



# 2025

# Annual Report







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

CELA acknowledges all Traditional Custodians across Australia and recognises First Nations Peoples' connection to their lands, skies and waterways. We respect Elders past, present and emerging.

Together we work towards a better future for all children, families and communities.

Artwork by Megan Daley, a Ngunnawal/Wiradjuri mixed media artist.

# Contents

Message from the CEO .....	2
Message from the Chair .....	3
Who we are .....	4
How we help. ....	5
How we are funded .....	6
Membership survey .....	8
What makes CELA membership so valuable?.....	9
Advocacy to support members.....	10
Advocacy highlights.....	14
Advocacy in pictures .....	18
Representation .....	23
Submissions .....	24
Impact through consultancy.....	26
Consultancy.....	28
Partnership .....	29
Progressive and flexible training program .....	32
Publications.....	36
Our team .....	38
Our board .....	40
Treasurer's report .....	42
Audited statements .....	43
Partnership .....	44



# Message from the CEO



“We stand on the cusp of the most significant reforms in the history of early education and care.”

It is with great pride that I present CELA's Annual Report for 2024–25, a year that has been truly transformative for our sector and for the community and small providers we represent.

This year, we saw long-fought reforms finally become reality. After decades of campaigning, we secured government-funded pay rises for early educators and teachers. This is an achievement that changes lives and strengthens the very foundations of our sector. The signing of the first multi-employer bargaining agreement for long day care, followed by our ongoing work to extend this to NSW community preschools, marked an historic turning point. For the first time, professional wages are within reach without increasing costs for families. Standing alongside Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to announce this landmark agreement was a moment of immense pride for CELA and the sector as a whole. The Prime Minister's commitment to a universal, high-quality early childhood education and care system reflects the momentum our sector has built and the trust that government has placed in organisations like CELA to shape this future.

These achievements didn't happen by accident. They were the result of relentless, solution-focused advocacy, bringing member voices into the heart of Fair Work Commission negotiations, working closely with unions, and ensuring community and small providers had an impactful voice. Together with our colleagues at Community Child Care Association, we amplified those voices, creating real impact in both state and federal arenas. At the same time, our advocacy delivered significant progress on quality and access. We pushed for, and won, key reforms from the Productivity Commission's final report, including three days of guaranteed early education for every child, changes to the activity test, and recognition of the critical role played by community-managed, not-for-profit services.

The past year has also shone a necessary light on child safety. As custodians of children's wellbeing, our sector carries the responsibility to ensure every child is safe, protected, and able to thrive. CELA has worked tirelessly to strengthen training, guidance, and policy so that our member services can be confident their practices are robust, compliant, and above all child-centred. This work is ongoing and non-negotiable, and we are committed to supporting our members in creating environments where children are safeguarded at every level.

As always, our members were a major focus this year. We conducted our first comprehensive membership survey, and the response was both affirming and instructive. The outstanding Net Promoter Score reflected the deep trust and loyalty members place in CELA, and told us what is important to our members, whom we represent. The survey reaffirmed that CELA is not just another membership—it is one of the most valued and essential voices in the sector.

Alongside advocacy, our training, publications, consultancy, and member support services continue to grow in reach and impact. From our much-loved Amplify! and Rattler publications, to essential insights webinars and tailored workplace relations advice, our services ensure members are supported at every level. We are proud that these offerings continue to underpin quality practice, leadership capacity, resilience, and now an even sharper focus on child safety across the sector.

Financially, CELA remains strong. Despite the challenging economic environment and the scale of investment required to achieve advocacy wins of this magnitude, we have maintained a surplus and strengthened our capacity. This is only possible because of the unwavering support of our members, our learning and development participants, our consultancy clients, and our partners, particularly Guild Insurance.

Looking ahead, we stand on the cusp of the most significant reforms in the history of early education and care. Our focus will remain on ensuring that community and small providers are at the centre of these reforms, because they consistently deliver the highest quality outcomes for children and families, and their expansion is critical to universal early education in Australia.

As I reflect on the year, I feel an immense sense of gratitude. Gratitude to our members for their trust and professionalism, to our staff for their commitment and expertise, and to the educators, teachers, leaders and families who make up this vibrant sector. Thank you for collectively shaping the high-quality early education system that children and families deserve.

**Michele Carnegie**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Community Early Learning Australia

# Message from the Chair



Looking back over the past year, I consider what an exceptionally busy and important one it's been for CELA. The pace of change in the early childhood education and care sector continues to accelerate, and with it, the opportunities and responsibilities for CELA to play a leadership role in shaping a system that truly meets the needs of children, families, and communities across Australia. I feel both proud and humbled to serve as Chair at such a pivotal time for the sector.

I first stepped into the early childhood sector in 1980, and through all the changes, I have seen how vital it is that children remain at the heart of our work. More than ever, CELA has kept that focus, and I truly believe that our collective efforts are helping to shape life-changing outcomes.

This year, CELA's board launched a new strategic plan that sets out a bold direction for the future. It rests on three key priorities: building sustainable services, advocating for children and educators, and strengthening governance. These are goals that guide our daily decisions and our longterm vision for the sector.

Over the past year, we have seen community partnerships flourish, especially in rural and remote areas where families often face the greatest challenges. By working hand-in-hand with local organisations, we have been able to bridge gaps and deliver better outcomes for children.

Our advocacy has also achieved historic milestones. Multi-employer bargaining has created a pathway to fairer pay and conditions for early childhood educators, and

CELA has taken a leading role in ensuring the workforce is represented in this process. This achievement is more than industrial reform. It is recognition of the incredible contribution educators make every day, and a step toward ensuring recognition of their professionalism. When educators are supported, children thrive, families flourish, and communities grow stronger.

Of course, challenges remain. Child safety is in the spotlight and reports continue to highlight worrying trends in children's development and in the quality of services across the country. Workforce shortages and financial pressures place real strain on services and families. Yet I believe this is precisely where CELA's leadership matters most. With governments increasingly recognising the vital importance of early childhood education, we are uniquely positioned to help shape reforms that put children at the centre, and I am excited and optimistic about the future.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our board, our CEO, and the CELA team for their tireless work, and to our members for their commitment and trust. Together, we are building a stronger sector, and a safer, brighter future for every child in Australia.

**Eve Hawkes**  
Chair  
Community Early Learning Australia

**“When educators are supported,  
children thrive, families flourish,  
and communities grow stronger.”**

# Who we are

**Community Early Learning Australia (CELA) is the voice for Australia's early education and care sector.**

CELA has successfully supported and advocated for early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for nearly 50 years. We are committed to early education and building the future, one child at a time.

A member-driven organisation, we are dedicated to supporting over 1,800 members that employ more than 27,000 educators and teachers nationally. Our members include community-managed not-for-profit, government, and privately-owned small providers, delivering preschool, long day care, mobile, outside school hours care, and family day care services.



CELA has supported  
early education and care  
professionals for

## 48 YEARS

Members gain access to a wealth of knowledge and inspiration through CELA's 1800 support line, publications and resources, and receive discounts on training, events and consultancy services. Through our advocacy, we provide a vital line of communication to government, ensuring member voices are heard.



### WHAT WE DO

CELA represents the interests of members and the sector by working with governments about issues and potential solutions, providing analysis and statistical evidence, and conveying the views of members. Our advocacy helps government understand how policies affect early childhood service provision and, ultimately, the families and children using these services.

We build capacity and expertise through our learning and development program for teachers and educators with a focus on supporting quality practice.

Through CELA's consulting services, we provide high level sector expertise to support the wide range of governance and operational needs of providers and services.



### OUR MISSION

1. **Quality education and care:** We deliver effective and expert support for our members, enabling them to deliver quality early education and care for all of Australia's children.
2. **Small providers, BIG voices:** We influence policy makers and government by amplifying the voices of community-based and small providers.
3. **Community is core:** We promote the value and importance of community-based early education.



Our **vision** is for all of Australia's children to have access to **quality early education**, regardless of economic circumstance or where they live.

CELA members never have to face a challenge on their own. Our experienced sector specialists are a phone call away for general information, or for more specific advice and direction to resources. Members have access to a comprehensive range of sector information and sound expertise through CELA's 1800 support line, publications and resources, and receive discounts on training, events and consulting services. CELA provides wider sector benefits through advocacy work on behalf of members, a knowledge portal for Approved Providers, learning and development programs, and consulting services for new and established providers.

