ECA Victoria Branch 2019

Committee Member Biographies

Marie Howard

Qualifications: BA, Grad Dip ECS, Cert IV Training & Assessment, CIV Frontline
Management, GRADUATE Australian Institute of Company Directors

Marie Howard has been a member of the ECA VIC Branch committee for seven years, serving as Treasurer for one year and then taking on the position as the Victorian Board Director on the National Board of ECA in 2010.

She has served two terms on the National Board and elected as Branch President at the AGM on 9 October 2017.

Marie’s governance experience includes duties as the Vice Chair and Chair of the Board of Tweddle Child and Family Services, an early parenting centre in the western suburbs of Melbourne. She was on the Tweddle Board for six years which is a Ministerial appointment.

A graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, she brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the ECA VIC Branch committee table.

Marie is currently employed at KU Children’s Services as the Victorian Strategic Development Manager. She was at Uniting Care VIC/TAS as their early childhood consultant for two years and played a major role in their restructure of their Early childhood Services. Her previous experience in the field includes 6 years as CEO of ECMS and 5 years as the National Director of Early Learning Services at Mission Australia as well as roles in state government and early childhood services.

Alistair Gibbs

Qualifications: Masters of Teaching (Early Childhood), Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Software Engineering.

Alistair has been working within the early childhood field for over eight years. He has been a kindergarten teacher using his leadership capabilities to run and adapt a program that reflects his personal teaching values, the centres philosophy and business ideals. His current role is as an educational leader in a not for profit community children’s centre.

Alistair is committed to being an advocate and support to educators, children and families in their capabilities, knowledge and rights which have seen him critically reflect on his program and practices, challenging how we approach Anti-Bias themes such as gender equity within early childhood. He has been involved in exploring children’s rights and how they intersect with children, families and educators leading to a collaborative framework being created and used within practice. His work has seen him receive the 2018 Anti-Bias Award from the Social Justice in Early Childhood Foundation. Alistair strives to use his various roles to challenge and empower, with integrity and respect, the voice of self and others.
Sharon Jordan

Qualifications: Cert App Social Sciences (Child Care), Dip Arts (Child Care), B.Ed. (Early Childhood Education), Grad Cert Ed Leadership, Grad Dip Ed & Training, MEd

Sharon has worked extensively in early and middle childhood settings for the past 30 years as practitioner, teacher, director and academic. She has a deep interest in developing effective relationships and networks that empower others (both within the service and also the broader community) to reflect and adapt their thinking and practices, to meet and support the changing needs of children and their families.

Karen Green

Qualifications: BEd (Rusden State College), Grad Dip in Education (Early Childhood - QU), MEd (Educational Leadership - MU), Cert IV Training and Assessment

Karen’s teaching experience is extensive and varied. She is currently participating in her 23rd year of service within the early childhood profession and prior to this, she accumulated 10 years’ experience working within the secondary education sector. She has taught in many locations across the Melbourne metropolitan area and has had some experience on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland.

Over the last decade, with the advent of the NQF, NEYLF and the VEYLDF, Karen has been keenly aware of the need for more experienced educators to further develop their skills and aptitude around pedagogical leadership to ensure the ongoing delivery of high-quality service provision. She has completed two leadership courses through the Bastow Institute (DET); specifically, Leading People in Early Childhood Settings (2013) and Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities (2014). A desire to continue her leadership studies led to her pursuing a Masters’ degree in educational leadership with a specialisation in early childhood education. During her master’s degree, she achieved a level of distinction or above in 7 out of 8 units and received an excellence award in the unit Child Development in Context.

Up until recently, Karen was employed at Manchester Preschool (Eastern Region, Melbourne) as the Director, Nominated Supervisor and Educational Leader. Over her 10 years of employment at this service, she made a firm commitment to embrace the early years' reform agenda transforming Australian practice within the field. She undertook professional development opportunities to advance her understanding of the NQF, VEYLDF and the NEYLF, and has an in-depth comprehension of all documents. In November 2012 under Karen’s leadership, Manchester Preschool was assessed against the NQS by our state regulatory authority (DET) and was granted an overall rating of ‘Exceeding NQS’.

More recently, Karen has worked as a trainer and assessor with MEGT during 2017 and 2018 and is currently working with bestchance as a Family Day Care (FDC) Coordinator.
Janet Williams-Smith

Qualifications in General and Psychiatric Nursing and Systemic Family Therapy

Currently Director of Research & Development at ECMS. The role has responsibility to develop ECMS’ work in research, new policy development and advocacy. ECMS has a five year strategic focus on excellence, progressive practice, innovation, and research driven change through contribution, advocacy, policy and service system design.

With a career history of working with young children and families at risk, Janet has held a range of jobs in community health and education sectors. This has included working at the Brotherhood of St Laurence with newly arrived refugees with infants and young children in trauma and transition and the Children’s Protection Society for five years developing up a targeted ECEC service for children at risk of abuse and neglect. Janet has held three roles in her five years at ECMS commencing in the role of Director of Operations then moving into strategy and service development that has recently evolved into a more research focused portfolio.

