



# Annual Report 2021-22



**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children

# Our vision

Every young child is thriving and learning

Our role in achieving this vision is to be an effective advocate for young children and a champion for quality outcomes in early childhood education and care. We specifically acknowledge the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, and the past and current injustices and realities for them around Australia. Our work is informed by our:

- commitment to children's rights
- knowledge of early childhood development, learning and pedagogy
- commitment to an inclusive and just society
- respect for the rights and aspirations of families
- the active involvement of our members.

Early Childhood Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to the Elders both past and present.

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# President's report



**This will be my final report as I prepare to step away from the National Board at the end of 2022, after more than 25 years of service to Early Childhood Australia (ECA) at both the national and state level.**

Over the years, I have seen many changes in the early childhood sector. The diversity of services available for children and families has increased and we've experienced extraordinary growth: there are now more than 200 000 people employed across the early childhood sector.

There have been great moments in time, when early childhood education was recognised by governments and significant investments made that have shaped the sector we have today—for example, the introduction of the Australian *National Quality Framework*, bringing with it the *National Quality Standard* and the *Early Years Learning Framework* and *Our Time, Our Place* curriculum documents.

Changes in governments, funding, regulations and law, the various pedagogies and approaches to children's learning, technology and societal attitudes have all taken place. Bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic tested the sector to its limits. Through all this, the early education sector has remained steadfast in its commitment to providing the very best experiences for children.

There have also been significant changes at ECA. We have shaken off the outdated image of 'nice ladies' to become serious advocates (still female dominated, but a growing number of males) who both challenge and support governments and policy-makers to make decisions in the best interests of all Australian children, regardless of where they live, or their family circumstances.

Over the past 12 months, changes to ECA's governance structure have allowed us to consolidate the team (now 122-plus employees) and establish new systems for supporting the work of the state

and territory committees. The ECA team, under the leadership of our CEO Sam Page, are all highly talented, and I thank them for the work they do for our members and the sector. I would also like to extend sincere thanks to my colleagues on the Board for their commitment and expertise: Italia Parletta, Dr Marina Papic, Jane Bourne, Dr Pauline Roberts, Simon Fewings, Jackie Wilson, Trevor Brown and Tony Fairbairn.

I would particularly like to thank Italia Parletta, who is leaving the Board at the 2022 AGM. Italia has served ECA at both the state and national level. A positive and thoughtful contributor, she has brought a depth of wisdom in vocational training, quality practice and sector development.

This has been a complex year. The integration of multiple separate entities into one, the transition to a company limited by guarantee and the additional demands resulting from ECA becoming a 'large employer' have combined to stretch the capacity of the finance and operations team. Combined with changes to the accounting standards and the long tail of negative impacts from COVID-19 have put ECA in a deficit financial position that we had not anticipated during the year. This should be offset by a better result in 2021-22 with positive signs that our events, online learning sales and project income are on an upward trajectory.

I think we are now on the precipice of another great moment in time for our profession. It was heartening to see early childhood education and care front and centre in the federal election. There were substantial investments in preschool/kindergarten programs and workforce initiatives in both the NSW and Victorian state budgets, recognising the importance of quality early education and care experiences for children as well as the economic benefits of supporting families, especially women, to participate in paid work.

This bodes well for the long-term sustainability of our sector and also for the recognition and respect our profession so thoroughly deserves.

However, we cannot ignore the current staffing crisis in our profession. We saw many experienced and talented teachers and educators leave the profession as COVID-19 entered its third year and staff were exhausted. There is much work to be done in this space and as a starting point, it is so important that we all use language that reflects the important work of the profession to both retain and attract new people.

I am also heartened by the number of eminent women being recognised for their contribution to our sector through our own Barbara Creaser and Doctoral Thesis awards as well as the HESTA Early Childhood Education and Care Awards. It was wonderful to see this year's Queen's Birthday honours being awarded to Professor Emerita Deborah Jane Brennan AM, Ms Leslie Loble AM and Ms Robyn Monro Miller AM for their service and commitment to the early childhood education and care profession.

I am optimistic about the future of early childhood education and care in Australia and feel privileged to have had the opportunity to contribute to and be a part of the ECA National Board. I also acknowledge and thank those who have come before me and wish Sam and the Board all the best in continuing ECA's vital work for children and their families.

**Christine Legg**  
Chair, ECA National Board

**'The ECA team, under the leadership of our CEO Sam Page, are all highly talented, and I thank them for the work they do for our members and the sector.'**

# ECA Board Members

## Chris Legg

Experienced early childhood professional and CEO of KU Children's Services, Chris began her teaching career more than 40 years ago. She is actively engaged in promoting the value of early childhood education, the rights of children, and improving the status and standing of early childhood education as a profession. Chris is the Chair of the ECA National Board, a Board member of the NSW Education Standards Authority, and is a member of the Australian Government Department of Education Early Childhood Education and Care Reference Group and the NSW Government Early Childhood Education Advisory Group.

## Italia Parletta

Italia is a senior lecturer in the Children's Education and Care program at TAFE South Australia and has worked in the early childhood education and care sector for over 30 years. Italia is an advocate for quality education and care that promotes development and wellbeing in the early years. She consults and provides training for government and NGOs to multi-disciplinary teams working with children and families. Italia has been an Executive Committee member of ECA SA for over 20 years, serving in numerous roles including president, and has been an ECA National Board Director since 2018.

## Dr Marina Papic

Marina is Professor of Early Childhood and Mathematics Education at the Australian Catholic University. She has 35 years' experience in teaching, academic and leadership roles in the education sector. Marina has led large research projects focused on mathematics curriculum and practice, early numeracy and professional development of early childhood educators and teachers. Marina is an ECA National Board Director, Big Fat Smile Board Director and NSW ECA Committee member. She sits on several advisory committees, was a member of the ACECQA Ratings Review Panel and was involved in the development of the *Early Years Learning Framework*.

