindergarten and GEKA for the great work they are doing in road safety education – the positive learning outcomes speak for themselves.

To organise a road safety professional development session please contact the RSE team at [rse@elaa.org.au](mailto:rse@elaa.org.au)



# CHILDREN IN WILD NATURE

By Niki Buchan, Company Director and Senior Educational Consultant, Inspired EC Pty Ltd

***Niki Buchan has a special interest in nature-based practice and has supported many Australian educators in setting up bush and beach schools. Niki and her team presented Nature-based practice in Australia at the 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference.***

Children experiencing close contact with nature in Australia is nothing new. Most adults reminisce fondly of their childhood, often outdoors, where they had time to explore, time to take risks, time to be away from adults and most importantly a time of joyous freedom. Educators need to hold onto these fond memories and facilitate opportunities for children to build equally valuable childhood memories while in care.

Over the past 3 years in Australia there has been a huge movement towards more nature-based education with services undertaking regular excursions to the beach, bush, forest, creek or paddock. For many, although keen, the risks of such excursions are just too great. Experience has shown that many perceived of the risks are not insurmountable.

Risk in itself sadly has unwarranted negative connotation and is misunderstood. In reality risk is about uncertainty, opportunity and challenge. So often we remove all risk from children's lives, considering it as something negative and this leads to other issues that could cause long term damage.

*"We deprive children of free, risky play, ostensibly to protect them from danger, but in the process we set them up for mental breakdowns. Children are designed by nature to teach themselves emotional resilience by playing in risky, emotion-inducing ways. In the long run, we endanger them far more by preventing such play than by allowing it. And, we deprive them of fun". (Gray, P. 2014)*

Adults should be encouraging a risk taking disposition, where children and adults search for and are prepared to have a go at opportunities. Many children are now so concerned about getting things wrong and

won't even try unless they are assured of success. Stephenson (1998) identified that children who were risk takers outdoors were also prepared to take risks indoors, to seek or accept challenges. This risk taking disposition is also beneficial when tackling new challenges such as those found in reading, mathematics and science.

*Risk-taking disposition – persistence in the face of difficulty and uncertainty. Persistence – 'engaging with uncertainty, being prepared to be wrong, risking making a mistake – going on to learn'. Carr (1997, p. 10, cited in Stephenson, 2003, p. 41)*

The National Regulations stipulate: 'An approved provider must ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and hazard likely to cause injury. The service is to have policies and procedures in place to support the protection of children.' '...services should use risk assessments to identify potential

hazards. The National Law does NOT require services to eliminate ALL risk and challenges from children's play or environments.' (ACECQA regulation section 167)

The Regulations do not stipulate the severity of the injury, nor whether harm is of a physical or emotional nature. This is where a common sense approach is needed; a paper cut is an injury, it takes time to heal but we would not consider removing paper from our lives!

Children are capable and intuitive self-risk assessors from a very early age, well intentioned adults often override this which means children then no longer trust their own instincts. "Allow children to continue to develop their intuitive response to risk and challenge from an early age and they will become competent self-risk assessors. (N Buchan, Children in Wild Nature 2015). The most effective way of keeping children safe is for them to keep





themselves safe, it is therefore important that children are included in the risk assessment process where appropriate. Leonardo (aged 4) of Goodstart Red Hill shares his knowledge “I play rolling down the rocks. You take turns by rolling down the rocks into the water. So you get a rock, and then you climb up to the top (its easier in your gumboots to climb) and you roll it down. You check for people first, you say “watch out!” When it hits the water you go down and get another rock and do it all again! My name is Leonardo and I am 4.”

Good hazards, such as heights, are those where children can judge the risk themselves, where the danger is obvious and where there are benefits to the opportunity while bad hazards and risks are ‘hidden’ and benefits are hard to find “Good risks and hazards are acceptable and hold few surprises. Bad risks offer no obvious developmental or other benefits.” (Ball, D., Gill, T., Spiegel, B. 2008)

So how should risk be assessed? Instead of looking only at the negatives of an opportunity start off with the benefits, what would add value to the child’s development? These are documented to demonstrate that adults have reflected and weighed up the benefits of a situation in relation to its risks and then made an informed decision.

