



# ECTA EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

## \*KEYNOTE ONLINE & ONSITE 9:20am to 10:50am

### Children First: The Strength in Inclusion

**PRESENTER/S:** Claire Allsop

**OUTLINE:**

*Working with children who have complex needs and challenging behaviours can be demanding, and it is easy for educators to focus on difficulties. This session highlights practical ways a strengths-based, child-first approach can guide inclusive interactions with children, strengthen their sense of belonging, and support their ability to engage and thrive in learning. A strengths-based lens is important for every child, ensuring that all children are seen for their abilities, interests, and potential, not just their challenges. This approach is grounded in contemporary research and literature, reflecting current understanding of child development, inclusion, relational pedagogy, and strategies for engaging children with diverse needs. Participants will gain practical tools to embed child-first thinking into daily practice, helping every child to participate, succeed, and flourish while easing day-to-day challenges for educators and supporting their professional wellbeing. Participants will explore how language shapes expectations and how unconscious bias can unintentionally influence perceptions and responses to children. By focusing on children's abilities, interests, and ways of learning, and fostering collaborative relationships with families and communities, educators can create more inclusive, supportive, and connected learning environments that also promote their own wellbeing and confidence.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Claire Allsop is Principal Advisor Inclusion at C&K, where she leads initiatives that equip educators to create inclusive, strengths-based learning environments for all children. She was recently named Reimagine Australia Leader of the Year 2025 in recognition of her work embedding inclusion across early childhood education. Claire is deeply passionate about ensuring children with complex medical conditions and diagnoses, as well as those in regional and remote communities, have equitable access to high-quality early education. She has developed professional learning initiatives, created innovative inclusion resources, and regularly presents on the practical application of inclusive pedagogy. Her work brings together research, policy, and lived practice, with a focus on embedding accessibility, equity, and belonging at the heart of early learning.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 1.2 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 7 | NQS: 5, 6**

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## SESSION ONE ONLINE 12 NOON TO 1:20PM

### Agency in Action: Working with Children to Understand Behaviour

**PRESENTER/S:** Shona Morris

**OUTLINE:**

*This presentation explores the transformative potential of working collaboratively with children as a strengths-based approach to understanding and responding to behaviours. Grounded in Ross Greene's evidence-based Collaborative and Proactive Solutions® and aligned with the EYLF's emphasis on agency, relationships, and responsive pedagogy, this presentation will use real-world examples to demonstrate how engaging children as partners in problem-solving fosters emotional safety, builds executive functioning, and strengthens inclusive practice. The session will unpack the practical steps of working collaboratively with children, reflect on the mindset shifts required in adults, and consider how this approach can be embedded in early childhood settings to uphold children's rights and voices. This work invites educators to move beyond compliance-based responses and toward relational, respectful, and developmentally informed practice.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Shona is a passionate early childhood teacher with over three decades of experience in the early childhood sector, and a Developmental Educator. She holds a Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Education, and a Master of Autism Studies, and is currently completing a Master of Educational Leadership. As a Senior Inclusion Consultant at Autism Queensland, Shona provides coaching and professional development to educators, with a focus on supporting neurodiversity within early childhood learning environments and promoting positive behaviour guidance. Her work is grounded in values of connection, collaboration, and authenticity, and she is committed to creating emotionally responsive environments where every child, their family and their*



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*educators feel safe, respected, and empowered. Shona brings warmth, evidence-informed leadership, and a deep understanding of early childhood pedagogy to her coaching, helping educators grow with confidence and integrity.*

**Age Range: K&P | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 2 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4 | NQS: 1, 5**

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## Beyond Family Grouping: Embedding Multi-Age Collaboration Every Day

**PRESENTER/S:** Linda Price

### OUTLINE:

*Imagine an early learning environment where children of all ages collaborate, lead, and learn alongside one another across shared spaces. At Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre, children from birth to six move freely through environments, choosing where and with whom they learn. Collaboration is not an occasional event. Instead it is a lived practice that reflects a sociocultural approach to learning and belonging. In these flexible environments, safety and connection form the foundation. Children seek sibling-like relationships that offer comfort, security, and a deep sense of belonging as they move throughout the service. Younger children are guided and inspired by older peers, while older children experience the joy and responsibility of leadership, mentoring, and storytelling. Through this daily collaboration, children experience mastery in action. Older peers scaffold problem-solving and learning, while younger children contribute new perspectives and curiosity. This embedded approach fosters competence, confidence, and mutual respect, aligning with the EYLF V2.0 vision of children as capable and contributing learners and reflecting the Phoenix Cups® Framework where Safety, Connection, Mastery, Freedom, and Fun are continually nurtured.*

### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*As a facilitator with Phoenix Support for Educators, Linda's dominant Freedom Cup finds her championing risky play, nature play, and child-led, emergent curriculum. Never one to pass up a good yarn, she brings learning to life through storytelling - weaving narratives that spark curiosity, connection, and joy. As a VIT-registered teacher with over a decade of teaching and educational leadership experience, Linda has co-created and taught an award-winning bush kinder program designed with mental health at its heart. Through this presentation, Linda will share the journey of embracing multi-age spaces within the placed-based context of Kinglake in rural Victoria. Across her 11 years in the sector, Linda has contributed through publications, magazine features, conference presentations, and teaching at RMIT, sharing her knowledge around nature play, risky play, and embedding First Nations perspectives. Her current studies, a Masters of Educational Leadership, have ignited a commitment for educator wellbeing, social sustainability and a drive to rethink practices, and communities where every human has the opportunity to flourish.*

**Age Range: T&K | Kindy Uplift: 2, 3, 4 | ASPT: 1, 3 | NQS: 1, 3, 5, 6**

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## Beyond Labels: Supporting Attention Differences and Executive Function

**PRESENTER/S:** Briana Thorne

### OUTLINE:

*This engaging presentation will explore how to foster attention differences and executive functioning in the early years through a neuroscience-informed lens. Participants will be introduced to the neuroscience of ADHD and its impact on executive functioning, including working memory, impulse control, and emotional regulation. Emphasising a child-centric lens, the session will explore how these neurological differences can influence children's behaviour and learning in early childhood settings. This shift challenges the tendency to frame ADHD traits as "behavioural" problems to be managed, and instead recognises them as expressions of underlying neurological differences. By moving from a deficit-focused, behaviourist lens to a brain-based, needs-supportive approach, educators can respond in ways that foster inclusion, skill development, and wellbeing for all children. Educators will be guided to move away from a diagnostic mindset and instead focus on creating inclusive environments that recognise and respond to the broad spectrum of attention-related needs. The workshop will offer tools for building responsive educational programs that allow for flexibility, choice, and rhythm, supporting not just children with ADHD, but all learners. By understanding the "why" behind behaviours, educators will be empowered to create supportive, nurturing spaces where each child can thrive, without labelling or limiting their potential.*

### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*Briana is an experienced early years education specialist with a deep commitment to fostering high-quality, inclusive environments for children and educators. Her diverse career spans roles as an Early Childhood Teacher, Educational Leader, Centre Director,*



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and senior leadership positions, including State and General Manager. Holding a Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) specialising in Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment, and postgraduate qualifications in Mental Health and Neuroscience, Briana bridges neuroscience and education to inspire evidence-informed practice. Her philosophy places the child at the centre of every decision, advocating for agency, inclusion, and authentic child-led learning. Briana's experience with the Victorian Regulatory Authority strengthened her expertise in quality and compliance across assessment and rating, investigations, and regulatory practice. She is skilled in supporting services to navigate legislative frameworks while embedding reflective, relationship-based pedagogy. Today, her extensive career has led her to her role as a Senior Facilitator at Phoenix Support for Educators, where she delivers coaching, mentoring, and workshops with educators and teachers across Australia.

**Age Range: K&P | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 2, 4 | ASPT: 1, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 5**

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## Empowering Educators to Lead in Child Safety: Practical Strategies

**PRESENTER/S:** Susie Wilson

### **OUTLINE:**

Creating truly child safe environments goes beyond policies and compliance — it's about embedding safety and wellbeing into everyday practice. In this interactive workshop, ChildAware Founder and CEO Susie Wilson will unpack the Child Safe Standards through an early childhood lens, sharing practical strategies and real-world examples.

