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LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA

The voice for parents and service providers

PRE SCHOOL MATTERS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR LIFE
TERM FOUR 2018

VICTORIAN ELECTION:
EARLY YEARS Q&A

2019 CONFERENCE
PREVIEW

2019 PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM





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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

“Add the recent commitment by the Victorian ALP to invest \$1.68 billion to build around 785 new preschools in Victoria, and upgrade another 170, and our sector now finds itself on the cusp of a period of unprecedented investment and growth.”

This time last year in my Preschool Matters President's report I wrote of how ELAA's advocacy work (and that of the wider sector) had successfully elevated early learning, its benefits, and the question of how it was adequately funded into the national spotlight – after years of campaigning.

Fast forward nearly 12 months and it's almost hard to believe that ongoing funding for universal access to 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten is now officially a marquee policy for both the Federal and Victorian ALP, while various levels of universal access for 3-year-olds were announced in a number of other States during the year. Add the recent commitment by the Victorian ALP to invest \$1.68 billion to build around 785 new preschools in Victoria, and upgrade another 170, and our sector now finds itself on the cusp of a period of unprecedented investment and growth.

While there has been some great progress made in the past 12 months, there is more work to do to ensure electoral policies and promises are put into practice. So, before the Victorian State election on 24 November and afterwards, in the lead up to the 2019 Federal Election, I urge you to visit our election

campaign website www.countingonyou.org.au. Once there, go to the 'Get Involved' page where there are seven actions you can take to remind our politicians of the importance of early childhood education and care to children, families, early years workers, and the nation.

In this edition of Preschool Matters there is a huge overview of ELAA's Early Learning – We Are Counting on You election campaign including a Q&A with the ALP, Liberal/National, and Greens spokespeople on the early years (pages 10-17); details on how you can register for ELAA's 2019 Professional Development program (pages 28-29); and a sneak preview of our new look 2019 Early Childhood Education Conference (pages 30-32) which has an exciting new venue and format. There's also a great piece on building early years education capacity in the visual arts (pages 40-43); tips on making the most of technology in the early years (pages 37-39) plus all our regular sections on advocacy, policy updates, sector news and more.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Preschool Matters and wish all our members the very best for the holiday period and new year.

Lee Cath, President, ELAA

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COVER: Congratulations to Kelly Cooper from Chelsea Kindergarten on being named 2018 McArthur Early Childhood Volunteer of the Year at the ELAA AGM.

Kelly was chosen from a field of seven very strong finalists and is typical of the volunteers that make such a difference to Australia's not-for-profit early childhood education and care sector. As Vice-President, her work on Chelsea Kindergarten's Committee of Management spans grant applications, OHS, staff liaison, supporting staff and the Committee in preparing the Kindergarten's Quality Improvement Plan and Assessment and Rating process. This year, Kelly continued on the Committee even though her child had moved on to Prep.

Well done Kelly.



EARLY
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AUSTRALIA

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Q&A

OUR EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY A RECENT TRAUMA AT THE SERVICE. WHERE CAN EMPLOYEES GO FOR HELP?



Fortunately this is not a common occurrence in children's services but there are occasions where a staff member, a parent or a child is seriously injured or dies. Employers have a duty to monitor the health of employees and to provide support where necessary. There was some discussion at the recent ELAA conference during a session presented by Victorian Minister for Mental Health – Martin Foley; WorkSafe Chief Executive – Claire Amies; Albert Park Kindergarten Director – Jenny Whelan; and Marcela Slepica from Access EAP.

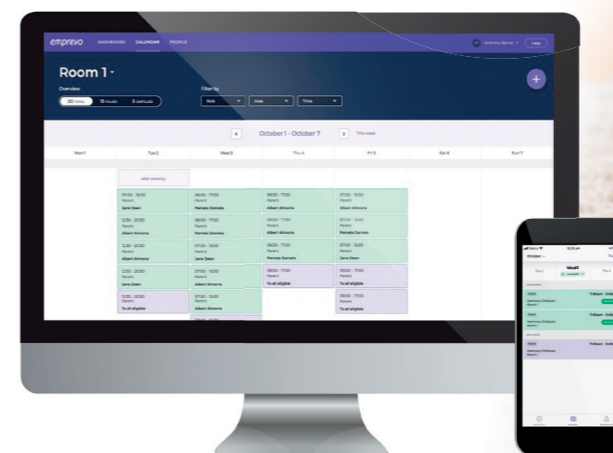
Some larger services are fortunate to have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in place and employees can access support through this. Generally this is cost prohibitive for small employers but there are a number of ways that help can be accessed.

- Employees may be able to access some support through their local GPs.
- VicHealth, SuperFriend and WorkSafe Victoria have formed a collaboration to help workplaces create positive and supportive work cultures and environments that enable workers to be happy, healthy and productive at work. They have a number of resources available at <http://leadingwellvic.com.au/resource-centre/?#resources>.
- The Better Health Channel also has some resources. <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/workplace-safety-coping-with-a-critical-incident>
- WIRE (Women's Information Referral Exchange) - WIRE provides free information, support and referral information for women across Victoria. They provide a Telephone Support Service, Women's Information Centre, online Livechat support and email support service www.dvrcv.org.au/womens-information-referral-exchange-wire.

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Susie Rosback, Chief Executive Officer
– Bubup Womindeka Childcare Centre

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CEO'S REPORT



What a huge month we just witnessed at both a Federal and State level in regards to policy and funding announcements for the early childhood education and care sector. At a Federal level, we saw the ALP leader, Bill Shorten, promise to extend access to 15 hours of subsidised early learning to three-year-old preschool children, also promising to ensure that the Commonwealth portion of the funding would be ongoing – for children in both four and three-year-old funded kindergarten programs. In more good news, the Federal ALP promised to axe upfront fees for 10,000 early childhood education TAFE students.

We also welcomed the announcement by Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, that a re-elected Victorian ALP Government will commit

almost \$5 billion over the next decade to ensure all three-year-old children in Victoria can attend up to 15 hours a week of 3-year-old kindergarten either at no cost (depending on family income) or at a significantly subsidised rate (up to 65 percent). This was then followed up a few days later by a further announcement by the Andrews Government that, if re-elected, it would commit \$1.68 billion over the next decade to the building of approximately 785 new kindergartens and expand about 170 others. This represents an unprecedented level of investment in Victoria's early childhood education sector and is an essential component to deliver on the policy of universal access to 15 hours of kindergarten and extending it to three-year-olds.

These policy announcements, both State and Federal, are good news for early learning providers, parents, our children, early childhood workers, and the nation's prosperity. However, while all these pre-election pledges are very welcome, our celebration must be tempered by the fact that there is significant work to be undertaken to influence

all sides of politics to adopt these much needed policy reforms. Additionally, ultimate outcomes will be influenced by election results, and a high level of cooperation will be needed between the Commonwealth and State governments before these policy initiatives become reality.

Victorian Early Years Policy Debate / pre-election campaign

Together with ECA and CCC, ELAA hosted a Victorian Early Years Policy Debate on Thursday 11 October 2018. Facilitated by Dr Charlene Smith from the Mitchell Institute, the policy forum provided a unique opportunity for members to engage directly with Minister Jenny Mikakos (ALP), Shadow Minister Georgie Crozier (Liberal Party) and Nina Springle (Greens).

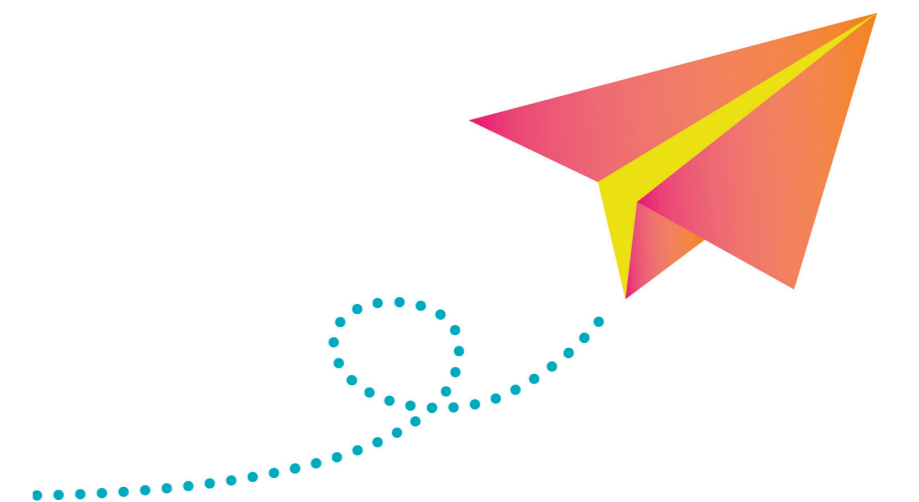
During the Debate, each of the three party spokespersons responded to the key policy areas outlined in our Victorian election policy paper *Creating children's future today* – Joint Victorian State Election Submission. Those four key policy areas include access,

quality, workforce development, and planning. To find out more about these key issues and to support ELAA's state election campaign Early Learning – We Are Counting On You, visit www.countingonyou.org.au and go to the Get Involved page to learn more about the seven direct actions we have created for members and supporters.