A benefit risk assessment clearly considers the benefits of an opportunity, weighs this up against the possible risks and then puts in place procedures to reduce the risks without removing all the benefits.

Nature and children tend to be unpredictable and it is not always possible to have a written risk assessment completed for every eventuality. This is where a common sense approach and alert adults may do a dynamic benefit risk assessment on the spot to allow the play opportunities to continue. “Dynamic benefit-risk assessment should be valued as supporting children’s uninterrupted flow in play while at the same time ensuring children are as safe as necessary.” (Buchan, N. *Children in Wild Nature* 2015)

At the 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference educators from a variety of settings shared their individual journeys with the audience.

Lenore Hamilton, owner of Lollipoppets Family Day Care in VIC, shared some of her experiences in taking up to 7 children out and about using public transport and forming close relationships with the local community. Regular day excursions to the Dandenong Ranges National Park with children of mixed ages, a place where children can explore and challenge themselves and really connect with nature over time. Lenore demonstrates her trust in the children by allowing them a great degree of freedom while she is constantly alert and assessing risk dynamically.

Fiona Pattinson founded the Wodonga TAFE Nature Playgroup in NSW where children, parents and students experience the benefits of the natural space and how children use this. The playgroup space is on a small ‘island’ surrounded on 3 sides by a creek which the children access after a dynamic risk assessment of the current conditions. Families involved in this program now visit natural spaces during weekends.

Renee Mitchell, director of Goodstart Red Hill in QLD, and her dedicated team initiated a project called Nature in the City where they take children of all ages to the local neighbourhood creek, rainforest or meadow daily. Renee shared how they involved and included parents and the community in this program which was vital to its success. Laura, the toddler group leader, commented on the children using this space, “*They see limitless learning opportunities and an endless array of materials and resources with which to hypothesize about, explore and investigate. It truly is remarkable how deeply engaged the children are in this space and with the learning opportunities it affords.*” As Renee commented, adults need to be brave to start such a program.

Kylie Keane and Lisa Beattie are the founders of Forrest ‘Beyond The Fence’™, a program for OOSHC children in Canberra, ACT.

Families make the choice and the space that is used is literally just beyond the school boundaries. Children successfully make the distinction between the different rules that apply and fully embrace the freedom allowed to climb, construct and just be.

Jenelle Haskew is the Bush Place teacher at Annette’s Place in Young, NSW. They take a group of children aged from 8 months to 5 years to the bush daily which entails a 15 minute bus journey. Here the children have the freedom to explore a large space, they make fires to keep warm or to cook on and when they are tired they can sleep in a hammock. The centre recently had their Assessment and Rating visit and the assessor spent 2 hours in the bush with the group. The centre was assessed as exceeding in all areas with particular mention of the benefits of the children having access to the bush excursions.

There are many forward thinking settings offering excursions into wild nature and many who aspire to do the same. My advice is to put in place your benefit risk assessments and to just do it!

**Niki Buchan’s new book *Children in Wild Nature* is available to purchase from the Inspired EC website [www.inspiredec.com](http://www.inspiredec.com).**

As part of the Starting Out Safely program, ELAA has developed policies for early childhood and Family Day Care services which help address the potential safety issues when taking children out into the community and natural environment. We have also developed Educator Resources, which include practice examples and ideas on how to use excursions to enrich your program. Go to Starting Out Safely on the ELAA website or [www.childroadsafety.org.au](http://www.childroadsafety.org.au) to download the free policies and resources.



# 2015 Early Childhood Education Conference



ELAA and Gowrie Victoria would like to thank our colleagues for being part of the 2015 Early Childhood Education conference. Over 1000 delegates – the largest number ever – came together to participate in an event that showcased a program full of high-calibre international and Australian speakers who focused on the theme *investing in our future*.

The conference was opened by the Parliamentary Secretary, Judith Graley MP on Friday and the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, addressed the delegates on Saturday. Writer and social commentator Kaz Cook delighted the audience with an entertaining account of the challenges of parenthood.

The keynote speaker, Professor Charles E Pascal entertained and informed the opening plenary session. He reflected

on the importance of both pedagogical investment in learning outcomes for children, and the importance of financial investment by governments in the provision of quality early childhood education and care services at a time when the sector has been under review by the Productivity Commission.