Participants will explore how to: - Understand the Child Safe Standards and what they mean in practice; Embed safety and wellbeing within their classroom and organisation; Empower children to speak up and share their views in age-appropriate ways; Partner with families and communities to strengthen shared responsibility; Identify and manage risk in everyday routines and environments; Recognise, respond to, and report concerns with confidence and professionalism; Reflect on their role in continuous improvement and accountability; Through discussion, reflection, and practical examples, this workshop will support educators to move beyond compliance — turning child safety into something children experience every day. Participants will leave inspired, confident, and equipped with realistic strategies to make child safety part of daily practice.

### **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

Susie Wilson is the CEO and Founder of ChildAware, a software platform that makes organisations safer places for children. With 20 years' experience in business, law and government, Susie founded ChildAware to help organisations to build cultures of child safeguarding and bridge the gap between complex legal compliance requirements and the practical challenges that organisations face. Susie believes in the power of technology to solve some of our greatest social problems and preventing the abuse, mistreatment, exploitation and harm of children is the most important of those challenges. After working as a lawyer and adviser within government Susie previously founded a successful childcare business and now brings those combined skills to drive the success of ChildAware.

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 1.1 | ASPT: 4, 6, 7 | NQS: 2**

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## Follow-Up Fatigue: When Letting Go Leads to Deeper Learning

**PRESENTER/S:** Angie Freeman

### **OUTLINE:**

Have you ever been told that someone will "follow up and get back to you soon"? In our day to day, the follow-up has become an almost automatic response, a single question answered, a box ticked, and the cycle supposedly complete. In Early Childhood, the practice of a follow up in our documentation can also veer dangerously close as another act of shallow box ticking, with more time spent on the writing than on the engagement, the learning and the fun. In this session, we'll unpack a real-life case study to explore what happens when we let go of the "traditional" notion of follow-ups altogether. What does authentic continuity of learning look like when we shift from box ticking, benchmark driven habits to genuine cycles of inquiry and reflection? This workshop explores and reimagines the history and future of the follow up. Where did this practice originate? Is it actually embedded in the EYLF, or have we simply inherited it? What would an Assessment and Rating visit look like if we abandoned the familiar observation > follow up formula? And perhaps most importantly, how might your professional life and the experiences of the children you support flourish without it? (Hint: your workload, wellbeing, and joy in teaching will thank you for it.)



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## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*With over 15 years of experience bringing sunshine to classrooms and leading teams, Ange is a passionate force in Australia's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector. Her journey spans from Early Childhood Education to Primary Teaching & Adult learning environments. Ange carries a toolkit full of leadership, mentoring, and training expertise. Ange is known for her inspiring energy and deep knowledge of the National Quality Framework. She is guided by a personal philosophy rooted in critical theory, the power of language, and a fierce commitment to social justice. Whether she's mentoring educators or helping teams work in more dynamic and intentional ways, Ange sees herself as a change agent, on a mission to build a more equitable education system where every learner has the chance to thrive.*

**Age Range: B-K | Kindy Uplift: 1.2 | ASPT: 3, 5 | NQS: 1**

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## Preventing Educator Burnout with the F.U.N Formula™

**PRESENTER/S:** Annie Harvey

### OUTLINE:

*Educators are passionate, but many are running on empty. The F.U.N Formula™ — Fuel · Uplift · Navigate — is a research-based wellbeing and performance framework designed to strengthen self-efficacy and restore professional confidence. Created by Annie Harvey, TEDx and international keynote speaker, former teacher and wellbeing specialist, this model reinterprets Albert Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (1970s social learning theory) into three accessible domains for modern education settings: Fuel (physiological regulation and safety), Uplift (social connection and persuasion), and Navigate (mastery, mindset, and confidence). Grounded in psychology and neuroscience, the F.U.N Formula™ offers practical tools for educators to reflect on their wellbeing, strengthen belief in their capabilities, and embed small, repeatable habits that build confidence across all areas of work. Participants will explore the science behind self-efficacy, experience short reflective "F.U.N pauses," and leave with a framework they can apply to their personal practice, team culture, and classroom environment.*

*Learning Outcomes: Understand how Bandura's self-efficacy theory protects against burnout; Reflect on personal and collective sources of confidence and calm; Apply the F.U.N Formula™ to enhance wellbeing and professional growth*

*Key Message: When educators feel strong, children thrive — and staying well can still be F.U.N (Fuel, Uplift, Navigate).*

### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*Annie Harvey is a TEDx and international keynote speaker, educator, and wellbeing specialist with more than 25 years' experience across education, corporate and community sectors. A former junior primary and ESL teacher, Annie has taught in schools across Australia and the UK and spent over a decade as a Kip McGrath tutoring franchisee. Annie has been both a certified mindfulness trainer for all ages and a laughter yoga specialist for over 10 years. She is the creator of The Giggle Game™, an evidence-informed card-based wellbeing resource now used in schools, aged-care homes and community programs worldwide to support co-regulation and emotional literacy through laughter, movement and mindful play. She is the author of 3 books and the founder of The STILL Effect and the F.U.N Formula™ frameworks, which help educators and health professionals prevent burnout by strengthening self-efficacy and nervous-system awareness. Known for her warmth, humour and trauma-informed approach, Annie brings science and joy together in ways that are practical, inclusive, and memorable, reminding audiences everywhere that staying calm doesn't have to be so serious.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 1.1, 1.2, 2, 4 | ASPT: 4, 6, 7 | NQS: 1, 4, 6, 7**

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## Sensing Science: Rethinking STEM Through Sensory Play in Early Childhood

**PRESENTER/S:** Dr Elise Waghorn & Dr Mariko Francis

**OUTLINE:**

*This presentation draws on a recently completed scoping review of international research on sensory play to reframe its significance as a foundation for early scientific thinking and STEM capability development. When viewed through a science and STEM lens, sensory play offers rich opportunities for children to hypothesise, test, compare, and reason—key processes underpinning scientific inquiry. Activities such as pouring, mixing, balancing, and transforming materials support children’s developing understandings of properties, forces, measurement, and change. The scoping review synthesised over 120 international studies published between 2010 and 2024 to examine how sensory play contributes to learning readiness, curiosity, problem-solving, and engagement. Findings highlight three key themes: (1) sensory play as a driver of inquiry and conceptual exploration, (2) the role of materials and environments in shaping scientific thinking, and (3) the importance of educator intentionality in extending learning beyond sensory experience alone. This presentation translates these findings into practical insights for early childhood educators, demonstrating how sensory play can be intentionally designed to support early science learning without compromising play-based pedagogy. It offers educators a research-informed framework for recognising, extending, and valuing children’s scientific thinking through everyday sensory experiences.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Dr Waghorn is Program Manager and Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at RMIT University. She completed her PhD at the University of Melbourne in 2023, focusing on global childhoods and the intersections of children’s lifeworlds, policy, and educational experiences across Australia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Her research interests include sensory play and STEAM pedagogies, inclusive and sustainable play environments, risky play, children’s socio-emotional development, and teacher education. Dr Waghorn leads innovative curriculum and professional experience initiatives, including the RMIT Early Childhood Connect Lab (“Pop Lab”), which has significantly improved student outcomes and placement readiness. She has published on creativity, sensory pedagogies, and childhood studies, and collaborates with community, government, and interdisciplinary partners to design research with both academic and sector impact.*

*Dr Francis is Lecturer and Course Coordinator in Inclusive Education in the School of Education at RMIT University, with a teaching and research focus on inclusive education practices for undergraduate and post-graduate courses. She works with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiation, as well as practices aligned with Victoria’s Disability Inclusion policy and the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD), to support all students’ equitable access to learning and development. Dr Francis’ research involves stakeholder experiences across primary, secondary, and higher education, liaising directly with industry partners. Her expertise is in developing robust instruments for collecting data in program evaluation, systematic review projects, undertaking data extraction, interpretation, and reporting.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 1.1, 1.2, 2, 3, 4 | ASPT: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 | NQS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7**

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## The Nature of Emotions: Playful Pathways to Emotional Literacy