## Dr Pauline Roberts

Pauline began her professional career as a teacher and director of early childhood services in NSW. As she developed experience, she began teaching students at TAFE in Western Sydney. After moving to WA, Pauline worked as a relief teacher before shifting her career focus to mentoring through professional experience supervision of pre-service teachers for Murdoch, Curtin and Edith Cowan universities. Since 2015, Pauline has been a lecturer in Early Childhood Education at Edith Cowan University and continues to focus on reflection, ePortfolios and technology. Pauline also focuses on advocacy and workforce issues impacting on the early years.

## Jackie Wilson

Jackie has a strong interest in the design of good policy and programs informed by strong stakeholder engagement. As a Partner at ORIMA Research, Jackie works on research projects in support of public sector policies, programs and initiatives. Prior to this, she worked in the Australian Public Service for 35 years, most recently as Deputy Secretary for the Early Childhood and Child Care Group of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE). She has held a number of senior Commonwealth positions in program and policy areas covering health, disability, community services, education, employment, budget and finance.

## Tony Fairbairn

Tony is an e-learning consultant who is passionate about ECA becoming the leading provider of quality online learning to our sector. Highly qualified, he holds a degree in Economics from Oxford and a Masters in Business Administration. He began his IT management career with Xerox and Fujitsu in the UK, Australia and Africa, culminating as Director of ICL/Fujitsu for central Africa, a \$A40 million company with 500 staff. After returning to Australia in 2002, Tony joined e3 Learning which became a leading online learning provider. He moved into consultancy after e3 was sold in 2014.

## Simon Fewings

Simon has worked in Aboriginal education and training, wellbeing and employment for 20 years. Beginning as a teacher in the TAFE system, he developed a deep passion for teaching and learning. He has worked with school leaders through the Australian Primary Principals Association and built Dulkka Yuppata Koorie Training Centre at Sunraysia TAFE. In 2022 Simon was appointed Victorian Director of the SNAICC-National Voice for our Children National Intermediary THRYVE Pilot Project to support and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services to deliver high quality, accessible and culturally strong supports for children, families and communities.

## Trevor Brown

Across an early years career spanning more than 30 years, Trevor has held a number of pedagogical, operational and strategic leadership positions in not-for-profit organisations and government agencies in Queensland and Tasmania. Work has included pedagogical coaching, professional learning design, management of state-wide projects and workforce development. Currently, Trevor works as Manager, Innovation & Growth with Lady Gowrie Tasmania.

## Jane Bourne

In September 2020, Jane received the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Faculty of Education Outstanding Alumni Award for her contribution to early childhood education and care. Jane's management and leadership experience is an extension of her background as an early childhood teacher. She is a fierce advocate for children and is dedicated to creating systems and opportunities that promote the best outcomes for children, families and the early childhood education and care profession.



Chris Legg



Italia Parletta



Dr Marina Papic



Dr Pauline Roberts



Jackie Wilson



Tony Fairbairn



Simon Fewings



Trevor Brown



Jane Bourne



# CEO's report



**I will never take for granted what a privilege it is to lead the team at ECA. I am very grateful to Chris Legg and the ECA National Board for their continued trust and support, particularly through the challenges of the past 12 months.**

The negative impact of COVID-19 was somewhat delayed for ECA. In 2020-21, while we had to postpone the conference and other events, and we experienced an unusually high rate of staff turnover, we still retained a strong and effective team that weathered these difficulties.

The impact has been much stronger in 2021-22. We experienced the withdrawal of government support, took the difficult decision to run the national conference as a fully virtual event and experienced reduced sales income as our members and stakeholders limited their expenditure in turbulent times. The cumulative impact—together with the complexities of integrating branches and transitioning to a company limited by guarantee—has led to a poor financial result for the year.

I am hopeful that the negative impacts are now behind us. Our revenue is strengthening across events, online learning, publications and funded projects. The early childhood sector is recovering from COVID-19 and we are building back better after investing in enhanced IT platforms and professional learning resources.

The pandemic gave us time to review all of the content on the ECA Learning Hub and reassess our users' needs. We developed a large amount of new content with subject matter experts from across the sector and, with over 100 professional learning resources mapped against the *National Quality Standard* and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, we are confident that the ECA Learning Hub is Australia's leading online learning platform for early childhood professionals.

Publications are also an important part of our work at ECA. We have been very happy with the success of our *Box of Provocations* series. The original box, written by Anne Stonehouse, remains very popular and both the *Box of Leadership Provocations* and the *Box of Provocations for Our Earth* are doing very well. Special titles such as *First Year at School* and *Ethics in Action* complement our flagship subscription products—*Every Child*, *AJEC*, *Research in Practice* and the *Everyday Learning Series*.

While we were sad to goodbye to Dr Kate Highfield, who left ECA to return to an academic role, the Professional Learning team is in very good hands with Shae Haylen taking over the role of General Manager.

The success of our National Conference in Canberra—*Passion to Power*—provided a significant boost to our confidence in the future. We are very lucky to have such a capable events team led by Conference & Events General Manager Elmarie Snyman, and they are already planning the next three conferences in Adelaide (2023), Brisbane (2024) and Perth (2025). After several years in development, our inaugural Ethics and Leadership Colloquia in February 2022 was also a success. Smaller events including the Reconciliation Symposium will be returning to the in-person format and we look forward to taking these events around the country.