Catharine Hydon

Qualifications: Dip Teaching (Early Childhood); MEd (Early Childhood Education)

Catharine Hydon is the Director and Principal Consultant at Hydon Consulting. Over the last 10 years she has range of organisations and governments to understand and articulate quality and inspire change. With a Masters in early childhood education, Catharine has extensive experience in the early childhood sector beginning as a teacher in a kindergarten program in the northern suburbs of Melbourne to lead roles in a range of services and projects for children and their families.

Catharine draws on her experience and ongoing practice research to consider how theory connects and informs practice. Specialising in early childhood practice and pedagogy, quality improvement, policy and governance, the delivery of integrated services to engage vulnerable children and their families.

Catharine’s involvement in the early childhood sector is an important part of her commitment to the outcomes for children. She is a long-time member of Early Childhood Australia (ECA) currently serving as the Co-chair of the Reconciliation Advisory Group and is a regular contributor in ECA publications. Catharine has been a member of the ECA Code of Ethics working group for the last two reviews and is a co-author on the recently published Ethics in Action Implementation guide. Catharine is also a member of the Respectful Relationship Expert Advisory Group for the Victorian Department of Education and the EY-10 Curriculum and Assessment Committee for the VCAA.

Catharine is a dynamic speaker and collaborative facilitator and is skilled at engaging professionals in reflective dialogue and creative conversations.
Louise Hennessy

Qualifications: BEd (Early Childhood), MEd (Early Childhood), PhD Candidate – Monash University

Louise is currently a PhD candidate, teaching associate and research assistant at Monash University. Louise was an early childhood teacher for many years before taking on ECEC advisory and leadership roles and further study at Masters and PhD level. Louise’s PhD examines the material-discursive entanglements of ECEC in Melbourne City. Her academic work focuses on her commitment to introducing emerging theoretical and research approaches to pedagogy and curriculum development in the ECEC sector. A long-term member of ECA, ARACY and AGECS Louise is committed to advocating for the rights of children across Victoria and Australia.

Rukmini Bose-Rahman

Qualifications: Bachelor of Arts; Diploma of Community Services in Childcare; Advanced Diploma of Frontline Management; Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment.

Rukmini has extensive experience in the field of early childhood in a variety of roles, including directing children’s services, local government and inclusion support and is currently the Early Childhood Project Manager (Quality) at ECMS (Early Childhood Management Services, one of Victoria’s largest early childhood cluster managers). Rukmini is part of a leading Child Safe Organisation and is a nominated Child Safety Advisor.

Rukmini’s professional philosophy finds its basis in increasing accessibility for families to quality early childhood care and education. She is committed to the not for profit early childhood sector and believes that creating strong community links is the cornerstone of creating quality education and care settings. She is passionate about the importance of future generations being actively and positively engaged in deep and respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Indigenous practices and knowledge. A strong commitment to training and professional development is a focus of Rukmini’s philosophy, resulting in supporting strong cultures of training, education and critical thinking; she is an advocate for a workplace where staff can explore and learn from innovative practise. Deep exploration of multicultural perspectives and leadership are a particular interest of Rukmini’s.
Sue Grieshaber (PhD)

Qualifications: PhD (James Cook); MEd St (UQld); BEd St (UQld); DipT (Griffith)

Currently *Professor of Education, School of Education College of Arts, Social Sciences & Commerce La Trobe University*, Sue worked as a classroom teacher in the before school and early years of school sectors for about 14 years before moving to work in universities. Her research interests are informed by principles of social justice and equity and concern early childhood curriculum, policy, play, pedagogies, families and women in the academy. Sue has extensive experience in leading professional learning for early childhood educators and is involved in research projects about play.

D'Lene Johnson

Qualifications: MEd (Early Childhood Education), Bachelor of Education, Cert IV Training & Assessment, Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood)

D'Lene is an Early Years Consultant with Haileybury Institute. Prior to this she was the Director of Early Learning for Haileybury overseeing the policy, practice, quality and regulatory requirements of Haileybury’s five Early Learning Centres. This also involved developing pedagogical practice, mentoring staff and leading new Early Learning projects for the school. With many years in the Early Childhood field, D'Lene has taught and been Director for sessional and long day kindergarten programs and worked as the Head of an Early Learning Centre.

Early Childhood Leadership is of great interest to D'Lene. She believes in supporting current Early Childhood professionals and the next generation of educators to become confident and capable advocates for the profession.

Nicole Pilsworth

Qualifications: Master of Educational Leadership; Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood); Certificate IV in Workplace Training & Assessment

Nicole has extensive experience as both a teacher and leader in ECEC settings in NSW and Victoria with over 25 years’ experience in not-for-profit organisations and local government. Nicole has worked with educators to embed the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards as a pedagogical leader and is an experienced facilitator of professional learning. Currently the Manager of Early Learning at Gowrie Victoria, Nicole has a specific interest in building capacity in the ECEC workforce, with a particular focus on educational leadership and how research evidence informs education and care practices. Nicole is a long-time member of ECA and has recently retired from the board of Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA).