



EARLY
LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA

The voice for parents and service providers

PRE SCHOOL MATTERS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR LIFE
TERM THREE 2017

DR STACEY FOX ON
POLICY PRIORITIES

BODY SAFETY EDUCATION

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FOR
TERMS 3 & 4



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Welcome to Term 3 and your latest edition of Preschool Matters.

Our sector has received some encouraging signs from the Victorian and Federal Governments since the previous edition of *Preschool Matters*. The Victorian State Budget promised in excess of \$200 million in new investment in early learning; while a pre-Federal Budget announcement by Minister for Education, Simon Birmingham extended the Commonwealth's commitment to its portion of the '15 hours' funding to the end of 2018 – with an important commitment to seek a more permanent funding agreement with the States beyond that. ELAA CEO, Shane Lucas, talks more about both the Victorian and Federal funding commitments on page 2.

In late June, we were thrilled to learn of the re-award (by VicRoads) of the *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Education Program delivery contract to ELAA. Congratulations to our RSE team and everyone involved in preparing a high quality (and ultimately successful) tender submission. You can learn more about our RSE program and this year's winner of the annual *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Education Award on pages 20 and 21.

A Term 3 *Preschool Matters* wouldn't be complete without a wrap up of our biggest professional development and networking event of the year – The Early Childhood Education Conference *together we grow*. This year's Conference theme – *the child in focus* – inspired a multi-faceted program (the largest in the Conference's history) that was well received by nearly 900 conference delegates. You can read all about it on pages 10 to 12.

We also invited some of our conference presenters to submit articles for this edition including a review of the current state-of-play in Australian early learning policy by Dr Stacey Fox and Kate Torii (Mitchell Institute) on pages 14 and 15; a thought provoking story on Child Body Safety Education by consultant, Deanne Carson, on pages 16 and 17; plus a discussion on the influence of early childhood educators on parent-child relationships by Professor Helen Skouteris, Professor Andrea Nolan and PhD student, Mandy O'Connor, on pages 18 and 19.

There's also a full professional development program to choose from on pages 6 to 8; an update on ELAA's advocacy work (page 9); plus the first in a new occasional series profiling early learning educators, managers and volunteers who have contributed significantly to excellence in early learning (page 13).

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

Lee Cath President, ELAA

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Cover: Road Safety Education at Bonbeach Preschool. Photo by Ange Basdekis.



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LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA

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
Web www.elaa.org.au

CEO Shane Lucas
President Lee Cath
Editor James Gardener
Creative Director Louisa Roubin
Advertising James Gardener

Printing Mouleprint @ www.mouleprint.com.au

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

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CEO'S REPORT



Since my last report, there have been some significant announcements from the Australian and Victorian Governments regarding early learning funding and policy.

Federal Budget

In a pre-Federal Budget announcement in early May, the Federal Minister for Education and Training – Senator Simon Birmingham – confirmed an extension to funding 15 hours (as part of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education) until the end of 2018. This ensures that Australian children will have access to 15 hours a week of quality Early Childhood Education in the year before commencing school – at least until the end of next year.

This was greatly welcomed by ELAA, our sector partners, service providers, educators, and families as the Commonwealth portion of the funding was due to expire at the end of 2017. We believe this extension was influenced by the advocacy activities of ELAA and our sector partners along with the collective voice of all our members and supporters who contributed to the campaign – either through signing our petition to the Minister, writing letters, posting on social media or just talking to parents and friends.

While Minister Birmingham's announcement was good news, it remains a short-term solution. The Minister has indicated that he will continue to talk with the States and Territories about how funding can be guaranteed beyond 2018 and ELAA will

continue to work on your behalf to ensure we lock in a meaningful and ongoing commitment to preschool funding from all levels of government.

Further information regarding the 2017–18 Federal Budget can be found at www.education.gov.au/budget

Victorian Budget and Early Childhood Reform Plan

We also welcomed significant new investment for the early years in the recent Victorian State Budget which was immediately followed by the release of the Andrews Government's much-anticipated Early Childhood Reform Plan. Both the Budget and Reform Plan have been influenced by ELAA's advocacy work, including our submission to the 2017–18 Victorian State Budget process.

ELAA was pleased to see that the Budget included more than \$200 million of substantial new investment in Victorian early childhood education and care, and in maternal and child health services over the

nurses will also get training in the latest techniques and practices to support families, including those struggling with trauma. Additional funding will also go to the Maternal and Child Health Line.

The Early Childhood Reform Plan is a key part of Victoria's **Education State** initiative and supports the Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children. The Plan was developed in response to the 2015 consultation process as part of the Education State initiative. It details the Government's strategy for investing in early childhood and to enable Victorian children to access high-quality, inclusive early childhood services. Key features of the Reform Plan include:

- \$55.3 million over the next four years in 'school readiness' funding
- \$22.8 million to help all services with a funded kindergarten program continue to improve their quality
- \$10 million to build early childhood facilities at government school sites

“ Thanks in large part to the efforts of ELAA members, stakeholders and like-minded friends, the Federal and Victorian Budgets reflect a rising tide of awareness across the sector, the research community, our politicians, and the wider public about the importance of quality early learning to the development of all children, and to the social and economic future of our nation. ”

next four years. This includes \$81.1 million for Maternal Child Health and parenting services, together with \$108.4 million for kindergarten services.

The expanded Enhanced Maternal and Child Health service will service families until their child turns three. The \$81.1 million package will provide extra support for new parents, including those with babies born prematurely, twins and triplets, or families facing specific disadvantage. Previously, this support ended after one year.

This funding will also expand supported playgroups across the State while those at risk of family violence will receive additional outreach visits by Maternal Child Health nurses. Maternal Child Health

- an additional \$5 million to expand the Kindergarten Inclusion Support program

A copy of the Early Childhood Reform Plan can be found online: www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/educationstate/ec-reform-plan.pdf

Thanks in large part to the efforts of ELAA members, stakeholders and like-minded friends, the Federal and Victorian Budgets reflect a rising tide of awareness across the sector, the research community, our politicians, and the wider public about the importance of quality early learning to the development of all children, and to the social and economic future of our nation.

Shane Lucas, CEO, ELAA

NEWS & EVENTS

2017 Caring for Kids Raffle Winners

The Caring for Kids Raffle is presented by ELAA and Playgroup Victoria.

Congratulations to the winners of the 2017 Caring for Kids Raffle (Permit 10937/16).

The Raffle was drawn on 30 June at the ELAA office.

1st Prize – Ticket 014240 – Jim Brown (Cowes). Ticket purchased from San Remo Preschool. \$6,000 Flight Centre voucher

2nd Prize – Ticket 033781 – Catherine Howard (Ascot Vale). Ticket purchased from Ascot Vale Kindergarten. \$3,000 Harvey Norman voucher

3rd Prize – Ticket 061251 – Kewal Gopalia (Carrum Downs). Ticket purchased from Chelsea Heights Kindergarten. \$1,000 JB HiFi voucher

4th Prize – Ticket 022280 – Joe Messina (Strathmore). Ticket purchased from Clare Court Children's Service. \$250 ColesMyer voucher

Congratulations to Clare Court Children's Services who sold the most raffle tickets. Clare Court receives the following fantastic prizes: a \$500 voucher from Officeworks; a \$500 voucher from Bellbird Kid-Z; products from Crayola; and a selection of children's books valued at \$150.

Thank you to our sponsors Officeworks, Crayola and Bellbird Kid-Z.



(L-R) ELAA Project Administration Officer, Julie Thompson pictured with Kelly who received the first prize (Flight Centre Voucher) on behalf of her father, Jim Brown.



Well done Linda on 28 years in early learning

Linda Joannidis has worked at Greenbrook Kindergarten for 28 years as an Early Childhood Teacher. She was recently honoured at a reunion event for the kindergarten which is celebrating its 40th year as a parent committee run service where Linda now teaches the children of former Greenbrook students. Linda's daughter, Shelly, carries on the family contribution to early learning as she is President of Gumnut Gully Pre-School in Doncaster East. Greenbrook Kindergarten is planning to hold an open day for former families, educators, teachers and committee members to come back to the kinder for a little trip down memory lane in October. All enquiries to greenbrook.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au

(L-R) Samantha Tillotson (Vice President), Elyse Weidlich (President), Linda Joannidis (Teacher) and Kirsten Lang (Teacher)

Conference App Prize Winner

Well done to Kay Fitzgerald, Pedagogical Leader with Moonee Valley City Council, on being the lucky winner of our Conference App prize – an iPad Mini. Kay went in to the draw for the iPad after she created her own attendee profile on the Conference App. This prize was offered to encourage delegates to use the app and create their own profile (which gives the user more features within the App). Kay dropped into the ELAA office recently to accept the prize on behalf of Moonee Valley City Council.