Be You Early Learning continues to expand with over 5400 early childhood services now participating. Our Be You team has delivered a number of additional projects in recent times, including the Bushfire Response Program which assisted early childhood services in communities affected by the 2019 bushfires, with some fabulous examples of local recovery initiatives including *Therapeutic Storytelling* modules developed in

collaboration with the Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health. The success of our Be You team has been driven by the leadership of Judy Kynaston, Be You Early Learning General Manager.

Following the integration of the NT Branch, it has been wonderful to gain a much stronger understanding of the work our NT team deliver, including the NT Inclusion Agency and the NDIS Early Childhood Partner in the Community program. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve collaboratively following the recent appointment of Janet Williams-Smith to the role of Inclusion & Early Intervention General Manager working with the highly experienced management team in Darwin and Alice Springs.

I am very grateful for the talent, enthusiasm and commitment to excellence that we can see right across the ECA team—thank you to everyone who has been a part of this in 2021-22.

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to Chris Legg who has been a steadfast and values-driven National President throughout her term. She has overseen significant governance reform and helped us navigate the complexities of integration and the impact of COVID-19. I know Chris is widely regarded as an outstanding leader in the early childhood sector and her contribution to ECA is only part of her legacy, but I have found it incredibly valuable to work so closely with her and I am grateful for all that I have learned.

**Samantha Page**  
Chief Executive Officer



**'I am very grateful for the talent, enthusiasm and commitment to excellence that we can see right across the ECA team—thank you to everyone who has been a part of this in 2021-22.'**

# ECA state and territory committees

## VICTORIA

### Chair: Marie Howard

The ECA Victoria Committee provides members, and the early childhood sector, many opportunities for networking and professional learning through our forums, Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and advocacy work. ECA Victoria continues to be consulted as a peak body and is represented on several advisory groups, including the Communication Workshop on the roll-out of three-year-old kindergarten.

### Key achievements

- We have facilitated successful forums on Leadership and Children's Mental Health. Each provided opportunity for discussion and reflection, and attracted members both online and in person. Delegates at our Leadership forum heard from Dr Dan Leach-McGill, ECA Policy and Government Relations Executive, and teachers from Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre and Gowrie Victoria. Our Children's Mental Health forum featured presentations from children's mental health specialist Dr Nicole Milburn, and Be You Consultant Trish Osgood.
- ECA Victoria Committee facilitates three active SIGs. Anti-Bias (30 delegates) focuses on equity, access and participation. Let's Reflect (20 delegates) is all about unpacking the expectations and professional identity of educators. And the important Talking Reconciliation SIG (30 delegates) convened during National Reconciliation Week.
- Our participation on the Best Start Best Life Taskforce Advisory Group contributed to the implementation of the recent reforms announced by Premier Dan Andrews: free kindergarten, 30 hours of kindergarten for four-year-olds and the establishment of 50 early learning centres in child care deserts.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Chair: Susan Jackson

The overarching objectives informing the work of the ECA South Australia Committee are to lead and inspire professional learning, champion 'beyond quality' in early education, and consistently be aware of and respond to political and bureaucratic initiatives. This year we have continued our collaborative advocacy and professional development work with ECA National and other South Australian early childhood associations.

### Key achievements

- In the past 12 months the ECA SA Committee have worked towards expanding our members' access to branch meetings and professional development through the use of technology and hub groups. Our three-part Ethics in Action professional learning was offered for the first time via mixed mode. Members could join online or in hub groups at seven different locations. Site hosts, supported by committee members, facilitated the hub groups. Member participation for the series increased by 300% compared to average attendance.
- We created an annual \$500 award for Excellence in Playful Pedagogies, to recognise outstanding contributions made to the teaching profession in South Australia by highlighting the importance of play. The inaugural award, presented at the Educators SA World Teachers Day Award ceremony, went to Kate Martin from the SA Branch.
- There are many changes occurring in SA with the change of governments and the new Office for Early Years, and the SA Committee are forging partnerships and representations across many of these areas. Achievements include providing representation for Raising Literacy Australia project development and representation for the new SA curriculum documents.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Chair: Tanya Steers

The ECA Western Australia Committee offers support and information to early childhood organisations, services, professionals, parents and policymakers about relevant issues regarding children, their families and their place in the community. Our primary imperative is to promote the interests and wellbeing of young people and those who work with them.

### Key achievements

- The ECA State Conference 2021 was the highlight of our year, celebrating creativity and embedding Aboriginal perspectives in the early years.
- Our RAP committee continues to provide amazing opportunities to learn and develop Noongar culture individually and within classrooms, through song, dance and cultural histories.
- The introduction of our Leadership in Early Years (LEY) Committee has seen some wonderful regular networking events, both online and in person, so that we are able to connect and develop leaders across our state. Bringing together both sector staff and schooling staff has allowed a greater connection.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Chair: Carol Burgess

From COVID-19 to devastating floods, 2021–22 presented many challenges. However, there was also good news, with NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet committing to universal access to early learning in the year before school and \$5.8 billion worth of ECEC initiatives. ECA NSW's membership base continued to grow across our seven regional groups.

### Key achievements

- Our Conversation Evenings continue to attract large numbers of participants. These are presented as Zoom meetings once every six weeks. We aim to present diverse speakers from a wide range of subject areas to provoke conversations, questions and provide a unique way for our members to network with others.
- As part of the Early Childhood Education Advisory Group for the NSW Department of Education, we discuss and advise on issues that affect the early childhood sector in NSW. We are also represented on the Early Childhood Reference Group for the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) Early Childhood Teaching Standards and Accreditation.
- ECA NSW have allocated 14 scholarships for ECA members working in early childhood education and care settings. There are seven scholarships on offer to help cover the cost of in-person conference attendance including registration, accommodation and travel. An additional seven scholarships are for online conference attendance, to fund the registration fee and \$200 a day to cover a replacement staff member.

## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

### Chair: Kylie Keane

Over the year the ECA ACT Committee has taken part in several advocacy initiatives and contributed to consultations, including those focused on the ACT ECEC Workforce Strategy, proposed legislative changes and engaging with the Preschool Reform Agreement.

### Key achievements

- Our 2022 National Reconciliation Week event was a great success. We invited speakers from Reconciliation Australia and several Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people doing incredible work within our schools and ECEC sector. Duncan Smith from Wiradjuri Echoes and his family joined us and shared their stories and truth. It was a powerful session with honesty leading to action.
- Preparations for the ECA National Conference 2022 (hosted in Canberra) as well as our ECA ACT Education and Care Awards Gala have been a focus for our State Committee. Highlights will no doubt appear on next year's report with high levels of engagement and energy already noted for both events.
- We were also present to support the launch of the Phase One Implementation Plan for *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT*, which outlines the plan for early childhood education and care in the ACT for the next decade.

## TASMANIA

### Branch President: Lynne Moran

While many Branch activities were impacted by COVID-19, our advocacy efforts throughout 2021–22 continued through representation on the Education & Care Unit Stakeholder Reference Group; meetings with the Department of Education Secretary; and involvement with the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. We also completed submissions for the Lifting Literacy consultation and the inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's COVID-19 response.

### Key achievements

- The Branch Forum was a great success, attended by over 100 professionals. Keynote presentations by the Commissioner for Children, Thrive by Five CEO Jay Weatherill and ACECQA CEO Gabrielle Sinclair set the scene for further conversations in breakout sessions. The Branch was delighted to partner with the B4 Leaders Coalition in this event and we acknowledge the support of B4 Senior Project Officer, Annette Fuller.
- The Early Years and School Aged Care (EYSAC) Workforce Strategy continued with project manager Kellie Watson working tirelessly to progress the project, which aims to address the critical workforce shortages evident in Tasmania as well as nationally. The Department of Education, Education and Care Unit are acknowledged for their support of this project by providing funding to ECA Tasmania Branch.
- We were proud to bring a Trauma Informed Practice project to the north, north-west and southern regions of the state in 2022. Overseen by ECA Tasmania Branch and delivered by the Inclusion Agency Tasmania, the project aims to build the sector's capacity in understanding and responding to the needs of children from trauma backgrounds. The project is led by Dr Elspeth Stephenson (University of Tasmania) who has been working with long day care and outside school hours care leaders to investigate and apply trust-based relational intervention.

## QUEENSLAND

### Chair: Alison Evans

The 2021 ECA National Conference, which was to be held in Brisbane, was changed to a fully virtual event which was a great success. Other highlights of the 2021–22 year for ECA Queensland included being the lead organisation in Australia for Global Intergenerational Week, and celebrating Early Learning Matters Week with visits to centres.

### Key achievements

- The ECA Queensland Committee attended an afternoon tea with the Brisbane Lord Mayor and councillors as well as a meeting with our new Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland.
- Under 8's Week continues to be one of our major events, held each year in May across the state and involving children, families, educators, teachers, centres, schools, libraries and more. This year's Week was a wonderful celebration of children and childhood.
- We held several successful panel events during the year with participants joining in-person and via online live-stream. In March, we hosted a wellbeing panel for early childhood teachers as part of our Early Careers group. The panel was presented by Tanya Burr, Education and Practice Advisor and Viki Rozsas, Early Childhood Pedagogy Advisor. We also facilitated a panel on children's play, with Dr Francis Bobongie-Harris, Pip Forbes, Kirsty Dixon and Prof Michael Hogan leading discussions.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

### Chair: Sarah Lloyd

The intention and role of the ECA Northern Territory Committee is to promote ECA's vision and purpose and support ECA's membership and advocacy by identifying key issues, priorities and policies that influence young children. We are a key source of professional support and development for ECA members in the Northern Territory.

### Key achievements

- Affiliation—a year ago, ECA NT Branch undertook the process to affiliate with Early Childhood Australia, which included not only a governance change but the transfer of our business operations. Through professionalism, collaboration and collective determination the transition happened seamlessly, with no interruption to our business and programs.
- Sparking the next generation—we collaborated with Charles Darwin University during Orientation Week to present *From Passion to Power—Our Future Profession*. Janet Williams-Smith provided an inspiring and thought-provoking message to the early childhood community, including pre-service teachers, and highlighted the individual and collective benefits of ECA membership.
- ECA continues to be a visible presence in the Northern Territory's early childhood sector and we are active in the broader community, advocating that all children are learning and thriving. We are active participants in government and non-government reference groups and provide education and outreach through community events and conferences.



# Year in review



## Finance and Operations

**2021–22 was a year of growth and challenge for all areas of the National Operations team as we adapted systems and processes to meet ECA's changing needs.**

The National Operations team had a significant increase in workload during the year as a result of the integration of most of the ECA state and territory branches under the new ECA governance structure. A major contributor to this was our takeover of the financial processing and management of the two large funded programs that operate in the Northern Territory—the NDIS Partner in the Community initiative and the Inclusion Support Program.

The National Operations team had to quickly get up to speed with the objectives and processes of the two programs. The Finance team transitioned the ECA NT operations from their previous external bookkeeper and audit team and established productive reporting lines with the two funders. ECA National's HR Manager transitioned NT staff from their prior employment contracts onto ECA's Enterprise Agreement.