## ADVOCACY

CELA influences government and policy makers to act on the issues that affect our members and the wider sector. Our advocacy is grounded in our mission to amplify the value of early learning and ensure all children and families have access to quality, affordable ECEC, no matter their economic circumstances or where they live.



## EVENTS

CELA hosts conferences, professional learning and networking events throughout the year. Events are designed to support professional growth and provide opportunities to connect with peers and sector experts.



## MEMBERSHIP

Members can access expert guidance and operational resources to improve quality practice and service delivery. The CELA helpline is staffed by sector specialists, connecting members with the latest information.



## TRAINING

CELA builds the professional capability of educators and teachers with all levels of qualifications, through training programs led by sector experts. We offer a wide range of topics, delivered online or in service, APST-aligned and RTO accredited courses, self-paced e-learning and micro credentials, and an Approved Provider and Governance Program for NSW providers and employees.



## CONSULTING

Our skilled early education and care consultancy team help services from start-up to compliance, through ongoing quality initiatives and governance to help deliver strong early education outcomes and operational success.



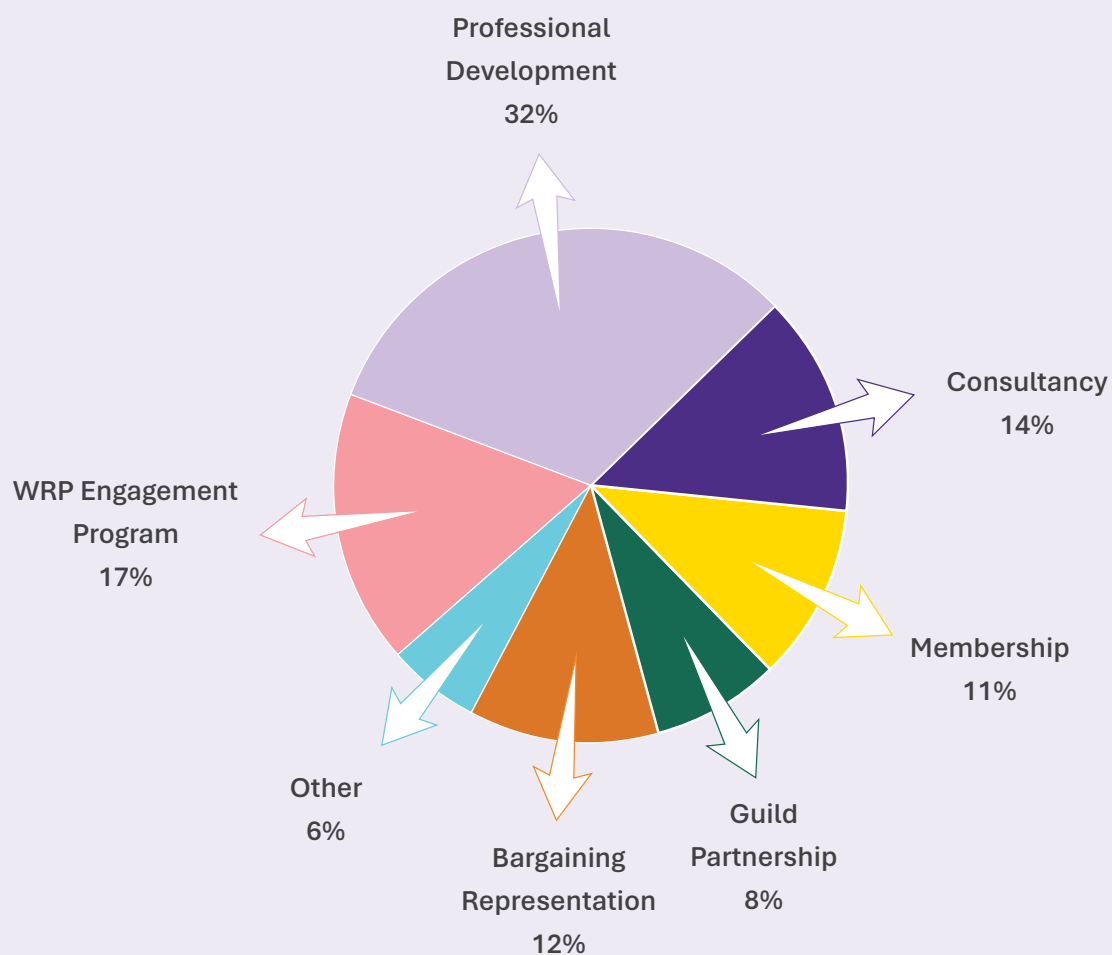
## APPROVED PROVIDER

We support new and existing providers through membership, resources, publications, professional learning and mentoring.

# How we are funded

Funding our mission for members and the broader sector is made possible by re-investing profits from our consultancy and professional development programs. This approach allows us to maintain low membership fees while delivering high-impact advocacy.

## Where our money came from this year:









# Membership survey



This year, we embarked on our first comprehensive member survey. It affirmed the immense value members find in CELA membership and the invaluable data collected is helping us to remain responsive to the needs of the services we represent. It provides a strong base for shaping strategic direction and future benchmarking.

## Who we heard from

The survey participants accurately reflect the diverse CELA membership, with 90% based in NSW, and an even split between major cities (48%) and regional/remote areas (52%). The majority of respondents (three-quarters) were directors or supervisors, with executives, managers, or administrators making up 1 in 6. Kindergarten and long day care organisations were most heavily represented (with about a quarter of these offering both).

## What members told us

Being part of a professional community and having access to the comprehensive resource library are key reasons for joining and remaining members. Other highly valued benefits include advocacy, timely sector news, training discounts, the member support line, access to reports, essential insights webinars, and networking opportunities. In fact, 90% of members highly value CELA's advocacy and weekly updates. This strong engagement is reflected in an excellent Net Promoter Score (NPS), indicating high loyalty and satisfaction levels across the majority of our members. It is clear that CELA is a vital resource for community and small providers.

## CELA's impact and member support

Members consistently recognise CELA's crucial role, particularly in securing pay increases for the sector. Member support for CELA is truly outstanding, reflected in an impressive Net Promoter Score indicating very high member loyalty and satisfaction. While most CELA members also belong to other organisations, they consistently rank CELA among their top three most valued memberships. This clearly positions CELA as a leading and essential voice in early childhood education and care.

## What we are acting on

Members understood the rising cost of operating and comprehensive advocacy success may result in higher membership fees. We are looking at alternate membership models that will give greater choice to our members so as no one is left behind. We have embedded this information into our strategy, which focuses on strengthening the sector through effective representation, amplifying members' voices, and driving innovation and sustainability. We are committed to enhancing our own capability and responsiveness, while prioritising ways to support quality practice, leadership capacity, and advocacy.

CELA SUPPORTS

**1,800+**  
**MEMBERS**

who employ more than  
27,000 educators across Australia.

CELA is deeply committed to listening to our members and responding to their evolving needs. The inaugural survey reinforced the importance of CELA's core activities, while highlighting important opportunities and issues we will continue to address. We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to better understand member sentiment as we continue to champion the ECEC sector.

# What makes CELA membership so valuable?

“

Professional value and support. Having a voice.”

“

The whole package and they are genuine.”

“

Huge support with the administration.”

“

Child focus and pedagogy.”

“

Everything in one place and easy to find. And the knowledge that you are working behind the scenes to support quality in the sector.”

“

A wealth of resources, knowledgeable staff, current and relevant PD.”

CELA members via the inaugural member survey



# Advocacy to support members

## Driving major reform on behalf of community and small providers

Every day, CELA represents the interests of community and small provider members to local, state and federal decision makers. Our advocacy highlights our members' issues and creates momentum to deliver solutions that support our five advocacy pillars.

2024-25 was another momentous year for advancing major reform for the early education and care sector. CELA has continued our intensive advocacy to state and federal governments, ensuring we are shaping major reform on behalf of community and small providers. We have led the way, advocating for a sector that is ready for the future with universal access, professional wages and expanded community services.