ELAA re-awarded Road Safety Education contract

Congratulations to ELAA's Road Safety Education Program team who have successfully bid for the re-award of the contract to deliver the *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Education Program in Victoria on behalf of VicRoads.

The re-award followed a rigorous tender process during which ELAA submitted a comprehensive bid detailing our capacity to successfully deliver the program until 2020 and highlighting our many successes and achievements since being originally awarded the contract, by VicRoads, in 2011.



REGS IN FOCUS

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

Working With Children Checks (WWCC) and Police Checks (PC) – part II: what is changing and who is required to have them?

What is changing?

Amendments have been made to the Working with Children Check Act 2005 ('the Act') to implement the following five recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

1. Expand the definition of 'direct contact'

in the Act to ensure that people engaging in 'child-related work' that involves 'physical contact', 'face to face contact', 'oral', 'written' or 'electronic communication' are required to obtain a WWCC.

Currently, a volunteer performing duties under the supervision of another person is not required to hold a WWCC. However, from 1 August 2017, those carrying out or volunteering in child-related work will have to have a WWCC whether they are supervised or not.

Some exemptions from the requirement to hold a current WWCC still apply. Exemptions include student volunteers who are aged 18 or 19 years of age, Victorian and Australian Federal Police Officers and teachers with current VIT registration.

In early childhood settings there is also an **exemption which will continue to apply** to parents and close relatives. The Act states that parents and close relatives (partners, grandparents, siblings, and so on) are exempt from a check if they are volunteering in an activity in which their child participates or normally participates in. Based on this exemption, parents doing "Kinder duty" or on a volunteer committee of management, board, or parent advisory group (PAG), do not need to hold a WWCC under this legislation.

However, some services **have their own policies which require all volunteers**, regardless of the exemptions under the WWCC legislation to have a WWCC before they can assist in activities with the children. This is additional evidence of their commitment to protecting children in their care from harm.

2. Remove references to 'supervision' from the Act. This means that even if a person's contact with children is supervised by another person, they will still need to obtain a WWCC.

3. Create a new occupational category of 'child-related work', known as 'kinship care' – family members (and other persons of significance) caring for a child placed by Child Protection under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 are required to obtain a WWCC.

4. Ensure that non-conviction charges (charges that have been finally dealt with other than by a conviction or finding of guilt for the most serious offences for the purposes of the WWCC) **form part of a relevant criminal history for the purposes of category C assessments** and re-assessments.

5. Enable the Secretary to the Department of Justice and Regulation to compel the production of certain information for the purposes of compliance monitoring.

These changes come into effect from 1 August 2017. It is important that services start to prepare for these changes now and consider which changes need to be made to current policies and procedures.

In accordance with the new definition of 'direct contact' and the removal of the exemption for a person who is under 'direct supervision', all employees who

work at a children's service (excluding those who are exempt such as teachers holding current VIT registration) such as cleaners, administration staff, contractors, visitors providing incursions will be required to hold a WWCC from 1 August 2017.

Volunteer parents and relatives closely related to a child participating in the program in which they are volunteering are still exempt from requiring a WWCC unless the service has their own policies which require everyone to have a WWCC.

If a volunteer with a WWCC moves to paid employment, they must apply and pay for an employee WWCC.

Who needs a PC?

It is recommended that anyone involved in the handling of money (such as fundraising officers, treasurers, enrolment officers) be asked to obtain a PC and/or a credit check. While this is not mandatory, it adds another layer of security for the service.

Who needs both?

Any volunteer who is considered to be 'a person with management or control' (this is the executive of the committee of management of an approved provider) is required to hold a WWCC as evidence of their 'fitness and propriety'. When the executive of the committee changes or an application for provider approval is completed, evidence of both the WWCC and PC for all the executive must be attached to the PA02 form (Declaration of fitness and propriety) on the ACECQA website. It is important to note that these checks may be called something different in states other than Victoria.

Employers may also have their own policies which require all staff to have both a WWCC and a PC.

Additional information is available from www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/utility/home
www.acecqa.gov.au

Q&A

OUR AGM IS IN OCTOBER – WHAT DO WE DO IF WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER FOR OUR COMMITTEE

With careful consideration and planning, committee recruitment and re-election can be an opportunity to recruit people with fresh ideas and a range of skills.

Rather than waiting until the last minute and hoping for the best, it is important that committees invest time thinking about the needs of the committee and implementing recruitment strategies well before the AGM. Some recruitment strategies for your committee (or subcommittee) include:

- **Cast your net wide:** if your constitution provides for interested members of the public (in addition to existing parents) to join your committee then consider approaching other organisations – such as Rotary, Lions Club, Toastmasters, Apex, Our Community – or former or aspiring local councillors/politicians or skilled professionals or trades people.
- **Think about the skills you need and actively canvass** for new committee members well before the closing date for nominations.
- Develop a simple **screening process** to ensure the suitability of applicants.
- Ensure there is a **clear nomination procedure** in place and encourage applicants to **nominate well before the night of the AGM**.
- Be **enthusiastic** and use the **personal** approach when recruiting. Be clear about the expectations of the role but also highlight how valuable the experience has been, what you have learnt, the friends you have made, networks developed and the difference you have been able to make.
- Organise **social functions** for people to meet the current committee and discuss its work.
- Invite potential members to **observe** a committee meeting, however, plan the agenda carefully to maintain confidentiality.
- Be prepared to answer any applicant questions and provide them with a nomination pack including:
 - nomination form and information about the nomination process. Include information about moving and seconding a nomination and submitting the nomination form
 - an outline of committee roles and responsibilities and the time commitment involved
 - the benefits of joining the committee
 - a short history of the organisation
 - organisation chart (including management structure)
 - details of the children's program, any proposed changes for next year and long-term plans
 - you organisation's philosophy, vision and values
 - committee member insurance details
 - a brief outline of the committee's legal responsibilities, which may include management and employment (refer to *Committee Basics*, which can be downloaded from www.elaa.org.au)
 - resources and support available to the committee
 - contact details of any current committee members willing to discuss/answer questions.

Remember:

- following the above strategies may mean you fill all your committee positions before the night of the AGM and all those who have been nominated will be declared elected
- if there are still positions that are not filled, you can call for nominations from the floor
- if there are no further nominations from the floor or there are still some vacancies, the AGM can be closed (as long as there are enough people elected to form a quorum for a committee meeting) and the committee can then continue to recruit people to the vacant positions.

PUTTING A FACE TO A VOICE



Vanaja Thomas is ELAA's Membership Officer and has been with ELAA since April 2016. Through her career background in membership management, Vanaja is working to develop ELAA's membership base and create stronger relationships with all ELAA members.

My work day entails... managing the integrity of the membership database, liaising and providing customer service to existing and potential members, managing the yearly membership renewal process and developing strategies on how we can add value and improve the benefits and services we offer.

I am most inspired by... creativity – art, photography, music, fashion, cooking. Anything that nourishes my soul.

What I like most about my job... is the people here who make work enjoyable and also the satisfaction in being able to provide support and customer service to our valued members.

If I wasn't doing this job I'd be... spending more of my time on fitness, travelling around and just having fun with my kids.

ELAA PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR TERMS 3 & 4 IN 2017

ELAA has put together an extensive Professional Learning and Development Program for 2017.

Our 2017 program features some of Australia's leading early childhood education and care experts and is tailored for all early childhood education and care professionals with each seminar mapped to the National Quality Standards (NQS). The program also clearly aligns to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), making it easier for teachers to record and fulfil their Victorian Institute of Teaching professional development requirements. Program participants receive a certificate of participation for all sessions which can be used as evidence for VIT annual professional development requirements.