Due to a significant increase in staff numbers—particularly within Human Resources Information System and Payroll—more equipment and IT support was needed. ECA entered into an agreement with AUIT to provide an IT Helpdesk, supporting ECA staff with basic IT issues. This allowed ECA's IT Manager to focus on application development, supporting ECA's Learning Management System and the continued integration of ECA's CRM across our various data sources.

### Key achievements

- ECA's national membership is up 3% on last year, with just over 3500 members in total. ECA is implementing changes to allow memberships to automatically renew, instead of requiring direct action at the end of each billing period.
- At the end of the financial year ECA moved to a new Human Resource Information System that will provide more options for employees and their managers to engage in task tracking and performance management.
- ECA's General Manager Finance and Operations, along with the HR Manager, led the discussions and negotiations of the ECA Enterprise Agreement that was due to expire at the end of June 2022. Meetings between employees and the management representative (General Manager Finance and Operations) aimed at striking the right balance between employee and management expectations. The resulting new Enterprise Agreement includes benefits such as an acknowledgement that the previous 'spread of working hours' present in most enterprise agreements and working conditions was not the most practical or ideal standard under new COVID-altered working conditions.



# Policy and Government Relations

**ECA is a regular and trusted contributor to the public policy debate on all matters affecting young children (birth to eight years) and their families.**

A core function of ECA is to develop policies on early childhood education and care (ECEC) and advocate for the rights of children. In 2021-22, we continued to draw on the broad experiences and expertise of our membership, professionals in the early childhood sector and related organisations in our advocacy work. Much of our focus this year has been on getting our 'Early Learning Matters' message heard, to raise awareness of the role of ECEC in children's development and wellbeing in Australia.

ECA prepared a pre-budget submission through which we identified four key themes for government investment:

- Access to Early Learning Matters: A high-quality, play-based ECEC place for every child where and when they need it.
- Affordability of Early Learning Matters: A simplified subsidy system that delivers affordable and predictable ECEC.
- Inclusion in Early Learning Matters: Well-resourced systems and practices that put ECEC services in reach for all children and families.
- Stability of Early Learning Matters: A well supported and professionally paid workforce that are thriving in their work.

These themes framed our response for subsequent advocacy and submissions throughout the year.

## Key achievements

- ECA developed and contributed to a number of statements and submissions including the Draft National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children; NSW Women's Economic Opportunities Review; ACT Set up for Success: Early Childhood Workforce Strategy; Select Committee on Work and Care; and Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment.
- On 21 May 2022, Australians voted in the Federal Election, resulting in the Australian Labor Party, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, forming government. Throughout the six-week period leading up to the election, ECA promoted a strong message that **Early Learning Matters** this election and called for all parties to make it a policy priority.
- ECA co-hosted the Federal Election 2022 Candidates Forum with Thrive by Five, Community Connections Solutions Australia and SNAICC. Candidates with early childhood portfolio responsibility were invited to share their policies and plans to support Australian children, answer questions from participants and to write a blog outlining their respective positions.

# Professional Learning

**Professional Learning at ECA consists of three teams: Learning Hub, Publishing and Studio, and Special Projects. As a group, we aim to lead and inspire educators at all stages of their careers, connect research with practice and champion quality in early education.**

Professional Learning continued to lead our sector in an ongoing difficult period with evidence-based professional learning, online learning and publications.

## ECA Learning Hub

The ECA Learning Hub (LH) reached an exciting and significant achievement in late 2021 with the launch of the [new Learning Management System](#) (LMS) through Moodle. All courses underwent an internal review, content updates, design changes and improved accessibility (including closed captioning on videos). Subscription courses were expanded with resources and additional reflection tasks. In total, 52 individual online courses were upgraded and relaunched.

The new LMS was integrated with other ECA infrastructure, such as the Customer Relationship Manager, Salesforce, allowing the broader ECA team transparency and autonomy over client and financial management. All Learning Hub products are now available on the ECA Shop, bringing all financial purchases in-house.

## ECA Publishing and Studio

The Publishing and Studio team produces quality publications and supports all aspects of ECA's work across marketing, communications, social media, online learning and events.

The end of 2021 saw the completion of some key collaboration work by the team. This includes the launch of the *Box of Provocations for Our Earth*, redesign of the new Learning Hub LMS, development of brand and style for the 2022 National Conference (including production of materials), and editing and design of the materials for the AJEC Research Symposium and ECA Leadership Colloquia.

Over the past financial year the team also published 16 issues of ECA's core publications—the *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* (AJEC), *Every Child* magazine, the *Everyday Learning Series* and the *Research in Practice Series*.

## Key achievements

- The Learning Hub completed a number of funded projects including:
  - course development of four new online safety modules for the e-safety Commissioner
  - three new *Therapeutic Storytelling* modules to support disaster resilience for Be You
  - a fourth module for the *Encountering and Interpreting the Principles of Reggio Emilia* series.
- Publishing and Studio completed a number of bespoke projects for external clients. These included:
  - ECTARC—production of five training resource books
  - Early Years and School Age Care (EYSAC) Workforce Tasmania Project—resources and career postcards
  - NOFASD Australia—booklet, educator resource, poster and brochure
  - Victorian Government—Family Violence Toolkit for early childhood services
  - Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program (KQIP)—*Mosaic Magazine* and LMS redesign.
- The Professional Learning section successfully collaborated with Family Day Care Australia launching a bespoke online learning platform that hosts ECA Learning Hub and bespoke content for the family day care sector.

# Events

During the past 12 months, the Events team have been navigating the new opportunities and challenges of the virtual and hybrid event space, as well as returning to in-person events.

Technology has played an important part in helping to grow our audience by providing opportunities to those who have previously been unable to attend ECA events in-person due to limited resources and/or long travel distances. The appetite to re-engage in-person has also been prevalent, with attendees sharing their excitement to have opportunities to reconnect with their colleagues and friends face-to-face.