**PRESENTER/S:** Tania Moloney

**OUTLINE:**

*In this fun and interactive online session, we’ll explore how nature can be a gentle and powerful teacher to help children notice, name and navigate their emotions. Through linking children’s emotional experiences to the elements, rhythms and patterns of the natural world, participants will explore practical, nature-based experiences that support children’s emotional literacy and their social and emotional development.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Tania Moloney is the Founder of Nurture in Nature Australia, where she helps educators to grow their knowledge and skills so they feel confident and supported in their nature-inspired teaching and learning practice. She presents regularly at national and international conferences; runs innovative nature programs in her mobile classroom, The Nature Bus; leads engaging professional development programs, including an annual in-person Campference Teacher Nature Conference and an online Campference: Where Nature Meets Story; and has an online professional learning community, Treehouse Educators. She’s also an Award-*



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*Winning Children's Book Author of Nature Ninja Saves the Natural World, and is on a mission to help children and their adults care for the planet in their own backyards, balconies and neighbourhoods.*

**Age Range: T-P | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 2, 4 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 2, 3, 5**

## **\*SESSION TWO ONLINE 2:10pm to 3:30pm**

### Growing Environments, Growing Children

**PRESENTER/S:** Lukas Ritson

**OUTLINE:**

*This session explores the reciprocal relationship between environment and child development. When designed with intention, outdoor spaces become living ecosystems for growth, belonging, and emotional regulation. The talk provides actionable steps for educators to transform outdoor environments into responsive learning communities.*

*Key Themes: The environment as a mirror of the child's growth: Emotional regulation through engagement and belonging; Inclusion through diversity of opportunity; Overcoming play deficits through intentional design.*

*Learning Outcomes:*

*Participants will: Understand the connection between engagement and emotional regulation; Learn to assess and evolve environments to meet diverse needs; Explore inclusive design principles that support all abilities; Develop reflective practices using extended research to sustain growth.*

*Practical Strategies:*

*Observation-based tools for identifying growth opportunities; Designing inclusive play elements that support diverse engagement; Reflective frameworks that link educator intention with child experience.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Lukas Ritson is an outdoor play specialist, educator and founder of Wearthly, an organisation dedicated to enriching childhood through meaningful outdoor environments and play-based learning. With more than two decades of experience across early childhood, primary education and landscape-led play design, Lukas bridges research with real-world practice to support the whole child. He is a sought-after keynote speaker who has presented at conferences across the United States, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and soon Malaysia in 2026. His TEDx talk on the Ecology of Play has further contributed to global conversations on children's wellbeing, risk competence and the impact of outdoor environments on emotional development. Lukas works with educators, leaders and policy groups internationally, delivering professional development and shaping environments that nurture autonomy, regulation and resilience. Known for his evidence-informed approach and practical warmth, he empowers communities to create spaces where children thrive through exploration, connection and play.*

**Age Range: T-P | Kindy Uplift: 1.1, 2, 3, 4 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 3, 5, 6**

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### Move to Regulate: Motor Skills and Self-Regulation

**PRESENTER/S:** Robyn Papworth

**OUTLINE:**

*As educators and therapists increasingly focus on the importance of self-regulation in early childhood, it's crucial to look beyond behaviour and understand the developmental foundations that support it. This presentation, led by Developmental Educator Robyn Papworth, addresses the powerful, yet often overlooked, connection between a child's motor skills, primitive reflex integration, and their capacity for emotional and sensory regulation. Attendees will explore the neurological underpinnings of self-regulation, discovering how foundational movements and the integration of early reflexes build the essential neural pathways for higher-order functions like focus, impulse control, and emotional stability. Join Robyn to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This session will equip you with the knowledge to: Identify key motor development milestones and subtle signs of retained primitive reflexes that can impact a child's regulation; Understand the science behind why movement and play are non-negotiable for building a well-regulated brain; Implement practical, evidence-based, and play-filled strategies to support motor skill development and reflex integration within your daily routines. This session is for any professional seeking to move beyond managing behaviour and start building the developmental capacity for self-regulation from the ground up.*



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## **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Robyn Papworth is the founder of Play Move Improve, an organisation dedicated to supporting childhood development. She is a Masters-qualified Developmental Educator, Exercise Physiologist, and certified Trainer. Robyn established Play Move Improve over 10 years ago and has since grown it into a dedicated team of early childhood teachers who deliver her evidence-based movement and self-regulation programs in kindergartens Australia-wide. With extensive experience working directly with children, families, and educators, Robyn is passionate about translating complex neuroscience into practical, play-based strategies that educators can use to support all children in the classroom.*

**Age Range: K&P | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 2, 3, 4 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 2, 3, 5**

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## **Music as Pedagogy: Teach and Embed Music with Confidence and Joy**

**PRESENTER/S:** Mary Angeline Villanueva

### **OUTLINE:**

*Music is a powerful medium for supporting children's holistic development. Yet many early childhood professionals hesitate to teach music, believing it requires formal training or natural talent. This misconception often limits music experiences and overlooks the deeper relational and developmental potential of active, participatory music-making. Drawing from both research and practical teaching experience, this presentation reframes music as an accessible and powerful pedagogical tool. It explores practical, age-appropriate strategies for embedding meaningful and engaging music experiences into daily routines and intentional teaching. The session aims to empower early childhood professionals to teach music with confidence, purpose, and joy. By the end of the session, early childhood professionals will: Understand why music is a foundational learning tool in early childhood; Discover practical ways to integrate music into everyday routines, transitions, and learning experiences; and Develop confidence to use their voice, rhythm, and body as musical instruments for engagement and connection.*

### **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Angel is an Early Childhood Teacher based on the Gold Coast, where she blends her lifelong passion for music with her commitment to early learning. Originally from the Philippines, she earned her bachelor's degree and Certificate in Teaching, and spent several years teaching Music and Arts to students from Grades 2 to 10 while also performing professionally as a singer. After moving to Australia in 2022, Angel completed a Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) at Southern Cross University in 2024. Her background as both an educator and musician informs her belief that music is a powerful medium for connection, expression, and the holistic development of young children.*

**Age Range: T&K | Kindy Uplift: 2, 3, 5, 6 | ASPT: 3, 6, 7 | NQS: 1**

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## **Ready in Every Sense: Redefining School Transition for the Whole Child**

**PRESENTER/S:** Angie Freeman

### **OUTLINE:**

*You are five. You have said goodbye to your Early Education setting. Santa has been and gone. Your brand new School Uniform is burning a hole in the wardrobe, as every morning you ask your adults if today is the day. You are big. You are starting BIG SCHOOL. And you don't feel even the tiniest hint of worry or uncertainty deep in your tummy, because your teachers were reflective practitioners. They attended the ECTA conference in 2026 and learnt all about humanistic psychology, choice theory and self-determination theory and how to make sure you felt an overwhelming sense of wellbeing. You know that your Early Education setting planned for and implemented transition to school practices tailored to your needs. Your teachers knew that worksheets, phonics and old ways of thinking about "School Readiness" weren't what you and your friends needed. You knew they could articulate the learning and life skills that you were developing through their pedagogical decision making. They are confident teachers. They know how important these first years of Education are in your abilities to navigate transitions for your life ahead. They know about dispositions for learning, they plan for them. And as a result, here you are. Ready in every sense of the word. You smile at your adults at the gate, as you wave. Your uniform feels new and exciting. Your backpack is heavy, but you are strong. Strong enough to conquer this next transition with confidence.*



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## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*With over 15 years of experience bringing sunshine to classrooms and leading teams, Ange is a passionate force in Australia's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector. Her journey spans from Early Childhood Education to Primary Teaching & Adult learning environments. Ange carries a toolkit full of leadership, mentoring, and training expertise. Ange is known for her inspiring energy and deep knowledge of the National Quality Framework. She is guided by a personal philosophy rooted in critical theory, the power of language, and a fierce commitment to social justice. Whether she's mentoring educators or helping teams work in more dynamic and intentional ways, Ange sees herself as a change agent, on a mission to build a more equitable education system where every learner has the chance to thrive.*

**Age Range: K | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 2, 4 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4 | NQS: 1, 5**

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## Reframing Success: Unleashing the Potential of Neurodivergent Minds

**PRESENTER/S:** Suzy Burgess

### OUTLINE:

*"Unlocking Potential: A New Perspective on Neurodivergent Education"*

#### Overview:

*Join Suzy Burgess, a passionate Naturopath and advocate for neurodiversity, as she shares transformative insights into empowering educators to unlock the potential of neurodivergent students. This session will provide practical strategies and a fresh perspective on supporting diverse learners.*

*Key Content: Understanding Neurodiversity: Definition and significance in early childhood education; Common neurodivergent profiles and their strengths; Reframing Perspectives: Shifting from a deficit model to a strengths-based approach; Celebrating the uniqueness of neurodivergent minds; Creating Inclusive Environments: Strategies for fostering emotional safety and self-awareness; Tips for building self-esteem and celebrating differences; Engagement Techniques: Effective teaching methods to reach every learner; Collaborative practices for working with families and specialists; Empowerment for Change: Inspiring educators to advocate for neurodiversity; Building confidence to create impactful change in classrooms.*

#### Learning Outcomes:

*Participants will leave with actionable strategies to appreciate and support neurodivergent students, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment. This transformative session aims to inspire educators and celebrate human diversity.*

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*Suzy Burgess is a Keynote Speaker and Advocate for Neurodiversity in Early Childhood Education. Suzy Burgess is a dedicated Naturopath and health educator with a degree in Health Science, passionate about transforming the lives of neurodivergent children and their families. As a mother of four remarkable neurodivergent children, Suzy draws from her personal experiences to advocate for understanding and support within early childhood education. With her unique insights as a neurodivergent individual, Suzy emphasises the importance of reframing neurodiversity. She believes that with the right support, neurodivergent children can thrive and showcase their extraordinary talents. In her presentations, she focuses on crucial elements such as brain health, emotional resilience, and self-regulation, equipping educators with strategies to create inclusive environments where every child feels valued and celebrated. Suzy's approach highlights uplifting neurodivergent children and building their self-esteem. She provides practical strategies for early childhood educators to engage effectively with these children, fostering self-awareness and emotional safety. Join Suzy as she inspires educators to embrace neurodiversity, promoting a future where all children can shine and share their unique gifts. Through her powerful message, Suzy Burgess advocates for an inclusive educational landscape that empowers neurodivergent individuals to thrive.*

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## Strengthening Oral Language Foundations in the Early Years

**PRESENTER/S:** Dr Deirdre Tate

**OUTLINE:**

*Children's oral language development is a cornerstone of literacy, learning, and overall well-being. Yet, despite its recognised importance, many children begin school with underdeveloped oral language skills—impacting their academic progress and social confidence. The National Preschool Outcomes Measure (POM) currently being trialed, involves a new set of learning progressions in two key learning domains, one of which is oral language and literacy. Aligned with the QKLG 2024 the POM aims to support early identification and continuity of oral language development across early childhood and school settings, helping educators track progress and tailor support. This session is designed to inspire and inform early childhood professionals working in before-school and lower primary settings about children's oral language development. Drawing on doctoral research, classroom experience and multidisciplinary community collaboration, it explores practical, evidence-based strategies that can be implemented in everyday practice to foster oral language growth during the early years and transition to school. Whether you're in a preschool, kindergarten, or Prep classroom, this session offers actionable ideas to empower your practice and support every child's communication journey.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*With over 20 years of teaching experience from pre-school to Year 10 in the UK and Australia, Dr Tate is deeply committed to empowering educators and building strong foundations in the early years. In her current role as a Senior Education Advisor for Brisbane Catholic Education, Deirdre advocates for research-driven, holistic approaches to teaching and learning, and thrive on collaborative practice. Her doctoral research explored parent and teacher perspectives on children's oral language development at school entry. Dr Tate holds a Master of Teaching from Griffith University and has contributed to educational publications by ACER and Hawker Brownlow. She has also presented a webinar and published a journal article with ECTA. As co-founder and long-time organiser of an AEDC Community Response Group, Dr Tate has led efforts for over a decade to create meaningful, community-driven change for young children in her local area.*

**Age Range: K&P | Kindy Uplift: 5, 1.2 | ASPT: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 5**

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## Temperament Toolkit: Understanding Emotional Safety with Neuroscience

**PRESENTER/S:** Dr Siobhan Kennedy-Costantini

**OUTLINE:**

*Children arrive in the classroom with their own a unique temperament - a built-in pattern of how they respond to the world. Understanding the neuroscience behind this can help educators move from reacting to behaviour toward responding to needs. This session explores how to recognise and adapt to children's individual temperamental traits (like sensitivity, intensity, or adaptability) to create emotionally safe learning environments where every child can thrive. Together, we'll unpack how temperament shapes a child's approach to new experiences, social interactions, and self-regulation. We'll link temperament science with attachment and co-regulation frameworks, helping educators see "tricky" behaviours as invitations to attune, adjust, and connect. Participants will leave with practical, reflective tools for observing, interpreting, and responding to children's emotional cues in ways that honour their individual wiring and strengthen relationships across the classroom.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Dr Siobhan Kennedy-Costantini is a child development specialist, educator, and founder of Science Minded, a Queensland-based organisation dedicated to sharing the science of childhood with the adults who shape it. Holding a PhD in developmental psychology, Siobhan has spent over 15 years working across research, university teaching, and early-years professional development. Through Science Minded, she delivers engaging professional learning for early childhood educators and leaders across Australia, translating complex neuroscience, attachment theory, and temperament research into practical, on-the-floor strategies that strengthen relationships and support children's emotional wellbeing. Siobhan is also a trained Circle of Security Parenting facilitator. Her work is known for blending warmth, compassion, humour, and evidence-based insight helping educators and parents alike rediscover the delight and connection at the heart of learning and care.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 2, 4 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4 | NQS: 1, 2, 5, 6**

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# ECTA EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

## Using Key Word Sign to Support Early Mathematical Concept Development

**PRESENTER/S:** Dr Kate Quane

**OUTLINE:**

*This presentation explores the use of Key Word Sign (KWS)—an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) approach that integrates Auslan signs with spoken language to promote understanding, communication, and inclusion in early childhood and junior primary settings. The presentation demonstrates how signs can act as multimodal representations of mathematical concepts, supporting children's comprehension of mathematical ideas. Drawing on practical examples from the mathematical area of position and direction, it illustrates how using signs such as up, down, above, below, around, and through can deepen children's spatial awareness and conceptual understanding. The session highlights the pedagogical value of intentional, purposeful integration of KWS in mathematics teaching, showing how it enhances participation and belonging for all learners—particularly those with communication or developmental needs. By connecting theory with classroom practice, this presentation positions KWS as an innovative and inclusive tool for advancing mathematics learning and communication across diverse educational contexts.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Dr Kate Quane is an educator and researcher with expertise in mathematics education and inclusive teaching practices at the Adelaide University. Her work focuses on how multimodal strategies, including the use of Key Word Sign, can enhance young children's mathematical thinking and communication. Kate has extensive experience working with teachers in regional and metropolitan settings to design learning environments that foster curiosity, confidence, and equity in mathematics. Kate's other research interests include how students and teachers communicate their mathematical understanding, particularly during mathematical problem-solving and their attitudes towards mathematics. Passionate about bridging research and practice, she is committed to supporting educators in implementing innovative approaches that make mathematics meaningful and accessible for all learners.*

**Age Range:** ALL | **Kindy Uplift:** 1.2, 6 | **ASPT:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 | **NQS:** 1

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## \*SESSION ONE ONSITE 12noon to 1:20pm