APST = Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

NQS = National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice

Quality Area 2 – Children's Health & Safety

Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment

Quality Area 4 – Staffing Arrangements

Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children

Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management



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

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2

Presenter: ASPECT

Date: Tuesday, 25 July

Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

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

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



Myths and realities of documentation and planning

Quality Area: 1
APST: 2.3, 5.4, 5.5, 7.2

Presenter: Heather Barnes

Date: Friday, 28 July

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Strategies for improving participation and inclusion of children with disability

Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2

Presenter: Yooralla

Date: Monday, 31 July

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Digital technology in the early years

Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 2.6, 3.4, 4.5, 6.2, 6.4

Presenter: Daniel Donahoo

Date: Friday, 4 August

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Strategies to include physical education and wellness in the 1–5 years program

Quality Area: 1, 2, & 3
APST: 1.1, 1.5, 3.3, 6.4

Presenter: Paul Pennisi

Date: Wednesday, 9 August

Time: 6.30am – 9.00pm

Venue: Darebin North East Community Hub, 35 Copernicus Crescent, Bundoora. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



Resilience, independence and self-esteem – a 3 to 5 year old focus

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5, & 6
APST: 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 6.3, 6.4

Presenter: Jo Lange

Date: Wednesday, 16 August

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Indigenous perspectives in children's programs

Quality Area: 1, 5, & 6
APST: 1.4, 2.4, 6.2, 7.4

Presenter: Annette Sax (Yarn Strong Sista)

Date: Tuesday, 22 August

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Eastern Hub Geelong, 285a McKillop Street, East Geelong. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Health and wellbeing for early years professionals

Quality Area: 4 & 7
APST: 6.2, 6.3, 7.4

Presenter: Dr Lyn O'Grady

Date: Friday, 25 August

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Exploring curriculum and pedagogy

Quality Area: 1
APST: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.3, 6.3, 7.4

Presenter: Catharine Hydon

Date: Thursday, 31 August

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Educational leadership – now I have the title what do I do next?

Quality Area: 1, 4 & 7
APST: 1.1, 2.1, 6.3, 7.4

Presenter: Anthony Semann

Date: Wednesday, 6 September

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Music and movement in early childhood programs

Quality Area: 1, 2 & 5
APST: 1.1, 2.1, 3.2, 3.4, 6.2

Presenter: Anne Belcher

Date: Friday, 8 September

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Demystifying your assessment and rating visit

Quality Area: 1 to 7
APST: 1.4, 2.4, 6.2, 7.4

Presenter: Heather Barnes

Date: Monday, 11 September

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Being an ethical professional – embedding ethics in our everyday practice

Quality Area 1 to 7
APST: 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2

Presenter: Catharine Hydon

Date: Tuesday, 19 September

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



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

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6
APST: 1.5, 1.6, 4.1, 6.2

Presenter: ASPECT

Date: Wednesday, 20 September

Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

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

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



Safety – not just child's play

Quality Area: 3, 4 & 7
APST: 4.4, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4

Presenter: Zora Marko & Emma Morgan

Date: Thursday, 21 September

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

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

Cost: \$323.50 members \$367.50 non-members



Positive behaviour guidance for 3 to 5 year olds

Quality Area: 1, 5 & 6
APST: 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 4.3, 6.4

Presenter: Jo Lange

Date: Wednesday, 11 October

Time: 6.30pm – 9.00pm

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

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



Indigenous perspectives in children's programs

Quality Area: 1, 5, & 6
APST: 1.4, 2.4, 6.2, 7.4

Presenter: Annette Sax (Yarn Strong Sista)

Date: Monday, 16 October

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Abbotsford Convent – Salon Room, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford (Enter Gate 1). Parking on site (\$12 all day).

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Using positive relationships and the EYLF to plan for and support children whose behaviour is affected by challenging life circumstances

Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6
APST: 1.3, 3.5, 4.1, 4.3, 6.2

Presenter: Children's Protection Society

Date: Friday, 20 October

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

Venue: Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Strategies to include physical education and wellness in the 1–5 years program

Quality Area: 1, 2 & 3
APST: 1.1, 1.5, 3.3, 6.4

Presenter: Paul Pennisi

Date: Wednesday, 1 November

Time: 6.30pm – 9.00pm

Venue: Quest Caroline Springs, 234 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$80 members \$95 non-members



Working with vulnerable children and families

Quality Area: 1, 2, 5 & 6
APST: 1.3, 3.7, 4.1, 6.2, 7.3

Presenter: Children's Protection Society

Date: Thursday, 16 November

Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm

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

Cost: \$175 members \$250 non-members



Safety – not just child's play

Quality Area: 3, 4 & 7
APST: 4.4, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4

Presenter: Zora Marko & Emma Morgan

Date: Friday, 24 November

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: Eastern Hub Geelong, 285a McKillop Street, East Geelong. Free parking on site.

Cost: \$323.50 members \$367.50 non-members



2017 FREE COMMITTEE TRAINING

QUALITY AREA 7: LEADERSHIP
AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT

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 (AGM) and successful handover to the new committee

Join us for a comprehensive presentation on preparing for your AGM and how to ensure a positive handover is provided to the new committee.

The free session will cover:

- The Annual General Meeting (AGM):
 - constitutional requirements
 - committee recruitment
 - planning the meeting
 - agenda and reports
 - committee elections
 - after the AGM
- The handover – what, when and who?

About our presenters

Our ELAA Member Services Team bring specialist skills and extensive experience to these sessions. With backgrounds in the management of early childhood services, industrial relations, early childhood assessment and early childhood teaching, they understand the governance and management challenges that you face as a committee member.

DATE	VENUE
Monday, 14 August 6.30 – 8.30pm	City of Stonnington, Malvern Town Hall Cnr Glenferrie Rd and High Street, Malvern
Thursday, 24 August 6.30 – 8.30pm	City of Darebin, Council Chambers High Street, Preston
Tuesday, 29 August 6.30 – 8.30pm	Banyule City Council, Hawdon Room, Level 4 1 Flintoff Street, Greensborough
Wednesday, 6 September 6.30 – 8.30pm	Yarra Ranges Council, Conference Room 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale
Thursday, 12 October 6.30 – 8.30pm	City of Greater Dandenong Dandenong Civic Centre Lonsdale Street, Dandenong
Monday, 30 October 6.30 – 8.30pm	Maribyrnong City Council Level 1 – Reception Room Cnr Napier and Hyde Streets, Footscray
Wednesday, 8 November 6.30 – 8.30pm	Early Learning Association Australia Level 3/145 Smith Street, Fitzroy
Tuesday, 5 December 7.00 – 9.00pm	Bayside City Council 76 Royal Avenue, Sandringham

Register on-line at www.elaa.org.au/pld or call (03) 9489 3500.

Prior registrations are essential. Please sign in 15 minutes prior to the commencement of a session.

ADVOCACY

YOUR COLLECTIVE VOICE

Each edition of Preschool Matters we report on ELAA's advocacy work to represent the collective voice of our members.

National Partnership Extension

ELAA welcomes the recently announced one-year extension to the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education that ensures all Australian children will continue to receive (at least until the end of 2018) 15 hours of early learning a week (for forty weeks) in the year before school. We believe the decision to extend was influenced by our advocacy activities (and those of our sector partners) including ELAA member communications, social media, video vox pops and advocacy through thought leadership groups such as ELAA's CEO's Group to both State and Federal levels of government.

ELAA also provided members and supporters with access to an online campaign kit that included background facts; template letters to media, government and parliamentarians; and a link to an online petition to the Minister for Education and Training.

ELAA will continue to proactively contribute to discussions between the Federal Government and the States toward resolving the uncertainty over this issue once-and-for-all.

Victorian State Budget and Early Childhood Reform Plan

We also welcomed significant new investment in the early years through the recent Victorian State Budget, and the release, by the Andrews Government, of the long-awaited Early Childhood Reform Plan. Both the Budget and Reform Plan have been in no small part influenced by ELAA advocacy work and our 2017/18 Victorian State Budget Submission.

Jobs for Families child care reform

The ELAA CEO's Group also influenced positive changes to Federal Government's recently amended Jobs for Families Package including encouraging the Government to avoid linking new investment in quality early learning with cuts to family welfare payments. However, there is still more work for the ELAA advocacy team and our sector partners to do in this space in guiding the Government toward fairer policy outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

ECEC Leadership Development Strategy

In March 2017 ELAA participated in a Victorian Government workshop on leadership and management to inform the development of a Leadership Development Strategy for Victorian early childhood education and care professionals. The strategy aims to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of leadership development across the ECEC sector's many different contexts. The workshop considered:

- the current state of leadership development in ECEC contexts
- future leadership development needs
- potential approaches for meeting leadership development needs.