The Events team have been adaptable and flexible in our approach to working in this new landscape and continue to meet the vision of the strategic plan 'to lead and inspire professional learning to ensure our events are well attended, sustainable and impactful'.

We would like to thank each of our speakers, presenters and facilitators, delegates, sponsors and exhibitors who helped with the successful delivery of our National Conference and events during the past 12 months.

## Key achievements

- More than 2500 participants joined the fully virtual **2021 ECA National Conference** and the energy online was exhilarating. The connection and sense of shared drive among delegates truly brought the theme *Young Citizens: The right to play, learn and be heard* to life. Post-event feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive:  
*Amazing! The platform was interactive and engaging, and there was no 'zoom fatigue' of three days online. It was easy to navigate and feel like you were a part of discussions. Amazing work ECA. —Conference delegate*
- The inaugural **ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics** was held 21–25 February 2022 in Brisbane. A total of 17 participants attended the event with Catharine Hydon and Trent Moy as the facilitators.  
*I was offered the tools and space to take a deep dive into philosophy, ethics, leadership and rights, all the while using the opportunity to reflect on my own professional journey, the perspective of the sector and ways we can or ought to exert our influence. —Colloquia participant*
- We welcomed 240 in-person participants to the **2022 ECA Reconciliation Symposium** in Darwin. We were honoured to have such an incredible diversity of speakers who shared their stories, research and experience so generously, and outlined the need for embedding reconciliation within the early childhood sector. We heard everything from historic perspectives through to current-day concerns that all Australians need to be aware of, and we were inspired and encouraged to **be brave** and **make change**.  
*All keynotes were inspiring and helped me to think wider on reconciliation and racism. It has helped me reflect on how I respond and react to these elements. —Participant*

# Marketing and Communications

It has been a busy and productive year for the Marketing and Communications team, with strong revenue gains and plenty of exciting new projects in the pipeline.

The rollout of a new electronic direct mail (EDM) campaign platform and website is ongoing, with a plan to launch in the first half of the 22/23 financial year.

We have also been making changes to the ECA Shop website to support the user experience and maximise sales. This work has led to demonstrated improvements in accessibility and usability. In addition to this, we spent a lot of time and effort improving our use of Google Merchant. This platform allows businesses to upload and maintain product information, including pictures and pricing, to be displayed in relevant Google Shopping searches. Our work in this area contributed to a dramatic increase in ECA Shop revenue.

Our 2022 Early Years Planners also had a very successful campaign, selling out before the end of December 2021. The planners featured a range of children's artwork submitted by services across Australia. Our 2023 planners were designed internally, featuring illustrations of Australian animals, and we anticipate they will be just as successful.

## Key achievements

- In June 2022 we achieved a 235% increase in Google Merchant-generated revenue compared to May 2022.
- We had a number of successful sales campaigns throughout the year. The EOFY sale resulted in a revenue increase of 8% on 2021.
- Our first in-person event since COVID-19—Reconciliation Symposium 2022—resulted in a revenue increase of 49% compared to the 2019 event.



# ECA Northern Territory

**One of Janet Williams-Smith's (General Manager, Inclusion & Early Intervention) key delegations is managing the National Disability Insurance Scheme Partner in the Community (NDIS) initiative in Darwin and the NT Inclusion Support Agency (NT-IA) as well as engaging in national advocacy for inclusion and effective early intervention.**

We are focused on building the capacity and capability of early childhood education and care services to include children with additional needs; including children being diagnosed or with a disability, those from diverse cultural and language backgrounds, refugee children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and vulnerable children.

Within the Inclusion Support Program, the NT-IA Inclusion Professionals are available to all eligible services to provide tailored inclusion advice and support. In addition, as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention partner, we work with families and carers of children with developmental delays and disabilities to identify their children's needs and help these families to reach their goals for their children.

Gym for Growth and Development (g4gd) has been developed by ECA NT staff as a universal, supported physical activity program. g4gd provides active and appropriate movement opportunities that enable children to explore, develop and refine the skills that are essential for healthy physical and neurological development.

## Key achievements

- The Inclusion Support Program is a territory-wide inclusion support program, and our Inclusion Professionals (IPs) are currently supporting 196 early childhood education and care (ECEC) services across the Northern Territory. Visits to remote communities have increased this year following a difficult period of limited access during the pandemic.
- The NDIS Specialist team are currently supporting 587 children on NDIS plans with 95 children receiving early support services. The team also run several early intervention activities including Little Geckos Playgroup, the Fun Bus mobile playgroup, Circle of Security training for parents and ECEC services, along with training and professional development activities on Let's Talk About Autism/Language/etc.
- The Gym for Growth and Development continues to flourish and this year partnered with the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) *Young Mums Strong Mums* group supporting young Indigenous mothers to interact, play and move with their infants.

# Be You

**Early Childhood Australia is proud to empower educators and early learning services to support the mental health of our youngest citizens through Be You.**

Be You supports educators to nurture positive, inclusive and resilient learning communities where every child, young person, educator and family can achieve their best possible mental health.

2021-2022 continued to be a challenging time for the early childhood sector, as services navigated closures, staffing shortages and fast-changing rules in the wake of COVID-19 outbreaks. These impacts were widespread but not evenly distributed: the great majority of early learning providers operate single services and have limited access to support networks. This underscores the need for targeted and tailored approaches to early learning services and educators experiencing vulnerability.

The Be You Early Learning Team remained responsive to changing needs across the sector, with a particular focus on educator wellbeing. Be You continued to engage services and stakeholders in clusters and via strategic collaborations with large providers and peak bodies. This approach leveraged the support and implementation resources of those organisations, allowing Consultants to provide tailored and targeted support to the learning communities who needed it most.

