2026 ECA National Conference

Holding the Past, Creating the Future

VIRTUAL PROGRAM

Melbourne
30 September–3 October

Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Holding the Past, Creating the Future

2026 ECA National Conference

VIRTUAL PROGRAM

Day One—Thursday 1 October 2026

START	END	PLENARY 2	MEETING ROOM 203 & 204
8.15 am	8.30 am	Welcome to Country	
8.30 am	8.50 am	Opening Session	
8.50 am	9.00 am	Welcome by Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education	
9.00 am	9.05 am	Welcome by ECA National President, Trevor Brown	
9.05 am	9.15 am	Platinum Sponsor Address—Modern Teaching Aids	
9.15 am	10.05 am	**International Keynote Address—Olof Gränström** From facts to understanding: Building a more fact-based future	
10.05 am	10.50 am	MORNING TEA	
10.50 am	11.35 am	**INTERNATIONAL KEYNOTE WORKSHOP** From data to understanding: Practical tools for working with statistics and visual representations Olof Gränström	**PROFESSIONAL BRAVERY—HOLDING PURPOSE AND RISK** From compliance to excellence: Reimagining safeguarding as a living system for children Sally Cordina, Jillian Fox, Damian Foley & Michele Rowse
11.35 am	11.45 am	ROOM CHANGE	
11.45 am	12.30 pm	**SUPPORTING SOCIAL COHESION IN DIVIDED TIMES** The development of Australia's Inclusive Practice Framework for ECEC Professor Frances Press, Dr Marie White, Lisa McCoy & Professor Jennifer Cartmel	**PROFESSIONAL BRAVERY—HOLDING PURPOSE AND RISK** What is the blueprint for effective safeguarding in early years settings? Nicole Talarico
12.30 pm	1.30 pm	LUNCH	
1.30 pm	2.15 pm	**CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW** Holding children's truths, creating inclusive futures: Children's perspectives on disability and belonging Associate Professor Kathy Cologon & Finbar Moynihan	**CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW** Championing children's voices: Lundy model in practice Bonnie Thomson & Carmen Cappello
2.15 pm	2.25 pm	ROOM CHANGE	
2.25 pm	3.10 pm	**CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW** Consultation as core curriculum practice: Children as active partners Rod Soper	**CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW** Adapting embedded learning supports for inclusive practice in Australian early childhood settings Stephen Carberry
3.10 pm	3.55 pm	AFTERNOON TEA	
3.55 pm	5.05 pm	**Ethics in Action: A conversation on the choices that shape our practice** Catharine Hydon, Dr Simon Longstaff AO, Dr Anne Kennedy AM & Leanne Mits OAM	
5.05 pm	5.15 pm	**Day One: Closing remarks**	

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Day Two—Friday 2 October 2026

START	END	PLENARY 2	MEETING ROOM 203 & 204
8.30 am	8.35 am	Welcome back	
8.35 am	8.40 am	Address by the Hon Dr Jess Walsh, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth	
8.40 am	9.30 am	**Australian Keynote Address—Professor Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett** Inclusion as a Radical Act: Rethinking Children's Behaviour and Our Role in the System	
9.30 am	9.40 am	ROOM CHANGE	
9.40 am	10.25 am	Children as Active Stakeholders: Reframing Behaviour, Inclusion and Operational Decision-Making in Early Childhood Education Professor Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett in conversation with Amy Shine	SUPPORTING SOCIAL COHESION IN DIVIDED TIMES Preventing gender-based violence: Exploring a national approach with early childhood education and care Samantha McGuffie & Dr Samantha Webster
10.25 am	11.10 am	MORNING TEA	
11.10 am	11.55 am	CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW Continuity: From home visits to school visits Toni Christie & Bridget McBride	CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW Growing quality early learning in childcare deserts Sam Page, Nathan Smyth, Jo Martin, Kate Torii & Rosie Bridge
11.55 am	12.05 pm	ROOM CHANGE	
12.05 pm	12.50 pm	SUPPORTING SOCIAL COHESION \IN DIVIDED TIMES More than words: Actioning the EYLF V2.0 principles for equity and inclusion Professor Lennie Barblett AM	PROFESSIONAL BRAVERY—HOLDING PURPOSE AND RISK National Best Practice Framework for ECI: Closing the loop through sector engagement Dr Kerry Bull
12.50 pm	1.50 pm	LUNCH	
1.50 pm	1.55 pm	Welcome back	
1.55 pm	2.55 pm	**Exploring AI for the early years** Professor Suzy Edwards, Professor Michael Henderson, Professor Jane Page & Kelly Humphrey	
2.55 pm	3.05 pm	ROOM CHANGE	
3.05 pm	3.50 pm	CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW AI Literacies and AI Pedagogies in Practice Dr Jane Caughey, Yifei Wang, Dr Rebecca Lewis & Anna Lettia	CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW Less power, equal value: An approach to involving children in meaningful decisions Rachel Flottman
3.50 pm	4.35 pm	AFTERNOON TEA	
4.35 pm	5.20 pm	SUPPORTING SOCIAL COHESION IN DIVIDED TIMES Preserving core values and promoting democratic participation in early years education Dr Angie Zerella & Dr Anne Kennedy AM	PROFESSIONAL BRAVERY—HOLDING PURPOSE AND RISK Professional bravery in child safeguarding: Purpose, risk and responsibility in early childhood Kate McGill

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Day Three—Saturday 3 October 2026

START	END	PLENARY 2	MEETING ROOM 203 & 204
8.30 am	8.35 am	Welcome back	
8.35 am	9.25 am	**International Keynote Address—Dr Claire Warden** Slow pedagogy and ancient wisdom: Reclaiming childhood in a world that never stops	
9.25 am	9.35 am	**Award Presentations** ECA Doctoral Thesis Award, Barbara Creaser Awards	
9.35 am	10.05 am	**Barbara Creaser Memorial Lecture**	
10.05 am	10.50 am	MORNING TEA	
10.50 am	11.35 am	**In conversation with Dr Claire Warden** Dr Claire Warden, Sam Page & Briony Brooks	PROFESSIONAL BRAVERY—HOLDING PURPOSE AND RISK Thinking with and paying attention: Ecological pedagogical courage Kerrie O'Neill & Lynda Salvo
11.35 am	11.45 am	ROOM CHANGE	
11.45 am	12.30 pm	CHAMPIONING CHILDREN HERE AND NOW Play School at 60: Championing children here and now in children's media Laura Stone, Associate Professor Kate Highfield & Bryson Hall	DOCTORAL THESIS AWARD PRESENTATION
12.30 pm	1.30 pm	LUNCH	
1.30 pm	2.15 pm	PROFESSIONAL BRAVERY—HOLDING PURPOSE AND RISK Expanding the conversation about risk-taking and courage in ECEC Dr Mandy Cooke	PROFESSIONAL BRAVERY Reimagining documentation through a child safe lens for stronger programming and planning Renae Karayannis & Rebecca Waingold
2.15 pm	2.25 pm	ROOM CHANGE	
2.25 pm	3.15 pm	**Australian Keynote Address** Thomas Mayo	
3.15 pm	3.35 pm	**Closing remarks by ECA National President and launch of 2027 Conference**	

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