

## Nicole Pilsworth



Nicole Pilsworth has an extensive experience as both a teacher and leader in the early childhood sector. She has experience in both operations and research and is an experienced facilitator who has presented at various conferences and seminars. Currently the Executive Manager of Early Learning with Gowrie Victoria, Nicole has a specific interest in building capability of the early childhood workforce with the goal of supporting learning and development for all children. She has a specific interest on educational leadership and how research evidence informs pedagogy and practice for improved outcomes for all children.

Nicole is a long-time member of ECA and a former Board member of Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA). She is a member of the Apiary Fellowship; a group that brings together leaders who are committed to creating thriving futures for children in Australia. Nicole holds a Master of Educational Leadership and a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood).

## Marie Howard

Marie is the current chair of ECA Victoria. An acknowledged leader in the Victorian early childhood sector, Marie has over 30 years' experience that has included positions within state government at a regional level and as a Senior Policy Advisor. She has also filled senior leadership roles at ECMA and Mission Australia. Marie is a graduate of the AICD with a strong interest in governance and served for 6 years on the ECA National Board before taking on the President role in 2018. She is also on the board of the Y Victoria and Tweddle Foundation. A grandmother of three, Marie is now working part time on various sector projects.

## Casey Goodman

Casey Goodman is the Leader of Reconciliation and Aboriginal Programs at Moreland Community Child Care Centres (MCCCC) in Brunswick, Melbourne. As an educator and ally to First Nations peoples, Casey embeds Aboriginal pedagogies and perspectives into her everyday work. Through her role, supporting early childhood professionals, Casey works to support and mentor staff to learn about and critically reflecting on Aboriginal pedagogies and protocols. Casey chairs the MCCCC Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and in January of 2020 established the Moreland Reconciliation Network Group, which she established and convenes.

Casey is an active participant in the Early Childhood Australia Victorian Branch Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and was interviewed as part of 'Educators Perspective' for the 2020 ECA Reconciliation Connect Symposium. In 2021 Casey was awarded the ECA Barbara Creaser Young Advocate award for her dedication and commitment to advocacy in the Reconciliation space. Casey carries dedication, passion and commitment to building sector wide changes to providing culturally safe and supportive early learning and care environments and curriculums for all children. Working at all levels of the sector to create meaningful and lasting positive change and outcomes for all children. Stacey holds a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care and currently studying towards a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.

### Sarah Louise Gandolfo

Sarah Louise is a Melbourne based early childhood teacher, and mum of two, who has recently completed a Master of Educational Leadership. Her 20+ year early childhood career spans long day care, stand-alone kindergartens, community managed services and school based early learning centres. She is a loud and passionate advocate for children's rights, social justice and ethical leadership.

Currently employed by Early Childhood Australia as their Professional Learning Project Coordinator, she brings to her work a strengths-based approach that values and encourages a kind and courageous style of leadership and management. Sarah Louise is currently the co-convenor of the Early Childhood Australia Victoria Committee Anti-Bias Special Interest Group, where she is joined by early childhood professionals across the country to discuss and reflect on the social justice and anti-bias issues affecting the sector. She is also a General Member of the ECA Victoria Branch Committee, a Board Member of the Social Justice in Early Childhood Foundation, and a Board Member of the Australian Educational Leader Journal editorial committee.

### Alistair Gibbs

Alistair has been working within the early childhood sector in various roles for over ten years. His current role is as an Early Learning Manager within a not for profit, for purpose organisation. Here he is able to embrace the different facets of leadership whilst finding balance in the different governance levels that underpin the quality programs we can provide within our environments.

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 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. Alistair holds a Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) and a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Software Engineering.

### Sean Whiting

Across a twenty-year career, Sean has worked in both government and community-based organisations in early childhood, primary and secondary education, as well as in family support, family violence, juvenile justice, mental health, alcohol and other drug, and homelessness sectors. He has worked in a range of roles, including as a case worker, counsellor, researcher and policy advisor, and in executive management. He is also the principal consultant for Endoxa Consulting, a consulting service that assists organisations to formulate policy positions through guided reflection and rigorous research, along with support in writing government submissions and facilitation services.

With training in philosophy and human rights law, Sean continues to combine his practical commitment to the rights and wellbeing of vulnerable children with his enduring philosophical interest in childhood itself. He regards childhood to be a profoundly illuminating, yet often underappreciated window on human nature and the human condition. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Melbourne Law School where he is investigating the philosophical foundations of Indigenous law. Sean holds a Graduate Diploma in Human Rights Law from University of Melbourne, a Graduate Diploma in Philosophy from University of Divinity, a Bachelor of Arts from Monash University and a Bachelor of Theology from University of Divinity.