### Developing Number Sense in Prep–Year 2

**PRESENTER/S:** Libby Foley & Janis McDermott

**OUTLINE:**

*An understanding of Number is integral to daily life. Young learners encounter numbers in everyday activities such as game play, errands at the shops and through stories, songs and routines. Learning in Prep–Year 2 Mathematics supports a strong foundation of number sense, which involves knowledge of numbers, number relations, and number operations. This hands-on workshop provides educators with practical, research-informed strategies to cultivate a well-developed number sense in students. Making connections to the Australian Curriculum v9.0, participants will explore numbers and their relationships in a variety of ways, including through multiple representations. Emphasis is placed on fostering curiosity, confidence, and mathematical thinking in Prep–Year 2 students.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Libby Foley is Principal Project Officer, Australian Curriculum: Mathematics at the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA). She is an experienced educator and reflective practitioner who has worked in diverse settings, including both metropolitan and remote contexts. Libby is passionate about engaging all learners in Mathematics and supporting them to make connections to big ideas through understanding of relationships and structures. In her role at QCAA, Libby provides curriculum and assessment advice, support, professional learning, and resources to schools and teachers across Queensland. She enjoys working with educators and leaders to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum v9.0.*

*Janis McDermott is a Principal Project Officer: Kindergarten at the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA). She has 20+ years experience teaching in primary schools and early childhood settings prior to working at the QCAA. Janis supports kindergarten teachers and services implement the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (QKLG) and is a passionate advocate for the early years profession and the vital role of teachers and educators in nurturing confident and creative lifelong learners.*

**Age Range:** P-G2 | **Kindy Uplift:** 6 | **ASPT:** 2, 3, 6, 7 | **NQS:** N/A



# ECTA EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

## Land Art: Using Clay and Charcoal to Create Art

**PRESENTER/S:** Jane Hely & Alanna Swanson

**OUTLINE:**

*It's a common misconception that art experiences for young children are all about activities such as fingerpainting and using paintbrushes. Children and their educators are capable of so much more. They just need to be given the right tools and knowledge to feel confident about exploring the myriad aspects of artistic expression. This workshop will empower educators to support children to use the natural materials of clay and charcoal meaningfully, to express themselves. Participants will come away with practical tips and skills which will enable them to go back to their service with a new perspective and jump straight into exploring this aspect of art alongside their children. As Loris Malaguzzi said, "Our task, regarding creativity, is to help children climb their own mountains as high as possible. No one can do more." We'll help you to elevate the art experiences you're offering your children. Let's make a start.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Jane Hely, an Early Childhood Teacher and Alanna Swanson, an Early Childhood Educator both have over 45 years' experience, much of which has been in the same community kindergarten settings. They have a wealth of knowledge to share regarding the creation of engaging environments and meaningful experiences that genuinely support a child's learning journey. In the last decade, their focus of interest has been on the development of an art program that lives within the day-to-day routine of a Kindergarten or Child Care setting. They now want to instil in others the confidence that they too can easily offer more to their children than just the run-of-the-mill easel painting and basic art activities. They can give the work that they do with children legitimate artistic context.*

**Age Range: K | Kindy Uplift: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 | ASPT: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | NQS: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6**

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## Little Voices, Big Insights: Valuing and Capturing Student Voice

**PRESENTER/S:** Lara Paxton-Hall & Amy Jenkins

**OUTLINE:**

*In the early years, student voice isn't just about giving children a say—it's about listening closely to how they make sense of their world. When we create space for young learners to reflect, explain, and share their thinking, we gain powerful insights into how they understand, connect, and grow. This session explores practical ways to capture student voice authentically in Literacy, Numeracy, and the Units of Inquiry. Using Toddle as a platform, participants will see how student reflection can move beyond surface-level responses to reveal genuine understanding. We'll look at how tools like photos, voice recordings, and student-led annotations can help children articulate what they know, what they're proud of, and where they want to go next. Drawing on current research and classroom practice, the presentation considers why student voice matters—not only for engagement and agency, but also for improving learning outcomes. By making student thinking visible and shareable with families, teachers can strengthen connections between school and home, and position students as active participants in their own learning journey.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Lara Paxton-Hall is a Primary Years teacher at St Peters Lutheran College in Brisbane. Having taught across regional New South Wales and metropolitan Sydney, she brings a depth of classroom experience and a strong commitment to evidence-informed practice. Lara is passionate about the foundations of learning in the early years—particularly literacy, numeracy, and inquiry. Her work focuses on making student thinking visible and creating playful, purposeful environments that nurture curiosity, confidence, and independence. Lara is dedicated to continually refining her practice and supporting young learners to see themselves as capable, motivated, and valued contributors.*

*Amy is an early years teacher based in Brisbane. Beginning her career at Ipswich Grammar School, Amy currently teaches at St Peter's Lutheran College Indooroopilly in the Primary Years space. Originally from Canberra, she has developed a strong interest in explicit instruction and the ways in which structured, responsive teaching supports student success. Amy is passionate about ensuring that every child develops a solid foundation in literacy and numeracy through clear teaching, practice, and feedback. Her teaching philosophy balances evidence-based instruction with authentic connection—helping students find joy and agency in their learning.*

**Age Range: P-G2 | Kindy Uplift: 5, 6, 2 | ASPT: 1, 3, 5 | NQS: 6**



# ECTA EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

## Meaningful Notes: Joy and Music in Early Childhood

**PRESENTER/S:** Melissa Smile & Adam Isaacs

### **OUTLINE:**

*Meaningful Notes is an 80-minute immersive, evidence-based workshop that explores how music and joy can transform early childhood learning and educator practice. Designed for educators and leaders, this session bridges research and reality, giving participants practical tools (no musical talent required) to use music to regulate emotions, build language, and strengthen relationships. Aligned with the EYLF and NQS, the workshop demonstrates how musical activities can support children's communication, identity, wellbeing, and sense of belonging, while simultaneously restoring educator energy, reducing stress, and boosting classroom confidence. Participants will engage in hands-on demonstrations, experience strategies to embed music into everyday routines, and reflect on ways to connect these practices to real classroom challenges. The session also includes practical guidance on vocal health, group leadership, and using music to deepen emotional intelligence and professional identity. By the end of Meaningful Notes, educators will leave feeling confident, connected, and joyful, equipped with actionable strategies to enhance learning outcomes, nurture relationships, and create vibrant, engaging, and resilient early learning environments.*

### **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Melissa Smile is a creative educator, performer, and co-creator of Meaningful Notes, an evidence-informed workshop that helps early childhood professionals use music and joy to enhance learning, connection, and wellbeing. As a Hey Dee Ho franchisee, Melissa delivers high-quality early childhood enrichment programs that empower children through music, movement, and play. With a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, Melissa combines academic insight with practical creativity. She specialises in fostering self-regulation, communication, and social-emotional development through interactive, play-based learning. Melissa has a strong background in supporting neurodiverse children, including those with autism and ADHD, using music and rhythm as tools to encourage engagement and learning. Her programs integrate music, movement, and storytelling to create engaging, inclusive experiences for all children. Melissa has performed and led workshops across schools, childcare centres, and community programs, equipping educators with evidence-based strategies to embed music into daily routines. Having played musical instruments since the age of six and performed at Carnegie Hall, she brings artistry, empathy, and authenticity to her work empowering educators and children alike through connection, play, and joy. Her creative approach inspires children to explore, express, and grow in a supportive environment.*

*Adam Isaacs is an experienced early childhood educator, musician, and Director of Hey Dee Ho Educational Services, a leading provider of music, movement, and wellbeing programs for children aged 0–6. Under his leadership, Hey Dee Ho reaches over 30,000 children weekly across more than 600 early learning locations in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. With over a decade of experience delivering music-based programs in early childhood settings, Adam uses his wealth of experience to train educators, equipping them with practical strategies to use rhythm, song, and play to enhance children's communication, self-regulation, and social-emotional development. His inclusive, research-informed approach helps educators apply evidence-backed strategies in everyday learning environments. His sessions encourage creativity and active participation. As a dynamic performer and educator, Adam co-created Meaningful Notes, an evidence-informed workshop with a strong focus on practical application, designed to help educators and educational leaders use music to foster connection, joy, and resilience. His interactive approach bridges research and real-world practice, giving educators accessible tools, no musical background required. Adam's passion lies in empowering educators to see music not as an extra activity, but as a vital part of every child's learning journey one that builds confidence, meaningful connections, and lifelong curiosity through the universal language of music.*

**Age Range: B-K | Kindy Uplift: 1, 2, 5, 2 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4 | NQS: 1, 5**

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## Teaching Through Culture, Applying the 8 Ways of Learning