Saturday's delegates were treated to an informative plenary session presented by Dr Sharon Goldfeld – *Using a place based approach to create change for children* – which looked at the challenge for children's policy in Australia, the impacts of disadvantage on children and how place can change children's chances.

Many of this year's speaker's presentations as well as recordings of the plenary sessions are available for you to download from the conference website [www.togetherwegrow.com.au](http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au).

ELAA and Gowrie Victoria are grateful to the Creswick Foundation for bringing Professor Charles E Pascal to speak at this year's conference. We would also like to extend our thanks to our gold sponsors, the Department of Education and Training, for their contribution which covered accommodation costs for rural delegates, as well as our other sponsors Australian Super and VicRoads.

We would like to thank everyone for making the 2015 conference a great success – the conference reference committee who set the theme and developed the program, our speakers, trade fair exhibitors, sponsors who help keep our registration costs to a minimum and of course, the many attendees from across the early learning sector.



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"I only wish I could have attended all sessions! I have thoroughly enjoyed my time!"

"Incredibly organised, engaging speakers and opportunities for questions and discussions"

"I had a great time, came away with knowledge and inspiration!"



**Clockwise from top left:** Delegates enjoying Louise Dorrat's & Zora Marko's presentation; Bernadette Coles-James; Jo Gaisl sharing music, movement and drama; making the most of the Trade Fair; Jo Lange.

**Opposite clockwise from top left:** Charles E Pascal during the opening presentation; a monotreme moment at the trade fair; discussing Nature-Based Practice in Australia.

### 2016 Early Childhood Education Conference

The planning for the 2016 Early Childhood Education Conference is well underway. If you have any ideas for speakers you would like to see next year contact Sue Doring [sdoring@elaa.org.au](mailto:sdoring@elaa.org.au).

**Save the dates: 27–28 May 2016**

# SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE – DIVERSE PLAYGROUPS IN GROWTH CORRIDORS OF MELBOURNE

By Judith Gray, Partnerships and Service Development Coordinator, VICSEG new futures

*In this article Judith Gray discusses the role of place-based processes and planning for facilitated playgroups as a platform for proportionate universalism.*

Over the last ten years playgroups, run by a wide-range of community organisations in Victoria, are becoming recognised for their positive impact on outcomes for young children and their families. In particular, they build connections and support during times of economic hardship, crisis such as major factory job loss or bushfires and settlement of newly arrived culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) families (Supported Playgroups and Parent Groups Initiative (SPPI) Process Evaluation 2011) In addition, outer suburban growth corridors have found facilitated playgroups provide local connections and social contact for the child and parent while children's services are yet to be built.

In growth suburbs within Wyndham, Hume, Whittlesea and Brimbank, there are many examples where the number and reach of playgroups has opened up access to 3 year old and 4 year old kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health services. Playgroups facilitators' knowledge of the local community and contact with ethnic groups is considered vital in connecting families to supported playgroups and encouraging them to attend. Maternal and Child Health nurses also rely on CaLD

playgroups as a place of referral for more vulnerable families. The trained facilitator in a playgroup offers an opportunity for families to mix across traditional cultural and religious divisions, with many historic assumptions put aside to focus on *common* aspirations for their young child and their future. For refugee families, facilitated playgroups are a vital step in building social capital, social inclusion and promotion of cross-cultural understanding over a two to three year period, this being the time needed for outcomes for children to shift.

Evidence in the City of Hume suggests that facilitated playgroups can positively impact on kindergarten, maternal and child health access and library membership by offering culturally respectful and responsive engagement using a network of bicultural facilitators (CfC Final Evaluation Report 2010). Some of these facilitators have gone on to train and implement the new Department of Education and Training (DET) *Small Talk* early home learning programs for children under three, *Finding Your Feet Kinder Gym* and *Parent-Child Mother Goose* programs in addition to playgroup facilitation. They have broken new ground in the development of 'culturally responsive' practice with their lived understanding of the power of hospitality, welcome, engagement and social connection across language and religious barriers.