### Nicole Talarico

Nicole Talarico is best known as an advocate for professionalism and children's rights, with a social justice lens always present. Nicole's insight is shared at conferences both nationwide and overseas, and outlined in a range of early childhood sector publications. Nicole is a valued and respected member of network groups, and has a prominent presence on social media and virtual communication platforms. Nicole is a member of ECA and has been an active member of ECA Victoria Branch Special Interest Group where she is passionate about listening to members and partaking in dialogue to amplify the voices of educators in the sector, inclusive of young children.

Nicole has a strong focus on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, and has just written a book about Child Safety. Nicole is a Reconciliation Ambassador for the Association of Graduates for Early Childhood Studies and supports Semann & Slattery as a mentor in the DET KQIP program. Nicole is authentic, driven and passionate, and continues to expand her knowledge through colleagues both in Australia and internationally, building on the potential strengths of her position on the Victoria State Committee.

### Leanne Mits

Leanne Mits is an experienced practising early childhood teacher and a strong advocate for children, families and education. As well as having nearly 40 years' teaching experience across a range of settings, Leanne is an active ECA Victoria committee member (Co-convenor of Special Interest Group 'Talking Reconciliation' and Victoria's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group).

She sees early childhood education as existing in a historical moment in time, with some of the most positive conversations for change and support for this sector taking place in government. Leanne wants to strengthen this conversation by representing practising educators, including their voice and perspectives and those of children and families.

Relationships and the pedagogies of listening, collaboration and participation are paramount both in Leanne's work as a teacher and in her committee involvement. With over 20 years' voluntary experience on national, education-related committees, she has a sound working knowledge of organisational purpose, values, governance and operations.

### Sam Vale

Since 2019, Sam has been an Educational Leader at Windsor Community Children's Centre, a standalone not-for-profit centre. Prior to this, Sam was Assistant Director with over 16 years' experience as an educator.

Sam believes that her values of connection and community strongly align with the values of ECA. As increasingly complicated systems are navigated, community ECEC services are having to work harder than ever to ensure they remain viable. Sam's focus has been on emphasising the value of early education for every child, not simply to promote workforce participation for parents. She is passionate to contribute within a broader community, highlighting the importance of equity and access for children and families with high-quality services led by educators who champion early education as a fundamental right.

### David Wright

David Wright has used his years of leadership experience in the early childhood and community services sector to display his values of respect, collaboration, accountability and integrity, as closely aligned with those of ECA. David's collaboration would support a position in the Victorian State Committee by facilitating discussion about key issues, needs and opportunities with not only existing members but also prospective member organisations who can provide valuable insights. This would be achieved by drawing on existing relationships to build and sustain new relationships, including key players in the education, training and health sector who play a critical role in advancing ECA's five strategic priorities.

### Disha Nayyar

Disha is a Senior Educator at Swinburne University of Technology with over 28 years' experience in the early childhood sector. She is passionate about advocacy for children's rights and creating a thriving environment for them to flourish in. Her skills and experience as an organised and analytical minded professional provide a platform that aids in my dedication to this vocation.

Over the years, she has ensured to upskill my knowledge through liaising with relevant organisations and impart my students with current ECEC practices for them to make a difference in a child's life. Her most notable accomplishments include branching into compliance, stepping up as Early Childhood and Education Department Manager, and establishing a not-for-profit evening school for children (all ages) of domestic help.

Throughout these experiences Disha displayed effective communication and collaborative skills to ensure smooth integration of knowledge and practice, and the ability to work with varying individuals and/or organisations in achieving the collective goal of championing the rights of children and becoming the voice for young children.

### Dr Helen Schiele

Helen has worked in all levels of education from early learning to tertiary institutions. She has spent some 15 years in dedicated community based early childhood settings in northern metropolitan Melbourne and now represents some 140 early learning services within the independent schools sector. Over several years Helen has been able to develop strong collaborative networks within State and Commonwealth departments. Seeing her as a keen advocate for early childhood services and the professionalisation of the field. She currently sits on several key working parties at a state level in supporting the Best Start - Best Life state government initiative. She also has a strong working partnership with VIT in supporting the work of mentors within the journey of the ECT. Helen has also worked closely with ACARA as a critical friend in bringing across the EYLF into the early years classroom of the Australian Curriculum.

She has recently completed her doctoral studies and continues to undertake research in the field of ECEC workforce issues. Her passion and commitment remain strong in advocating for better pay and equity in the field and in supporting teachers and educators in developing their capacity to articulate their strengths through professional development sessions and her early years newsletter for the independent schools sector. Helen is developing several key partnerships with university based leaders to engage future educational leaders and explore pedagogy of practice within the field.