Professional development

Our 2019 ELAA Early Learning Professional Learning and Development Calendar is now available on the ELAA website. Go to www.elaa.org.au/pld and advance the calendar to March 2019 and beyond to see scheduled sessions. Next year's sessions feature innovations such as sessions with common and streamed content tailored to attendees needs e.g. educators, service managers etc. and opportunities for attendees to influence the session content prior to each session.

Finally, I would like to thank you for renewing your ELAA membership for 2018/19. We look forward to supporting you during the coming year as we all work towards achieving our shared vision of excellence in early learning for every child.



2019 Early Childhood Education Conference

ELAA and Gowrie Victoria are currently working with the Conference Reference Committee to plan our 2019 Early Childhood Education Conference. Responding to delegate feedback, the event in 2019 will be moved to the state-of-the-art facilities of Crown Conference Centre at the rear of the Promenade Hotel. The event will feature a mix of international and local speakers, with cutting edge presentations and workshops linked to the NQS, VEYLDF and EYLF. In 2019, the program will feature content 'streams' that target the needs of different delegate cohorts including approved providers, leaders, teachers and educators. Keynote speakers and other event features will be announced shortly.



David Worland
CEO, ELAA

Farewell David Haesler



David Haesler is retiring from ELAA after nearly 24 years of service.

It's now rare for someone to have spent nearly a quarter of a century with the one employer but it is with joy and a touch of sadness that the ELAA community celebrates such an achievement with our Membership Services Officer (HR/IR portfolio) David Haesler. We mention sadness because David has elected to retire this November.

David joined ELAA (then known as Kindergarten Parents Victoria or KPV) in January 1995. As his four children progressed through kindergarten, he had volunteered as Vice President and Treasurer on their

kindergarten's committees of management. His background as a maths teacher also came in handy as he custom-built financial management models to help his committees manage costs.

"At the end of 1994 the funding regime had changed and I had done a whole lot of calculations (in my role as Treasurer) on the impact of the funding at the kindergarten I was at and provided all that information to my committee. This was probably a month before KPV sent out their information on the funding changes and, not surprisingly, their information

was almost identical to mine so my committee were impressed."

Around this time David saw the KPV advertisement for a Payline Support Person and thought "I can do that". "My job was telephone support for all the kindergartens using Payline (payroll). By my second year at KPV I was doing all the Payline training as well. My role just grew and grew and by 1999 I became full-time. That's when the GST was introduced so I took six months off the phones and wrote a GST implementation kit for the Kindergartens."

After the introduction of the GST David expanded his role to include Industrial Relations and was a regular at Commission hearings, representing ELAA members and the Victorian not-for-profit early learning sector on industrial issues. "The industrial system in those days meant that whenever there was the slightest change in an award then you had to front up to a full bench of the commission all suited up."

David has also witnessed the growth of Early Years Mangers (clusters) throughout the early years sector. "I remember there were three of us sitting in a

room at KPV office one night and we came up with the concept of ECMS (Early Childhood Management Services) and even invented the name. I remember when bestchance first became interested in kindergartens. They used to be called Child and Family Care Network. I sat down with people there and got them off the ground."

David will leave ELAA in mid-November after nearly 24 years of service, although his association with ELAA is not entirely over as he was awarded honorary life membership at the 2018 Annual General Meeting. He plans to enjoy retirement catching up on odd jobs, traveling and spending time with his two grandchildren. "I want to see what Africa's got to offer. I've done Europe twice and South America, Canada, and Hawaii."

David's final thoughts about the early learning sector? "It's all about the people you meet and the volunteers that do an extraordinary job for kindergartens. You just build up relationships with some of them. I'm always in awe of what the volunteers do for Kindergartens."

ELAA members star in Vic Early Years Awards

Congratulations to the ELAA members who were recognised in the 2018 Victorian Early Years Awards during October.

Banyan Fields Kindergarten (Community Kinders Plus) in Carrum Downs were thrilled to have staff member, Nicole Bechaz, named Early Childhood Teacher of The Year while Community Kinders Plus (Frankston and Mornington Peninsula) received the Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Award. Community Kinders Plus were also a finalist in Category 3: Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships.

Other ELAA members who were finalists in this year's Awards included Barwon Child, Youth and Family - finalist: Category 1: Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning and Gowrie Victoria - finalist: Category 6: The Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Awards

A full list of awards finalists and winners and details about their projects can be found at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards



Nicole Bechaz, from Banyan Fields Kindergarten (Community Kinders Plus) was named 2018 Early Childhood Teacher of The Year.

EARLY LEARNING WE ARE COUNTING ON YOU

ELAA ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

With the 2018 Victorian State Election on November 24 and a Federal Election likely before the end of May next year, ELAA has launched its Victorian and Federal pre-elections campaign, Early Learning - We Are Counting On You.

The campaign seeks to ensure that, ahead of both elections, our main political parties affirm their support for an early childhood education and care system that is accessible by all, founded on quality, staffed by an appropriately skilled and rewarded workforce, and meets community needs today and into the future through forward thinking and collaborative planning.

While Australian state and federal governments have introduced some significant improvements to early childhood education and care policy and resourcing over the past decade, there is a long way to go until we catch up with other OECD countries like New Zealand and the UK.

Specifically, the campaign seeks a commitment from the main political parties contesting the next Victorian and Federal elections to publically support the following:

All political parties contesting the 2018 Victorian election to commit to:

- continuing the implementation of the Early Childhood Reform Plan
- immediately expanding three-year old preschool to 15 hours per week in Victoria to a wider group of children experiencing disadvantage
- increasing investment in assessment and rating in Victoria to enable services to be assessed at least every three years
- leading the nation with affordable high quality services accessible to all Victorian children and families
- continuing the implementation of the Murrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026.
- ensuring that current and long-term facilities and equipment planning is linked to community needs and in step with projected population levels
- including early education and care qualifications on the Free TAFE for Priority Courses initiative and increase the number of funded places.

The Victorian and Federal Governments to work together to:

- negotiate a new National Partnership Agreement to guarantee ongoing funding for 15 hours of preschool in the year before school
- extend the National Partnership Agreement to 15 hours of preschool for ALL children in three-year-old preschool programs
- confirm a renewed commitment to funding and developing the National Quality agenda
- improve the regulation of funded registered training organisations
- develop and implement a workforce strategy to ensure early childhood education and care services are adequately staffed with well-trained early and middle childhood professionals who feel supported and whose skills are valued and recognised
- invest in the sustainability of Early Years Management Services
- develop a cross-government agreement to plan for and integrate education and care. →



CAMPAIGN RESOURCES AND EVENTS

Joint Victorian State Election Submission

Ahead of the 2018 Victorian State Election, ELAA, Community Child Care, and Early Childhood Australia (Victoria Branch) released a Joint Election Submission that articulated their collective vision for early and middle childhood education and care services in Victoria. The Submission called on all the State's political parties to 'create our children's future today' by committing to actions spanning four key areas i.e. access, quality, workforce advancement, and planning. The submission document was also used to brief early years education and care spokespeople from the ALP, Liberal Party, and Greens participating in the Victorian Early Years Policy Debate.

Victorian Early Years Policy Debate

During October, ELAA, in partnership with Community Child Care and Early Childhood Australia (Victoria Branch), presented a Victorian Early Years Policy Debate featuring:

Jenny Mikakos – Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education, and Minister for Youth Affairs

Georgie Crozier – Shadow Minister for Families and Children

Nina Springle – Deputy Leader for the Victorian Greens and Spokesperson for Women, Families and Children.

