



28 May 2015

Educators gather to support the importance of investing in early childhood learning

Over 1000 delegates from Australia and overseas will attend the annual Early Childhood Education and Care Conference at Caulfield Racecourse commencing on Friday, 29 May.

The conference is hosted by Early Learning Association Australia, in partnership with Gowrie Victoria.

Over two days, educators, service providers, policy makers and parents will engage with high profile international and Australian academics and thinkers, and hear from practitioners and educators about practical strategies to deliver quality early learning programs for children and families.

"The theme of this year's Conference – *Together we grow: investing in our future* – was selected by the Organising Committee very deliberately," said Mr Shane Lucas, CEO of ELAA.

"We want governments - and the broader community - to think of investment in early learning as perhaps the most significant form of public investment that we can make.

"The investment we make in our social infrastructure through investing in early learning is as or more critical to our future than what we spend on physical infrastructure like roads and transport."

Over the past fifteen months, the early learning and care sector has been subject to an inquiry by the Productivity Commission, which reported to Government in October 2014. The Federal Government also put a "Jobs and Families" package at the centre of its 2015-2016 Budget, with additional funding to be delivered through a new Child Care Subsidy and other initiatives.

"We have welcomed the Federal Government's "Jobs for Families" package and the extension of Commonwealth funding to provide 15 hours of kindergarten in 2016 and 2017," Mr Lucas said.

"There has also been a change of government here in Victoria, and we look forward to a conversation with the Andrews Government about the role played by early learning in what the Premier has labelled 'the Education State.'

"Our Conference provides an opportunity 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 vital to our future."

Speakers at the conference include:

- **Professor Charles E. Pascal** - internationally recognised educator and expert in early and higher education, public policy, leadership/organisational development and strategic philanthropy. A former college president and Deputy Minister for Education in the Ontario Government, Charles is currently Professor of Applied Psychology & Human Development at the University of Toronto where he is coordinator of the PhD. Program in Early Learning.

Media Release



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- **Dr Sharon Goldfeld** - Associate Professor, paediatrician and public health physician at the Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) and Co-Group leader of Child Health Policy, Equity and Translation at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.
- **Anthony Semann** – Director at Semann & Slattery. Anthony has a degree in education, a Master in Sociology, and is currently completing as PhD investigating the relationship between courage and leadership.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training 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