Early childhood policy and advocacy

ELAA has contributed to a number of high level early learning policy forums over the past few months:

- in March ELAA hosted members of the Early Learning: Everyone Benefits

campaign group to talk about national campaign strategies to build community understanding of the importance of the early childhood education.

- In April, we represented members at a Mitchell Institute forum, together with a range of peak organisations and service providers, to consider the future of quality early learning programs for both 4-year-old and 3-year-old children
- ELAA also attended a round table discussion convened by Federal Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development, Kate Ellis, which sought the early childhood sector's input into Labor's future policy directions. The round table was followed up by the release of a consultation document in June 2017 seeking the views of the sector on key policy questions including long-term reform; children's development; access to and affordability of services; sector reform; and workforce issues. ELAA believes it is important to work with both sides of politics to inform quality policy and made a written submission.

ELAA is here to listen to you

ELAA is pleased to participate in these groups and represent the interests of our members. We welcome any questions or input by contacting us at elaa@elaa.org.au





2017 Early Childhood Education Conference

Hosted by ELAA and Gowrie Victoria, the 2017 Conference was a fantastic opportunity for nearly 900 educators, service providers, policy makers and parents to learn from leading researchers, experts and fellow professionals from our sector. It was also an opportunity for the early childhood sector to gather as peers and friends, all of us committed to delivering excellence in early learning for all children.

The theme of this year's Conference – *the child in focus* – was wide-ranging and included children's sense of identity; their connection and engagement with their community; their sense of wellbeing; children as confident and involved learners; effective communicators;

children's rights; resilience; disadvantage and vulnerability; supporting transitions; partnerships with families and professionals; and equity and diversity.

Largest speaker program in the Conference's history

This year, the Conference Reference Committee adopted a new approach to the speaker program, significantly expanding it to almost twice the previous size. This was achieved through splitting the post-lunch and afternoon sessions across two presentations in most rooms with presentations paired by theme where possible. This enabled the development of a program of over 70 presentations that traversed a broad spectrum of topics

from numeracy, literacy and children's rights to integrated service models, indigenous early years experiences, professional ethics and much more. Evaluation feedback had indicated that this was a successful innovation.

The quality and scope of the Conference owed much to the dedication and professionalism of the Conference Reference Committee – comprising representatives from ELAA, Gowrie Victoria, the Victorian Department of Education and Training, Playgroup Victoria, Noah's Ark, FKA Children's Services, Community Child Care Victoria, Banyule City Council, Early Childhood Australia, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Assoc Inc.



Keynote speaker

This year, we were delighted to have Professor Edward (Ted) Melhuish OBE – from Oxford University – as our keynote speaker on the Friday morning, and as a special guest panellist on the Saturday. Professor Melhuish's attendance at the Conference was made possible by the generosity of the Creswick Foundation.

Ted drew on his extensive research experience regarding the economic and social impacts of early learning in an address entitled 'Early childhood experience, long-term development and the wealth of nations'. His address journeyed through studies from many countries indicating how differing patterns of experience in the early years, both in the home and outside the home (such as early childhood education and care), can have long-term impact on a child's educational and socio-emotional development, employability, criminality, and mental and physical health. He then went on to discuss how this was relevant to practice and policy, including resource allocation at both a local and national level.



Clockwise from top left: Victorian Minister for Families and Children – Jenny Mikakos; Professor Edward Melhuish OBE delivers the Keynote Address; and Professor Edward Melhuish, ELAA CEO – Shane Lucas, and Gowrie Victoria CEO – Andrew Hume.

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

26 and 27 May, 2017 at the Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne

together we grow the child in focus



Ted also joined Sandra Cheeseman, Anne Stonehouse and Katherine Whitty for a facilitated panel discussion on the Saturday morning where they discussed the complexity of working with children under three-years-old in education and care settings and examined the important components of reflective and thoughtful pedagogy.

Access to presentations online

Conference delegates wishing to revisit presentations from this year's Conference can access soft copies of most presentations by visiting the conference website www.togetherwegrow.com.au and clicking on the Program tab and then selecting the presentation of their choice under the day on which it was delivered i.e. Friday or Saturday (look for the link to presentation file at the end of individual presentation abstracts).

Scholarships assist delegates to get to the Conference

This year, we were very pleased to receive funding support from the Australian Department of Education and Training who provided financial assistance to help services from disadvantaged or remote communities throughout Australia to

attend the Conference. The funding was available via application to ELAA and covered delegate's registration costs for either one or two days, depending on the delegates needs. As Conference hosts, ELAA and Gowrie Victoria also assisted services from disadvantaged communities to attend the conference this year.

Turning good presentations into great presentations with a mentor

Another first for this year's Conference was the allocation of an industry mentor to some of the presentation teams – to assist them to align and develop their presentations with the conference theme 'the child in focus' in mind.

"We had a number of phone conversations and emails with our mentor, Heather Barnes, early on in our presentation development process and Heather was great in aiding us in achieving clarity regarding what we wanted to say. Because ours was a team presentation, effective collaboration was crucial and Heather added value in that we had another 'set of eyes' that could critique our presentation objectively and also suggest practical advice on things like the timing of our presentation. It was also great to bounce ideas off her." – Barbara Gomez, lead presenter of *Assessment for learning and development*.



Sponsors

ELAA and Gowrie Victoria gratefully acknowledge the support of our Conference Gold Sponsor – the Victorian Department of Education and Training – and our major sponsors AustralianSuper (morning tea sponsor), VicRoads (Starting Out Safely Award sponsor), Insurance House (afternoon tea sponsor), the Australian Department of Education and Training (scholarship sponsor), Australian First Aid (water bottle sponsor), and the Fair Go Group (signage and name tag sponsor).



A valuable development opportunity for regional services

As with previous years, the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) provided funding to ELAA to offer Victorian children's services employees and early childhood educators in Prep, Years 1 and 2 working in a rural area with a rebate for their conference accommodation costs. The assistance was available by application to ELAA and many rural services sought to access it including Robyn Jane Children's Centre in Healesville. Jan Amos, the Centre's Director, said, "Robyn Jane Children's Centre Inc was so grateful to receive the accommodation grant, it allowed our leadership team of eight attend the Conference for the first time without taking resources away from the children at our not-for-profit centre. Educators came back inspired and excited by their new knowledge."



Trade Fair

This year's Conference Trade Fair was very successful with 60 booths including returning and new exhibitors showcasing the latest in services and products for quality early learning services. One such returning exhibitor was **educational experience** who celebrated 40 years in business this year and have been an ongoing supporter and exhibitor at the Early Childhood Education Conference for over a decade.



Clockwise from top: ELAA Road Safety Education Project Manager – Zora Marko – chats to a delegate at the Starting Out Safely RSE booth at the 2017 Conference; the Conference provided great opportunities for professional networking; and Trade Fair Exhibitor – educational experience – celebrated 40 years of service this year.

Save the dates for the 2018 Early Childhood Education Conference

The 2018 Early Childhood Education Conference will be held on Friday, 25 May – Saturday, 26 May.

Initial expressions of interest to present at the Conference or recommendations for speakers to approach may be sent to ELAA's Communications and Marketing Officer, James Gardener, at jgardener@elaa.org.au

EXCELLENCE IN EARLY LEARNING

ELAA's vision is excellence in early learning for every child and we work toward this through supporting early learning services and their staff and volunteers. In this new occasional series we celebrate the educators, managers and volunteers who are the heart and soul of early childhood education and care.

MARIA KOUMIDES – MORELAND COMMUNITY CHILD CARE CENTRES



In March, 2017, at the age of 77, early childhood educator, Maria Koumides, officially retired from a 39-year career with Moreland Community Child Care Centres (MCCCC).

In a tribute on its website, MCCCC said “Maria’s warm nature, cheerful disposition and genuine love and affection for the children in her care will be greatly missed by MCCCC’s families, children and staff”.

In the aftermath of the Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus during 1974, Maria, her husband Sotos, and their sons, Mel and Philip, immigrated to Australia in 1975.