Each speaker delivered an address to an audience of over 100 service providers, educators, and sector supporters that focused on the four key themes from the Joint Election Submission followed by a Q&A with the audience. For more details see page 18 and 19.

Campaign Website

The website www.countingonyou.org.au spells out the major policy and funding commitments sought from all parties contesting the November Victorian State Election as well as the key matters the Victorian and Federal governments should be working together on to deliver an early childhood education and care system worthy of a leading OECD nation.

The site features a campaign supporter sign-up form; a preformatted email to send to the relevant Victorian and Federal politicians responsible for Early Childhood Education and Care; tips on using social media; and resources that early years services and individuals can use to help support the campaign including a downloadable A3 poster, email signature graphic, social media postcards, the Joint Election Submission, and sample text for service providers to use when encouraging their communities and staff to support the campaign.

ELAA will keep members and supporters advised of more campaign resources and activities as each election draws closer.



Seven simple things can you do to support the campaign?

There's plenty you can do to support the campaign - in fact there's seven specific actions on the Campaign website's Get Involved page that you and your service can do straight away including:

- 1.** Sign up to the campaign
- 2.** Email the politicians
- 3.** Use the social media resources
- 4.** Send your story to the campaign.
- 5.** Print and display the campaign poster in your service
- 6.** Add the campaign graphic to your email signature
- 7.** Tell parents and careers about the campaign.

Do all seven or just one. Just do what you can as every little bit helps support our services, staff, children and families.

A PRE-ELECTION Q & A

WITH VICTORIA'S SPOKESPEOPLE ON EARLY LEARNING



Jenny Mikakos - ALP
Minister for Families and Children, Early Childhood Education, and Youth Affairs.



Georgie Crozier - Liberal / National
Shadow Minister for Families and Children



Nina Springle - Greens
Deputy Leader and spokesperson for Women, Families and Children.

1. What is your party's commitment to increasing access to early childhood and out of school hours care, including providing two years of preschool?

Jenny Mikakos – ALP

A re-elected Andrews Labor Government will introduce universal three-year-old kindergarten for all Victorian children. We will invest almost \$5 billion over the next decade to deliver a full 15 hours of three-year-old kindergarten, with rollout beginning in 2020.

Victoria is already leading the nation when it comes to early years services. We understand that the greatest investment we can make as a Government is in the early childhood education of our littlest Victorians and we are ready to take the next step.

We will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth Government for ongoing funding for four-year-old kindergarten.

Georgie Crozier – Liberal / National

The Liberal Nationals believe that there is nothing more important for the future prosperity of an individual than a good education, starting in early years.

It is imperative that Governments at all levels continue to recognise the value of early education and provide for the necessary support. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has been working to ensure that continued funding is provided for early childhood education, so it is incumbent on any Victorian Government to continue with the necessary and required negotiations.

It will be the aim of a Liberal Nationals Government to cooperatively work with the Commonwealth to ensure that the necessary funding is delivered so that every Victorian child will be presented with every opportunity to reach his or her potential.

Nina Springle – Greens

The Victorian Greens consider education a public good and a significant contributor to personal and community wellbeing and social fulfilment, as well as economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. Early childhood education is an essential component of learning and it should be free and culturally appropriate. The Greens' fully costed election platform includes six hours per week of free kinder for three-year-olds and our position is that two years of preschool should be co-funded by state and federal governments. We also support increased investment and support for out-of-school hours care to enable more schools to deliver their own programs.

2. What is the party's position for ensuring the National Quality Framework and National Quality Standards continue as the vehicles for improving service quality in Victoria?

Jenny Mikakos – ALP

The Andrews Labor Government is unequivocal about the importance of the NQF and NQS in early childhood education and care.

Despite comparable nations recognising the benefits of quality early childhood education, the Federal Liberal Government's response is to cut funding for the regulation of quality.

We have already invested \$22.8 million to significantly increase support to kindergarten services to improve their quality, including new specialist staff to work with services to respond to quality improvement priorities and provide appropriate supports.

We are clear about lifting quality in the early years because this is where it matters the most.



Georgie Crozier – Liberal / National

The Liberal Nationals are committed to the National Quality Framework, which provides the foundation for improving the quality and intensity of delivery of early childhood education.

The Liberal Nationals believe that there should be an overarching strategy for the provision of support into strengthening families and improving quality education, so that as a starting point every Victorian child can reach his or her potential.

Nina Springle – Greens

Quality is of prime importance in early education and a key priority for the Victorian Greens. Investment in the National Quality Framework and Standards cannot be a time-bound investment. If we expect continued quality – and we must – then investment needs to be ongoing and commensurate with these expectations. The Greens will continue to advocate strongly for federal funding for the National Quality Agenda to be reinstated with a long-term commitment. State and territory governments and the Commonwealth have a joint, ongoing responsibility for improving and maintaining nationally consistent and high quality education and care for children.

3. What are your party's plans for developing a workforce strategy to attract, retain, develop and motivate skilled educators?

Jenny Mikakos – ALP

The Andrews Labor Government understands that a professional and skilled workforce is critical to achieving quality early childhood education and care services.

Our Budget this year included \$8 million for scholarships to attract new early childhood teachers to the field and for existing educators who wish to upskill to a teaching qualification. We are also providing an additional payment for those early childhood teachers who find work in regional or rural locations.

Our commitment to expand universal access to three-year-old kindergarten includes a significant investment to support workforce attraction.

Georgie Crozier – Liberal / National

The success of Victoria's early education system relies heavily on how well its workforce performs. The Liberal Nationals value the contributions of Victoria's early childhood educators and a future Liberal Nationals government will be committed to an education system with appropriately resourced educators who are leaders in their field.

We will explore various strategies successfully done by other jurisdictions and assess how they may effectively work in Victoria. We will also review the various policy changes administered by the Andrews Government and explore stronger partnerships with all tiers of Government.

The Liberal Nationals' decentralisation policy provides greater opportunity to grow our State with a focus on all of Victoria and not just metropolitan Melbourne. This will assist in attracting and retaining a vital workforce in rural and regional areas.

Nina Springle – Greens

The Greens' place an emphasis on investment in training and education – with a focus on TAFE – and on fair pay and rewards for ECEC workers. We believe early childhood education qualifications should be added to the free TAFE list to remove any financial barriers that may currently exist for those wanting to enter the sector. We will continue to work with the sector, unions and employers to develop a fair and sustainable workforce strategy that ensures fair pay and conditions for all workers and removes significant barriers to building and retaining a skilled and committed workforce.

4. How does your party plan to ensure a sustainable and responsive services system which meets community needs today and into the future?

Jenny Mikakos – ALP

Through our Early Childhood Reform Plan, the Andrews Labor Government is committed to building a more connected early childhood education and care system, in partnership with local government, the Commonwealth, and the sector.

We have invested significantly in reforms such as school readiness funding, language programs, dedicated inclusive education funding, expansion of Maternal and Child Health services and state-wide rollout of Supported Playgroups.

We have delivered a record investment of \$123.6 million over the past four years to build, expand and improve Victoria's kindergartens - triple what the previous Liberal Government budgeted for – creating more than 8,250 additional three and four-year-old kindergarten places across the State.



Georgie Crozier – Liberal / National

The 2017 VAGO Report into Effectively Planning for Population Growth highlighted the disparate nature and massive shortfalls in early education delivery particularly in Victoria's growth areas.

A future Liberal Nationals Government will be committed to planning for the ongoing needs of a growing Victorian population. This will include supporting infrastructure development in growth areas but also utilising a decentralisation policy that will take the pressure off inner urban areas.