In this discussion, it is important to clarify what is meant by *social inclusion* in low-income communities, as there is often confusion about whether ethno-specific playgroups and story times in local libraries *contribute to or detract from* social inclusion. In order to achieve social cohesion benefits in vibrant multi-cultural locations, this article presents the need to offer both ethno-specific and cross-cultural playgroups in a layered response as part of social inclusion, respecting culture and the global context of family life. It also offers a caution towards simplistic presentations of universalism, which can, paradoxically, be socially exclusive when programs fail to address the differences in power between groups in favour of those already included.

**For culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) families** living in low income areas, facilitated playgroups provide a key point of social and community contact for many who do not speak English, reflecting the social norms of more collectivist, traditional cultures. They engage families in sharing language, cultural heritage and similar resettlement experiences to connect with one another. Culturally specific programs are useful for cultural groups where clients are likely to have experienced levels of trauma in relocation and settlement – including refugee communities. These services provide a familiar setting (i.e. language, customs) which helps clients feel safe outside their

For culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) families living in low income areas, facilitated playgroups provide a key point of social and community contact for many who do not speak English, reflecting the social norms of more collectivist, traditional cultures. They engage families in sharing language, cultural heritage and similar resettlement experiences and connect with one another.



The concept of proportionate universalism derives from the ground breaking work of Marmot in the UK on the social gradient of health, which suggests the application of resources should be proportional to the degree of disadvantage experienced and power relationships between those excluded need to be addressed for outcomes to improve.



facilitated playgroup are well-established (VICSEG New Futures website [www.vicsegnewfutures.org.au/playgroups](http://www.vicsegnewfutures.org.au/playgroups))

In addition, CaLD playgroups in primary schools can be considered controversial for those who think about playgroups at one level, without considering a two-layered approach, where the most isolated and vulnerable can be engaged in a universal setting. In terms of school readiness, Western Australian research from the Telethon Institute for Child Health indicated that attendance at Playgroup halved the attainment gap in learning between the children from poorer and more advantaged backgrounds.

*“We know that children from disadvantaged families tend already to have fallen behind by the time they start school and what this shows is that playgroup attendance is associated with closing the gap”* (Hancock et al 2012)

Local governments in Victoria have shown increasing interest in understanding the importance of neighbourhood environments for Early Years Engagement and Family Learning (Hume City Council Learning Together 4 Strategy 2014) and this is backed by ground breaking evidence in the 1990’s from the USA researchers – Mustard, Shonkoff, Phillips and Brooks-Gunn.

The expansion of ethno-specific outreach storytelling programs and playgroups in disadvantaged areas in Victoria has been a welcome example of this research, offering a response where educational programs for the child and parent are integrated and families with limited, or no English, are not excluded. Playgroup and Family Engagement facilitators can also model opportunities for broader community leadership and volunteerism to reduce social isolation.

The opportunity, within a playgroup platform, to break down cultural barriers and divisive attitudes has a major impact on establishing a pathway to early childhood education, English acquisition

home. **However, the question raised in this paper is how to apply this approach using the concept of proportionate universalism?**

*Proportionate universalism offers a helpful framework for looking at equitable responses in areas of high social and economic disadvantage, within the universal and primary care platforms available in Australia* (Goldfeld 2013).

The concept of *proportionate universalism* derives from the ground breaking work of Marmot in the UK on the social gradient of health, which suggests the application of resources should be proportional to the degree of disadvantage experienced and power relationships between those excluded need to be addressed for outcomes to improve. It responds to concerns with the traditional universal approach that largely benefits children in middle-income families and less so families on a low-income with a number of young children.

There a number of levels of facilitated playgroups and parenting groups that demonstrate impact on outcomes for children and families relevant to the concept of proportional universalism.

These are

1. Language specific or ‘bonding’ playgroups (for those with no or very limited English, led by a person of the same language group who understands the concepts of social inclusion/exclusion, the characteristics and needs of newly arrived vulnerable families and important community networking knowledge)
2. Cross-cultural or ‘bridging playgroups’ (led by bicultural workers) whose language may/may not match the demographic, but who are experienced in working with CaLD families. They understand social inclusion, exclusion, offer help with English and have important local community networking knowledge
3. Parent-child English classes (integrating Adult English and Children’s English) with common topics integrated within a Playgroup structure
4. Playgroup Enhancements – with funding from health and family services for the playgroups to integrate a particular message e.g. healthy eating/family violence/new settlement needs to CaLD groups once the

The expansion of ethno-specific outreach storytelling programs and playgroups in disadvantaged areas in Victoria has been a welcome example of this research, offering a response where educational programs for the child and parent are integrated and families with limited, or no English, are not excluded. Playgroup and Family Engagement facilitators can also model opportunities for broader community leadership and volunteerism to reduce social isolation.

and lifelong learning. By employing local women as 'para professionals'/or facilitators, with strong links to mainstream services, facilitated playgroups provide a more proportionate response to disadvantage.