## Key achievements

- Despite the difficulties facing the sector we have continued to exceed recruitment targets with a total recruitment of 5579 as of June 30, with the average monthly recruitment of 70 services. Approximately 90% of participating services are categorised as 'engaged' or 'progressing', meaning that they have attended Be You events or participated in professional learning in addition to receiving consultant support. This highlights the priority educators and services continue to place on mental health and wellbeing. These strong engagement rates were supported through the delivery of approximately 500 online events and 59 bespoke onsite events delivered throughout the year.
- In June, our flagship annual Virtual Conference welcomed over 3000 attendees, of whom 44% were associated with early learning services. This year's theme, *Empowerment: Keys to mentally healthy communities*, received strong positive feedback from attendees. Approximately a third of attendees who requested follow-up after the conference subsequently registered their learning community with Be You.
- During 2021-2022 we concluded the Bushfire Response Program (BRP), completing the transition of BRP content and knowledge into core Be You. This work included the development and review of a suite of resources addressing natural disaster resilience and community trauma. Be You partnered with the ECA Learning Hub and the Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health to deliver three interactive learning modules exploring the use of therapeutic storytelling in disaster-affected communities. These were complemented by a set of posters highlighting key resilience and wellbeing messages, designed by the ECA Publishing and Studio team and mailed out to over 2000 bushfire-impacted services across Australia.



# Audited financials

## Early Childhood Australia

ABN: 44 950 767 752

Concise Consolidated Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022



## Early Childhood Australia

ABN: 44 950 767 752

### Concise Consolidated Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
<b>Income</b>			
Revenue	4	15,043,093	11,211,552
Other income	4	26,552	1,771,957
<b>Total income</b>		<b>15,069,645</b>	<b>12,983,509</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Communication		(75,786)	(82,562)
Consulting		(326,738)	(673,586)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(503,018)	(318,674)
Development		(142,584)	(153,067)
Event expenses		(448,101)	(42,149)
IT platforms, project specific		(310,882)	(368,155)
Labour costs		(11,358,640)	(9,123,647)
Occupancy		(717,923)	(661,452)
Postage		(170,673)	(221,877)
Printing		(47,396)	(57,194)
Promotion		(115,938)	(108,702)
Finance costs		(48,460)	(50,060)
Cost of sales of publications		(167,333)	(150,361)
Royalties		-	(14,466)
Travel costs		(357,641)	(410,661)
Other expenses		(1,019,864)	(817,214)
<b>Total expenses</b>		<b>(15,810,977)</b>	<b>(13,253,827)</b>
<b>Profit for the year</b>		<b>(741,332)</b>	<b>(270,318)</b>
<b>Other comprehensive income, net of income tax</b>			
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>(741,332)</b>	<b>(270,318)</b>

## Early Childhood Australia

ABN: 44 950 767 752

### Concise Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

As At 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents		3,771,206	3,098,084
Trade and other receivables	5	1,197,319	1,514,435
Inventories		327,651	296,657
Other assets	6	1,049,111	707,481
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>6,345,287</b>	<b>5,616,657</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Other financial assets		64,609	-
Property, plant and equipment	7	213,079	119,061
Intangible assets	8	479,006	177,454
Right-of-use assets	9	645,461	735,243
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>1,402,155</b>	<b>1,031,758</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>7,747,442</b>	<b>6,648,415</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Creditors and accrued expenses		863,225	615,933
Lease liabilities	9	230,159	157,961
Employee benefits	10	1,016,009	727,302
Income in advance	11	3,150,337	2,961,835
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>5,259,730</b>	<b>4,463,031</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Lease liabilities	9	475,503	622,566
Employee benefits	10	142,003	82,227
Provision for make good		50,000	50,000
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>667,506</b>	<b>754,793</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>5,927,236</b>	<b>5,217,824</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>1,820,206</b>	<b>1,430,591</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Reserves	12	657,634	615,000
Retained earnings		1,162,572	815,591
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>1,820,206</b>	<b>1,430,591</b>

## Early Childhood Australia

ABN: 44 950 767 752

### Concise Consolidated Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

## 2022

	Note	Retained Earnings	Asset purchase reserve	Program development reserve	Redundancy reserve	Administration reserve	State and territory reserves	Total
		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2021		815,591	100,000	400,000	35,000	80,000	-	1,430,591
Profit (loss) attributable to members of the parent entity		(741,332)	-	-	-	-	-	(741,332)
Transactions with owners in their capacity as owners								
Contribution of equity from affiliates		1,130,947	-	-	-	-	-	1,130,947
Transfers to/from reserves		(42,634)	(95,436)	(224,567)	-	(30,000)	392,637	-
Balance at 30 June 2022		1,162,572	4,564	175,433	35,000	50,000	392,637	1,820,206

## 2021

	Note	Retained Earnings	Asset purchase reserve	Program development reserve	Redundancy reserve	Administration reserve	Total
		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2020		1,700,909	-	-	-	-	1,700,909
Profit (loss) attributable to members of the parent entity		(270,318)	-	-	-	-	(270,318)
Transactions with owners in their capacity as owners							
Transfers to/from reserves		(815,000)	100,000	400,000	35,000	80,000	-
Balance at 30 June 2021		615,591	100,000	400,000	35,000	80,000	1,430,591