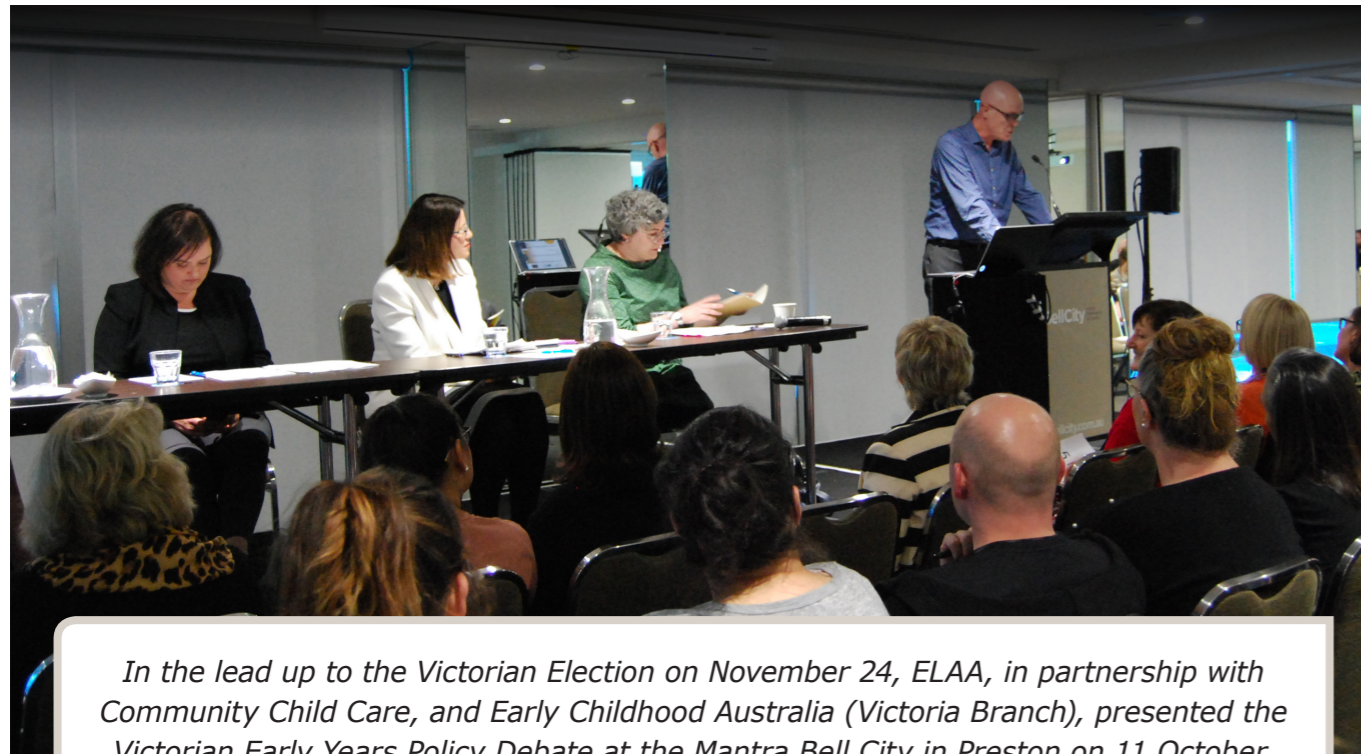
The Liberal Nationals believe that to allow the early education system to flourish, programs must reflect the needs of a child. This will be achieved by working with the sector in co-

designing and providing appropriate support coordination.

Nina Springle – Greens

Our devolved, mixed model of early education and care has resulted in a highly fragmented and under-regulated sector. Oversight, cohesion and effective long-term planning are inadequate, as pointed out by the Victorian Auditor General in 2017. The Greens would undertake a major review of the sector, as well as projected growth, to map out gaps in infrastructure and demand for specific types of services. This review would form the basis of a long-term strategy to ensure that we're properly planning for future needs over the coming decades, with a strong focus on public and community-run education and care.

POLICY DEBATE TACKLES THE BIG QUESTIONS FOR EARLY LEARNING



In the lead up to the Victorian Election on November 24, ELAA, in partnership with Community Child Care, and Early Childhood Australia (Victoria Branch), presented the Victorian Early Years Policy Debate at the Mantra Bell City in Preston on 11 October.

Over a 100 independent service providers, educators, Early Years Managers, peak body representatives, and other early years stakeholders attended the event to hear how our political leaders plan to support and develop early childhood education and care in Victoria.

The debate was chaired by Dr Charlene Smith from the Mitchell Institute and featured:

Jenny Mikakos - Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education, and Minister for Youth Affairs

Georgie Crozier - Shadow Minister for Families and Children

Nina Springle - Deputy Leader for the Victorian Greens and Spokesperson for Women, Families and Children.

Each politician was asked to respond to four major themes concerning the future of early childhood education and care in Victoria. These themes formed the basis of a Joint Victorian State Election Submission prepared by ELAA, CCC, and ECA Vic, entitled *Creating children's future today* which was provided to each speaker prior to the debate. The four themes were:

- ensuring access for all children to quality early childhood education and care
- ensuring early years learning and care programs in Victoria are supported and regulated to maintain quality standards
- building the capacity of Victoria's early years workforce so early years teachers,



Georgie Crozier, Nina Springle and Jenny Mikakos.

educators, carers and other early years workers are recognised, rewarded and developed appropriately as education and care professionals

- planning based on real community need, projected population growth and changing approaches to learning.

ELAA CEO, David Worland, gave an overview of the Joint Election Submission prior to the party representatives presenting their response.

Minister Mikakos focussed on the Victorian ALP's recent policy announcements regarding guaranteeing 15 hours of early learning for 4-year-olds, extending it to 3-year-olds, and building new and upgrading kindergarten facilities across the State. She announced that representatives from educators, employers, unions, local communities, and other stakeholders would be invited to form an Implementation Working Group (in December) to plan the rollout of universal access to kindergarten for 3-year-old children across Victoria.

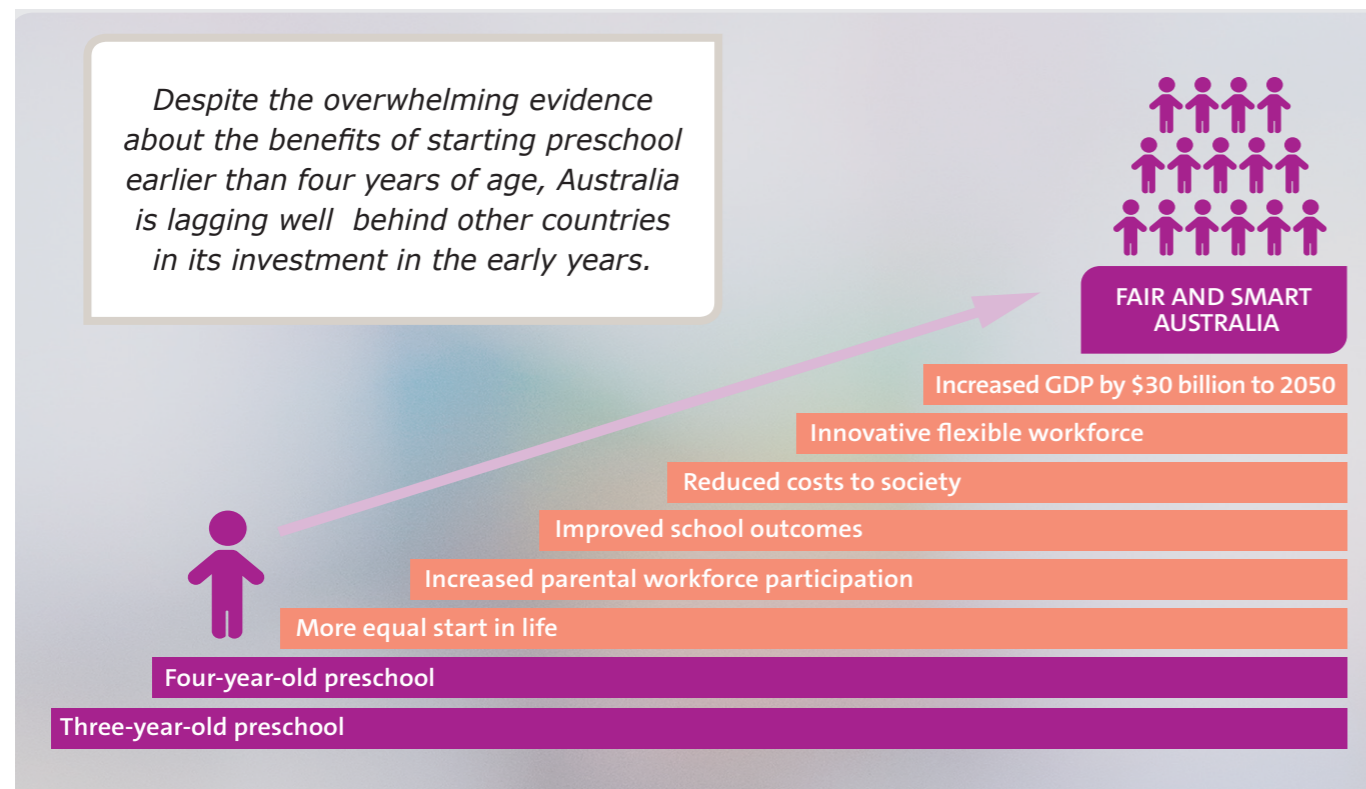
Shadow Minister Crozier spoke of Victoria's burgeoning population and the need to plan services and infrastructure for growth while

placing a priority on levels of attendance in 4-year-old programs prior to considering expanding universal access to 3-year-olds.

