



23 May, 2018

## Early Years Experts Look for Answers in 'Connectedness'

The largest and longest running conference for early childhood and care professionals in Victoria kicks off this Friday.

"This year's Conference theme is *Our Children Our Communities* and we want to provoke thinking and discussion about the importance of connecting educators, policy makers, specialist service providers, families, carers and communities when striving for the best learning outcomes for children," said Early Learning Association Australia CEO, David Worland.

The 2018 Early Childhood Education Conference is an intensive professional development and networking event for early years teachers and educators; day care professionals; service managers; researchers; students; policy makers; and allied professionals such as Maternal and Child Health Nurses.

This year, delegates will experience a wide-ranging program that spans Working with Rainbow Families; Children's Rights; Preventing Paediatric Traumatic Injury; Children's Food Education; Self-determination in Indigenous Early Years Education; and much more.

"The program includes nearly 80 presentations delivered by 128 speakers and is the largest in the Conference's 13-year history," added Mr Worland.

The Friday program will commence with an opening address by the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Families & Children, and Youth Affairs – Jenny Mikakos MP followed by the 2018 Conference Keynote Speaker, Jane Vadiveloo.

As CEO of Children's Ground, Jane's work and background is in leading advocacy, reform and service provision for First Nations children and communities. Jane's Keynote Address will explore how the critical influences of family, community, languages and cultures nurture brilliance and are protective factors. Along the way, Jane will highlight the rich cultural learning environments and leading early years practice in First Nations communities.

The Friday program also features Professor Deborah Brennan who will discuss the findings from the 'Lifting Our Game' *Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools Through Early Childhood Interventions* (co-authored with Susan Pascoe AM) which was commissioned by all the Australian States and Territories in early 2018.

"The Lifting Our Game Report is one of the most important concerning Australia's early childhood education and care sector to be released in decades and we're privileged to have Professor Brennan explain its significance for early years professionals, children and families," said David Worland.

Delegates attending on the Saturday morning will start the day with a unique 'take' on early learning courtesy of comedian, writer, TV & radio personality – Meshel Laurie. The program then



## EARLY LEARNING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA – THE VOICE FOR PARENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

launches into to the Saturday morning panel discussion – always one of the most popular events on the Conference program.

This year's panel focuses on the wellbeing of staff working in the early childhood education and care sector and what can be done to ensure they remain safe, happy, and committed to their vital work. The 2018 panel includes Martin Foley MP (Victorian Minister for Mental Health), Clare Amies (Chief Executive, Worksafe Victoria), Jenny Whelan (Director, Albert Park Kindergarten), and Marcela Slepica (Access EAP).

"Given this topic directly affects all professionals working in the early years, this year's Panel Discussion promises to inspire some lively debate," said Mr Worland.

The Conference is also the largest early learning educational trade fair in Victoria with 60 exhibitors displaying the latest in early years educational products and services.

For full program details go to [www.elaa.org.au/conference/program](http://www.elaa.org.au/conference/program)

**ENDS**

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