



## Volunteers still the backbone of early learning services

2 December 2022

As President of Thornbury Kindergarten, Paul Cortissos is described by his fellow kinder committee members as an “incredible role model”. His days are consumed with supporting the teacher and carer team at the kindergarten with everything that a paid manager would do to rallying support from local businesses and volunteers to providing a vital link between the kindergarten and the families of the children who attend. And he doesn’t receive a cent for his efforts, it’s all for the love of it.

“To be a leading advocate that will serve and help shape our vibrant, diverse and inclusive kinder is why the role (President) is a privilege,” said Paul during his acceptance speech.

On Monday night Paul was announced the winner of the 2022 anzuk Early Childhood Volunteer of the Year at the Early Learning Association Australia Annual General meeting. The award celebrates the significant contribution volunteers make to the Early Childhood Education and Care sector.

Paul is one of thousands of volunteers who give significant amounts of time to ensuring community-run Early Childhood Education and Care services deliver high quality learning and care to our children. Their roles can involve everything from HR Manager, accountant, marketer, fundraiser, IT Manager and communications to maintenance, gardener and general voice of calm and assurance.

Paul was named Volunteer of the Year along with four other runners up including:

- Emma Butler from Wahroonga Preschool, in Greensborough, Victoria
- Lois Maiden from Totom House located in Kaleen, ACT
- Anne Sidebottom from North Brighton Kindergarten, Victoria.

ELAA congratulates Paul and all the volunteer finalists for all the time, passion and expertise that they invest in the futures of our youngest learners.

“It’s hard to imagine what our community early learning sector would be like without our hard working volunteers,” said ELAA Director of Advocacy and Member Solutions, Megan O’Connell.

View Paul accepting his award <https://youtu.be/FHBjvPHrNZI>

For more information or to arrange an interview with ELAA contact James Gardener 0413 483 182.

**ENDS**

*ELAA is the national peak body for not-for-profit providers of early childhood education and care. Our vision is Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care. [www.elaa.org.au](http://www.elaa.org.au)*