



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

**OUR
VISION:
EVERY
YOUNG
CHILD IS
THRIVING
AND
LEARNING**



Early Childhood Education global leaders in Australia for National Conference

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 6 October, 2016

Australia's peak early childhood advocacy organisation, Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has brought nearly 2000 early childhood practitioners together with leading national and global thinkers and researchers for the 30th biennial [Early Childhood Australia's National Conference](#).

Federal Education Minister Birmingham said ECA's National Conference would be an important platform for early childhood education and care experts, researchers and policymakers to offer thinking and ideas about what they can contribute to Australia's overall education landscape into the future.

"ECA and the child care sector have made important contributions to the Turnbull Government's more than \$3 billion worth of additional investment into early education and child care. This year's National Conference is an opportunity to further explore how we can realise the benefits of our \$40 billion investment and the important role the early education and care sector has in setting Australia's children up for their best chance of success in life," Minister Birmingham said.

Opening the conference in Darwin today, Northern Territory Minister for Education Eva Lawler said:

"Caring for, nurturing and protecting the youngest members of our community is the hallmark of a fair and decent society. Investing in our children and their families to support their healthy development is the hallmark of a smart society."

"Early Childhood Australia is very proud to bring to the Northern Territory the finest minds in Australia and latest thinking in the world on quality early childhood education and care for children from birth up to eight years," said ECA National President Ros Cornish. "This is an exciting opportunity to share ideas, knowledge and experience and celebrate the capability, strengths and joy of children and childhood in Australia today."



Highlights of this year's conference will be keynote addresses by [international speakers](#):

Dr Chip Donohue, Dean of Distance Learning and Continuing Education and [Director of the TEC Center](#) at Erikson Institute in Chicago, USA - a leading thinker, writer and teacher on how best to introduce young children to digital technology. His presentation and workshop will explore how a screen can be a window, mirror or magnifying glass for young minds. Chip is the editor of two books on technology and young children including [Family Engagement in the Digital Age: Early Childhood Educators as Media Mentors](#), with contributions from Australian authors [Kate Highfield](#) and Kristy Goodwin.

Claire Warden, Nature Pedagogy expert from Scotland. Ms Warden established the International Association of [Nature Pedagogy](#) and is the founder of two nature kindergartens in Scotland. Nature Pedagogy is a way of being with children – embracing nature so they discover the possibilities of childhood wherever they live in the world.

Maria Aarts, Founder and Director of the [Marte Meo](#) International Network, Netherlands, which operates in 46 countries. The words 'Marte Meo' mean 'on one's own strength'. The Marte Meo program helps educators and parents work with their natural child-rearing behaviour to communicate with and support children in day-to-day situations.

And addresses and panel discussions by Australian Speakers:

Professor Susan Edwards, Research Director of Early Childhood Futures at the Learning Sciences Institute Australia. [Professor Edwards](#) is an expert on play-based learning in both outdoor and nature-based learning and the role of digital technologies and popular-culture in the early childhood curriculum. Susan is the author of several books including [Young Children's Play and Environmental Education in Early Childhood Education](#).

Dr Anita Heiss, author and Lifetime Ambassador of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation and a proud member of the Wiradjuri nation of central NSW. Anita is an Advocate for the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence and an Ambassador of Worowa Aboriginal College. [Dr Heiss](#) is part of a panel on Storytelling on Thursday 6 October, that includes illustrator Sandra Kendall, writer Leonie Norrington and Joanna Bell, founder of [www.StoryProjects.com.au](#)

Associate Professor Richard Fletcher, Convenor of the Fatherhood Research Network in the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle. He and his team have established the [SMS4Dads](#) online resource for new Dads and [StayinOnTrack](#) online resource for Aboriginal dads.

Charlie King, (OAM) Founder NO More campaign; Presenter ABC Grandstand, Darwin. As well as being a sports broadcaster, Charlie founded the [NO More](#) campaign to engage men in how they can be active in changing attitudes to domestic violence. He will join a panel discussion on Fathering with Professor Fletcher on Thursday 6 October.

To view the conference program visit: www.ecaconference.com.au

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