

Newsletter



Early Childhood Australia
Western Australia



The Nyoongar season of Bunuru is the hottest and driest time of the year, marked by stillness as plants and animals slow in response to the heat. With freshwater scarce, people are drawn to the coast for sea breezes and food, while many animals rest during the day and move in the cooler hours..For young children, Bunuru invites close attention to how living things respond to heat — seeking shade, conserving water, resting, and adapting routines. It is a season well suited to gentle outdoor experiences, water play, noticing changes in light and temperature, and conversations about caring for ourselves, each other and the environment during hot weather. Bunuru reminds us that learning does not always look busy or fast; sometimes it is found in slowing down, observing carefully, and responding thoughtfully to the conditions around us.

Kaya

As we move into the year ahead, Early Childhood Australia WA is focused on strengthening the connections that matter most — across our membership, within the sector, and with partners who share our commitment to children, families and educators.

Following our recent planning day, we have sharpened our priorities for 2026 around collaboration, professional connection and remaining responsive to the realities of practice across Western Australia. Through our subcommittees, events program and upcoming networking opportunities, we are placing a strong emphasis on creating spaces where educators can come together to share ideas, learn from one another and feel supported in their work.

While the sector continues to navigate change and complexity, we are encouraged by the energy, expertise and generosity within our ECA WA community. By working together — across services, disciplines and regions — we can continue to build strong professional networks and advocate for quality early learning that places children at the centre of everything we do.

In this edition, you'll find opportunities to connect, including details of our upcoming networking event, along with updates from across the state and nationally, and recognition of outstanding contributions within the early childhood community. We look forward to another year of meaningful partnership and shared purpose.

Warm regards,
Tanya Steers
Chairperson

ECA WA COMMITTEE

Chair: Tanya Steers
Secretary: Rosina Smith
Treasurer: Dani Arrigoni
Committee Members
Amelia Ruscoe
Olivia Long
Dimity Franks
Sally Griffiths
Wendy Gorman
Deb Cavanagh
Emma Gardner
Tricia Ward
Ann Lochore
Admin: Jo Kapica

Our committee work with passion to provide an exciting calendar of events and professional growth opportunities. If you are interested in joining one of our special interest groups in 2026, please reach out!

ecawa@earlychildhood.org.au



Find us on [Facebook](#)

Start of the 2026 Full-time Kindy Pilot

As many of our members will be feeling this week, the 2026 school year has properly commenced across Western Australia, with children returning to early learning and school settings and families settling into new routines. According to the WA Government, approximately 23,490 children are beginning Kindergarten, marking the first year of formal schooling for many families.

The start of the school year also includes the commencement of a free full-time Kindergarten pilot at five public schools across metropolitan and regional WA. The optional pilot provides a play-based Kindergarten program delivered five days a week, with participation determined in consultation with families. The pilot operates at Roleystone Community College, Halidon Primary School, Banksia Grove Primary School, South Kalgoorlie Primary School and Dalyellup Primary School. Further expansion to additional public schools has been flagged from 2027. Early Childhood Australia WA is working with the State Government to provide advice and input on behalf of the early childhood sector as this initiative progresses.

National Early Childhood Reforms Commencing in 2026

As 2026 begins, early childhood education and care services across Australia are entering a year of national reform, following agreements by Education Ministers in 2025. Changes to the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the Education and Care Services National Law will be phased in throughout the year, with a strong focus on child safety, governance and regulatory oversight.

From 1 January 2026, child safety is more explicitly embedded within the National Quality Standard, particularly within Quality Area 2 (Children's Health and Safety) and Quality Area 7 (Governance and Leadership).

From 2 January 2026, penalties for breaches of National Law have increased, alongside expanded enforcement powers for regulatory authorities.

From 27 February 2026, further reforms will take effect nationally, including:

- child safety, rights and best interests becoming the paramount consideration*
- restrictions on personal electronic devices in services*
- mandatory child protection and child safety training*
- new and expanded misconduct offences*
- nationally consistent “no card, no start” Working with Children Check requirements*
- removal of supervision-related waivers*
- expanded oversight of related providers*
- establishment of a National Early Childhood Worker Register*

Further Information and Guidance

ACECQA has indicated that guidance and implementation support will be provided throughout 2026.

Key resources include:

- Guide to the National Quality Framework
- Child Safety Guides
 - Policy and procedure guidance
- National child safety training information
- Early Childhood Worker Register guidance

More information is available via:

- ACECQA (www.acecqa.gov.au)

- Australian Government Department of Education – Early Childhood (www.education.gov.au/early-childhood)

National update: Thriving Kids Advisory Group Final Report released

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has welcomed the release of the Thriving Kids Advisory Group Final Report, released by Health Minister Mark Butler and Advisory Group Co-Chair Frank Oberklaid. This follows the recent release of the Parliamentary Inquiry report into 'Thriving Kids', No Child Left Behind.

ECA participated in the Advisory Group and has endorsed the core principles underpinning the proposed model, including early identification, matching supports to levels of need, and delivering supports in everyday settings where children live, learn and play. The model proposes two streams of support: universal parenting supports, and targeted, evidence-based services tailored to children and families.

Australian governments have committed \$4 billion to Thriving Kids, with rollout scheduled to commence from October 2026 and full implementation by January 2028.

MeMembers can access the ECA national statement on the Thriving Kids Advisory Group Final Report via the recent Early Childhood Australia members email.

For direct access click here for the [Thriving Kids Advisory Group Final Report](#) or you can find a [summary here](#), the Minister's [media release here](#) and an article from [ABC News here](#). The Parliamentary Inquiry report into 'Thriving Kids', [No Child Left Behind](#) can be found here.

NETWORKING SUNDOWNER

BAREFOOT BOWLS & BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Make new connections, exchange ideas and step into the new year with a stronger network.

**ECA WA
MEMBERS
FREE**

**NON MEMBERS
ARE WELCOME \$10**

 **20 MARCH, 2025**

 **TIME: 6:00 PM**

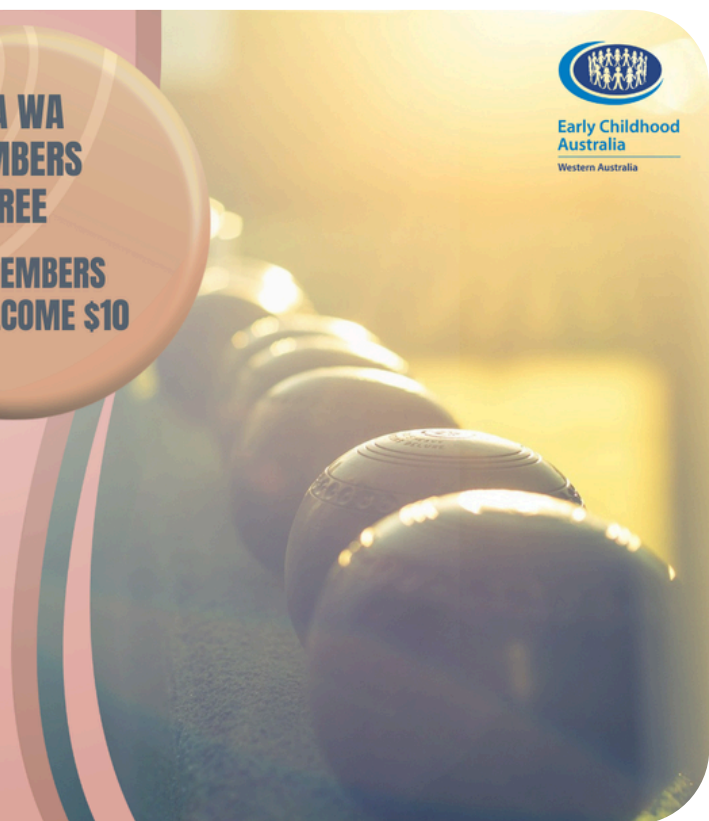
BOOK NOW



Enjoy a BBQ dinner and refreshments then unwind with a game of barefoot bowls as the sun sets.

Como Bowling Club
99 Hensman St, South Perth

Visit our website for membership
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au



Recognising Excellence in Early Childhood

Early Childhood Australia WA warmly congratulates Jill Cameron on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Australia Day Honours, recognising her long-standing contribution to early learning and early childhood development.

Jill has a strong historical connection to ECA WA, having served as Director of the WA Lady Gowrie Centre during the early years when Early Childhood Australia and the Gowrie services were closely linked and affiliated. Her leadership and advocacy span more than five decades, including significant roles within the

WA Department of Education and the Department of Communities, as well as her work supporting early learning initiatives such as the REED (Regional Early Education and Development) program in the Wheatbelt.

Across metropolitan, regional and rural Western Australia — and in international contexts — Jill has consistently championed equity, inclusion and the importance of the early years. ECA WA joins the broader early childhood community in congratulating Jill on this well-deserved recognition.



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

2026 EARLY YEARS PLANNERS



AVAILABLE WHILE STOCKS LAST
shop.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Dr Dawn Butterworth, President of OMEP WA. Dawn's lifelong dedication to young children, families, and early childhood education in WA and internationally was extraordinary. A pioneering educator, respected academic, and tireless advocate, her leadership and generosity shaped countless lives and organisations, including OMEP WA, which she served with energy, wisdom, and deep care. Dawn's contribution to the sector is immeasurable, and her legacy will continue to inspire. We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and colleagues.