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Early Childhood Education Conference focusses attention on importance of early learning

Practical strategies supported by leading-edge research will be the focus of Australia's largest annual early childhood education conference on Friday 30th and Saturday 31st May.

Over 850 delegates from Australia and overseas are expected to attend the *Together we grow – preparing children for life* annual conference at Caulfield Racecourse. The conference is hosted by Early Learning Association Australia, in partnership with Gowrie Victoria.

This year's event will have a strong focus on preparing children for life, acknowledging early childhood education as a vital period in children's lives.

ELAA CEO Shane Lucas said the conference was an opportunity for teachers, parents and service providers to hear about the latest research from early childhood education experts – and to learn from each other about practical strategies to deliver high quality early learning programs.

"For many years, our conference has brought together Australia's leading experts on early childhood education," Mr Lucas said.

"And this year's event comes at a critical time when Commonwealth and State governments are reconsidering where early childhood education and care sits in the Australian policy landscape - and how best to fund it".

"The *Together we grow* conference provides an opportunity for our sector to demonstrate why the early years are so important".

"Quality early learning is not just a welcome part of a child's pre-school years. It is the foundation of every child's life-lasting educational, social and economic prospects - and it is vitally important to the future of our nation", Mr Lucas said.

Speakers at the conference include:

- **Professor Iram Siraj** - Professor of Early Childhood Education at London University. Iram has advised governments, UNESCO, the World Bank and UNICEF on the importance of quality early education and care, especially for vulnerable children.
- **Nairn Walker** – renowned trainer and consultant with Social Solutions. Nairn has worked across Australia, New Zealand, the US and the UK to raise awareness of issues of disadvantage for children and communities
- **Dr Karen Malone** - Professor of Education at the University of Western Sydney. Karen is Chair and Founder of the Child Friendly Asia-Pacific network, and a member of the UNICEF International Research Advisory Board for Child Friendly Cities.

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is a gold sponsor of the conference and supports accommodation costs of staff from rural and regional services.

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Conference website www.togetherwegrow.com.au