The title of this **Discussion Paper, 'Something for everyone'** refers to the challenge of offering both **bonding** CaLD Playgroups (mixing a similar language/cultural group and **bridging** CaLD Playgroups (mixing a broad range of cultural groups together) to improve education and health outcomes for families with young children. The multi-layered CaLD Playgroup model enshrines these values and is a major 'window' for acting early and shifting outcomes for more vulnerable children.

For more information or to contact the author visit [www.vicsegnewfutures.org.au](http://www.vicsegnewfutures.org.au) or email [jgray@vicsegnewfutures.org.au](mailto:jgray@vicsegnewfutures.org.au)

For general information about Playgroups, go to the Playgroup Victoria website [www.playgroup.org.au](http://www.playgroup.org.au).

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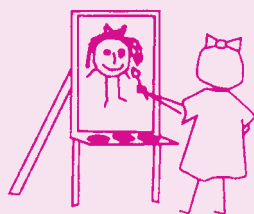
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# FAMILIES AND CHILDCARE, PENSION ELIGIBILITY AND TAX CUTS FOR SMALL BUSINESS FEATURE IN THE 2015 FEDERAL BUDGET



*The Abbott Government handed down its second Federal Budget on 12 May 2015. There were no changes to superannuation, but there will be changes to Age Pension eligibility, a new Families package and tax cuts for small business.*

Here a rundown of highlights.

## Age Pension eligibility changes

From 1 January 2017, couples with assets of more than \$823,000 outside their family home will no longer be eligible for the part-pension. Previously couples who owned their own homes could have up to \$1.15 million in assets. For single homeowners the threshold has been cut from \$775,000 to \$547,000.

The assets taper test rate will increase from \$1.50 to \$3, which means the pension payment reduces by \$3 a fortnight for every \$1,000 in assets above the asset threshold.

Retirees who are entitled to the full Age Pension will be able to own more assets and still qualify. The asset limits for single home owners will increase from \$202,000 to \$250,000 and from \$286,500 to \$375,000 for home owning couples.

*Indexing and deeming thresholds will not change*

The Government has decided not to go ahead with changes to indexing of the Age Pension announced in last year's Budget. This means the Age Pension will continue to be indexed to average male weekly earnings and not the Consumer Price Index. The Government also reversed its decision to reduce the deeming thresholds for the income test it announced in last year's Budget.

## Families Package

The Government will add \$3.5 billion to childcare for working parents. From January 2017, families who earn between \$65,000 and \$185,000 a year could be \$1,500 a year better off with the new childcare subsidy. However, families with one stay-at-home parent will lose this subsidy once their income goes above \$65,000.

With the Government's Paid Parental Leave Scheme not going ahead, employees who receive paid parental leave from their employer will no longer be eligible for the government's 'minimum wage' scheme.

## Access to super for people with terminal illness

Rules that determine early access to super for people suffering from a terminal medical condition will be amended from the current life expectancy limit of 12 months up to a period of 24 months. This change is proposed to take effect from 1 July 2015.

### For more information

Visit [www.australiansuper.com/federalbudget](http://www.australiansuper.com/federalbudget) or visit the Government's Budget website at [www.budget.gov.au](http://www.budget.gov.au)

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# CELEBRATING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURE

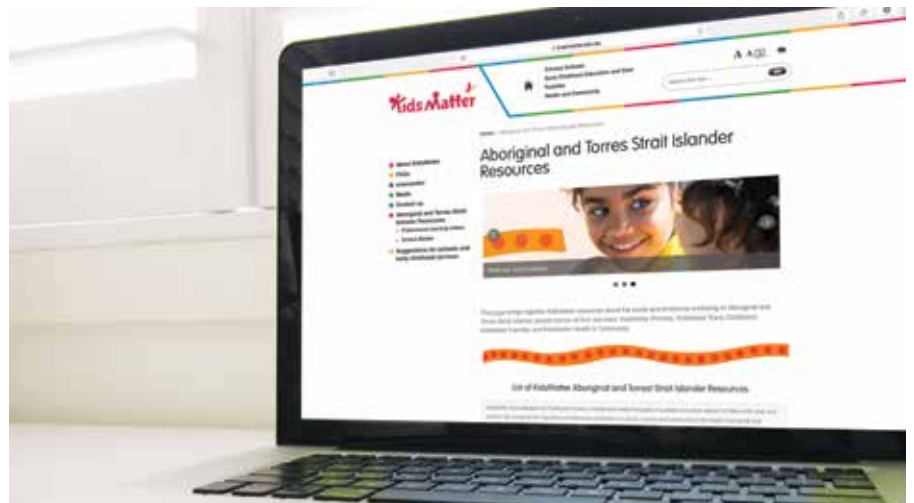
**Each year from 27 May to 3 June, National Reconciliation Week provides an opportunity to take action to build respect and strengthen relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, any time is a good time to celebrate Australia's first-peoples and their cultures.**

This year National Reconciliation Week focused on engaging the next generation. *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning* supported early childhood services, primary and secondary schools in Australia to develop environments that foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.

Here are some activities to celebrate Aboriginal culture, and connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island families, in your community:

- Find out who are the traditional owners of the land on which your service is located – talk to local Indigenous organisations and groups and the Indigenous officer at your local council. Share this information and acknowledge the traditional owners with children and families.
- Invite a member of your local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community to visit and share their culture and history.
- Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at your centre and talk about what these represent. To buy flags visit Koorie Heritage Trust. For information about the flags go to AIATSIS website.
- Share picture books by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors. For suggested titles visit Magabala Books.
- Listen (and dance) to music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians and talk about this with the children – e.g. Christine Anu, Dan Sultan, Gurrumul Yunupingu, The Mills Sisters, Tjupi Band, Archie Roach, Ruby Hunter, Jimmy Little, Warumpi Band, Kev Carmody.

- Look at a wide range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art from around the country – x-ray art, watercolour paintings, dot paintings, bark paintings, printed textiles.
- Explore the lives of Indigenous sports men and women – e.g. Cathy Freeman, Adam Goodes, Nicky Winmar.
- Plan a visit or check out the Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum: visit the Bunjilaka website
- Use Indigenous animals and plants in play to connect with your local environment.
- Let families know about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events, exhibitions, and festivals e.g. the Koorie Night Markets
- The Indigenous Professional Support Program may be able to assist. For example, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) can provide support to raise cultural competency in mainstream early childhood services – visit the VAEAI website
- Review your *Inclusion and Equity Policy* and ensure that everyone at the service is familiar with its contents.



## KidsMatter Resources

KidsMatter is a mental health and wellbeing initiative for children.

KidsMatter Early Childhood works with early childhood education and care services to support the mental health and wellbeing of young children, their families and early childhood educators using a promotion, prevention and early intervention framework. The KidsMatter website provides a range of resources which can be used to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

These resources are in a range of formats, including web based and videos.

For more information visit: [www.kidsmatter.edu.au/early-childhood/resources-educators-and-families](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/early-childhood/resources-educators-and-families)

For further information visit: [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au). Early Childhood Australia also produces a range of reconciliation resources to support educators which can be viewed at ECA's learning hub website.



# SUMMERHILL PARK KINDERGARTEN – A WORKING RAP

*Summerhill Park Kindergarten's desire to strengthen their relationship with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families was more than just lip-service. Vida Ivan, the Kindergarten's President, shares with us their RAP journey.*

It's been two years in the making but Summerhill Park Kindergarten (SPK), a community-based kinder in the leafy Melbourne suburb of Glen Iris, now has a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and has begun putting actions in place of discussions.

"We recognised the need to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families living in the local area – and that this relationship building was a priority for us," says Summerhill Park Kindergarten Director, Georgie Favaro.

"Children's connection to their community is essential to their sense of belonging – and the kindergarten can, and does, play a key role in cultivating relationships within the wider community."