After settling in Brunswick and a few years of factory work, Maria commenced work as an assistant at the Mitchell Street Child Care Centre in Brunswick (or Elpida as it was then known) – she had worked as a kindergarten assistant in Cyprus before she married. Maria commenced with Mitchell Street on its opening day (19 March, 1978). Since then she has performed just about every role in the Centre – from educator, cook, and dance teacher to payroll, team leader and 2IC.

In May, Maria was honoured at a special event hosted by Moreland Council that acknowledged her contribution to the early childhood education sector. Guest

speakers included the Mayor of Moreland, Cr Helen Davidson, ELAA CEO and former MCCCC parent – Shane Lucas, and Anne Jorgensen, Chair of the MCCCC Committee of Management. The Brunswick Women’s Choir also performed during the evening.

To mark the occasion, MCCCC produced a special publication all about Maria: her childhood and young adult life in Cyprus, her expulsion from her homeland after the Turkish invasion, her earliest memories of Mitchell Street and her plans for retirement.

The publication notes: “Maria’s kindness and compassion saw her instil in Mitchell Street a tangible sense of family and community. Families helped run the centre by cooking, doing laundry and maintaining the old building. Maria fostered a warm, collegiate atmosphere where families and staff worked together as a team and everyone’s input was considered of equal value. Maria has looked after thousands of children over the past 39 years, including the children of children she cared for – and a few that later became MCCCC staff!”.

The publication can be found at www.mcccc.com.au/our-news-and-events/fond-farewell-maria-koumides.

Congratulations Maria on nearly four decades of providing excellence in early learning.

Image courtesy of Moreland Community Child Care Centres Inc.

Do you have a story to share?

If you know of an educator, manager or volunteer at your early learning service who has contributed to excellence in early learning then why not share their story in *Preschool Matters*? Email your story to elaa@elaa.org.au with “Excellence in Early Learning – attention James Gardener” in the subject field of your email. Please limit your story to no more than 500 words and, if possible, attach no more than two images. Please ensure images are jpeg files and are at least two megabytes each in file size.

POLICY APPROACHES TO BETTER OUTCOMES

The policies that drive the funding, planning and regulation of Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia are complex and subject to passionate debate within our sector and the media. In this article, Dr Stacey Fox and Kate Torii, from leading educational think tank – the Mitchell Institute – cut through the jargon to provide a clear picture of the key policies that shape our sector, their effect so far and future priorities for our children and educators.

Early childhood education is widely recognised as one of the most valuable public policy investments that governments can make. The long-term benefits of quality early learning flow through not only to the individual, but to the future productivity and prosperity of the nation.

Australia has built strong foundations for a high quality early education and care system, but evidence suggests that current policy arrangements are not yet extending high quality early educational opportunities equitably to all children in Australia.

Policy decisions guide government investment and shape the everyday routines and processes in early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs across Australia. It's critical that we continuously sharpen our policy approaches to meet the needs of every child and create the conditions for excellence in practice across the system.

The early childhood policy landscape

The overarching policy goals for ECEC are to promote children's early learning and development as a foundation for future learning, as well as enabling greater workforce participation for parents.

ECEC in Australia operates in a complex policy environment – where federal, state and local governments, as well as community groups and private providers all play a role.

Responsibility for funding, planning, regulation and service delivery is divided between different levels of government making clear leadership and decision-making a challenge.

From a national perspective, key policy developments include the National Partnership Agreement in 2009 and the introduction of a National Quality Framework in 2012. These reforms have fundamentally impacted practice on the ground by bringing curriculum and approaches to pedagogy up to a consistent national standard, as well as expanding children's access to early learning opportunities.

The more recent *Jobs for Families* Child Care Package legislation, which was passed this year, combines the Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) with a single, means-tested Child Care subsidy. The core underpinning rationale for this policy is accessible and affordable childcare that supports parents into work – it has a stronger focus on workforce participation than children's learning and development.

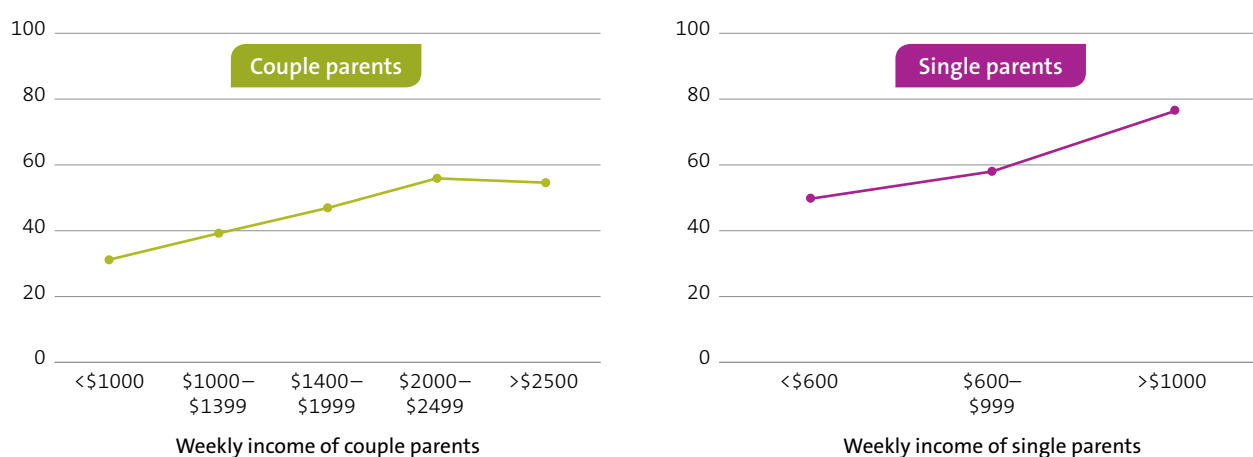
How we're tracking

Despite significant developments in the early childhood policy space, too many children continue to miss out on access to high quality services.

Five years since the introduction of the National Quality Framework, we can't yet guarantee every child in Australia a high quality early education. Around 1,930 (12 per cent) services in Australia have not yet been assessed, and 3,690 (24 per cent) assessed services are not meeting the National Quality Standard¹.

Participation in early education, outside of the universal preschool entitlement in the year before school, is still strongly tied to family income.

Figure 1: Proportion of children usually attending care, by weekly income of parents

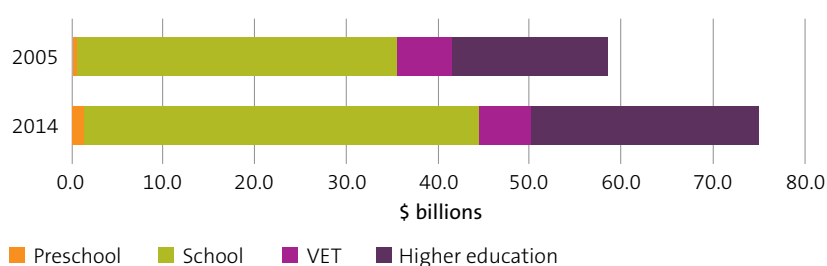


Source: ABS Childhood Education and Care, Australia, June 2014

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4402.0June%202014?OpenDocument>



Figure 2: Expenditure by sector, 2005–06 and 2014–15 (\$ billions)



Source: ACIL Allen Consulting analysis based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. From <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/expenditure-on-education-and-training-in-australia-2016/>

Dr Stacey Fox is Acting Director at the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University. The Mitchell Institute is committed to an education system that equips all young people to be creative, entrepreneurial, resilient and capable learners, and works from early childhood through to tertiary education. Stacey primarily works in the Mitchell Institute's early childhood research and policy stream. She recently co-authored, with Myra Geddes from Goodstart Early Learning, a significant report on two years of preschool, *Preschool – Two Years are Better Than One: Developing a Universal Preschool Program for Australian 3 Year Olds – Evidence, Policy and Implementation*. <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/author/staceyfox/>

Kate Torii is a Policy Analyst at the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University. Kate is interested in tackling complex public policy challenges and building a more inclusive and equitable future for young people. At Mitchell, Kate works across education policy areas from early childhood through to VET. <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/author/katetorii/>

The E4Kids study reveals that socio-economic status (SES) has a significant impact on the quality of learning supports that children in ECEC receive, with children from the lowest SES families experiencing consistently lower quality services despite having the most to gain.

The 2015 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) revealed that 22 per cent of children entered school developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain – showing no national improvement on the previous census in 2012.