To take full advantage of these opportunities, we have focused on solution focused, persistent and creative advocacy. We recognised governments' appetite for major reform and knew that community and small providers had to have a seat at the table.

Our dedicated advocacy team means we can harness this unprecedented momentum for ECEC reform. Our advocacy partnership with Community Child Care also increases the weight of member voices that we bring to decision makers with a peak body that shares our goals and values.

Our advocacy to government has further grown CELA's influence and access to decision makers by:

- ▶ shaping reform processes, informed by our members' experiences
- ▶ being a trusted source for effective policy solutions and specialist expertise, on behalf of community and small providers
- ▶ creating champions in state and federal parliaments by bringing member voices directly to decision makers.

## Solving workforce shortages through professional wages for early educator and teachers

CELA is helping community and small providers to deliver quality services sustainably by delivering government

funded pay increases through multi-employer bargaining in federally funded long day care and NSW preschools.

When CELA started our journey with multi-employer bargaining, promoting access for our members was front of mind. We took the lead to solve workforce shortages by supporting community and small services through this process.

CELA led negotiations on behalf of member services to ensure their voices were heard in Fair Work Commission negotiations. We also worked intensively across our sector and within Federal Parliament to represent the interests of community and small providers to ensure wage increases were a key priority, despite economic headwinds.

The signing of the day care agreement between providers, unions and the Australian Government was a momentous moment for our sector, addressing chronically low wages without raising fees for families.

In December 2024, CELA member Gowrie Erskineville hosted a press conference with Minister for Education Jason Clare and CEO Michele Carnegie. This was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the employers who led the multi-employer bargaining process, on behalf of their sector, to deliver the professional wages that their staff urgently need.

This momentous change did not happen by accident. Our sector has fought for decades to pay educators and teachers a professional wage. This agreement and Federal Government funded pay rise was only possible because the whole sector came together.

We knew it was important for the 1,500 small and medium providers to have the right expert support to secure the federally funded 15% wage increase for early educators and teachers. That's why CELA worked intensively to ensure the Australian Government is provided free workplace relations advice for providers to access the ECEC Worker Retention Payment. We are delivering this for community providers through our dedicated Workplace Relations team.

We are already seeing the benefits of paying educators and teachers what they are worth. This wage increase will unlock access to early education for families where it is needed most, creating the workforce foundations for transformative ECEC reform.





CELA is also representing 104 community managed preschools in the first multi-employer bargaining application for NSW preschools. This is the next step in delivering professional wages for our whole sector.

The Fair Work Commission's draft gender undervaluation decision reinforces our claim that early childhood staff in preschools are performing critical professional work that has been undervalued. We are working to ensure the NSW Government supports this decision and funds professional wages to protect the future sustainability of our preschool sector.

### Driving an urgent uplift in quality and safety

CELA's mission is to ensure all governments prioritise the most effective reforms to protect children's safety. We can't 'enforce' our way to a child safe system – prevention and increased quality is the key.

In 2024-25, we focused on ensuring state and federal governments prioritised two key reforms:

Firstly, regulators must be resourced to deliver the frequency of monitoring, compliance, assessment and ratings that will effectively uphold the National Quality Standard.

Secondly, governments must invest in services that prioritise quality. A safe system is based on high quality, but quality does not happen by chance. Community and small providers are proven to prioritise quality by investing in a qualified workforce and offering services that reflect the values, cultural identity and needs of local families. This is the basis for delivering the full benefits of early childhood education and care for children, families and our broader community.

### Establishing the foundations for a universal high quality system

In 2024-25, our priority was to advocate for a sector that is ready for the future with professional wages, sustainable funding and expanded community services. This is the key to ensuring all children have access to quality early education and care, no matter where they live. It's also the basis for growing sustainable and resilient services staffed by skilled and qualified educators.



## ADVOCACY PILLARS

CELA has five advocacy pillars which guide our work:



Achieving  
quality early education



Building a stable workforce  
that is nurtured and valued



Ensuring viability for  
community and small providers



Improving access for  
vulnerable children



Closing the gap for  
rural children



CELA delivered this by focusing on two key streams for our advocacy:

- ▶ solving workforce shortages through government funded professional wages to early educators and teachers
- ▶ ensuring state and federal governments prioritise the most effective reforms to deliver a high quality universal education and care system.

In September 2024, the Productivity Commission released its final report in its Early Childhood Education and Care Inquiry. This was the final piece of the reform puzzle required for the Australian Government to deliver long overdue reforms to early childhood education and care, featuring many of the recommendations that CELA has advocated on behalf of our member services. We then worked with state and federal governments to turn this wealth of analysis and recommendations into a road map for delivering the universal high quality system that families need.

In December 2024, the Prime Minister announced an ambitious plan for universal early childhood education and care that recognises the central role that community-managed not-for-profit services will play in delivering this for Australian families. CELA worked intensively with decision makers to ensure this historic commitment was prioritised in the last term of Federal Parliament.

We are pleased to see many of our key reforms adopted including:

- ▶ delivering three days guaranteed early education and care for all children
- ▶ changing the activity test to ensure children who will benefit most can access education and care
- ▶ growing high quality community managed not-for-profit services, particularly in areas of undersupply
- ▶ creating a sustainable early education workforce through professional wages
- ▶ research into the cost of delivering high-quality early childhood education and care.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

Our intensive advocacy has ensured decision makers understand the value of community and small services, creating momentum for the reforms that are essential to unlock the full benefits of early education and care.

Our advocacy in 2025-26 will focus on the next phase of major reforms to establish universal high quality early education and care by prioritising five pillars:

- ▶ embedding quality and safety in all education and care services
- ▶ supporting a qualified valued workforce
- ▶ inclusive education and care for all children
- ▶ growing community and small providers to meet the needs of all children and families
- ▶ affordable education and care for all families, regardless of where they live.

Community and small services will be the foundation for delivering universal high quality early education and care in a meaningful timeframe. They provide the greatest return on government investment by consistently delivering the highest quality ratings and most efficient service delivery.

This is an unprecedented moment where families, the early education sector and governments are all ready for change. Our number one priority is to seize this opportunity on behalf of community and small providers, creating the early education system that children and families need.





## Our educators



created by  
ZOE



created by  
Heidi



created by  
Harper



created by  
Elop



created by  
STELLA



created by  
Scarlett



Children need  
Educators who are **attuned** to their thoughts and feelings – **Trusting** relationships with educators that provide them with a **secure** base from which to explore and learn – **Secure** educator and child relationships where children can learn, develop and feel valued – **Educators** that provide **familiar** routines – **Educators** who **prioritise** **nurturing** relationships, who are **culturally safe**, **responsive** and provide children with **consistent** emotional support – **Healthy** positive, caring and consistent relationships and interactions that are **critical** to **healthy** brain development.

Early Years Learning Framework (2022) Australian Government Department of Education, 2022

These practices can only be achieved through well trained, qualified, experienced teachers and educators who feel valued. Thank you for taking steps to keep more teachers and educators in the early childhood sector.

# Advocacy highlights

CELA and the IEU lodge an application to the Fair Work Commission for a Supported Bargaining Authorisation to kick off the NSW preschool multi-employer bargaining process for a pilot group of 103 NSW community preschools.

CELA attends hearings for the Fair Work Commission's Gender Undervaluation Review into Priority Awards including the Children's Services Award, providing direct representation on behalf of member services throughout this process.

ACECQA's National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care comes into effect on 1 July 2025, with input from CELA.

Changes to ministerial rules allow OSHC providers to offer services to children under school age – CELA works with federal decision makers to ensure this works as intended.

CEO Michele Carnegie visits Coonabarabran in northern NSW to learn more about what local children and families need from early education and care.

The Productivity Commission releases its final inquiry report into early childhood education and care, adopting many of CELA's recommendations and referencing our submissions. CEO Michele Carnegie was at this announcement with Ministers Clare and Aly.

CELA's CEO meets with Minister for Education Jason Clare to outline our plan for implementing the Productivity Commission's recommendations, with a focus on growing community and small services as the foundation for a universal high-quality system.

Minister for Education Jason Clare highlights comments from CELA's CEO in Federal Parliament as part of introducing legislation to deliver professional wages for early educators.