A working group was established, with the goal of developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for the service. One of the first steps was to develop a RAP vision statement – proudly launched during NAIDOC Week in 2014. Since then, the working group – a volunteer group whose members change annually – has developed and begun implementing a RAP.

"Our RAP is central to extending our knowledge of Aboriginal culture and heritage and includes Indigenous perspectives which will feature at all levels of our kindergarten service," says Georgie.

"For example, since the RAP launch at our 2014 AGM, an Acknowledgement of Country is delivered at key meetings and events as an opportunity to promote

an awareness of the past and ongoing connection to place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians."

As part of the RAP, the teaching team have undertaken additional training – including organising a session for the wider kinder teaching community on Indigenous Curriculum in the Early Years with Yarn Strong Sista. Art themes and techniques explored in that session are in current use within the teaching practice at the kinder.

Information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander significant events and celebrations is regularly included in the newsletter to families, and a number of discussion sessions have been held for parents – opening the dialogue on reconciliation and the part the kindergarten can play.

The kindergarten is starting to develop relationships with local Aboriginal groups with excursions and incursions being planned which focus on Victorian Aboriginal culture for the three and four year old groups.

"Our RAP is a working document, so its implementation is a work in progress," says Georgie.

"So far it's been about learning, developing relationships and creating a supportive environment within the kinder community. We have the support of our Committee of Management to continue to introduce and explore curriculum integration points and to develop relationships in the wider kinder community. And that's just what we're doing."

For more information visit the Kindergarten's website [www.summerhillparkkinder.org.au](http://www.summerhillparkkinder.org.au).

## Summerhill Park Kindergarten RAP vision statement

### Vision

Our vision is to visibly respect and acknowledge the unique connection that Aboriginal people have to the land on which our kindergarten is situated and to build genuine, respectful relationships with all children and families who attend our service.

### Values

Summerhill Park Kindergarten values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture and the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities can make to the kindergarten and wider community.

### Objectives

We are committed to; gaining a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and learning; reflecting that knowledge at all levels of our service; improving access to our service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and developing genuine, respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities for the benefit of all children and families in our kindergarten community.

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presented by Bernadette Glass.

The Strengths Approach is the basis of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for which Bernadette Glass acted a consultant. She works alongside Early Childhood Educators and in ECIS services across Australia to develop quality, inclusive services that value connection and empowerment for children, their carers and staff. Bernadette presents both public and tailored, in-house workshops.



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# SAFETY IS NOT JUST FOR CHILDREN

*Creating a safe place for children to play and learn should be a priority for all children's services and there are many fantastic resources available to parents and educators to help keep children safe.*

But what about the people that work with children?

Many people working in preschools and childcare centres across Australia are seriously injured every year. Most of these are musculoskeletal injuries (sprains and strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries) caused by everyday activities like moving play equipment, lifting children and sitting on small chairs.

ELAA has developed a website to support Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

for early childhood service providers and employees. The website provides practical guidance specifically for early childhood services. This information is aimed at preventing injury and illness to employees, contractors, visitors, parents, children and the general public who enter a service. It has comprehensive information to help organisations comply with health and safety laws and assist early childhood services to manage their safety needs.

There are a number of resources available for free download including:

#### **OHS Purchasing Guidelines**

The OHS Purchasing Guidelines provide a framework that assists services and their employees to consider the adverse impact on health and safety that may occur

if unsuitable furniture, equipment or substances are purchased. The associated fact sheets provide specific advice on purchasing equipment for your service.

#### **6 common hazards training videos**

These 6 videos provide practical advice for staff working in services. The videos demonstrate a variety of techniques to avoid common hazards.

#### **Hazard tip sheets**

This series of tip sheets provide information on identifying and avoiding hazards specific to the early childhood sector.

#### **Templates and guidelines**

Available for download in Word documents, these templates and guidelines can be adapted for use in services. These have been sourced from the ELAA Early Childhood Management Manual.

Visit the website [www.ohsecservices.org.au](http://www.ohsecservices.org.au) for more information and to download your free OHS resources.

## Work Health & Safety in early childhood services

**Early Learning Association Australia has a fantastic website with all the information early childhood services need to keep staff safe at work.**

The website offers free resources to help organisations manage their OHS needs. This information is aimed at preventing injury and illness to employees, contractors, visitors, parents, children and the general public who enter a service.