Investment levels

Public funding for early childhood services has grown rapidly, reflecting the expansion of the sector and substantial growth in costs². Despite this, the size of the investment relative to government spending on other parts of education is still very low.

A key challenge is determining how to lift quality in a policy environment where there is limited appetite for significant funding increases and a lack of clarity on how to invest to achieve the best impact.

What are the policy priorities?

Ensuring affordable access to early learning and that children get the right dose to make a difference must continue to be priorities in early childhood policy discussions.

However, the debate must also shift to lifting quality. There are many moving parts to getting quality right, but evidence suggests that the linchpin is skilful educators who can combine explicit teaching of skills and concepts with sensitive and warm interactions with children.

To date, early childhood workforce reforms have focussed primarily on lifting educators' qualification levels. There's now an opportunity to build on this by prioritising and investing in educators' capability to provide high quality interactions with children.

To do so, government policy must expand the supports provided to educators at various stages of their careers, from their initial training, through embedded, sustained and evidence-based professional learning, to leadership development.

There is a clear role for governments to be on the front foot in driving quality improvements, but educators can act as agents for change too.

1 NQF Snapshot Q1 2017 http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/Reports/2017/NQF_Snapshot_Q1_2017.PDF

2 See Phillips B (2014), 'Child care affordability in Australia', AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report Issue 35, June 2014.

WHAT IS BODY SAFETY EDUCATION AND HOW DOES IT SUPPORT THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS?

Deanne Carson is the Co-founder of Body Safety Australia. In this article, Deanne provides an overview of her presentation at the ELAA/Gowrie Victoria Early Childhood Education Conference on the role of educators in promoting children's wellbeing and resilience through body safety education.

'Instead of our singing "give someone a hug", we could sing "offer someone a hug!"'

Standard 7 of the Victorian Child Safe Standards asks us to *develop strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children*. For many this can be the most difficult standard to implement as it calls for a change in mindset. We have previously been vigilant yet reactive, responding to any signs that a child may be at risk of abuse. We are now shifting to a culture of being proactive in supporting children to know their rights, giving them skills to assert themselves and actively informing them of avenues to where they can seek help.

Body Safety Education has been developed by taking traditional Protective Behaviours Education and adapting it to incorporate new research in childhood sexual abuse and current best practice in violence prevention education.

Body Safety Education should be embedded into the curriculum over the

course of the year and can be kicked off over a week of intentional teaching. Many centres are doing so over term 3 and 4 as part of their school readiness program.

When a body safety program is delivered in an education setting, children as young as three-years-old are able to understand and retain core body safety principles.

Whole Community Education

While children are able to absorb these lessons, Body Safety Education is most effective when there is also comprehensive whole community engagement.

Protecting children from abuse is the responsibility of adults not children, so it is logical that adults be engaged in learning. This means engaging with as many people as possible involved in the caring of children; in an education setting, the home and the wider community. When we engage at this level, not only are we active in keeping children safe in the short term, we are instrumental in creating generational change.

Whole community education is consultative and inclusive of children and adults from diverse backgrounds or needs.

Ideally, whole community education involves professional learning for staff and parent, carer and community workshops.

Teaching, modelling and connecting

Teaching

Body Safety themes can be taught to children, modelled by staff and be communicated to parents and carers so that the child is supported in practicing these new skills at home.

Bodily autonomy for instance, can be introduced by reading 'My Body Belongs to Me' by Jill Starishevsky.

A follow up activity may be to draw a body outline of the child on paper. Have the child mark where they are comfortable being touched and by whom. They can colour this on the outline. Discuss why they may feel more comfortable being touched in more places by mum than by a shopkeeper.

Modelling

Educators and teachers are already modelling bodily autonomy to a great extent but it's good to reflect on where small changes can be made.

Often we will ask permission to change nappies and negotiate ways a child can feel empowered when they are resistant to nappy changes. We can also model consent by reflecting to children our own need for bodily autonomy. For instance, 'I can see that you are happy to see me and are giving me a big hug! This is my body and I can choose who touches it. I choose to accept your hug because I am happy to see you, too!'.

Connecting

This is an excerpt from the weekly newsletter sent to parents from Woodleigh Minimbah Early Childhood Centre and is a great way of connecting parents with learning about bodily autonomy (in this case a child's right to their digital image) without being didactic.

'Following our Body Safety Australia professional learning sessions, we as educators, have been reflecting on how we can support the children in developing an





understanding of their rights and the skills to stand up for themselves or seek support if they need it. As part of our critical reflection, we have developed a new goal for our Quality Improvement Plan: Provide children with an opportunity to see and consent to the use of their images in documentation and parent communication.

Any body safety program needs to be culturally sensitive and inclusive of children of all abilities and family structures. Educators can do this by:

- inviting members of your community to collaborate on what is culturally appropriate. For instance, some people may have a greater number of body parts they consider to be private
- learning the name of genitals that children may use at home in their first language.

Deanne Carson is a speaker, author, researcher and educator specialising in abuse prevention education, respectful relationships and sexuality education. Deanne has been instrumental in developing a whole community approach to prevention education that encompasses the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards and Respectful Relationship Curriculum. Further information is available from Deanne@bodysafeaustralia.com.au or www.bodysafeaustralia.com.au.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS FOSTERING PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Deakin University Professor of Developmental Psychology, Helen Skouteris, was a feature speaker at this year's ELAA/Gowrie Victoria Early Childhood Education Conference. In this article Helen; along with PhD student, Mandy O'Connor, and Professor Andrea Nolan; revisit the key theme of Helen's Conference presentation – the significance of parent-child relationships on preschool children's development and how early childhood educators can foster those relationships and current programs designed to help them achieve this.

Children's early years provide the foundation for all future development, learning, health and wellbeing. Substantial changes in children's social and emotional capabilities occur during early childhood with emotional self-regulation being a critical component to all social-emotional behaviours. Emotional self-regulation enables age appropriate expression and regulation of emotions and social skills, and is facilitated within the context of parent-child interactions. Positive parent-child relationships support the development of children's socio-emotional skills through the quality of the following core parenting dimensions: responsiveness, sensitivity, understanding, mutual respect, communication, emotional availability and bond, connectedness, support and empathy. The most promising strategy to influence children's developmental pathways is identifying children's needs early and moderating their impact significantly, through family and community environments and relationships.

Supportive programs

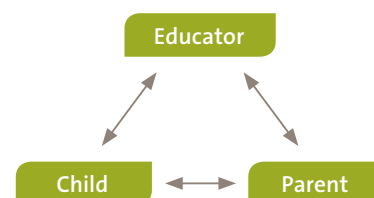
Parents and early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings play a critical role in children's social and emotional development, with the experiences of children in ECEC settings influenced by three significant dyadic relationships: parent-child; educator-child; and educator-parent (see Figure 1).

The early childhood period provides a crucial opportunity for early intervention and prevention to strongly influence life course trajectories. High-quality ECEC has been found to be the most consistently effective early childhood intervention; however, supporting parent-child relationships has traditionally been conducted through parenting interventions within community or health settings.

Investigation of programs and interventions, available to ECEC educators to support parent-child relationships, reveals a lack of specifically designed and evaluated programs and resources for use by educators within ECEC settings.

Vital components of programs reviewed in other settings supporting parent-child relationships include: observation of parent-child interactions, parent engagement and professional facilitators with child development knowledge. Given that young children spend considerable amounts of time attending ECEC services, educators are encouraged to build strong relationships with parents and children. ECEC settings provide an ideal opportunity for educators to observe parent-child interactions and share their knowledge with parents to promote and foster parent-child relationships.

Figure 1. Triad of educator-child-parent relationships



“ ECEC settings provide an ideal opportunity for educators to observe parent-child interactions and share their knowledge with parents to promote and foster parent-child relationships.”