Greens Deputy Leader and spokesperson for Families and Children, Nina Springle, outlined the Greens policy including six hours per week of free kinder for 3-year-olds and co-funding of two years of preschool by state and federal governments. She said the Greens would advocate strongly for reinstatement of federal funding for the National Quality Agenda and flagged that the Greens would undertake a major review of the sector, as well as projected growth, to map out gaps in infrastructure and demand for specific types of services with a strong focus on public and community-run education and care.

After each political representative presented their vision for early learning in Victoria there as a 20 minute Q&A session where the audience were able to put their questions directly to the panel. The session produced some lively discussion, especially around the issues of 4-year-old attendance, data provision and working with the current Commonwealth Government.

A FAIR AND SMART AUSTRALIA



The steps to a Fair and smart Australia start with universal access to 3-year-old preschool.

Two years of non-compulsory preschool, of a minimum of 15 hours per week, will give children the best start for their futures and make for a fair and smart Australia. 'A fair and smart Australia' is the name of ELAA's campaign to help make this a reality. A position paper entitled *A fair and smart Australia: The case for three-year-old preschool*, developed with ELAA's CEO Group, brings together the evidence about the positive outcomes that an additional year of preschool can bring to children, communities and the nation.

Why start preschool at age three

The science behind brain development shows that the two years before school are optimal for learning essential skills for life. Between the ages of three and five years, foundational skills

critical for learning are established (Fox and Geddes 2016). Ages three to five years are considered the sweet spot for reducing disadvantage and enhancing readiness for school, setting a child up for life.

Benefits of two years of preschool

There is overwhelming evidence of the positive outcomes of an additional year of preschool.

1. Children who are behind in their learning can catch up to their peers and start school ready together
2. More parents enter the workforce, increasing Australia's productivity.
3. Australia's declining school performance in international benchmark testing will be turned around.

4. Children are more likely to go on to further education, to be employed and earn more.
5. The national costs of education, justice and health are reduced resulting in overall savings.
6. Increased net GDP of up to \$30 billion cumulative to 2050 (PriceWaterhouse Coopers, 2014).

The combined effect of these benefits will lead Australia to be more innovative and competitive with a more adaptable and capable workforce.

The way forward

Two significant reports, *Lifting Our Game* (Pascoe and Brennan, 2018) and *Preschool – Two Years are Better Than One* (Fox and Geddes, 2016) have considered how to grow the capacity of the sector to provide three-year-old preschool. Securing permanent funding of four-year-old preschool will remove uncertainty and provide the necessary foundation for the sector to prepare for growth.

Developing and implementing three-year-old preschool will require all Australian governments to work together with the sector to:

- design a preschool program which considers ratios, size of the groups, and curriculum
- plan to grow the infrastructure
- develop a workforce strategy to recruit, develop, support and retain teachers and educators
- drive improved quality under the National Quality Framework
- re-design the Child Care Subsidy so children's access to early learning is not

dependent on whether their parents are working

- promote the benefits of early learning to ensure take-up by families.

In the past two months both New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory governments have made announcements about plans to expand access to preschool to three-year-olds. ELAA is advocating for Victoria to take a lead by, in the first instance, expanding three-year-old preschool to a larger cohort of children experiencing disadvantage to 15 hours per week.

How to help make two years of preschool a reality

A united commitment is required across the political spectrum that puts children and Australia first. You can help to make this a reality by:

- telling politicians and journalists that this is an issue which matters to you, whether you are a service provider, educator, parent or administrator
- talking to those around you to help spread the good news about the benefits of two years of preschool
- using the resources that ELAA is developing to support you in the campaign for two years of preschool, including template letters to politicians and for media, sample text for inclusion in newsletters and social media content to use and for sharing.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Keep in touch with the campaign by visiting www.elaa.org.au/advocacy-research/fair-and-smart-australia and subscribing to eNews www.bit.ly/2jDroD9

MEMBER PROFILE

KARMAI COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Our service has been operating since ... August 2014, however we previously operated as Korumburra Kindergarten and Birrale Childcare for over 30 years.

Karmai Community Children's Centre is the brainchild of a group of inspirational locals on both committees of management who saw the opportunity to create a wonderful integrated resource for the Korumburra community and surrounding towns. This group of talented visionary parents worked tirelessly to consult with the community, lobby local, state and federal governments to merge the two organisations and develop the proposals and successful tenders to build our magnificent new home for Karmai Community Children's Centre.

Our board of management is a cross section or representatives from our current parent group, previous parent group, two of the local primary schools, the local council and community members with a vested interest. We also collaborate with the Karmai Alliance members, who are a collective of educational experts from local primary schools, kindergartens, secondary colleges and a representative from CEP from Korumburra and surrounding towns.

We currently support the learning, care and education for 320 children (187 families) and the professional growth of 48 Educators as well as the broader community. We provide Long Day Care 0-5 years, Kindergarten, Pre-kindergarten, before and after school/kindergarten Care, and vacation/holiday programs for kinder and



Building a scarecrow for the Karmai Kitchen Garden.

school age children. Programs have grown exponentially since 2014 and continue to grow.

Our approach to early learning focusses on ... engaging with families and children to understand their learning, developmental and social needs and then creating welcome, inspiring programs, where the children, families and educators can engage in lifelong learning together. We provide a warm and friendly environment in which each child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs are met, where children are free to be themselves, encouraged to experience all that they can and inspired to be their best. The community plays an important role in early learning and over the last two years, since moving into our beautiful new



Smoking ceremony during the opening of the new Karmai Community Children's Centre building.

learning environment, we have made a concerted effort to increase our community engagement through excursions and incursions.

Our proudest moment was ...

first would be the moment when the beautiful little town of Korumburra was named in the federal budget as receiving funding for our new building. That was the last piece of the puzzle for our wonderful board members after 12 years of consultation, lobbying, design and presentations. The second proudest moment was when the foundations of our new community building were laid. Our opening ceremony for our new building was an amazing experience with generations of people who had been involved with the three past organisations, as well as the current children, Karmai's staff and members of parliament. The most special moments of this day were our smoking ceremony and listening to the President and Vice President share our history and evolution of Karmai Community Children's Centre.

Lately we've been working on

... continuing to deliver on our promises to the families and the community to not only provide exceptional education, care and learning for the children in the service, but to further integrate additional specialist and support services into our organisation for the community. Operating from Karmai is Maternal Child and Health who have now been an essential part of our team for the last two years and most recently we have collaborated with a paediatrician to integrate a weekly visiting service for the Karmai community. Our other major goal is to ensure we continue build the capability and expertise of the Board of Management to continue operating the service as a not for-profit, community run, and financially sustainable organisation robust enough to cope with an ever changing environment. We are extremely proud of where we are today and see every new day as an opportunity to strive towards an even more positive future.

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



A major focus of ELAA's advocacy work over the past few months has been preparing our campaign – entitled *Early Learning – We Are Counting On You* for the Victorian State election and a likely Federal election. With the support of ELAA's CEO Group, ELAA has also released a Position Paper – *A fair and smart Australia: the case for three-year-old kindergarten* – outlining the case for universal access to two years (3-year-old and 4-year-old) of funded preschool. You can read more about this work in this edition of *Preschool Matters*.

ELAA has also been advocating regarding two other key early years sector initiatives – the portability of long service leave and the introduction of school readiness funding.