**PRESENTER/S:** Jessica Staines

### **OUTLINE:**

*This session introduces educators to the 8 Ways of Learning as a practical and culturally responsive framework for embedding Aboriginal perspectives in early childhood settings. Jessica Staines will unpack the intent behind the 8 Ways and demonstrate how it supports educators to teach through culture by grounding pedagogy in relationships, stories, community connection and place-based practice. The presentation explores how the 8 Ways helps educators move beyond tokenistic inclusion by shaping daily routines, planning processes and learning environments. Jess will share examples from services participating in the Community,*



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*Country and Cultural Connections program, highlighting how teams have adapted the framework to reflect local Country, cultural narratives and partnerships with knowledge holders. Participants will see real learning inquiries where the 8 Ways guided children's investigations and strengthened their sense of identity, belonging and connection to Country. The session offers practical strategies for using the framework as a planning and reflection tool and provides educators with a clearer understanding of how to embed culture in meaningful, sustainable and community-informed ways. Learning outcomes include understanding each element of the 8 Ways, recognising and avoiding tokenism, applying the framework to planning cycles and working collaboratively with community to guide culturally grounded practice. This session is suited to educators, leaders and*

## **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Jessica Staines is a Wiradjuri early childhood consultant, author and Founder and Director of Koori Curriculum. She holds a Bachelor of Teaching (Birth to Five Years) and has more than fifteen years of experience working across early learning services, professional development programs and community-led initiatives. Jess specialises in supporting educators to embed Aboriginal perspectives through practical, relational and culturally responsive approaches that honour local knowledge holders and the unique identities of children, families and communities. Her work includes developing national professional learning, such as the Intercultural Ways online module created in partnership with Early Childhood Australia, as well as leading Koori Curriculum's Community, Country and Cultural Connections program, which supports services to build strong relationships with the community and implement place-based curriculum pathways. Jess presents regularly at conferences, delivers consultancy and coaching to early learning teams across Australia and is widely recognised for her ability to translate cultural frameworks, such as the 8 Ways of Learning, into meaningful everyday practice. Her focus is on helping educators build confidence, cultural capability and genuine partnerships grounded in respect, reciprocity and ongoing learning.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 1.1, 1.2, 2 | ASPT: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 6 | NQS: 1, 5, 6, 7**

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## The Benefits of Children's Key Word Sign

**PRESENTER/S:** Elaine Stigwood

### **OUTLINE:**

*Key Word Sign (KWS) is a powerful communication strategy that supports all children's language, literacy, and social development - not only those with communication delays. This presentation explores current research and real-world practice highlighting how sign-supported communication benefits children's comprehension, attention, memory and expressive language. Drawing on experiences from over 200 early learning settings across Australia, this session demonstrates how KWS promotes inclusion, supports emotional regulation, and enhances vocabulary. During this sessions participants will gain practical insight into embedding KWS naturally within routines, play, and early learning environments, supported by evidence from gesture and early language research. We will explore the use of KWS for Early mathematical skills and emotion regulation. By the end of the session, attendees will understand why KWS is an effective multimodal communication approach that benefits every child, and how small, intentional changes in practice can make a big difference in connection and communication.*

### **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Elaine Stigwood is one of the founders and directors of Children's Key Word Sign (formally Sunshine Sign and Sing), a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting early communication through Key Word Sign. Since 2019, the business has provided Key Word Sign training to over 200 Early Learning Services, schools, and allied health professionals across Australia, providing tailored and evidence-based resources. Children's KWS specialises in practical strategies that help educators and families embed inclusive communication practices in everyday routines. Elaine is passionate about accessibility and inclusion, ensuring communication support is fun, functional, and importantly, available to all children. Wherever there are children, there should be Key Word Sign.*

**Age Range: B-K | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 | ASPT: 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 2, 5, 6**

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# ECTA EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

## Where We Look, Learning Grows

**PRESENTER/S:** Ella de la Motte

**OUTLINE:**

*Every environment tells a story, about our values, our image of the child and the kind of learning we prioritise. This session invites educators to slow down, observe, and notice the subtle ways environments shape behaviour, relationships, and thinking. Together, we'll explore how intentional design can transform familiar spaces into places of curiosity, connection, and calm. Through reflective discussion and practical examples, participants will: Examine how small environmental shifts can have a big impact on learning and wellbeing; Learn strategies to "see with fresh eyes" and notice what children's engagement reveals; Reimagine their spaces as living, responsive partners in pedagogy rather than static setups; Attendees will leave inspired and equipped with practical tools to make their environments more thoughtful, intentional, and alive with possibility.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*With over 30 years of experience in Early Childhood Education, Ella de la Motte is a respected consultant, facilitator, and thought leader known for her warm, grounded, and deeply practical approach to professional learning. Ella partners with early education services, leaders, and educators across Australia to create meaningful change — in pedagogy, culture, and community. Her work spans leadership development, team culture, environments, governance, and curriculum design, always grounded in the values of connection, sustainability, and authenticity. Drawing on decades of on-the-ground experience as an educator, director, and leader, and Early Childhood Teacher, Ella brings a unique blend of wisdom and creativity to every collaboration. Her sessions and keynotes are known for being reflective yet energising, challenging yet compassionate — creating space for educators to pause, rethink, and reconnect with what matters most. Ella is passionate about reimagining environments, strengthening leadership through collaboration, and advocating for ethical, sustainable, and community-driven practice across the sector. Ella de la Motte – Early Childhood Consultant Connection. Reflection. Transformation.*

**Age Range: B-K | Kindy Uplift: 2 | ASPT: 2, 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 3**

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## Wide Fields, Solid Fences: Freedom and Boundaries in Early Learning

**PRESENTER/S:** Siobhan Kennedy-Costantini

**OUTLINE:**

*Children thrive when they feel both free and safe, when their world has "wide fields" for exploration and "solid fences" for their emotional (and physical) security. This session explores how attachment theory can guide educators to set boundaries that feel supportive, not restrictive. We'll unpack what predictable, responsive limits look like in practice, and how they foster curiosity, self-regulation, and resilience. Educators will leave with concrete tools for balancing warmth and structure, using real-life examples from early learning environments. Participants will reflect on their own comfort with control, freedom, and flexibility—and how to use this awareness to strengthen relationships and classroom flow.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Dr Siobhan Kennedy-Costantini is a child development specialist, educator, and founder of Science Minded, a Queensland-based organisation dedicated to sharing the science of childhood with the adults who shape it. Holding a PhD in developmental psychology, Siobhan has spent over 15 years working across research, university teaching, and early-years professional development. Through Science Minded, she delivers engaging professional learning for early childhood educators and leaders across Australia, translating complex neuroscience, attachment theory, and temperament research into practical, on-the-floor strategies that strengthen relationships and support children's emotional wellbeing. Siobhan is also a trained Circle of Security Parenting facilitator. Her work is known for blending warmth, compassion, humour, and evidence-based insight helping educators and parents alike rediscover the delight and connection at the heart of learning and care.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 2, 3, 4 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 | NQS: 1, 2, 3, 5**



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27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

## \*SESSION TWO ONSITE 2:10pm to 3:30pm

### AI Scales Chaos – But It Doesn't Have To

**PRESENTER/S:** Jason Alexander

**OUTLINE:**

*Artificial Intelligence promises efficiency in education but efficiency alone doesn't solve our real challenge. Without intention, AI simply mirrors the systems it serves. Instead of freeing educators, it risks handing them more minutes to spend in stress and overwhelm. It doesn't have to be that way. Humans were the world's first ICT, our nervous systems the hardware, our beliefs the software and our connections the network. When this human operating system is upgraded, AI shifts from compliance tool to time arbitrage: a way to buy back minutes and reinvest them into presence, co-regulation and connection with children. This session challenges us to move past "How do we use AI?" and toward the deeper question: "Who are we when we do?" The future of early learning will not be defined by the tools themselves but by whether we choose to let AI scale chaos or connection.*

