



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 6 October 2022

MORE THAN 2,200 ECEC PROFESSIONALS ATTEND 2022 ECA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The 2022 Early Childhood Australia (ECA) National Conference kicked off today from the National Convention Centre Canberra with more than 2,200 delegates in attendance, both in-person and online. The conference, which will conclude on 8 October, has brought together Australian and international experts to speak to the theme of *Passion to power: Our future profession*.

Highlights from the first day of the conference include:

- the address by The Hon. Jason Clare MP, Australian Minister for Education
- the address by Ms Yvette Berry MLA, ACT Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development
- the keynote speech by Australian of the Year Dylan Alcott AO
- two panel discussions on 'Updating the approved Learning Frameworks—10 Years on' and 'Building our future profession' led by experts from the early childhood education sector and government organisations such as ACECQA, Department of Education and ACT Education Directorate
- more than 35 concurrent sessions sharing research, best practice and insights.

Speaking on the importance of early childhood education, **Jason Clare MP, Australian Minister for Education, said:** 'What [children] see, hear, what they eat ... Every smile, every laugh, every friend, every book, every lesson, shapes the person [they] become. That makes what [early childhood professionals] do about as important as any job in this country. And all the evidence shows that. Particularly the impact that early childhood education has for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.'

Talking about the planned early childhood education and care sector reforms, minister Clare added, 'What we are doing isn't tax concessions. It's not welfare either. It's economic reform. It means more Australian women will have more choice. It means they can earn more ... build careers ... retire with more.'

Commenting on the state of the sector, **Yvette Berry MLA, ACT Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, said,** 'The workforce has faced a range of challenges, high workloads, low pay, the cost of training and career progression ... *Set up for success* (an early childhood strategy for the ACT) identifies a number of initiatives to address these

challenges, such as providing increased coaching, mentoring and professional learning opportunities and improving pathways to the profession.’ In short, her message to delegates was, ‘If we value our children, we must value educators.’

Addressing the delegates **Ms Christine Legg, National President, ECA**, said, ‘We need to move from a position of passion to a position of power, recognising that the social and economic performance of this country relies on our work. The workforce of tomorrow starts with us. We have the potential to drive education improvements nationally by giving every child the very best possible start. We can reduce educational disadvantage and provide effective early support to prevent children [from] experiencing learning difficulties down the track.’

The welcome addresses culminated with a motivating keynote speech by **Australian of the Year 2022 Dylan Alcott AO**, who had an important message to share. He said: ‘We need greater representation, absolutely everywhere, changing perceptions in our mainstream schools, in our workplaces, on our boards, in our workplaces, in our parliament, on our school fields. You cannot be what you cannot see.’

ENDS

ECA CEO Samantha Page is available for comment. For interviews, please contact ECA Media Officer Reshma Jayesh on 0475 554 999.

For a downloadable PDF version of the media release, please click here:

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/media/

Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children from birth to eight years, their families and early childhood professionals.