The Federal Government released an in-depth study into the future workforce needs of the early childhood education and care sector, referring to CELA's joint submission with CCC that highlighted the importance of Diploma qualifications to create professional pathways and careers of choice in long day care.

The NSW Preschool Supported Bargaining application is approved by the Fair Work Commission, meaning negotiations can begin in earnest.

## 2024

### JULY

### AUGUST

### SEPTEMBER

### OCTOBER

The Federal Government confirms they will fund an initial 15% pay increase for early childhood educators and teachers. CELA's CEO was at this announcement with the Prime Minister, Minister Clare and Minister Aly.

CELA's CEO speaks with federal parliamentarians about the importance of making historic wage commitment work for our member services and the families they support.

CELA represents community preschools in the NSW Supported Bargaining process.

CELA CEO meets with Reserve Bank of Australia to share current data and perspectives from our members on demand for ECEC, workforce issues and factors that affect the cost of services.

Legislation to deliver the 15% wage increase is referred to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee – CELA provides a substantive submission on the importance of delivering this funding urgently to solve workforce shortages.

CELA launches its Workplace Relations Service to help community and small providers access the ECEC Worker Retention Payment for long day care educators and teachers.

CELA holds its 2024 AGM, with Professor Deb Brennan sharing her insights on the Productivity Commission's Early Childhood Education and Care Inquiry.

CELA attends the first NSW Preschool Supported Bargaining meeting, representing 103 community preschool providers.







CELA, the Federal Government, unions and other providers reach in principle agreement on long day care multi-employer bargaining.

CELA's CEO opens the 4th annual Infants and Toddlers Conference at Macquarie University.

CELA writes to Federal Minister for Education Jason Clare outlining our detailed plan to guide the Federal Government's response to the Productivity Commission's Early Childhood Education & Care Inquiry Report.

CELA lodges a Pre-Budget Submission for the 2025-26 Federal Budget, focusing on strengthening support for educators, inclusion and expanding community-led services.

The first group of new providers join the Long Day Care Multi-Employer Agreement.

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

2025

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

The Long Day Care Multi-Employer Agreement is finalised – CELA's CEO attends the signing ceremony with Minister for Employment & Workplace Relations Senator the Hon Murray Watt and member services.

Services begin to receive the ECEC Worker Retention Grant, passing the 15% federally funded pay rise to their staff.

Representatives of the NSW Government attend their first negotiation meeting for NSW Preschool Supported Bargaining.

The Australian Government announces major early education and care reforms including the Three Day Guarantee and \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund.

CELA lodges a Pre-Budget Submission for the 2025-26 NSW Budget, outlining our plan to solve workforce shortages and boost community managed preschools.

The Federal Parliament passes legislation to establish a Three Day Guarantee for early education and care, laying the foundations for a universal quality early education system.

CELA's CEO visits Federal Parliament to advocate for community and small providers during the last sitting week before the March Federal Budget.

The Federal Government announces support for free workplace relations advice for providers to access the ECEC Worker Retention Payment. CELA commences delivering this for community and small providers through our dedicated Workplace Relations team.

The NSW Government announces the Wheeler Review into the NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Regulatory Authority.

CELA's CEO meets SA Minister for Education the Hon Blair Boyer MP on opportunities to expand high quality community and small services in rural and regional communities.

CELA's CEO appears on The Parenthood's At What Cost podcast, sharing insights on the far-reaching impacts of childcare deserts on Australian communities.

CELA attends NSW Preschool Supported Bargaining sessions on behalf of community preschool providers.

CELA's CEO meets with Ministers Clare and Aly to outline urgent reforms that can drive an urgent uplift in the quality and safety of our sector.

The Federal Government announces steps to strengthen safety and quality in early childhood education and care, including new Commonwealth regulatory and enforcement powers for consistently underperforming providers.

The 2025-26 Federal Budget locks in \$5 billion for the foundations of a high-quality early education and care system that is universal, sustainable and easy to access. CELA's advocacy ensures the Australian Government highlights the critical role of community and small providers in delivering this.

CELA's CEO visits Federal Parliament for Budget Day, speaking with MPs and Senators about opportunities to expand high quality community and small services in their communities.

CELA continues to support community and small providers to access the ECEC Worker Retention Payment through our dedicated Workplace Relations team.

CELA attends NSW Preschool Supported Bargaining sessions on behalf of community preschool providers.

CELA CEO advocates intensively to Minister Car, the NSW Department of Education, NSW Regulatory Authority and Abigail Boyd MLC to prevent the release of early childhood educators and teachers' names by NSW Parliament in NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Regulatory Authority documents.

CELA's CEO joins ACT Minister for Early Childhood Education Yvette Berry to launch a new program to support culturally inclusive practices and responses for early childhood educators. CELA worked closely with the Ngunnawal families, and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expert Panel to ensure this program reflects local culture and meets the community's needs, particularly on cultural safety and integrity.

## MARCH

The Fair Work Commission proposes wages increases of 15-23% for educators and a new simplified classification structure for the Children's Services Award as part of its major review into gender undervaluation.

CELA continues our advocacy during the Federal Election, writing to the leaders of all major parties outlining our plan to drive an urgent uplift in quality and safety across the early education and care sector.

CELA attends the regional Early Childhood Australia conference.

## APRIL

## MAY

The Federal Election is held – early education and care is a high priority issue for the returned Albanese Government.

CELA writes to the Prime Minister outlining our plan for key early education and care reforms in the 48th Parliament.

CELA's CEO meets the Governor-General H.E. Sam Mostyn at an event for The Infants Home, discussing her recent Royal Assent of the Three Day Guarantee legislation.

CELA attends NSW Preschool Supported Bargaining sessions on behalf of community preschool providers.



CELA's CEO meets the new Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Jess Walsh to discuss the next steps for expanding community and small services through the Building Early Education Fund.

CELA writes to Minister Walsh outlining our recommendations for the design and implementation of the Building Early Education Fund, prioritising support for community and small providers.

CELA continues to support community and small providers to access the ECEC Worker Retention Payment through our dedicated Workplace Relations team.

The NSW Government announces new quality and safety reforms in response to the Wheeler Review including a new independent Regulatory Authority, increased public information on significant breaches and service quality, increased penalties and regulatory powers to install CCTV.

Federal, state and territory governments agree to new tougher child safety rules including mandatory 24 hour reporting of all complaints or allegations, a ban on vapes in all early education and care services and stronger protections around digital technology use.

## JUNE

CELA and CCC provide our feedback on the Australian Government's Child Safety Review Consultation Regulation Impact Statement, outlining our recommendations for ensuring a system that shares responsibility for the provision of safe services across funding agencies, early education and care providers, employers and educators.

CELA CEO meets with NSW MP for Prospect Dr Hugh McDermott to highlight the value of community preschools to the NSW Government.

The ACT, NSW and SA Budgets are handed down, with major investments to roll out universal preschool.

CELA's CEO and the CELA team visit Coorong in regional South Australia to speak with families, directors, educators and community workers about local early education and care needs.

CELA provides a submission to the Fair Work Commission's Gender Undervaluation Review, outlining our detailed feedback on draft determinations for the Children's Services Award.





# Advocacy in pictures



## **JUL 24: CELA AND IEU LODGE NSW PRESCHOOL MEB APPLICATION**

Michele spoke to supporters when the NSW Preschool MEB application was lodged with Fair Work in Sydney—the next step in delivering professional wages for the whole sector.



## **AUG 24: VISIT TO BERMAGUI PRESCHOOL CO-OPERATIVE**

Michele visited the preschool to celebrate their rating of Excellent for the third time. CELA has represented preschools such as Bermagui in multi-employer bargaining to ensure their teachers and educators are paid professional wages.



## **AUG 24: PAY INCREASE AND \$3.6 BILLION COMMITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT**

CELA member service, Styles Street Children's Community Long Day Care, hosted Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Education Minister Jason Clare, and Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly to officially announce the 15% pay increase funded by the Federal Government.





## SEPT 24: PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION FINAL REPORT RELEASED

Michele was in Brisbane to hear Minister for Education, Jason Clare, announce the release of the report—a culmination of a mammoth effort across the entire sector.



## NOV 24: MICHELE OPENS THE 4TH ANNUAL INFANTS AND TODDLERS CONFERENCE AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

The conference brought together professional early educators and teachers to consider the diverse opportunities for rich evidence-based learning.