*By the end of this session, participants will: Understand how AI mirrors human systems and why it can either scale chaos or amplify connection; Reframe AI as time-arbitrage, using it to reclaim minutes for presence, co-regulation and child connection; Recognise why upgrading the human OS must run hand in hand with AI tools.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Jason Alexander is an education specialist, coach and co-founder of I AM Education. With nearly two decades of experience across early childhood, primary and leadership roles, Jason has worked as a teacher, centre director and instructional coach, shaping practice across multiple layers of the sector. His expertise lies in bridging human connection and technology. Jason is the creator of Ask I AM, an AI-powered support tool for educators and his work combines behaviour guidance, Montessori philosophy, NLP and nervous system regulation. He is widely recognised for reframing educator wellbeing and leadership through the lens of what he calls the 'human operating system' - the inner narratives and regulation that shape how educators show up. Jason's current focus is helping educators and leaders harness Artificial Intelligence not as compliance, but as time-arbitrage: a lever to buy back minutes and reinvest them into presence, co-regulation and connection with children.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 4, 2 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 | NQS: 1, 5, 6, 7**

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### Beyond the Fence: Growing Active Citizens Through Nature and Community

**PRESENTER/S:** Madison Pease

**OUTLINE:**

*This presentation explores how extending learning beyond the walls of the classroom and learning space can nurture children's sense of agency, belonging, and citizenships within their world. Drawing on ten years of learning and teaching experience, and armed with a strong commitment to nature pedagogy, I will share how our kindergarten has embraced inquiry-based learning to connect children meaningfully with their local environment and community. Our journey has included collaborative projects with the local council, where children's voices have been valued as contributions to community spaces - demonstrating that even our youngest learners can be active participants in shaping their world. I will also share insights from our Grand-friends Pen Pal project with a Mackay Retirement Village, which fosters authentic connection, empathy, and cultural connection. Grounded in the principles of slow pedagogy and nature-based learning, our practices use birdwatching, gardening, woodworking, and outdoor exploration as powerful tools for inquiry and active learning. Participants will gain practical strategies to extend their own learning environments beyond traditional boundaries, cultivate partnerships, and empower children as capable, curious citizens of their community.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Madison is an Early Childhood Teacher with 10 years experience across central Queensland. Demonstrating a strong passion for nature play, and a commitment to nurturing curiosity through inquiry-based learning. She believes in the beauty and value of a slow pedagogy - creating meaningful, unhurried moments where children can wonder, explore, and connect deeply with their environment. Madison's approach is grounded in the belief that the natural world is a powerful teacher, offering endless opportunities for connection, discovery, growth, and creativity. In creating and facilitating thoughtful, child-led experiences, she strives to cultivate a sense of belonging, respect, and lifelong love of learning in each and every child.*

**Age Range: K | Kindy Uplift: 1.2 | ASPT: 3, 4 | NQS: 1, 3, 6**



# ECTA EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

## Brain-SET Environments: The Staff Retention Revolution

**PRESENTER/S:** Kathryn Murray & Isabella Carter

### OUTLINE:

*In early childhood education, joy and team culture are not luxuries—they are foundational for keeping skilled educators inspired, engaged, and thriving. This session will describe the Brain-SET Environments approach, exploring challenging realities such as burnout, attrition, and a “checkout” culture that can erode even the best teams. Through provocative real-world examples from Queensland centres, participants will tackle how neuroscience-informed principles can move teams beyond compliance—toward energized collaboration, psychological safety, and authentic pride in the profession. Expect discussion on how Brain-SET principles align with system-level retention strategies and address the daily frustrations that lead educators to consider finding work somewhere else. Participants will leave with: Advanced tools to disrupt burnout and disengagement: Learn how sensory and relational triggers impact brain states for both children and staff, and how to use environmental tweaks that foster staff wellbeing and reset high-stress moments; Blueprints for creating a shared purpose and supportive workplace: Get strategies for co-creating Brain-SET aligned team rituals, check-ins, and celebration systems that reward innovation, mutual support, and risk-taking in practice; Staff retention as ethical leadership: Walk away with practical “culture audit” checklists, adaptable for infants through kindy teams, that spark brave conversations.*

### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*Dr Kathryn Murray is the proud to be the founder of Future Strong Education Consultancy, based in Australia. She is passionate about aligning the workplace environment with the needs of the brain to create opportunities for success, joy, productivity and calm. This is achieved using her Brain-SET Environments Formula®, a cutting edge approach grounded in research and over 40 years of personal experience in the education field. Brain-SET has been applied in classrooms and work spaces globally. Kathryn is an international environment design expert, holds a Doctorate of Education, an award-winning early childhood education specialist, highly sought-after Keynote speaker and workshop facilitator. She is a mentor, coach, and author. Kathryn has written numerous articles on productive environments, teaching practices, wellbeing, and parenting. She is grateful to have had the opportunity to support children, educators, teams, leaders, corporate organisations and parents to be all they can be.*

*Bella Carter is a seasoned early childhood educator with over 30 years of experience specializing in holistic child development. Holding a Bachelor of Education Major Early Childhood, Bella’s approach emphasizes understanding each child’s unique strengths and potential. She has worked across diverse educational settings including childcare centers, traditional schools, homeschooling, and kindergartens. Bella excels in milestone assessment and early intervention, identifying developmental benchmarks and addressing needs with tailored support. Committed to a whole-child perspective, she interprets children’s behaviors as communication to foster optimal growth and learning across physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains. Bella also focuses on the input and science of “The Third Teacher” concept, highlighting its influence on brain development and well-being. Her passion for mentoring parents and educators and fostering optimal learning environments led her to collaborate with Dr. Kathryn Murray, expert in the Brain-SET Environment Formula. Together, they support educators and parents in creating calm, supportive spaces for optimal growth and learning. The outcome? Educators love their work, children thrive.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 1.2, 4, 2 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 3, 5, 6**

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## Movement: An Essential for Life, Learning, and Development

**PRESENTER/S:** Jacqueline CoxTaylor

### OUTLINE:

*I will present ways to create age appropriate movement programs which not only address developmental movement needs but are delivered through age appropriate curriculum material with imagination. The movements address retained reflexes patterns, lower sense support and general fine and gross motor development. I will demonstrate how these programs may be presented without the need of expensive equipment. Movement is a fundamental essential for real learning to take place. Without movement there is no digestion or assimilation.*

### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:

*Initially from the UK Jacqueline trained as a Froebel teacher, she taught in kindergarten and primary classes. Jacqueline also trained as a Teacher of the Deaf and Special Needs Educator. Before emigrating to Australia to raised her own children and taught in a school for the deaf, special school and Steiner kindergarten.. She have a Bachelor Degree in Education,, Graduate Certificates*



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*in Special Education, Education of the Deaf and Expressive Therapies, Master of Special Education and. PhD in Special Education. Jacqueline currently works as a Therapeutic Education Specialist at a Steiner school and also lecture both nationally and internationally. She has published in magazines and books.*

**Age Range: P-G2 | Kindy Uplift: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 | ASPT: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | NQS: 1, 2, 3, 5**

## Playing with Paradigm Shifts: Building Effective Play Leadership

**PRESENTER/S:** Sandi Phoenix

### **OUTLINE:**

*In this session, Sandi will explore some of the paradigms from psychology that influence our work with children, and how they have shifted throughout our careers. Participants will explore effective leadership styles that inspire lasting play innovation, and consider how to cultivate visionary leadership that places children's rights and wellbeing at the centre of our practice. Leading a shift towards enriched play environments requires shedding outdated mindsets and embracing a paradigm where children's rights, curiosity, and autonomy are placed at the forefront. With a clear, visionary approach, leaders can be purposeful and courageous, guiding their teams towards meaningful change that fosters play practices supporting each child's right to explore, create, and thrive. This session is designed to empower attendees to translate their passion for play into practical, transformative leadership that respects the needs of their teams while championing children's wellbeing and development. This workshop will take that fire in your belly and add tools to fan the flames of innovation in your own practice, turning inspiration into actionable steps that move your vision for play leadership forward.*