# ELAA PARTNERING WITH ALLIANZ WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE



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- An Account Manager to oversee your Workers' Compensation program;
- Claims management expertise that will return your injured workers to employment sooner;
- Occupational Health & Safety support and guidance;
- Access to Allianz training courses and events.

## 2015 National Training Schedule now available

To help ELAA members begin planning their training requirements for the new year, Allianz' workers compensation courses for 2015 are now available online.

The online National Training Schedule, gives you access to book your training courses 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Other benefits include immediate confirmation for your booked course, email and SMS reminders and the ability to pay for courses via EFT, MasterCard or Visa, that incur a fee.

Our 2015 training offerings will be reviewed quarterly to ensure they continue to be relevant and topical. Courses scheduled for the second half of 2015 will be released in March.

As well as standard course offerings, three new courses have been introduced.

- Incident Investigation – This course will provide participants with an overview of incident investigations, reporting, notification obligations and prevention strategies in the workplace;
- Prevention of Musculoskeletal Injuries in the Workplace – This course will examine the common causes of musculoskeletal injuries, including manual tasks and slips, trips and falls. The course will focus on prevention and provide ergonomic principles and risk management strategies to implement in the workplace.
- Enhancing Wellbeing in the Workplace – This workshop will help you understand the impact of health and wellbeing levels on workforce capability and the benefits that a wellbeing program can add to your workplace. It will also assist you to develop and implement a strategic wellbeing program in your workplace.

For more detailed descriptions of these new courses and all other courses available go to <http://www.allianz.com.au/workers-compensation/training/>

For all queries regarding the ELAA/Allianz partnership and the benefits it provides or general queries regarding Workers' Compensation, please contact your Allianz Business Account Manager, Ryan Phillips, on (03) 9234 3633 or via email [ryan.phillips@allianz.com.au](mailto:ryan.phillips@allianz.com.au).



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- Janet Gonzalez-Mena



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# MEMBER PROFILE



In this edition of *Preschool Matters* we catch up with

**HEIDI PERRY**

Executive Officer,  
Yarra Ranges Kindergartens Inc.

**My career path to this job** began in 1997 when I answered an anonymous newspaper advert for a part time clerk. As a professional with a background in office administration and personnel management, I asked myself “Should I mention my kindergarten committee experience in this application?”

Just as well I did! A number of preschools in the Upper Yarra Valley had joined forces under group management and they were looking for administration support.

My kindergarten management career had begun.

As my experience and business qualifications grew over the years, so did our association. The first preschool to join us in 2010 was ‘down the line’ and we realised that we needed to change our name to better reflect what we do and

where we are. There were five preschools across the municipality so Yarra Ranges Kindergartens Inc. was chosen as the new name.

As a fully amalgamated cluster, we pride ourselves on being able to offer families the chance to be involved with their child’s kinder in the traditional sense; by participating in fundraising, working bees, local promotion of their centre and day to day support of teaching staff. At the same time, we also provide opportunities for families to join the Board and have a real say in the future of the association.

**My role** encompasses employee management and development, departmental liaison and oversight of the administration activities of my team. Our job is to relieve the burden of management responsibility on parent volunteers and provide guidance and

support to teaching staff. From 2015, we’re proud to have ten member kindergartens. Naturally, there have been a few changes along the way but one constant is my commitment to the absolute value of quality early education and care for all children. 18 years down the track, my belief in the importance of quality developmental programs for young children remains unshakeable. It’s that belief that inspires me to keep doing what we do and honestly, I can’t see myself doing anything else.

**What I love about my organisation** is that, although part of the same cluster, each of the ten preschools retains its own individual flavour and reflects the personalities of its staff, families and locations.



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**Starting Out Safely, funded by VicRoads, is Victoria's early childhood road safety education program.**



**For information on free training for Early Childhood Educators and for CALD organisations on child car seats or to find out more about our fantastic free education resources, please contact the road safety education team on (03) 9489 3500 or email [rse@elaa.org.au](mailto:rse@elaa.org.au). Visit the ELAA website [www.elaa.org.au/roadsafety](http://www.elaa.org.au/roadsafety).**