2027 ECA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

HOLDING THE UNCERTAIN

ETHICS, RELATIONSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL COURAGE

HOBART 5–8 OCTOBER 2027



APPLICATION TO PRESENT

The Early Childhood Australia (ECA) National Conference provides a platform for professional discourse relevant to the rights, wellbeing and early education of young children (birth to eight years). It is attended by early childhood educators, teachers, service leaders and executives, as well as policymakers, program administrators, academics, researchers and those involved in pre-qualification training and ongoing professional development. The conference is live streamed and in 2026 attracted over 2,300 national and international participants in person and a further 350 participants online.





CONFERENCE ARTIST AND ARTWORK



Allan Mansell is a celebrated Tasmanian Aboriginal artist of the Plangermaireenier Nation, an original Tasmanian whose ancestry traces directly to the survivors of the British invasion, who inhabited the Furneaux Group of islands in Bass Strait, Tasmania.

His family were the last of the Indigenous nomadic groups who traversed Tasmania in search of work and food without a car or possessions. Allan was later taken by the authorities and became part of the Stolen Generations.

Allan's visual vocabulary takes on a very specific style and aura that encompasses the land, flora and fauna around him, as though he holds a genetic memory of the past.

He expresses these emblems of his past and present through exquisite compositions, conveying simplified forms of echidnas, leaves, ants, snakes, birds and more.

His art tells a story of what was, what is now and what can happen.

Allan's work has been sold all over the world and hangs in prestigious venues in Europe and America.



Artwork:
Looking After

© Licensed by Allan Mansell



CONFERENCE THEME

‘HOLDING THE UNCERTAIN: ETHICS, RELATIONSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL COURAGE’

The 2027 ECA National Conference theme invites participants to consider how early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals can thoughtfully, ethically and courageously navigate the complexity of the challenges the sector is facing. In a time of uncertainty and change in ECEC, it offers practical guidance on how to prioritise the best interests of children while also meeting the evolving ethical expectations surrounding inclusion, the use of emerging technologies and system-level reform. The theme also encourages thoughtful dialogue rather than definitive answers, reflection rather than declaration, and engaging with rather than retreating from challenges.

SUB-THEMES

CHILDREN AT THE CORE: RIGHTS, VOICE AND BELONGING

This stream focuses on the unchanging priorities for children in a changing sector environment, meeting times of uncertainty with a firm commitment to children’s rights, interests and wellbeing. It invites presentations on children’s agency and voice; their inclusion and sense of belonging; and their participation and decision-making as young citizens. The stream also encourages presentations that demonstrate through practice examples and case studies how educators enact ethical obligations that prioritise children’s interests, support their self-determination, and promote on their behalf rights-based approaches, inclusion and equity.

PLACE, CULTURE AND DEEP LISTENING

This stream invites participants to explore the relationships between place, culture, identity and belonging, and the responsibility to listen deeply, respectfully and with cultural humility. It recognises the unique and enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country, culture and community, alongside the diverse cultural identities, histories and experiences that shape contemporary Australia.

Presentations may explore First Nations knowledge and partnerships; truth-telling and cultural authority; culturally responsive and inclusive practice; the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse children, families and communities; place-based approaches to learning; and the ways educators listen, learn and challenge assumptions.

The stream encourages exploration of how genuine relationships, community voices and different ways of knowing and belonging can shape curriculum, professional decision-making and everyday practice.

COURAGE IN PRACTICE: LEADERSHIP, ETHICS AND SYSTEMS

This stream explores the professional courage required to navigate complex and evolving systems, bringing together leadership, workforce, regulation and reform through an ethical lens. It invites presentations on the practical implementation of the ECA *Code of Ethics*; ethical leadership in the face of policy reform and compliance pressures; the ethical use of technology, including AI, in early learning; exercising professional judgement in implementing reforms and building trust in regulatory systems; and the solidarity, advocacy, sustainability, morale and wellbeing of the sector workforce.

PRACTICE THAT HOLDS: PEDAGOGY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

This stream focuses on thoughtful, high-quality practice as a stabilising force in times of change, inviting early childhood practitioners to share practical strategies and case studies that conference delegates can take away and implement in their own settings. It invites participants to reflect on pedagogical approaches, relationships and environments that support children's rights, safety and wellbeing; and educator responsiveness to changing regulatory and policy conditions. Presentation topics may include risky play; relational practice with infants and toddlers; innovation in outside school hours care (OSHC) settings; thoughtful (rather than compliance-driven) documentation; and place-based learning and intentional design of indoor and outdoor environments.



APPLICATION INFORMATION

Applications to present must be made using the online portal. Applicants will need to follow all steps and address all sections of the application process.