### **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Sandi Phoenix is the founding company director at Phoenix Support for Educators. For over two decades, she has dedicated her career to supporting educators, families, and communities to enhance children's wellbeing and inclusion. Under her leadership, Phoenix Support has grown into a nationally recognised organisation, and team of 20 staff, delivering transformative professional learning across Australia and beyond. Beginning her career in 1998 embarking on a Bachelor of Psychological Science, as she became an educator, Sandi has since held diverse roles in education, leadership, and consultancy. Her experience spans teaching the Diploma of Early Childhood Education, leading service improvement under the National Quality Framework, and designing professional learning and curriculum software. Her coaching and consultancy are grounded in strengths-based, evidence-informed approaches that empower educators to thrive. Sandi is the creator of the Phoenix Cups® Framework - a globally adopted framework integrating humanistic psychology, positive psychology, motivational psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience to support wellbeing in education. Sandi is currently completing postgraduate studies in Neuroscience and Mental Health, building on her foundation in psychology and positive education. A sought-after keynote speaker, Sandi captivates audiences with her warmth, insight, and practical wisdom, inspiring educators to embrace reflective, relationship-based practices.*

**Age Range: ALL | Kindy Uplift: 2 | ASPT: 3, 6, 7 | NQS: 1, 5, 7**

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## Speech and Language Support in the Early Years

**PRESENTER/S:** Hermione Chettle

### **OUTLINE:**

*This presentation is an educators guide to understanding speech and language development in the early years. Educators will develop their conceptual understanding and walk away with practical strategies they can begin using immediately. Our learning outcomes include: Clearly distinguish speech vs. language and understand their key components; Identify common speech errors in children and how to support them; Identify key signs for language delay or disorder in children; Deep dive into how speech works and the importance of you understanding 'the how'; Know the true impact of early identification and providing tailored support in the early years; Learn strategies which Speech Pathologists use every day in clinic to support speech and language; Clearly understand the role you play and how you can support speech development in your routines; Understanding Autistic Communication and Language difference; Understand the language flower and its importance; Learn language facilitation strategies which can be implemented any place any time.*

### **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Hermione Chettle, is a passionate speech pathologist and founder of House of Speech, a speech pathology practice dedicated to helping children flourish through confident and meaningful communication. At House of Speech, we believe educators are at the heart of children's growth. We aim to bridge the gap between health professional and educator knowledge, bringing practical,*



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27 JUNE 2025 (9AM-4PM)

ONLINE & ONSITE - St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly

*research-backed training and resources into your childcare centre. Our mission is grounded in the belief that all children, regardless of their background or geographic location, should have equal access to high-quality communication development opportunities. We believe that every child communicates in their own way, and our role is to meet them where they are and work together to further develop. Our support is child-led and play-based, creating safe, joyful, and meaningful opportunities for children to explore communication in ways that feel natural and empowering. House of Speech brings these same concepts into our educator professional learnings, providing multiple engagement modes and covering a perfect combination of conceptual understanding and practical skill development. Educators will feel empowered, supported, and ready to implement strategies into their work. House of Speech is deeply committed to supporting educators and enhancing communication for all children, recognising that it is not just a skill, but a fundamental human right*

**Age Range: T-P | Kindy Uplift: 5, 1.2 | ASPT: 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 | NQS: 1, 5, 6**

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## The Connection Between Our Image of the Child and The Child's Image

**PRESENTER/S:** Nicole Halton

**OUTLINE:**

*In an increasingly digital world, it's easy to capture photographs of children at play. But what impact does that have on children? In this workshop, we will explore the practicalities of taking photographs of children in care including: child safety implications, device and data management, and managing expectations from families. We will also look at what impact our frequent "snapping" has on children's play, with a focus on the play cycle and children's wellbeing and involvement.*

*What will we cover? The emergence of photography in early childhood settings; The child safe challenges of photography in early childhood settings; The impact of photography on children's play; Considering alternatives and how we implement them; This session is for anyone working with children, and will encourage you to reflect deeply on current methods of documentation, and explore ways of making learning visible without compromising play, safety and our image of the child.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Nicole Halton is a passionate early childhood professional with over twenty years of hands-on experience in just about every role you can imagine: from educator and director to author, consultant, approved provider and resource developer. Nicole has made it her mission to help educators rediscover the joy and wonder of childhood through nature play, slow pedagogy, and authentic connection with children. Since co-founding Inspired EC in 2008, Nicole has inspired countless educators across Australia and beyond with her workshops, books, and resources, always encouraging them to embrace the messiness, adventure, and magic that comes with working with young children. When she's not delivering a training session, or putting together a new blog post for the Inspired EC blog, you will typically find Nicole with her head in a book or exploring the outdoors with her family.*

**Age Range: B-K | Kindy Uplift: 2 | ASPT: 4, 6, 7 | NQS: 1, 2, 5, 7**

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## Understanding the Play Cycle from Birth and Beyond

**PRESENTER/S:** Tash Treveton

**OUTLINE:**

*How often do you sit and really watch children at play? Watch without asking questions or offering suggestions or cleaning up around them? Have you ever really stopped and thought about play - about it's role in brain and body development, and the impact it can have on socio-emotional development and learning? When we understand the play cycle, observing children's play takes on a whole new meaning. In this session, we investigate the play cycle, looking at frames, cues and responses. Participants will also explore play types, and discuss the impact that we as educators have on children as they learn through play, and reflect on the difference between play and a play-based program.*

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY:**

*Natashja "Tash" Treveton is a passionate early childhood professional with over twenty years' experience and is the co-founder of Inspired EC. Tash has held roles including educational leader, director, approved provider, consultant, and playground designer, and loves supporting educators with infant and toddler practice, slow pedagogy and leadership in particular. Her work is grounded*



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*in the belief that both children and educators thrive when given the freedom to explore, imagine, and take risks. Tash has inspired thousands of educators across Australia and beyond through training, mentoring and books.*

**Age Range: B-K | Kindy Uplift: 2, 3, 4, 6, 5 | ASPT: 1, 3, 4, 6 | NQS: 1, 5**

## COST:

### ONSITE REGISTRATION FEES (GST inclusive)

ECTA Members and all staff at Member Centres/Schools \$270

Non-Member \$395 (includes ECTA Individual Membership)

### ONLINE REGISTRATION FEES (GST inclusive)

ECTA Members and all staff at Member Centres/Schools \$210

Non-Member \$330 (includes ECTA Individual Membership)

### FEES PAYABLE

Fees payable within two weeks of registration. The website will send a tax invoice/receipt straight after registration. You can add a Purchase Order number to the registration and pay later.

### PAY WITH CREDIT CARD

Please note the CVENT registration system charges 2.5% processing fee on online credit card payments.

### CHANGE FACE TO FACE TO ZOOM:

We will refund the \$65 onsite fee, if attendees change their mind and wish to participate via ZOOM up to one week prior to the Conference.

## ECTA MEMBERSHIP FEES:

*(Australian Teachers, Educators, TAFE & UNI EC students, and anyone interested in Early Childhood may join ECTA)*

**NON-MEMBER RATE INCLUDES COMPLIMENTARY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP.**

### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

ECTA Membership runs for 12 months from time of joining.

- Hugely discounted fees at ECTA Early Childhood Conference and regional group PD events.
- No-Cost registration at member-only webinars. (usually eight webinars)
- Three new issues of Educating Young Children digital journal.
- Access to online Members Centre which houses copies of all journals and recordings of webinars.
- eNEWS sent monthly (You can unsubscribe at any time)
- Advocacy at state and national levels

### MEMBERSHIP FEES:

- \$120: Individual (Educators, teachers & those interested in Early Childhood)
- \$100: Australian Graduate (first year of working in EC Field) \*\*
- \$0: Australian Pre-service Full-Time Student \*\*
- \$50: Australian Concession card holder \*\*
- \$250: Centre/School membership \*(covers staff at one school or centre)

\* If you have multiple centres each must join separately

**Centres & Schools Save by Joining ECTA** (Membership covers one school or centre)

*Centres and schools sending more than two staff members save money by joining ECTA as a Centre/School Member (\$250). All staff from the member site receive the member conference registration rate and gain access to member-only webinars, journals, and webinar recordings via the Members Centre.*

Join ECTA at <https://ecta.org.au/join> before registering.

Invoices and receipts are issued automatically through the ECTA website.



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