## DEC 24: MEDIA CONFERENCE WITH MINISTER FOR EDUCATION JASON CLARE AT GOWRIE ERSKINEVILLE

CEO of Gowrie NSW, Nicole Jones, welcomed CELA and others to celebrate the employers who led the MEB process to deliver professional wages to staff.



## DEC 24: HISTORIC 15% PAY DEAL OFFICIALLY SIGNED

CELA members joined Michele, Julie Price and Minister for Workplace Relations, Murray Watt, at the signing of the multi-employer agreement.





### **FEB 25: THREE DAY GUARANTEE BILL IS PASSED IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT**

The passage of the Three Day Guarantee bill was a welcome sign that the Federal Government is serious about delivering universal early education and care.



### **MAR 25: FEDERAL BUDGET DAY**

Julie Price and Michele were in Canberra to spearhead essential advocacy on behalf of community and small providers and maintain momentum with crucial ECEC reforms.



### **MAR 25: LAUNCH OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTICE**

The ACT Government partnered with CELA to develop this professional learning program, which involved working closely with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and an Expert Panel.



### **APRIL 25: WORKING WITH THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION**

Throughout the year, CELA led negotiations on behalf of member services to ensure their voices were heard in Fair Work Commission negotiations. In April, the Commission proposed wage increases of 15-23% for educators and a new simplified classification structure for the Children's Services Award as part of its major review into gender undervaluation.





#### **JUNE 25: VISIT TO HAPPY DAYS KINDERGARTEN WITH PROSPECT MP DR HUGH MCDERMOTT**

This visit was part of CELA's campaign to deliver pay parity for NSW community preschool educators and teachers through multi-employer bargaining.



#### **JUNE 25: JULIE PRICE AND MICHELE CARNEGIE MEET WITH THE NEW MINISTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, DR JESS WALSH**

The National Early Years Policy Summit at QPAC in Brisbane provided a good opportunity to discuss the next steps for expanding community managed services through the Building Early Education Fund.



# Representation



## **CELA CEO Michele Carnegie raises the voices of our members by:**

- ▶ working with state and federal ministers to advocate for solutions that support the needs of community and small providers
- ▶ liaising regularly with senior officials to support CELA's advocacy to ministers
- ▶ reporting on important issues for the sector through Amplify! and Member News
- ▶ participating on federal and state advisory panels to represent the views of community and small providers
- ▶ providing influential and substantive submissions to major reviews such as: the Child Safety Review Consultation Regulation Impact Statement; Federal Pre-Budget Submission; Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers—Senate Inquiry Submission; Fair Work Commission's Gender Undervaluation Review into Priority Awards; NSW Pre-Budget Submission; NSW Parliament Inquiry into the Early Education and Care Sector.

## **To deliver effective advocacy, we constantly seek feedback and information from our members by**

- ▶ having conversations with them about urgent and emerging issues
- ▶ undertaking member surveys on issues that are important to them
- ▶ engaging with our member advisory group which represents the diversity of service types
- ▶ gathering insights from the learning and development program, attended by several thousand educators annually
- ▶ consulting with communities across Australia about their early education and care needs
- ▶ drawing on our collective CELA leadership expertise.

## **It was another year of focus on policy and reform and CELA was at the forefront of advocating for the sector. CELA's active representation was led by CEO, Michele Carnegie alongside:**

- ▶ Australian Government Early Childhood Education and Care Reference Group
- ▶ NSW Government Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG)
- ▶ NSW Government Education Standards Authority's (NESA) Early Childhood Reference Group
- ▶ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) National Workforce Strategy Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG)
- ▶ NSW Government Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG) Preschool Reform Agreement subgroup
- ▶ Jobs and Skills Australia, Early Childhood Education and Care Capacity Study Steering Committee.

## **Building effective government relationships:**

- ▶ Intensive ongoing engagement with Minister for Early Childhood Education the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, and the new Minister Jess Walsh, along with their advisers and senior officials to shape major reforms on behalf of community and small providers
- ▶ Creating champions for community and small providers within Federal Parliament by highlighting member services stories from their communities
- ▶ Engagement with NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Prue Car to discuss the need for a funded pay increase for NSW Preschools.

# Submissions

CELA contributed to advocacy and policy development in FY2025 through several formal written submissions to both federal and state government inquiries.



## Child Safety Review Consultation Regulation Impact Statement

In June 2025, CELA provided detailed feedback on proposed regulatory changes as part of the Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework.

CELA's mission is to ensure that every child can experience the benefits of high-quality education and care and that children's rights to safety and wellbeing are paramount in any decisions concerning their education and care environments. Our submission outlined recommendations for creating a safe system based on quality including:

- ▶ a well-structured, funded and coordinated national system that puts children's needs first
- ▶ a provider market that prioritises quality, with good governance and educational leadership informed by expert pedagogy
- ▶ higher than minimum staff ratio's that provides supervision and care at a level that is appropriate to needs of children
- ▶ a stable workforce that results in high retention of staff and low use of temp staff and waivers, ensuring children can maintain consistent attachments with educators and teachers
- ▶ a qualified, experienced workforce with paid access to ongoing professional development
- ▶ a National Quality System with effective assessment, rating and compliance levers.

## Federal Pre-Budget Submission

CELA captured our key recommendations for the next phase of Australian Government reforms in our Pre-Budget Submission, outlining our six pillars for guaranteeing Australia's future through world class early childhood education and care:

- ▶ Universal ECEC – guaranteeing quality free or low-cost early education and care
- ▶ Affordability – affordable early education and care for all families, regardless of where they live or how much they earn
- ▶ Inclusion – setting children up for lifelong success
- ▶ Supply – enough places and spaces in every community to meet the needs of all children and families
- ▶ Workforce – a qualified valued workforce to deliver universal education and care
- ▶ A sector ready for the future – building capacity for effective ECEC reform

Our submission highlighted the importance of community and small providers as the foundation for delivering universal high quality early education and care.

### **Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers— Senate Inquiry Submission**

To deliver the ECEC Worker Retention Payment, the Australian Government introduced the Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers (Special Account) Bill 2024. This Bill was referred to the Senate to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee.

As part of our ongoing advocacy for improved wages in the ECEC sector and in our role as bargaining representative for the Early Childhood Multi-Employer Agreement, CELA provided a substantive submission to this inquiry urging the timely passage of this legislation.

### **Fair Work Commission's Gender Undervaluation Review into Priority Awards**

In June 2025, CELA outlined our feedback on the Fair Work Commission's provisional determinations for the Children's Services Award, supporting the Commission's findings that the work of children's services employees has been the subject of gender-based undervaluation.

CELA highlighted that solving gender undervaluation under the Children's Services Award should not result in any reduction in hourly rate of pay for existing staff. We also recommended that Commissioners consider changes in historical workforce arrangements and levels of responsibility since 2010, and how these should be best reflected in a new simplified classification structure.

### **NSW Pre-Budget Submission**

CELA's advocacy to the NSW Government highlighted the value of community and small services as the backbone of the NSW preschool sector, providing the vast majority of NSW Government funded services.

We outlined our plan for supporting universal preschool by tackling the workforce shortages that have hampered our sector for too long. Our recommendations will ensure providers can offer preschool educators and teachers the professional pay, support and recognition they deserve without increasing costs to families.