## Early Childhood Australia

ABN: 44 950 767 752

### Concise Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:</b>		
Receipts from members, customers and government	15,307,020	14,452,416
Payments to suppliers and employees	(16,898,985)	(13,794,667)
Interest received	26,552	45,407
Finance costs	(48,460)	(50,060)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	(1,613,873)	653,096
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:</b>		
Payment for intangible assets	(83,299)	(144,080)
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(160,560)	(94,586)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	(243,859)	(238,666)
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:</b>		
Proceeds from affiliate contributions	2,801,219	-
Payment of lease liabilities	(270,365)	(146,030)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	2,530,854	(146,030)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held	673,122	268,400
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	3,098,084	2,829,684
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	3,771,206	3,098,084



## 1 Basis of Preparation

The concise consolidated financial report of Early Childhood Australia Inc. (the Association) is an extract from the full financial report for the year ended 30 June 2022. The concise financial report has been prepared in accordance with Accounting Standards AASB 1039: Concise Financial Reports, and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

The financial statements, specific disclosures and other information included in the concise financial report are derived from, and are consistent with, the full financial report of the Association. The concise financial report cannot be expected to provide as detailed an understanding of the financial performance, financial position and financing and investing activities of the Association as the full financial report. A copy of the full financial report and auditor's report is available from the Early Childhood Australia Incorporated's website.

The functional and presentation currency of Early Childhood Australia Inc. is Australian dollars.

## 2 Discussion and analysis of the financial statements

This discussion and analysis is provided to assist Members in understanding the concise financial report. The discussion and analysis is based on the company's financial statements and information contained in the concise financial report. This information has been derived from the full financial report of Early Childhood Australia (ECA).

During the year the ECA entered into affiliation agreements with separate state and territory associations (branches) of Early Childhood Australia. Under the agreements, the branches agreed to wind-up and transfer surplus assets to Early Childhood Australia. The winding up process and transitioning of control to the Group has varied amongst the branches. The Group has consolidated the activities of the branches when effective control over decision making for the branch has occurred.

### Statement of Comprehensive income

The Association's operations for the year ended 30 June 2022 resulting in a deficit of \$741,332 (2021: deficit of \$270,318). In the previous year's financial report, a surplus of \$60,534 was reported. This has been revised due to the discovery of an error which overstated the amount of grant income recognised as revenue during the 2021 financial year.

Income and expenditure have both increased due to the broadening of the Company's activities as a direct result of the affiliation with the state and territory Company's.

Funding for the Be You program remains a key source of income as well as retail sales such as our Learning Hub products. Additional sources of income for the current year include the NDIS and ISP grants (\$3,464,556) which have continued following the affiliation with ECANT.

The extended delay of some large-scale events due to the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that income originally projected for this financial year has not been recognised. This has had an impact upon the 2022 financial result, as that income will now be brought to account next financial year.

### Statement of financial position

Total assets increased to \$7,747,442 (2021: \$6,648,415). Total liabilities increased to \$5,927,236 (2021: \$5,217,824). The affiliation with the state and territory associations attributed to an increase in net assets of \$1,130,947. These was partially offset by outgoings made with respect to grant funding received in advance (a reduction in cash and liabilities of \$748,696) and the operating deficit.

### Statement of changes in equity

Total equity increased by \$389,615 to \$1,820,206 (2021: 1,700,909.) The affiliation with the state and territory associations attributed to an increase of \$1,130,947 which has been partially offset by the operating deficit.

### Statement of Cash Flows

Cash and cash equivalents increased by \$673,122 (2021: \$268,400).

Cash balances of \$2,801,219 were transferred to the Company upon the affiliation with the state and territory associations. However, this included \$1,369,901 of unacquitted grant funding (NDIS & ISP grants) which was matched by an obligation to provide future services.


Cash outflows from operating activities included significant amounts made with respect to these and other grant payments which were received in previous years and treated in those years as income received in advance. This included:

- \$452,894 expended on grants (ISP: \$349,154 & Be You: \$103,740); and
- \$748,696 returned to providers upon the negotiation of new grant agreements (NDIS: \$218,731 & Be You: \$529,965).

## 3 Retrospective restatement

(a) Grant income was overstated in the 2021 year. The aggregate effect of the error on the annual financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2022 is as follows:

	Previously stated \$	30 June 2021 Adjustments \$	Restated \$
<b>Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income</b>			
Revenue	8,234,039	(330,852)	7,903,187
<b>Statement of Financial Position</b>			
Income in advance	2,630,983	330,852	2,961,835
Retained earnings	1,146,443	(330,852)	815,591

Director 

Director 

Dated 25/11/2022



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## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA

### Report on the Financial Report

#### Opinion

We have audited the accompanying concise financial report of Early Childhood Australia (the company), which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022, the consolidated statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the year, and related notes, derived from the audited financial report of the company for the year then ended.

In our opinion the accompanying concise financial report complies with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

#### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the concise financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We confirm that the independence declaration required by the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, which has been given to the directors of the company, would be in the same terms if given to the directors as at the time of this auditor's report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### Concise Financial Report

The concise financial report does not contain all the disclosures required by the Australian Accounting Standards. Reading the concise financial report and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report and the auditor's report thereon.

#### The Audited Financial Report and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial report in our report dated 25 November 2022.

#### Directors' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The directors of the company are responsible for the preparation of the concise financial report in accordance with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports, and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the concise financial report. The directors are responsible for overseeing the company's financial reporting process.



CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS  
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### Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the concise financial report, complies in all material respects, with AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 810 Engagements to report on summary financial statements.

Matthew Hung, CA  
rdl.accountants

25 November 2022  
Blackburn, Victoria

### AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION UNDER DIVISION 60 OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHARITIES AND NOT-FOR-PROFITS COMMISSION ACT 2012

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2022 there have been:

- i. no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- ii. no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Matthew Hung, CA  
rdl.accountants

25 November 2022  
Blackburn, Victoria





**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children