Applications to present at the conference will need to identify which one (1) of these four (4) areas of inquiry the presentation will most directly contribute to:

1. Children at the core: Rights, voice and belonging
2. Place, culture and deep listening
3. Courage in practice: Leadership, ethics and systems
4. Practice that holds: Pedagogy in uncertain times



Applicants are required to submit a **300-word abstract** and will be asked to identify a **target audience** for their presentation.

The application process will ask about the experience of the presenter(s) and whether the content has been presented elsewhere. This information will help ECA balance the program with a mix of new and known material. It will also help us to meet our aim of delivering consistent, high-quality presentations and give new or inexperienced presenters an opportunity to gain experience.

Applicants will also need to list the position and organisation of each author and provide biographies for each **presenting** author.





PRESENTATION TYPE

There are three presentation categories for the conference. Applicants must specify which presentation format they are applying under.

ORAL PRESENTATION

Oral presentations are allocated 45 minutes, including time for questions and discussion with attendees. ECA encourages presenters to adopt an interactive approach to their presentation. A 10-minute break between sessions will allow attendees to move between rooms.

Presenters may be asked to present twice during the conference or provide a video recording post-conference if their session proves to be popular.

FLASH PRESENTATION

Flash presentations are allocated 15 minutes each and are presented back-to-back within a single session. Time for questions and discussion will be provided at the end of the session where time permits.

Grouped together under a common theme, these concise and engaging presentations build on one another to deliver a collective message that encourages collaboration and inspires delegates to take the ideas further.

PLEASE NOTE: the room configuration for all presentations will be in a theatre style setting. Applicants must ensure their submission reflects the room setting, as changes to the configuration and setup of the room are not possible throughout the conference.

Selected presentations will be live streamed to a virtual audience. By accepting to present at the ECA National Conference, applicants grant ECA permission to live stream and record presentations to be made available for delegate viewing for up to 60 days after the conference. All presenters will be required to pre-record a copy of their presentation for use on the virtual platform.

ECA reserves the right to request successful presenters to modify the length or format of their presentation (for example, from an oral presentation to flash style or panel discussion) to best align with the structure and objectives of the conference program.

AUDIO-VISUAL REQUIREMENTS

Presentations must be in **PowerPoint** format. The full and final electronic presentation will need to be submitted by **Friday 10 September 2027** to ensure compatibility with the system available at the venue.

At the venue, presenters will have access to facilities such as data projectors, computers, screens and the internet. The conference will be networked, which means that presentations will be loaded from the Speaker Preparation Centre. All presenters will be required to check in at the Speakers Preparation Centre the day prior to their presentation.

POSTER PRESENTATION

All poster presentations must follow a standard format and adhere to the following dimension and layout criteria:

- The maximum size allowed for posters is 1.2 m (h) x 1 m (w).
- The title and author names must be clearly indicated at the top of the poster. Large letters are to be used for the title (equivalent to 80-point font size or larger).
- All text on the poster is to be legible from a distance of 1 m. It is suggested that headings be a minimum of 30-point font size and body text be a minimum of 24-point font size.
- Posters are to be either printed on poster paper or assembled on light cardboard.
- Use of columns is recommended as it is easier to read than material arranged in rows.

Presenters are encouraged to include visual aids in their posters (e.g. images, flow charts, graphic representations of data).



If successful, poster presenters will be required to record a short video presentation (5–10 minutes) to talk about their poster for viewing during the conference via the mobile app and virtual platform. The recording will be made available to delegates for up to 60 days after the conference. A digital version of your poster will also need to be available at the time of recording.

PLEASE NOTE: successful poster presenters will not be listed on the program. However, we do encourage poster presenters to engage with delegates viewing their posters during meal breaks.

Recorded presentations remain the property of ECA, for the purposes of the ECA National Conference only.





SELECTION CRITERIA

KEY FOCUS

Applications must focus on:

- relevance to at least one of the conference themes
- examples of emerging or exemplar practice that enhance children's experiences and/or the sector
- university research, action research or extension of existing thinking
- relevance to the target audience, understanding that delegates attending the session may come from across Australia and overseas.

REQUIRED INCLUSIONS

Applicants must ensure that their papers:

- specify the aims of the project or research questions and/or focus of inquiry, where applicable
- outline research methods and/or analytical and/or theoretical framework in brief
- have a strong emphasis on findings and/or translation to practice and contribute to the professional practice of the target audience.

FREE OF COMMERCIAL INTEREST

Applicants must confirm that their paper is free of commercial interest and declare if they are a commercial enterprise. Papers that primarily promote or sell a specific product or service will not be accepted. Presentations that contain a commercial interest will be asked to provide further information on:

- how the product or commercial service contributes to or benefits the ECEC sector
- how you will present your paper to ensure it remains informative and educational in nature, rather than promotional or sales focused.

CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

ECA values the respectful representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and knowledge. If your presentation explores Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander topics, cultures or communities, please tell us how you have engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities and sought their support to deliver a presentation at our conference.

This helps ensure that presentations reflect community voices and uphold cultural protocols.

REVIEW PROCESS

All applications to present will be reviewed by a panel that includes members of the ECA Conference Program Committee. Members of the ECA Conference Program Committee will:

- know the identities of the applicants
- assess the applications to ensure the quality and relevance of the presentations
- assess the applications in accordance with the ECA selection criteria.

Wherever possible, feedback will be given to unsuccessful applicants depending on the number of applications received.

PRESENTER REGISTRATION

A condition for being able to present is that all presenters must register for the day on which they will be presenting at the conference. All presenters will receive the ECA member rate for full conference registration. A maximum of five (5) presenters per paper will be allowed to register and participate at the member rate. If registration confirmation and payment are not received by Wednesday 30 June 2027, abstracts will be withdrawn from the conference program.

PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

All selected abstracts will be published on the 2027 ECA Conference App and virtual platform.

Some presentations and papers may also be selected by the ECA Publications Advisory Committee for inclusion in other ECA publications. The ECA Publications Team will approach presenters independently regarding potential publication. This may involve presenters summarising their paper or presentation for a magazine format. Further instructions will be provided by the ECA Publications Team as required.

CONFERENCE LIVE STREAM

The 2027 ECA National Conference will be live streamed to delegates who purchase a Virtual Delegate Pass. Selected papers will be allocated to the live stream. Presenters of these papers will be filmed and their presentation will be shown to the virtual audience.

Following the conference, presentations will be made available for viewing in the library of presentations for a period of 60 days after the conference.





SUSTAINABILITY

In keeping with ECA's sustainability drive, all abstracts must be submitted online using the following link:

https://eca.eventsair.com/g68-2027-hobart-national-conference/2027hobart

ECA seeks to minimise any negative environmental impact from the conference. We therefore encourage successful presenters to avoid the use of single-use plastics or unnecessary printed material—any handouts can be pre-loaded onto the virtual platform or conference app.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Successful candidates must agree to the following terms and conditions:

- All presenters **must register** for the in-person conference. Up to five (5) presenters per paper will receive the ECA member rate for full conference registration.
- All presenters must be available to present live and in person and speak at any time during the conference.
- All presenters **must pre-record** their presentation during the timeframe provided by ECA for use on the virtual platform.
- ECA may broadcast selected presentation(s) via live stream to conference delegates. Presenters grant ECA the right to publish their recorded presentation in the library of presentations for a period of 60 days after the conference.
- If the conference changes to a fully virtual format, all presenters must be present on the virtual platform during their presentation and have a virtual registration.
- Presenters may be asked to repeat their session if it proves to be popular, or if delegates miss out on the session due to lack of space.
- Presenters grant ECA the right to publish their papers on the conference website and/or in various ECA publications.
- Presenters grant ECA permission to use their uploaded photo for conference promotional purposes.
- Presenters must ensure their availability for media comments about the conference.
- Abstracts will be withdrawn from the conference program if registration confirmation and payment are not received by **Wednesday 30 June 2027**.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

STEP 1: **Read all instructions carefully.**

STEP 2: **Write an abstract (no more than 300 words) related to the preferred sub-theme.**

STEP 3: **Ensure the abstract addresses the selection criteria.**

STEP 4: **Submit the abstract online before Wednesday 20 January 2027 via** https://eca.eventsair.com/g68-2027-hobart-national-conference/2027hobart

STEP 5: **Ensure presenter biographies are no more than 50 words in total.**

STEP 6: **Supply at least one presenter photograph with the application (limit file size to a maximum of 1 MB).**



PLEASE NOTE:

- **The abstracts and biographies of successful candidates will undergo editing before being published in the conference program.**
- **A maximum of five (5) presenters will be allowed to register and present per paper at the member rate.**
- **Applicants may submit multiple papers, but only one paper can be accepted to present at the conference.**
- **Applications will only be accepted online.**

SUBMISSION AND POST-SELECTION SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE	DEADLINE
Application to present closes	20 January 2027
Review of all applications by ECA Conference Program Committee	17 February 2027
Notification of applicant outcomes	19 March 2027
Program at a glance published on conference website	28 April 2027
Pre-recording of presentations	June–August 2027
Closing date for successful applicants to register	30 June 2027
Submission of final PowerPoint/poster presentation	10 September 2027

APPLY NOW