### **NSW Parliament Inquiry into the Early Education and Care Sector**

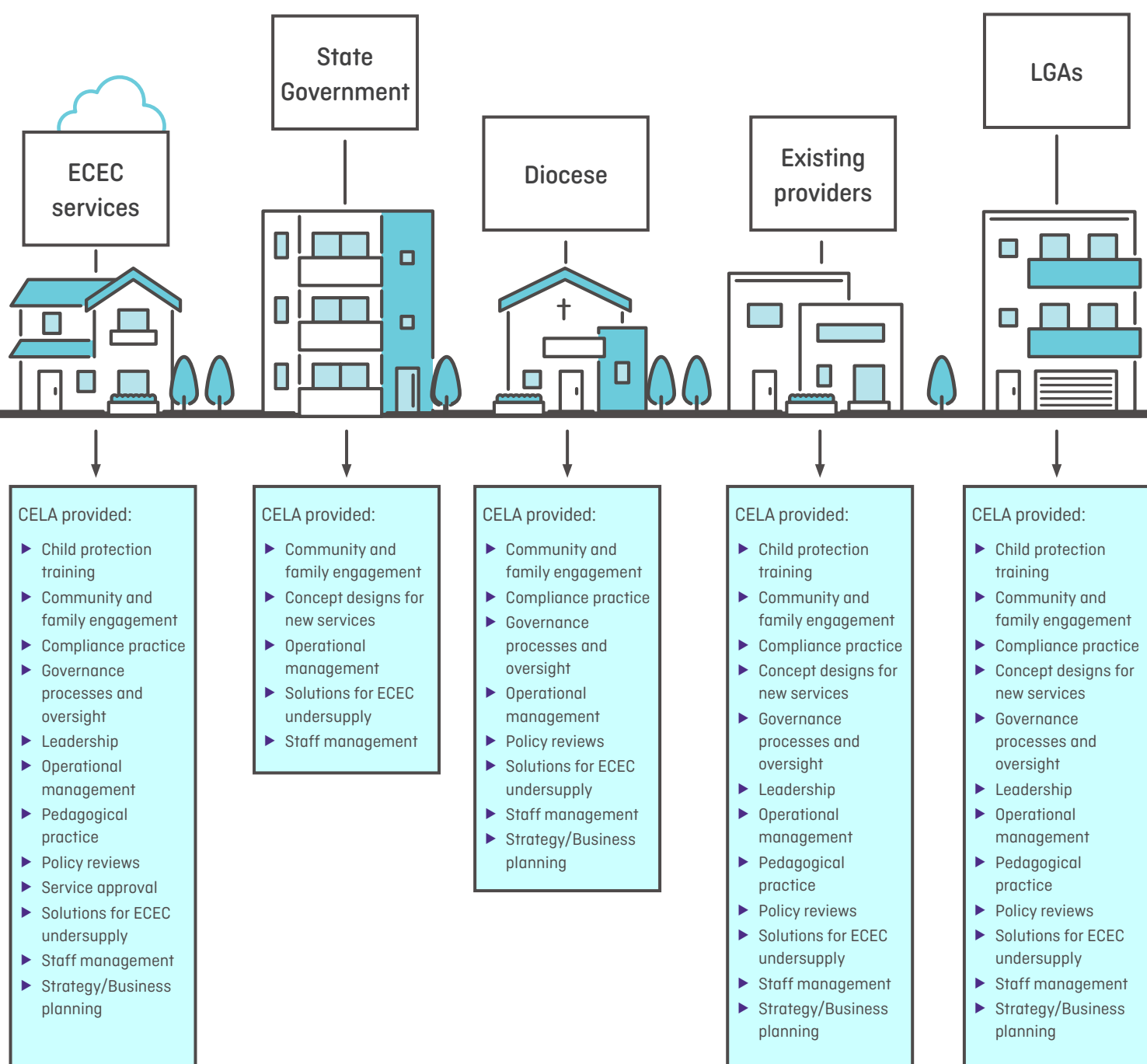
In June 2025, CELA provided our recommendations for boosting quality and safety in NSW ECEC services, with a focus on embedding child safe service culture, quality training, regulatory reform and systemic improvement. This includes:

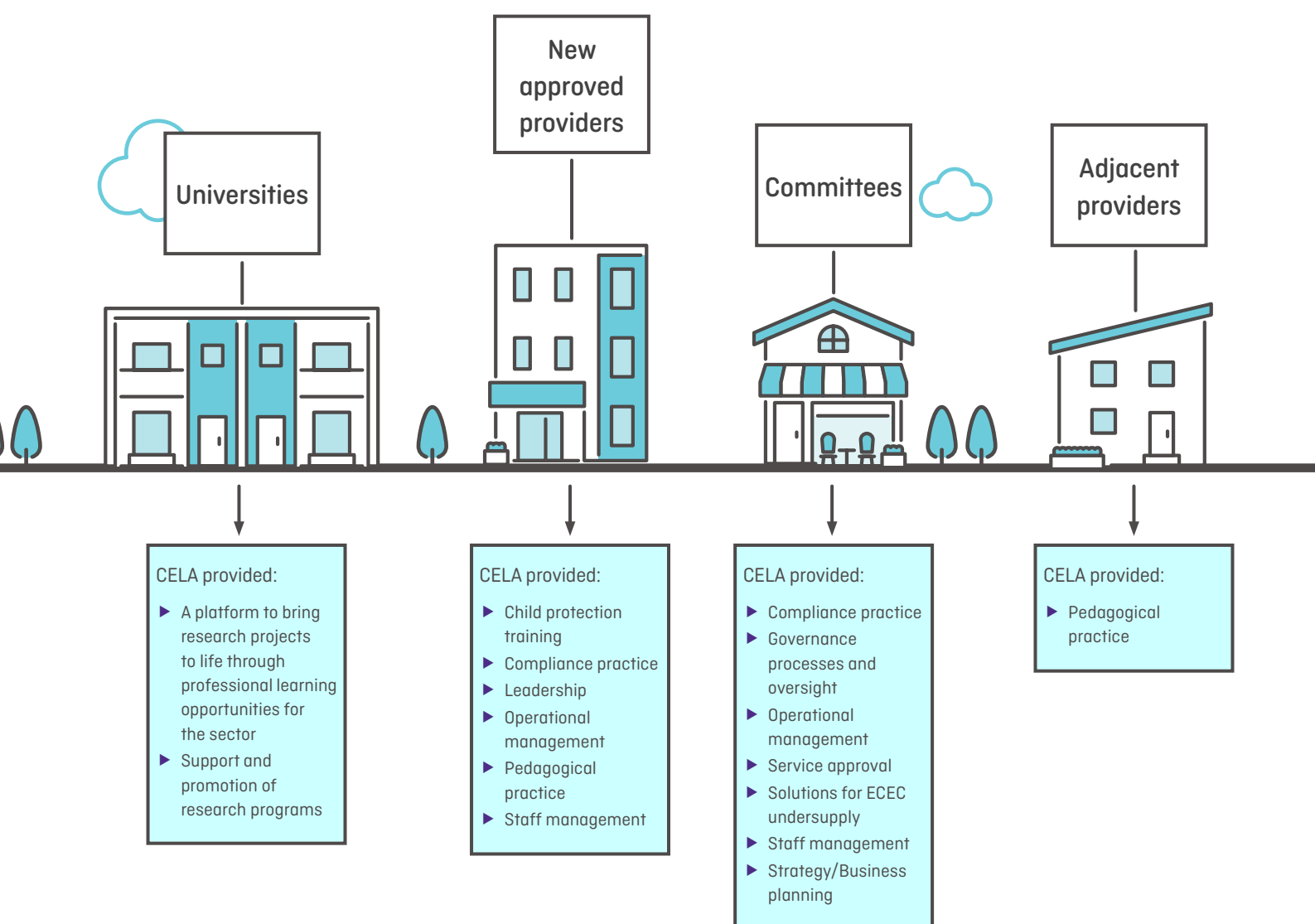
- ▶ strong recruitment practices including obtaining written references, conducting detailed phone interviews (including most recent employer) and asking specific child safe questions of referees
- ▶ ensuring a culture of child safety during induction of new staff and temp staff
- ▶ integrating the Child Safe Standards into service programming, ensuring their consistent inclusion in daily programs, evaluations, policies, child safe codes of conduct, risk assessments, future planning and all staff meetings
- ▶ using diligent supervision practices to ensure no staff member is ever alone with a child or out of sight/earshot of colleagues
- ▶ dedicating time each year to embed child safe practices, guided by the Safe Series program developed by the Office of the Children's Guardian
- ▶ prioritise annual child protection training for the whole team, delivered by high quality service providers, and suitably experienced and trained facilitators, so teachers and educators truly know how and when to act.



# Impact through consultancy

In FY2025, CELA provided customised consultancy support to numerous services and organisations across Australia—from ECEC services and committees to universities, councils and government agencies. Drawing on our sector-specific expertise, we delivered tailored solutions that strengthened governance, leadership and pedagogy, while building workforce capability and resilience. This work is transforming the sector by elevating practice, deepening staff engagement and positioning services to meet the evolving needs of children, families and communities.