Educator-Parent Child Relationship (E-PCR) program

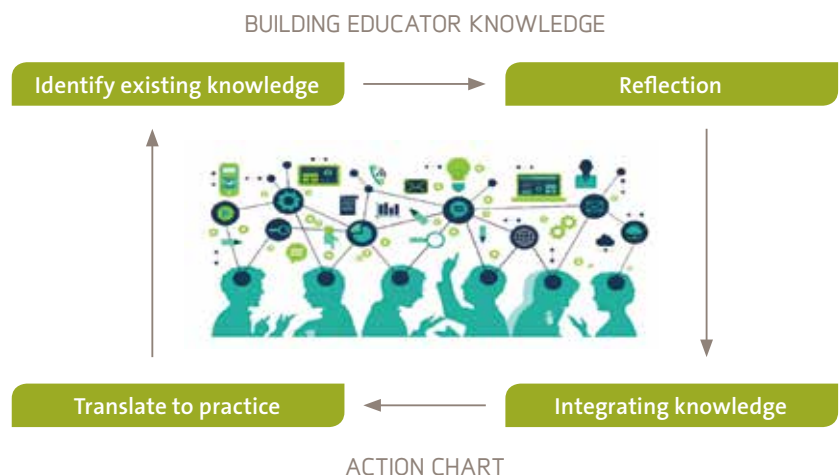
Working collaboratively with ECEC educators, leaders and industry partners enabled the development of an Educator-Parent Child Relationship (E-PCR) program and toolkit for use by educators in ECEC settings. Tapping into educators' perspectives revealed they are well placed to support parent-child relationships as they have: robust awareness of the importance of children's social and emotional development and parent-child relationships; strong knowledge that relationships are critical to children's development, health and wellbeing across the life course; and a sense of importance in establishing quality relationships with parents and children in their work. However, a lack of confidence and communication skills impacts educators' ability to share knowledge and engage with parents.

Educators identified five key topics to support parent-child relationships: (1) Building relationships with children; (2) Sharing observations; (3) Having open conversations; (4) Knowledge of positive parenting practices; and (5) Addressing difficult situations. Educator practice cards and ECEC service posters in the educator toolkit detail theoretical and empirically based information and practical strategies to engage with parents on each topic. Professional development workshops are designed to support educators and educational leaders' confidence and communications skills through: development of supportive workplace environments; identification of existing parent-child relationships and social and emotional development knowledge; and translation of knowledge into practice.

Building Educator Knowledge framework

In order to support educators' professional development the Building Educator Knowledge (BEK) framework is used; see Action Chart (Figure 2). The E-PCR program is delivered using the BEK framework ensuring the valuable existing knowledge of educators forms the foundation for educators' ongoing professional learning. The cyclic nature of the framework recognises that incorporating explicit information and translating theory and

Figure 2. Building Educator Knowledge (BEK) Action Chart



Source: ECMS and Deakin University

evidence into practice into educators' existing/implicit knowledge will impact and strengthen educators' knowledge and practices.

The five stages of the BEK framework are: (1) Identify existing implicit knowledge; (2) Use educator narratives; (3) Engage in reflection; (4) Integrate knowledge; and (5) Translate knowledge to practice.

Supporting educators

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and National Quality Framework (NQF) recognise that supportive relationships are fundamental to children achieving positive outcomes and encourage educators to develop collaborative partnerships with families and communities. The E-PCR program addresses elements described by National Quality Standards (NQS) Area 5: Relationships with Children and Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities. Providing educators with support to ensure they are well positioned to care for parents and children, with current evidence informed knowledge and practices to enhance children's development and relationships, will provide our children with opportunities for the best start in life.

Professor Helen Skouteris is Professor of Developmental Psychology at Deakin University. Helen is an expert in child and maternal health and wellbeing, longitudinal, intervention and implementation research.

Professor Andrea Nolan is Professor of Early Childhood Education at Deakin University. Andrea was Project Chief Investigator and senior researcher for the 'Support for children and families experiencing vulnerability in early years transitions: practice review'.

Mandy O'Connor is a Deakin University PhD student whose research work has focused on parent-child relationships and the role of early years educators in harnessing that relationship to support child development.

EXCELLENCE IN ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION IN ACTION

The annual Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Award is sponsored by VicRoads and is awarded, each year, during the (Together We Grow) Early Childhood Education Conference hosted by ELAA and Gowrie Victoria.

The Award seeks to recognise the achievements of early childhood services and educators who provide Road Safety Education. The winning service receives \$500 together with a Road Safety Education pack full of great resources.

The 2017 *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Education Award was awarded to Bonbeach Preschool.

"We take road safety extremely seriously in our community and this is reflected in the program at Bonbeach Preschool," says Bonbeach Preschool Committee Chairperson, Michael Wilson.

In winning the Award, Bonbeach Preschool demonstrated a strong commitment to embedding road safety education into their curriculum through:

- engaging in meaningful conversations with adults and children about safety through daily conversations; road safety newsletter articles that include content from the [childroadsafety](http://childroadsafety.com.au) website; and the promotion of vehicle child restraint information for families
- advocating for clearer road markings and a one-way system in the car park shared with Bonbeach Primary School which has

led to a much safer experience for children and families at drop-off and pick-up

- taking children on regular walking excursions in the local community – using the Stop! Look! Listen! Think! principles
- creating resources and equipment to support ongoing road safety education at the service
- inviting a crossing supervisor to the kindergarten to discuss road safety with the children
- undertaking the *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Professional Development session and running a ThingleToodle session at the Kindergarten.

Bonbeach Preschool Director, Emily Malone, says "several of our preschool educators (including myself) have attended the *Starting Out Safely* professional development training and this has allowed us to confidently imbed road safety into our programs. At Bonbeach, road safety education is a community effort and we enlist the support of parents and guardians to attend community walks with the children ... this is their own neighbourhood and they are building on the skills they have learnt from their families".

Bonbeach's passion for including RSE in their program has led them to innovate and improvise in order to keep costs manageable. "Great pride is taken in recreating real-life traffic scenarios for our children to practice being safe. Our own money has been spent on resources and equipment to design and make our own petrol bowser, train tracks, railway crossing etc. In fact, the local council (City of Kingston) saw the examples of our 'homemade' props and used this as inspiration to build even better equipment for the council's own use."

Bonbeach Preschool is also fortunate in that it is co-located with Bonbeach Primary School. "This allows us to influence not only the preschool's families but the larger community that is Bonbeach Primary School and Preschool," says Michael. "As a parent with a child at each service, I'm well placed to see how Road Safety Education is a part of the children's learning from three-year-old preschool through to Grade 6."

"We look forward to spending our prize on new and updated equipment to continue teaching our children the importance of road safety," says Emily Malone. "The road safety education pack will be a highly-valued resource which we will use to build on our already strong focus on road safety and being a safe pedestrian."

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“Several of our preschool educators (including myself) have attended the Starting Out Safely professional development training and this has allowed us to confidently imbed road safety into our programs. At Bonbeach, road safety education is a community effort and we enlist the support of parents and guardians to attend community walks with the children.”
— Emily Malone, Bonbeach Preschool Director



Bonbeach Preschool

Operating since 1995, Bonbeach Preschool is co-located and integrated with Bonbeach Primary School, although maintains a separate entrance to the Primary School and a separate outdoor play area. The Preschool runs two three-year-old groups and two four-year-old groups catering to approximately 92 children and families. Most of these children follow onto the adjoining Bonbeach Primary School and all preschool children take part in whole school events. They also participate in the transition program co-ordinated by the preschool educators and Prep teachers, offering a smooth transition into their first year of school.

The Starting Out Safely Program

VicRoads has a long history of supporting road safety education in the pre-school years, dating as far back as 1989 when the *Starting Out Safely* program was first introduced. In 2011 VicRoads funded ELAA to deliver *Starting Out Safely* to prepare children to become safer road users, and support them to reach their full potential as active and responsible members of the community.

The program has since evolved to become one of the most comprehensive early childhood road safety education programs in Australia and is unique in that the content has been created to align with the NQS and VEYLDF, and is also delivered by early childhood experts.

Since 2011, *Starting Out Safely* has reached thousands of children and educators across Victoria through:

- professional development in road safety education for early childhood educators and tertiary students
- child restraint and booster-seat education sessions to new parents, including special sessions for culturally and linguistically diverse communities and the development of a new video resource on the safe transportation of children in cars with the assistance of VicRoads, TAC and the Royal Children's Hospital
- ThingleToodle incursions to long day care and kindergarten programs; and
- advocating for the value of early childhood road safety education with State and Federal policy makers.

