

EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA
COLLOQUIA
ON LEADERSHIP
AND ETHICS

*I know you won't believe me but the
highest form of Human Excellence is
to question oneself and others.*

—Socrates



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Never has ethical leadership been more important...



A message from the ECA National President

Since 1939, Early Childhood Australia (ECA) members and delegates have gathered at events like our National Conference to challenge the status quo and grapple with the complexities and ethical issues of leadership practice. Alongside ECA's *Code of Ethics*, first developed in the 1980s, we have valued opportunities to support each other in thinking through the complex social, policy and regulatory agendas every day.

Every ECA National Conference tackles the contemporary issues in leadership and ethics. Over the years, keynote presenters have challenged, inspired and expanded our understanding of the early childhood landscape. In 2019, Professor Peter Moss challenged delegates to look beyond managerial or objective definitions of quality, urging us instead to view education as political, dynamic and sociocultural:

What are the ethics and values that frame the way we work—what is your image of the child? What is the purpose of education? What ethics for education? What values? What do we want for our children?

These questions helped inform the development of the ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics. The colloquia offers an intellectually rigorous space that explores the interplay between leadership and ethics in and on circumstances that influence and shape the early childhood education and care sector. It is underpinned by a safe and collaborative process, inviting participants to think deeply about the fundamental ideas that shape our profession and sector including civil society, childhood and identity.

The **2026 ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics** will continue this exploration through Socratic questioning and peer-to-peer dialogue—an evolution in our approach to strengthening and supporting ethical leadership in the early childhood sector. It also offers a unique way

to experience the ECA National Conference through exclusive access to some of the keynote speakers and contemporary leaders who are prompting us to think differently, dig deeper, and better understand the contemporary ethical issues shaping early childhood education and care today.

As a leader or aspiring leader, I warmly invite you to join the **2026 ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics** in Melbourne.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Brown'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'T'.

Trevor Brown
ECA National President

The facilitators led the participants on a path of challenge, deep conversation and questioning of ethics, leadership and our identity.

We were united in our desire to discuss and deeply reflect on the readings given prior to the colloquia.

The management of our time and dialogue that we were inspired to enter into have given me an even deeper thoughtfulness about my own leadership and ethics in the early childhood sector.

—Jane Bourne, 2022
ECA Colloquia Participant



Overview

This is an exclusive opportunity to participate in the ECA National Conference in a new and dynamic way, where we will be joined by some of the conference keynote presenters, community leaders and sector protagonists.

The **ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics** provides a select group of leaders in the early childhood sector with the opportunity to engage in deep, connected professional learning through a series of facilitated dialogues.

Occurring in a dedicated space with facilitators who bring expertise in the study and practice of ethics and ethical leadership, the colloquia dialogues interlink with the key themes and content of the ECA National Conference.

Program

The colloquia program will begin on Tuesday 29 September, two days prior to the commencement of the ECA National Conference, and will end on Friday 2 October. We recommend participants arrive in Melbourne on the afternoon of Monday 28 September for a social gathering before the formal program begins.

Colloquia sessions (dialogues) will be intertwined with the ECA National Conference and will take place in a dedicated space set aside for participants and facilitators. The first two days of the colloquia (Tuesday 29 September and Wednesday 30 September) will run independent of the conference, followed by two days (Thursday 1 October and Friday 2 October) that will be incorporated into the conference program. This will leave Saturday 3 October as a free day, allowing participants to connect with colleagues at the conference before heading home.

Preparation

Prior to attending the conference, colloquia participants are asked to engage with a curated set of thought-provoking resources (these will include readings as well as audio/visual resources). It is recommended that participants allow 30 hours for preparation in the weeks leading up to the colloquia.

The dialogues will be structured around a tailored conceptual framework containing three key themes that historically and currently shape our sector—childhood, civil society and identity.

Outcomes for participants

As a participant in the colloquia, you will:

- expand your understanding about ethical leadership using a critically reflective approach for advocacy and action
- gain deeper understanding of the importance of diverse perspectives, dialogue and negotiation as critical elements of ethical leadership
- strengthen your capacity to be an informed thought leader for achieving improved outcomes for children, families and the community
- challenge and reconsider your role in empowering, enabling and enhancing future leaders in the children's services sector.

Development and framework

The colloquia dialogues have been developed by a team of experts in ethics and leadership, both within and beyond the early childhood professional context.

The program facilitators, guest speakers and group dialogues will expand and reimagine the childrens education and care leadership landscape as we know it, laying the foundations for participants to create a sense of shared humanity as trailblazers tasked with ethical decision-making as they contribute to a more civil society.

Facilitators

Our highly skilled facilitators will use a dynamic conceptual framework and rich dialogic techniques to generate deeper, broader and transformed ways of thinking and being. Each dialogue session will be led by the facilitators, who will be confident with the content and processes and have a broad understanding of ethics as well as their application in early childhood education leadership.



Catharine Hydon,
Director,
Hydon Consulting

With over 30 years' experience leading and advocating for quality early childhood education and care, Catharine Hydon's work as the Principal Consultant and Director at Hydon Consulting focuses on supporting professionals to explore the relationship between theory and practice. Catharine travels across Australia to partner with leaders and educators in a collective effort to create meaning, define quality and engage in the art of transformational change. Central to her work is the cultivation of professional dialogue that embraces diversity and invites deep reflection.

Informed by a Master of Early Childhood Education, specialising in innovative practice and governance, Catharine is driven by the need for principled approaches to education and leadership.



Melinda Miller,
Principal Consultant,
Melinda Miller Consultancy

Dr Melinda Miller is a registered teacher, education researcher and consultant working across early childhood services, schools, universities and government. Melinda's doctoral research focused on racism and whiteness in early childhood education curriculum and service delivery. She delivers professional learning on unconscious bias, whiteness and cultural responsiveness in educational programs. Melinda joined the ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics as a participant in 2023 and since then has gone on to being a valued member of the facilitator team.

Dates and location

The **ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics** will be held from **Tuesday 29 September to Friday 2 October 2026**, in tandem with the ECA National Conference *Holding the Past, Creating the Future* at the **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC)**, Melbourne.



Registration

To register your attendance at the **ECA Colloquia on Leadership and Ethics**, please use the link to the registration website provided in your letter of invitation.

For further information, please contact the ECA Conference and Events team:

Telephone: 02 6242 1800

Email: conference@earlychildhood.org.au

Terms and conditions

ECA's usual terms for cancellations apply, and due to the nature of this event, we will need to approve any registration transfer. Refer to www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/events/colloquia/ for more information.



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We need to look to our past. Has anything really valuable been lost in the onward surge?

... We need to evaluate our present very carefully. There is so much that could be done.

... We need to look to the future lest present habit and expediency determine our direction; rather should we be guided by reasoned planning based on expanding knowledge of children and seen in relation to a complete scheme of education in its widest sense.

— Editorial excerpt from the *Australian
Preschool Quarterly*, 1963