# Consultancy



## Preschool Attendance Boosting Project (PreBoost) - University of Wollongong

CELA has partnered with the Early Start Institute at the University of Wollongong on the PreBoost research project, which aims to increase preschool attendance for the following priority cohorts:

- ▶ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- ▶ children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ▶ children experiencing disability
- ▶ children from low socio-economic status backgrounds.

The initiative is led by Early Start at the UOW in collaboration with the NSW Department of Education.

### Approach

Up to 50 ECEC services are participating in the program from four NSW LGAs: Walgett, Kempsey, Fairfield and Campbelltown. CELA is working alongside UOW Practice Partners by supporting services and providing expert advice, resources, and training to build capacity and improve outcomes. SNAICC—National Voice for Our Children is also walking alongside Early Start to ensure cultural safety and respect for Aboriginal ways of knowing at each stage of the project.

### Outcomes

The project provides funding that will result in selected services:

- ▶ delivering up to two attendance boosting activities that respond to the needs of their local community over an 8-week period
- ▶ partnering with the UOW to collect and share activity data will inform recommendations
- ▶ receiving support from a practice partner to submit a grant application and collect activity data
- ▶ building long term capacity





# Partnership



## Engaging Families in Early Education research project

CELA has worked with UNSW to build and host five professional learning courses on an online learning management system (LMS) as part of the Engaging Families in Early Education project. The professional learning courses are the result of research conducted and compiled by the Engaging Families in Early Education research team. The professional learning courses will enable capacity building and pedagogical innovation to support educators' engagement with families and children who experience financial adversity and find services hard to use.

### Scope

The scope of this project has included the production, design and build of 5 online, self-paced evidence-based professional learning courses hosted on a learning management system. Each course is expected to take 2.5-3 hours of study and includes reading material, video content, activities and supporting resources.

### Results

- ▶ CELA partnered with universities to deliver important, evidence-based professional learning opportunities that align to prioritised government policy.
- ▶ We built capacity in the sector to enable teachers and educators to effectively engage with families for the benefit of children.
- ▶ Valuable training was made available through CELA's vast national network, in a way that is accessible and affordable.



# Recognised by government as sector experts



## Federal Government

In January 2025 CELA was engaged by the Australian Department of Education to support providers through the Worker Retention Payment (WRP) application process. WRP gives eligible ECEC providers the opportunity to deliver the 15% government funded pay increase to their staff.

### Scope

CELA's advocacy led to the creation of the ECEC Multi-Employer Agreement and the announcement of the ECEC Worker Retention Payment.

### Approach

Jointly formed by CELA and CCC, the Workplace Relations Team has supported services by providing step-by-step instructions, approved templates, and a dedicated team for advice and questions. We developed a 'workplace instrument options' pack to help better understand the process. We delivered comprehensive webinars and communicated regularly with the sector via EDM, social media and newsletters so they were informed and empowered to understand the steps they needed to take and the value of the government-funded pay increase.

For services not covered by the Multi-Employer Agreement (MEA) or the Professional Community Standard (PCS), CELA has assisted with Individual Flexibility Arrangements (IFAs). These allow services to confirm the 15% pay increase required to unlock funding.

### Outcomes

- ▶ As of 30 June 2025, 70% of the sector, covering 90% of employees had made applications for the grant
- ▶ Also by this date, 389 providers had been approved to join the Multi Employer Agreement with almost a third of those providers guided by the CELA & CCC Workplace Relations Team
- ▶ ECEC staff members have been receiving their 10% raise since December 2024, many commenting on the difference it is making to their lives. Another 5% rise in December 2025 will add further financial security.
- ▶ The Australian Government's Internet Job Vacancy Index shows early childhood educator and teacher vacancies fell 39% from over 8,400 in November 2023 to just over 5,000 in June 2025.

## State Government

### NSW Department of Education - Business Capability Development Program

This extensive program from the NSW Department of Education is helping to enhance the viability and sustainability of 22 ECEC services in three regions: Campbelltown, Dubbo and Coffs Harbour. Stage 2 of the program is the implementation phase, with a focus on business leadership, management and capability development.

### Scope

CELA is working with the Department and partner organisations to implement key strategies across several key capability areas including: governance processes and oversight; community, family and staff engagement; change management; staff management; administration processes; operational and risk management; work health and safety; property and asset management; financial management; information technology use and processes; and strategy and business planning.

### Approach

CELA Leads and Consultants are supporting uplift through face-to-face learning, webinars, mentoring, coaching, and self-paced learning. They customise their delivery to the specific needs of each service and track impact through attendance, completion rates and service capability improvements.

### Outcomes

The program will deliver outcomes across:

- ▶ viability and sustainability
- ▶ workforce capability, satisfaction and retention
- ▶ operational viability and business management practices
- ▶ capacity to meet diverse family needs

Additionally, insights from this program will help to strengthen the viability of the overall sector.



## Local Government

### Rouse Hill

CELA has undertaken a feasibility study for a long day care service in a new hospital in Rouse Hill, Sydney. This project has included demographic analysis, competitor analysis in the local area and along commuter routes, and benchmarking in a range of hospitals nationally to determine advice on the size of the service and recommended operational parameters.

CELA's role in the project includes:

- ▶ providing early learning regulatory requirements and design information support
- ▶ reviewing spatial planning and layout provided in architectural floor plans
- ▶ providing information and planning advice to meet early learning regulatory requirements
- ▶ providing a Schedule of Accommodation for a 68-place early learning service for ongoing design development

### North Sydney Council

CELA has been appointed to assess the suitability of four potential sites for the relocation of Kelly's Place Children's Centre in North Sydney, ensuring compliance with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.

CELA's expertise encompasses:

- ▶ evaluating planning controls, zoning, environmental factors, traffic and access arrangements, and infrastructure availability
- ▶ determining the maximum number of children that each site could accommodate, considering required indoor and outdoor space ratios, parking, and access requirements
- ▶ providing a conceptual layout or schematic diagram for suitable sites
- ▶ illustrating the arrangement of indoor areas, outdoor play spaces, amenities, staff facilities, and parking/drop-off zones
- ▶ a reconfiguration analysis to outline any modifications needed to convert each site into a compliant service

The final report will include a comparative analysis of all sites and recommend the preferred site that offers the best overall outcome for North Sydney Council based on compliance, functionality, cost effectiveness, and community integration.

### Coorong District Council

The Coorong District in South Australia is a geographically large and dispersed district identified as a childcare desert. Despite the many positive aspects of the District, including its sense of community, a lack of childcare makes it hard to raise a family and work, potentially limiting growth for the area.

#### Scope

CELA was engaged by Coorong District Council to provide insights into a business case investing in ECEC in the district. This project aligns with directions in the South Australian Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which recognises the importance of ECEC for all children in the two years before school and additional ECEC for the most vulnerable children.

#### Approach

CELA conducted demographic research and developed a community profile for the district and surroundings. A survey and community consultation helped us to quantify and better understand the need for additional childcare and potential delivery locations. Through written feedback and rich conversations with families, educators and community representatives, we gained a thorough understanding of challenges and opportunities. Following data analysis, we developed a comprehensive financial framework and operational design concept.

#### Outcomes

CELA continues to work with Coorong District Council to identify opportunities and implement key recommendations. To date we have provided:

- ▶ Key demographic data for the broader district
- ▶ A survey and community consultation regarding local demand for childcare, impact of the absence of childcare, and community and economic benefits that could be derived from additional childcare in the district
- ▶ A potential, costed solution for the region including the towns of Tailem Bend, Meningie, Coomandook and Tintinara
- ▶ An economic benefit model that highlights immense potential for the community due to an increase in parental employment
- ▶ Extensive advocacy to federal government for Coorong to be included in Building Early Education Fund (BEEF).



# Progressive and flexible training program



## 70+ TRAINING TOPICS

CELA training courses bring together sector expertise with evidence-based research to help educators and professionals learn in more engaging and meaningful ways. We speak with educators and sector professionals every day, so we understand the many constraints that impede participation in training and development. CELA has designed a range of flexible training options to suit the demanding schedules faced by educators due to workloads and workforce shortages.