Portability of Long Service Leave

ELAA is committed to improving outcomes for staff working in the early childhood sector. The Victorian State Government recently proposed a Portability of Long Service Leave Bill which aimed to provide transferable long service leave for staff in the sector, which ELAA has long supported. The bill was introduced without material input from employers in the early childhood sector and had a number of serious design flaws. ELAA raised concerns that the Bill excluded private service providers from its scope. Private providers now represent 65% of the early childhood sector and the consequences of the bill meant that the vast majority of the Victorian early childhood workforce would have been excluded from the Bill, largely negating the concept of transferable long service leave. ELAA argued that the Bill was fundamentally flawed and did not meet its stated objectives.

In the lead up to the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill being considered by Parliament, ELAA expressed several concerns publicly about the scope and potential unintended impacts of the Bill. The Victorian Government responded to ELAA's strong feedback and exempted the Victorian early childhood education and care sector from the Bill scope.

ELAA will continue to advocate for improving outcomes for attracting and retaining high quality staff in the early childhood education and care sector. We are arguing for a broader framework of improved and funded employment conditions, such as a workforce strategy that seeks to address issues regarding:

- pay rates
- career pathways
- professional development
- equity and fairness
- portable long service leave.

School Readiness Funding

ELAA and its members have been involved in helping to design school readiness funding which will help more children prepare for school - particularly the one in five Victorian children who start school developmentally vulnerable and who tend to stay behind without additional support. The Victorian Government has recently announced the first round of school readiness funding of around \$58.1 million for 580 Victorian kindergartens from 25 local government areas and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

The funding seeks to reduce the impact of educational disadvantage on children's learning and development and improve outcomes in communication (language development), well-being (social and emotional regulation) and access and

participation. Specifically, this will be achieved through increasing the capacity of Victorian kindergarten services to engage the expertise of speech and occupational therapists, language and literacy professionals and child psychologists.

ELAA will continue to represent the interests of the sector and our members throughout the rollout of this initiative. The funding will eventually be available to all Victorian kindergartens by 2021.

ELAA is here to listen.

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

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



Safe sleep and rest practices

From 1 February 2018 the National Quality Standard was revised which involved the reduction of standards and elements. This included the modification of QA2, element 2.1.1 – Wellbeing and comfort. This element refers to Regulation 81- Sleep and rest under Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Early childhood services are required to have in place sleep and rest policies and procedures that meet the ages, development stages and individual needs of all children. Employers of early childhood services also have a responsibility under the 'Occupational Health and Safety Act'

to provide a safe and healthy working environment, this extends to others present in the workplace including children.

Approved Providers and employers should consider the following health and safety principles to inform safe sleep and rest practices:

- effective sleep and rest strategies are important factors in ensuring a child feels secure and is safe at an early childhood service
- ensure children are provided with a high level of safety when sleeping and resting and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect them from harm and hazard

- ensure sleep and rest policies and procedures are in place; these should be based on current research and recommended evidence-based principles and guidelines
- provide all educators information and training to fulfil their roles effectively, including being made aware of the sleep and rest policies, their responsibilities in implementing these and any changes that are made over time
- consult with all educators in relation to occupational health and safety issues, procedures and when purchasing equipment
- ensure the physical environment is safe and conducive to sleep. This means providing quiet, well-ventilated and comfortable sleeping spaces. Wherever viewing windows are, all children should be visible to supervising educators
- ensure cots and bedding provided comply with the most current Australian/New Zealand Standards and stored in a hygienic manner
- ensure all children are adequately supervised at all times, this includes active monitoring during sleep and rest periods
- ensure educator to child ratios prescribed in Regulation 123 be maintained at all times
- consult with families about their child's individual needs and be sensitive to different values, parenting beliefs associated with sleep and rest. In these specific scenarios it may be reasonable to seek written support of the child's medical practitioner, undertake a risk assessment and implement risk minimisation plan or take the opportunity to educate the family regarding current recommended evidence-based practices.

Early childhood service leaders can access more information about current recommendations through the following channels:

Red Nose –
www.rednose.com.au
 (safe sleeping resources, online safe sleeping eLearning course and Red Nose Safe Sleeping Child Care Kit)

ACECQA –
www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/information-sheets/safe-sleep-and-rest-practices

WorkSafe Victoria –
www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/childrens-services-occupational-health-and-safety-compliance-kit

ELAA –
www.elaa.org.au/resources/shop-resources/ (PolicyWorks Manual – NQF Relaxation and Sleep Policy) and
www.ohsinecservices.org.au (tips sheets, guidelines and training)

ELAA PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

ELAA is taking a new direction in professional learning and development by inviting key members of your organisation to learn together.

Through providing opportunities for both collaborative and specifically targeted learning, our 2019 professional learning and development program will provide you with the tools to enact real and meaningful change at your setting.

Our new-look professional development sessions will be:

- full days from 9.00am to 5.00pm to give participants time to deepen their learning
- include information targeted at 'streams' of professionals (see diagram below)
- some sessions will take a collaborative approach and participants will be invited to make suggestions for the content prior to the session (through a survey).

The 2019 Program

ELAA has developed a targeted calendar of Professional Learning and Development workshops for 2019. These will be presented by well-known and respected presenters who are experts in their field.

Our 2019 program:

- covers important issues and contemporary topics relevant to the early childhood sector
- is tailored for all early childhood professionals including teachers, educators and other staff such as service managers, coordinators as well as Committees of Management
- is mapped to the National Quality Standards (NQS) and clearly aligns to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)
- provides participants with a certificate of participation for individual sessions which can be used as evidence for VIT annual professional development requirements.



AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

2019



Working together to achieve best practice

Quality Area: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7

APST: 3.1, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1, 6.2, 6.3 & 7.2

Presenters: Heather Barnes and DET authorised Officer

Date: Friday, 22 March

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: Mercure Hotel, Corner Flemington Rd and Harker St North Melbourne. Parking on site (\$15 per day).

Cost: \$340 member \$450 non-member



Putting early childhood leadership in action

Quality Area: 4 & 7

APST: 2.3, 3.3, 6.1, 6.2, 7.2 & 7.4

Presenters: Catharine Hydon & Sharon Jordan

Date: Friday, 14 June 2019

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: Manningham City council, 699 Doncaster Rd, Doncaster. Free parking on site

Cost: \$340 member \$450 non-member



Renewing program and practice (QA1) from a team perspective

Quality Area: 1

APST: 1.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 6.2, 6.3 & 7.4

Presenters: Anthony Semann

Date: 8 November 2019

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: Darebin North East Community Hub, 35 Copernicus Crescent, Bundoora

Cost: \$340 member \$450 non-member



Wellbeing in early childhood settings matters!

Quality Area: 4 & 7

APST: 6.2, 6.3 & 7.4

Presenters: Dr Lyn O'Grady and Jenny Whelan

Date: Wednesday, 11 September

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: Manningham City council, 699 Doncaster Rd, Doncaster. Free parking

Cost: \$340 member \$450 non-member



OHS Safety not just child's play

Quality Area: 3, 4, & 7

APST: 4.4, 6.2, 7.2, & 7.4

Presenters: Zora Marko and Emma Morgan

Date: Monday, 29 April and Thursday 15 August

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Venue: (29 April) Manningham City council, 699 Doncaster Rd, Doncaster. Free parking on site

(15 August) Darebin North East Community Hub, 35 Copernicus Crescent, Bundoora

Cost: \$340 member \$450 non-member

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 – Governance and Leadership

APST = Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

REGISTER NOW:

Visit the ELAA training calendar at www.elaa.org.au/pld and go to the date for the session/s of your choice or call (03) 9489 3500

Friday 17 May and Saturday 18 May
Crown Conference Centre – Melbourne

2019 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONFERENCE

together we grow



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RUNNING
EARLY YEARS
PROFESSIONAL
EVENTS HAS
A NEW LOOK
PROGRAM AND
NEW VENUE!



2019 Conference theme – Growing Tomorrow

How do we get to the stage where Early Childhood Education and Care is recognised throughout the community as a key educational, social, and economic building block for society?

This year's conference theme – *Growing Tomorrow* – confronts this fundamental question.

Delegates will experience a program that explores the 'macro' issues for our sector, such as the need for continued governmental support of quality regulation, while also considering the key challenges for pedagogy and practice, workforce development, leadership, management, and helping the wider community to understand the essential benefits of quality early childhood education and care.

Four inspiring keynote speakers

We have increased the number of keynote speakers from one to four! Opening and closing keynote speakers on the Friday and Saturday will ensure that delegates start and end each day feeling inspired.