To find out more about a *Starting Out Safely* Professional Development session go to childroadsafety.org.au or contact the ELAA RSE team at rse@elaa.org.au

ATTAINING AN ACECQA 'EXCELLENT' RATING IS NO CHILD'S PLAY

BY AISHA BAL, EXECUTIVE MANAGER EARLY YEARS,
CHILDREN'S PROTECTION SOCIETY

On an otherwise nondescript Thursday afternoon in May I was bursting with excitement as I waited outside my CEO's (Aileen Ashford's) office.

As the Children's Protection Society's Early Years Executive Manager, I had just been informed of CPS' Child & Family Centre in West Heidelberg being re-awarded its 'Excellent' rating by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

CPS is the first and only early learning service in Victoria to be re-awarded the coveted 'Excellent' status, and one of 52 services across Australia to currently hold the tick of approval out of 13,500 rated centres (just seven have been renewals).

Achieving the rating also resulted in a degree of relief, for significant work by all staff had been invested to attain the benchmark.

CPS' Child & Family Centre is an early learning service with a difference. Opened in 2009, children who participate in this service receive five days per week of high-quality early education and childcare totalling at least 25 hours per week. The service also doubles as a research centre into the impact of concentrated support for highly vulnerable children aged 0–5 years old. As such, the Centre provides an early intervention program which aims to deliver immediate benefits for children and anticipates, in the longer term, that

they will be academically and emotionally better equipped to embark on a positive trajectory into adulthood. Educators also support parents/carers so they can assist their child to realise their full potential.

The service first received its rating of excellence in 2014. At the time, the then Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell, said, "Children that attend the Centre and participate in the program are often living in circumstances of 'multiple disadvantage' that can make it difficult for them to participate in mainstream pre-school services. It is incredibly rewarding to know these children are attending a service that understands the importance of making the most of a child's education from the beginning."

Since 2014, the service has maintained and developed its model of quality to improve outcomes for children and their families. We also made sure to learn from other services including the newly opened CPS Korin Korin Child & Family Centre in Wollert.

There was a two-step process to the West Heidelberg Centre achieving a status of 'Excellent'. The first step was the recent review by the regulator, which resulted in the service receiving a rating of 'Exceeding National Quality Standard'. It is only with this rating that we were eligible to apply once more to ACECQA for a rating of 'Excellent'.

As part of the application to ACECQA we prepared a practice summary for each criterion in discussion with staff. The application process challenged us to describe and reflect on our practices and our daily interactions with children and their parents/carers. Following ACECQA's assessment of our written application, a teleconference with staff followed and subsequently representatives visited the Centre to learn more about program practice. Preparation for each stage of the assessment process was pivotal and helped the centre to achieve the outstanding result of being re-awarded its 'Excellent' rating.



CPS Early Years Executive Manager Aisha Bal (in blue) and CPS CEO Aileen Ashford (holding certificate) with Centre staff and ACECQA National Education Leader Rhonda Livingstone (far right).

MEMBER PROFILE

STABLES KINDERGARTEN



Our service has been operating since...

April 1984, a group of parents established the kindergarten to meet the needs of a new and upcoming area with lots of young families. We celebrated our 30th birthday in 2014 with many past students, parents, and teachers. Many of their children and grandchildren now attend our service.

In 2011, St. Francis of Assisi Primary School accepted management control of the service and this began a new area for the kindergarten. It went from being a standalone service to one very much encompassed in the school community.

Our approach to early learning focuses on...

an integrated model of teaching and learning, we believe that learning takes place and occurs within the child's social and cultural contexts. Therefore, working in collaboration and partnership with our families, the community and allied health services is paramount in achieving developmental outcomes for the children, giving them the best start in their learning journey.

Our proudest moment was...

in 2014 when our service was assessed against the National Quality Framework and awarded an overall rating of "Exceeding". This rating reflected the dedication, professionalism, passion, and commitment of our teaching staff who provide quality experiences for our children and their families. It was also a reflection of the input and support provided by our broader community that continues to support us strongly today. This support has enabled us to think "outside the square" and take the program to new levels.

Lately we've been working on...

connecting to our local community through our regular visits to Bethel Aged Care in Mill Park. This initiative has been months in the planning and we have been collaborating with the Department of Education and Training, Bethel Aged Care Lifestyle co-ordinator Sharon and Dysons Bus Company who have recognised the value of such a program and have assisted generously. Our children are building relationships in the community, developing respect, and engaging in

experiences such as art and craft, dancing, singing, and games. We envisage this project to evolve as time goes on bringing with it new and wonderful experiences for our kindergarten children, staff, and the residents.

We are inspired by...

our creative, capable, and inquisitive children. Our holistic program and our dynamic teaching is driven by the children's interests and experiences, alongside intentional teaching, and world events. We are inspired by our seasonal environment outside our walls – incorporating sustainable materials into our program as well as using the natural world to inform our teaching. We see technology as an avenue to enhance learning, explore ideas and pursue questions – for example using our interactive Whiteboard to travel overseas or to view a time-lapse video of a bird making its nest. We instil mindfulness in our children and the thought that they can be whatever they want to be, in an environment where fun and laughter fill the air.

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SOLAR LIGHTS UP SERVICES

There is a lot of talk about solar panels in the media. Preschool Matters invited a number of services to share their experiences and tips for installing and funding solar panels.



Early Learning Centres, Moreland City Council

Stuart Nesbit, MCC Climate Change Technical Officer and Helen Eveleigh, Positive Charge, Moreland Energy Foundation

What are the benefits?

Going solar can significantly reduce services' electricity costs (typically by 50–60%) and carbon emissions.

How was solar funded?

Moreland Council funded the solar system for services leasing premises from them. Services repay the cost of solar over 7–10 years, enabling them to save money from day one.

What advice do you have for other services?

Services leasing facilities from Moreland Council can email helen@mefl.com.au to see if they qualify for a place.

Positive Charge helps services find the right solar deal from vetted suppliers. Contact Positive Charge for free advice on solar at www.positivecharge.com.au

Castlemaine Childcare Centre (Carinya)

Daria Healy-Aarons, Chair of Committee of Management

What are the benefits?

Our committee wants to direct parent fees to quality education. One of the biggest items in the budget is the cost of energy.

How was solar funded?

Carinya was nominated to be a recipient of a \$10,000 gift for a solar installation by Powershop, an energy supplier.

What advice do you have for other services?

Reach out to local community groups which have the expertise on costs and benefits of solar and information about how to fund and install solar.

Isabelle Henderson Kinder

Nicole Messer, Director

What are the benefits?

Our service has a goal of being carbon-neutral by 2018. Our use of power was the biggest contributor to our consumption of energy.

How was solar funded?

Together with the children we filmed a story about a solar python for a crowd-funding campaign using the platform Pozible. The platform reached out beyond our families to people who are interested in sustainability and we were able to achieve our funding goal ahead of the deadline.

What advice do you have for other services?

Engage children and use parents' skills. We had a strong story which was important to the overall strategic direction of the kindergarten.

Do the research and plan each stage of the project.

Albert Park Kinder

Jenny Whelan, Administration Director

What are the benefits?

We have a dream to become energy neutral. The children understand that one of the best ways we can help our planet is by installing solar panels.

How was solar funded?

Families' fundraising efforts and a donation from Community Carbon Cops covered the cost of half the solar panels we need. We are currently trying to raise the additional \$5000 required to complete the system via the Solar Schools Program.

What advice do you have for other services?

Have a dream and build a team! Our partnership with the Sustainability Department at our local Council has been integral. Don't feel you have to raise all the money at once.

Consult with Solar Schools Program weblink www.solarschoolsprogram.net.au

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ELAA established the Early Childhood Education Foundation to address concerns that many Victorian families were not accessing preschool. Due to financial hardships and other factors many children are not experiencing this vital year of development.

Why was the Early Childhood Education Foundation established?

The ELAA Early Childhood Education Foundation believes that all young children and their families should have access to high quality educational programs.

Please help us to help those families in need. Donations will assist us in providing a child with the opportunity of accessing this vital year of development.

To make a donation or to apply for funding, call 9489 3500 or download an application form from www.elaa.org.au and send to PO Box 1246, Collingwood Vic 3066.



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To find out if it's safe for your child to be in an adult seatbelt take the 'Five-Step Test' by visiting www.carseatssavelives.com.au where you can also watch ELAA's new video 'Child Restraints and Booster Seats – What You Need to Know' and access more essential information on keeping your child safe in your car.