A program targeted to a range of early years professionals

In 2019 we are introducing 'streams' to our speaker program to better align content with the needs of delegates. When registrations open, delegates will have the choice of registering for all the sessions in their chosen stream or a mix of sessions across all four streams. The 2019 conference streams are:

1. Leadership and service management
2. Staff development and wellbeing
3. Education program and practice
4. Engaging communities





More news on our keynote speakers and extended speaker program will be announced soon through ELAA's eNews; special conference email updates; ELAA's Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages (#growingtomorrow) or at the conference website www.togetherwegrow.com.au

A new world-class venue

The Conference is moving to Crown Conference Centre in Southbank with state-of-the-art conference facilities, first-class catering and public transport access.

One of the biggest early years trade exhibitions in Australia

The Trade Exhibition is on again! There will be around 60 booths packed full of the latest and best in early learning products and services. From educational toys and art supplies to superannuation and insurance, the Trade Exhibition is ideal for early years service managers, educational leaders, and committees of management as many exhibitors offer exclusive pricing for conference delegates.

Exhibitor and major sponsor opportunities

The Trade Exhibition is also an excellent opportunity to promote your products and services to key early years decision makers by becoming a Trade Exhibition Exhibitor. There will also be major sponsorship opportunities including flexible sponsorship packages and exclusive sponsor benefits. More information on becoming a Trade Exhibition exhibitor or major sponsor coming soon.

Initial enquiries to Julie Thompson
jthompson@elaa.org.au

Interested in being a 2019 Conference delegate? Join our mailing list now!

Join our mailing list and be among the first to hear about special offers, program announcements and how to register as a delegate. Go to www.togetherwegrow.com.au to join our mailing list now.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Make a difference to a child's future.

Over 60,000 children access kindergarten programs across Victoria each year. Many of these children miss out on the opportunity to attend a quality kindergarten program in the year before they commence school because their parents are unable to afford the fees.

Since 1997 the Early Childhood Education Foundation has helped children from families experiencing financial difficulties to access a funded kindergarten program and enjoy the same opportunities to succeed in life as any other child. You can make a difference to a child's future by donating to the Foundation.

HOW TO DONATE

The ECEF contributes approximately \$350 per term to a recipient's kindergarten fees – allowing a child to attend at little or no cost.

All contributions will be issued with a receipt and donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

If you would like to donate please:

1. Download the donation form from elaa.org.au/ecef
2. Print out and complete the form
3. Return the form via post or email (see form for address details).

Alternatively, call ELAA on 03 9489 3500.

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OF MAKING QUALITY EARLY LEARNING POSSIBLE FOR CHILDREN WHO MAY OTHERWISE MISS OUT

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WORTH OF KINDERGARTEN FEES SUPPORT PROVIDED



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ENGAGEMENT
PROJECT*Safe* TRANSPORTATION
OF CHILDREN

A VICTORIA POLICE AND ROTARY LEADERS MENTORING PROGRAM

As the mother of three children and also being witness to road trauma involving children and the devastating ripple effect this can have, Victoria Police's Senior Sergeant Sarah Carmichael has taken a proactive approach to engaging and educating the community in relation to road safety.

This project theme aligns with the Victoria Police Road Safety Action Plan – working in partnership to promote and drive the importance of road safety as a community imperative. The plan has a specific focus on elderly and young road users and to embed an active and effective partnership approach to road safety so that community and stakeholder engagement becomes a part of road policing business.

It aligns with the Victoria Police Road Safety Strategy 2013 – 2018:

- to improve compliance with wearing child restraints to reduce road trauma
- working with our road safety partners to raise awareness of the dangers of failing to wear a seatbelt/restraint
- to promote seatbelt compliance for all vehicle occupants
- to change road user behaviour to reduce the level of road trauma associated with vulnerable road users.

Lastly, this project aligns with Towards Zero – to address safer road users by highlighting

that reducing road trauma is a shared responsibility. All members of the community have a role to play by abiding by the road rules and setting a good example for others by belting up and ensuring everyone in the car is wearing a seatbelt. Being a good road model for our children will help ensure that everyone has a safe journey.

Sen Sgt Carmichael spearheaded this local initiative as part of the Victoria Police / Rotary Leaders Mentoring Program (LMP) within the City of Greater Dandenong to educate and empower the community in relation to the safe transportation of children. This project was supported and achieved through assistance from key partners including Early Learning Association Australia, Britax, Baby on Board, Monash University Accident Research Centre, City of Greater Dandenong, Springvale Service for Children, Rotary Central Melbourne, Rotary Keysborough / Noble Park and Rotary Dingley.

As part of this project, a Community Education Forum was held on 20 August at the Springvale Town Hall, including subject matter experts from the Royal Children's Hospital (Associate Prof Warwick Teague), Monash University Accident Research Centre (PHD Candidate Suzanne Cross), Victoria Police (Acting Assistant Commissioner Michael Grainger and Early Learning Association Australia (Zora Marko) all presented upon the theme.

"We had approximately 110 people in attendance from the community, health and

education sectors, City of Greater Dandenong Council as well as local police," Sen Sgt Carmichael said.

This event was complemented by two child car seat checking days on 31 August and 1 September at Springvale Service for Children, which put the theory into practice.

"Cold and wet weather aside, we achieved really fantastic results, with active engagement from the community, police and project partners with more than 300 people in attendance over the course of the two days."

On the first day, 58 child car seat checks were conducted and of these, only two were correctly fitted. On the second day, only four of the child car seats were correctly fitted of the 50 checked. Overall, 95% of the total 108 child car seats were incorrectly fitted.

Additionally, 19 new child car seats were fitted to replace those found to be aged, damaged or not age appropriate. These child car seats were generously donated by Britax, being the leading manufacturer of child car seats within Australia.

"On the figures, the results are utterly appalling. However, it has truly highlighted that this is an area that needs attention. The aim of the project was to start a conversation and to question the status quo in



Apply the 5 Step Test

The law says that children do not have to be in a child car seat once they are over seven years of age. The law also allows children to sit in the front seat of a car once they are over seven years of age – this is not safe. However, research shows that children are safest if they stay in a child car seat until they are approximately 145cm, regardless of age. In general, children will reach this size when they are 10 to 12 years of age.

We recommend that you only consider moving your child out of their booster seat once they have passed the '5 Step Test'. Here is what to look for:

- 1.** Can your child sit with their back against the vehicle seat?
- 2.** Do your child's knees bend in front of the edge of the seat cushion?
- 3.** Is the lap belt sitting low across your child's hips and touching their thighs?
- 4.** Does the sash belt sit across the middle of your child's shoulder?
- 5.** Can your child stay seated correctly like this for the entire trip without slumping?



Victoria Police's Senior Sergeant Sarah Carmichael and Acting Assistant Commissioner – Michael Grainger – present at the Community Education Forum.



relation to the way in which we transport our children. Two key messages emerged: firstly that infants should remain in rear facing child car seats for as long as possible, as these afford the greatest level of protection and, secondly, that older children need to be at least 145cm tall before they transition from a booster seat into an adult seatbelt or front seat of the car. This conversation is a whole-of-community responsibility."

Sen Sgt Carmichael advised that Victoria Police will continue to engage with road safety partners, with a presentation planned in the near future to highlight the unquestionable benefits of this project for the wider organisation and the community.

Reflecting on the project, Sen Sgt Carmichael stated, "This project has highlighted to me that with a common purpose, clear goals, strong relationships with key partners and the desire to empower and improve outcomes for our community – anything is possible. This project reaffirmed why I joined Victoria Police 18 years ago, and that was to make a difference. I believe that through this incredible project, with the support of incredible people, I have achieved this."

Sarah Carmichael, Senior Sergeant 32184,
Road Policing Strategy Division, Road Policing Command

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

ELAA delivers Starting Out Safely, Victoria's early childhood road safety education program on behalf of VicRoads.

ELAA has developed a number of online resources to help educators, parents and children understand and reinforce the message that children under 145 centimetres should not be in adult seat belts or in the front seat of the car. One of the resources available, the video, Child Restraints and Booster Seats – What You Need to Know provides parents and care-givers with valuable research and ideas they can apply in their daily routine to help protect the lives of the children in their care.

www.carseatssavelives.com.au

www.childroadsafety.org.au

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE EARLY YEARS

BY PROFESSOR SUSAN EDWARDS, INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING SCIENCES
AND TEACHER EDUCATION – AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY



What is digital technology?

People have always created and used technology. Technology is defined by people using knowledge about how things in the world work to create new objects or tools that help them in their lives. Traditional technologies, like analogue (painting, film-based, drawing) and mechanical (blocks, wheels, levers) are well-known in early childhood education (Early

Childhood Australia, 2018). Educators use these technologies to help children explore their world, make meaning and share ideas. Digital technology involves people generating, storing, retrieving, sharing and communicating information in digital form. Digital information can take many forms, such as video, image, text, and audio. There are various technologies children can use to engage with these

forms, such as computers, touchscreen devices, phones, digital video cameras, internet-connected toys and robotics.

Digital play

Digital play describes how children engage with digital technologies. In early childhood education, play is associated with learning. Play provides opportunities for exploring materials, problem-solving and engaging with peers and adults. Digital play builds on the idea of play for learning for early childhood education. Young children will often explore the capabilities of different technologies. They may spend time pressing the same buttons repeatedly, testing an app or software several times over or trialing different ways of recording video. This exploratory activity is important because it is how children learn to use technologies through play (Bird & Edwards, 2015).



Case study 1

Maria noticed that one of the children in her group talked constantly about his iPad. Arjun would tell her about his favourite apps and how he enjoyed watching Monster Trucks on YouTube. Maria did not have a touchscreen device for the children to use. However, she was keen to build on Arjun's interests in his iPad. Maria printed a life-sized image of an iPad off the internet. She laminated the image and stuck down some small Velcro dots. Then she identified Arjun's favourite apps. She printed and laminated these too. Maria put the 'iPad' with the Velcro 'apps' in the home corner. She noticed that Arjun spent an extended period in the home corner. He changed the apps around several times and engaged in detailed conversation with the other children about each app.



“Early childhood educators can help mediate against problems of digital access by creating opportunities for digital play.”

Children can also use technologies to inform their play. Some children enjoy engaging with popular-culture through digital media. They often re-enact the narratives they have viewed. These re-enactments provide opportunity for social interaction. Often these re-enactments can involve young children in leaping, running and chasing outdoors. These are appropriate opportunities for movement and physical activity.

Other opportunities for digital play occur when children use well-designed apps, software, coding toys or robots. Educators can look for apps and software that are age appropriate and respectful of gender and

cultural diversity (Donohue, 2016). Some apps and software will be more open-ended in nature and let children create their own content. Other apps and software may be more structured and help build children's early knowledge about literacy, numeracy or science concepts. Coding toys and robotics support the development of children's computational thinking through hands-on activity. Computational thinking involves children thinking through problems in a logical step-by-step process (Bers, et al., 2014). Computational thinking in early childhood is important because it provides the foundation for coding later in school.

Digital technologies in practice

Not all educators think the same way about using digital technologies with young children. Some educators see value in technology use. They believe that technologies are part of children's lives and will be important in their futures. Other educators may believe that technologies distract from children's learning, or that children have enough technology use at home or in their communities.

It is important to remember that adult attitudes towards digital technologies influence children's digital learning. Young children do not have equal access to digital technologies at home. Socio-economic factors have been shown to influence children's access to digital technologies (Warschauer, Matuchniak, 2010). Children from more advantaged homes have access to a greater range of technologies than children from more vulnerable settings. Early childhood educators can help mediate against problems of digital access by creating opportunities for digital play. Digital play is important for young children because children today are growing up in a digital world. Digital play helps integrate technologies into practice based on well-known ideas about learning in early childhood education, such as exploration, problem solving and social interaction.

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Case study 2

Bruno had some children in his class who enjoyed Teenage Mutant Ninja turtles. The girls and boys would run around the playground pretending to be the different characters. Bruno thought it was good that the children were getting exercise from this activity. Over about two weeks the children kept on playing the chasing game outside. Bruno thought this game was getting too repetitive. He planned to extend on the children's interest in the characters. First Bruno and the children discussed the names of the turtles. Then Bruno helped the children learn about the famous painters each of the turtles were named after. The children became very interested Michelangelo's painting of the Sistine Chapel. They wondered how Michelangelo had painted the roof. Bruno taped paper to the underside over several tables and the children lay underneath and painted their own chapels.

the ART of the matter

CHALLENGING EDUCATOR BELIEFS AND MISBELIEFS

To experience the joy of playing with art making is a human right that should not be denied (Rinaldi, 2006).

Few early childhood educators would disagree or say that children's visual arts development and expression does not matter. Art materials and processes are central to daily practice in most early childhood settings and the benefits of visual arts engagement are widely accepted. Yet, it is very common to hear early childhood teachers and educators (and the wider population) express the belief that they are not personally artistic (Lindsay, 2015; 2016). When I explain that my PhD research explored the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of early childhood educators, the most common response is comments about the importance of the research topic, quickly followed by self-conscious statements such as, "Oh, but I am not artistic", or "I don't have a creative bone in my body".

When educators lack visual arts confidence, instead of equipping children with a rich vocabulary of visual arts methods and techniques, it seems that visual arts provisions remain an ever-changing, Pinterest-informed smorgasbord of 'keep-them-entertained-and-busy' activities. It is ironic that educators, who routinely support children to learn and develop new skills through experience, intentional teaching and practice, regularly leave children's visual art development to chance. This avoidance of modelling and teaching jeopardises children's capacity to joyfully make and express meaning in visual ways, both now and into the future. Scholars affirm that teachers who lack knowledge about visual arts methods and processes, and who deny their own artistic skills, are more likely to provide materials to children, while avoiding direct engagement with children to intentionally teach visual arts skills (Eckhoff, 2012; McArdle, 2013). →



Early years student Marika Tults implements high quality visual arts learning experiences with children

“In my work with pre-service teachers, I initially implement a range of practical drawing experiences designed to deconstruct their often strongly-held belief that they are not artistic.

My research with early childhood educators found that negative personal beliefs about the capacity to make art are often based in the belief that truly artistic people can draw realistically. Those who defined themselves as ‘not artistic’ either believed that the capacity to draw and to be ‘artistic’ was a special gift they had somehow missed out on. Most recalled prior experiences that undermined their self-belief. Adding to the problem, few participants remembered anything from their pre-service training that had helped them to overcome their lack of visual arts confidence. Apart from gathering a list of arts activity ideas and being told that process is more important than product, the participants’ memories of visual arts coursework content were vague or non-existent. When beliefs are formed early they can be resistant to change and even to schooling and experience (Pajares, 2011).

My research suggests that to transform visual arts pedagogy for children, we need to shift the mindsets, attitudes and beliefs of educators. I propose that we must not only teach educators the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of visual arts pedagogy, or simply present them with a shopping list of arts activity ideas. We must address the ‘why’ and the ‘who’ of visual arts pedagogy in order to inform theoretical appreciation for the vital role of the educator in fostering children’s visual arts learning.

In my work with pre-service teachers, I initially implement a range of practical drawing



Confidence to make art develops with practice. Early Years student Claire Shea.

experiences designed to deconstruct their often strongly-held belief that they are not artistic. This is not done to glorify realistic drawing, but to disrupt assumptions about how people develop artistic skills. Through hands-on drawing experiences that explicitly teach observational drawing skills, students are often amazed to realise how quickly they can learn to draw realistically, simply by being taught the skill of transferring what they observe onto paper. This is followed by immersion in a range of meaningful experiences with a range of visual arts methods and techniques. This process supports our future early childhood teachers to reconstruct a new image of themselves and children as artists, researchers and teachers. It fuels the liberating notion that learning visual



Early Years student, Xiaomeng Wei, learns to draw what she sees.

arts skills and techniques is no different to learning skills in any domain.

Inspired by the participants in my study who overcame their own lack of visual arts confidence by adopting constructivist approaches to pedagogy, such as those exemplified in Reggio Emilia, the pre-service teachers are challenged to exercise an image of the child and themselves as competent and capable. Visual arts methods are positioned as languages that can be intentionally scaffolded through modeling, co-learning and co-teaching. To genuinely enact a strong value for the rights and capabilities of the child will result in visual arts pedagogy that is child-centred, complex, open-ended, authentic and empowering.

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