From micro-credentials to self-paced programs, 100% online to webinars and onsite learning, we are focused on expanding (and normalising) accessible and engaging flexible learning.



## 314 CUSTOMISED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

CELA provided customised training opportunities to individual services and large organisations, using a blend of online and on-site approaches. CELA's professional learning was delivered across Australia to approved providers and organisations operating in all areas of early education and care.



## 11,500+ EDUCATORS

attended a CELA training  
session in FY2025



## 33 APST-ALIGNED COURSES

CELA is the largest provider of Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)-aligned courses for the sector, with 33 courses on topics including program and practice to governance matters, numeracy and literacy in the early years, and health and safety training.

Courses offer practical guidance on topical issues such as connecting with, and understanding, the Early Years Learning Framework V2.0, and Acknowledging and Celebrating First Nations Australia.



## APPROVED PROVIDER AND GOVERNANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

We continue to offer flexible online learning for our Approved Provider and Governance learning program for services operating in NSW. This comprehensive program contains years of CELA governance training expertise condensed into a streamlined program.

The 4 workshops, 25 tutorials and a knowledge library of resources are hosted via a dedicated online portal.

## NEW IN 2025

### Expanding evidence-based training opportunities

Over the past year, we have introduced a suite of high-quality, evidence-based professional learning designed to strengthen practice across the early education sector.

### Engaging with Families in Early Education

This new professional learning series, developed in conjunction with leading researchers and early education experts, deepens understanding of the challenges families face and equips educators with practical tools to engage effectively with families from all backgrounds.

The program includes 5 self-paced online courses, each aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers [APST].

The 5 courses include:

- ▶ Introduction to working with families experiencing poverty
- ▶ A funds of knowledge approach to supporting children's learning, development, and wellbeing
- ▶ Using effective communication to build and maintain relationships with families

- ▶ Strengthening mainstream ECEC engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- ▶ Rethinking behaviour – strengths-based approaches to inclusion
- ▶ Each course is delivered online in a flexible, self-paced format, combining research-based insights, case studies, and practical activities.

### New live webinar topics

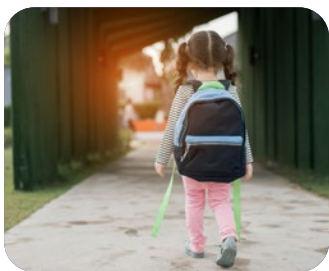
In addition to this new program, we introduced 3 new live webinar sessions on priority topics for the sector, including neurodiversity, observation, and strategies for discussing behaviour with families.

These sessions ensure educators have access to timely, responsive learning that reflects emerging needs across services.

### A Framework for Understanding and Responding to Behaviours that Challenge

We continue to offer new topics that meet critical professional learning gaps. This includes the research-informed program 'A Framework for Understanding and Responding to Behaviours that Challenge', developed and delivered by Professor Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett.

## OUR SIX MOST POPULAR TRAINING SESSIONS



**CHCPRT025 Identify and Report Children and Young People at Risk (RTO ID 90842)**



**Child Protection NSW — Comprehensive Refresher**



**An Introduction to Reframing and Responding to Children's Behaviour**



**Engaging with Principles of Active Supervision**



**Creating Safer Childhoods: Body Safety: Exploring Protection, Respect and Consent with Young Children**



**Practical Approaches to Programming for Educational Leaders**

## RTO TRAINING

Over 700 people completed our highly regarded accredited child protection course CHCPRT025 Identify and Report Children and Young People at Risk. The course is accessible in 3 flexible delivery modes: self-paced, calendar webinar and in-service (face to face and webinar). This included customised RTO training opportunities to individual services and organisations.

Nearly 750 people enrolled in the new unit of competency CHCPRT025 Identify and Report Children and Young People at Risk either via online self-paced course, a webinar session or by booking an in-service session. We provided RTO training opportunities to individual services and large organisations, with a blend of online and onsite approaches for CHCPRT025.

**1,500+  
RTO  
ATTENDEES**





The session was highly engaging and reflective with a strong focus on practical application. One of the most effective aspects was the trainer's use of real-life examples and case studies to demonstrate how children's voices can be genuinely included in day-to-day practice.

This helped bridge theory with practice, making the content relatable and meaningful.”

CELA member and training participant



# Publications

## AMPLIFY!

CELA's blog, Amplify! has cemented its reputation as the go-to source for discussion about early education and care sector topics. Our e-newsletter is distributed to over 20,000 ECEC sector professionals each week and includes sector news, advocacy, interviews and opinions by sector experts and educator reflections. Amplify! articles collectively received over 201,000 unique page views.

Over the 2025FY, we received many comments from readers indicating how valuable the newsletter is to informing and inspiring quality practice in the sector.

Our team is dedicated to delivering timely news and information designed to help our sector navigate the changes and challenges they face while continuing to inspire quality practice. We focus on turning complex information into articles that are easy to navigate.

## OUR SIX MOST WIDELY READ 2024-2025 ARTICLES:



The role of behaviour guidance in ECEC



Unpacking the NAIDOC Week 2024 theme



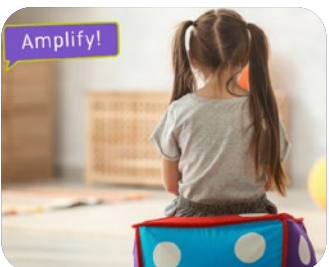
What are children's rights and how do they apply in early education?



The ethics of dress-up: Balancing parental authority and child autonomy



A new framework for understanding and responding to behaviours that challenge



How to recognise inappropriate discipline plus tips for positive behaviour guidance

## What readers have said about some of our recent articles:

“Thank you for your article on child protection and training for early childhood educators. It really got me thinking. It reminded me of how important it is to stay up to date—not just with reporting procedures, but also with creating safe and supportive environments for children every day.”

Kim S

How ECEC professionals can recognise and respond to abuse

“What a lovely explanation of storytelling. It has projected a variety of genres and shows how storytelling can be included from all cultures, including the ‘olden days’! Thanks for not giving a negative vibe to any of the story genres and for showing how they can be inclusive and giving us strategies of how we can be inclusive within our services with our storytelling!”

Di S

Beyond the happily ever after: Exploring the ethics of nursery rhymes and fairy tales

“Thank you for this clear and simple explanation of neurodiversity. It will help educators. I think more about the ‘big behaviours’ would be very useful. This issue can divide educators, family and neighbours.”

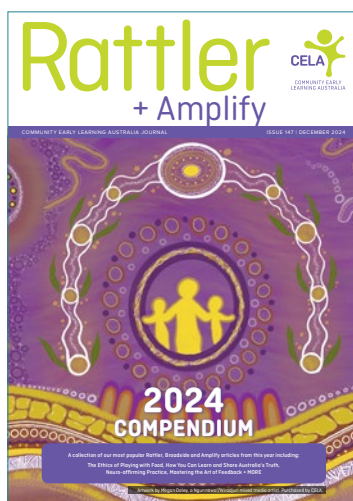
Linda N

Why understanding neurodiversity is important for educators and children

## RATTLER

For 38 years, Rattler has been one of the most respected early education journals in Australia. During 2024-2025 we released two digital editions and one printed compendium to members and subscribers.

Each edition provides an in-depth look into the operations and achievements of one of our members, a summary of sector-related research, and many inspiring articles covering program, practice and regulations, with a focus on quality.





# Our team



**Sabrina Patrick-Urrutia**  
/ Adile Hoxha  
Director of Programs

**Aline Majado**  
RTO Manager

**Rachel Ho**  
Professional Learning  
Coordinator

**Kerrie Maguire**  
Learning & Development  
Specialist

**Louise Black**  
Learning & Development  
Specialist

**Lisa Walker**  
Cultural Advisor

**Jannelle Gallagher**  
Early Education Specialist

**Jen Boddy**  
Early Education Specialist

**Guita Badaoui**  
Early Education Specialist

**Martine Almodovar**  
Operations & Membership  
Coordinator

**Amy Coulton**  
Early Education Specialist

**Laura Stevens**  
Director of Policy  
& Strategy

**Felicity Dunn**  
Member News Co-ordinator

**Amy Shaw**  
WRP Project Administrator

**Membership  
L&D  
Consultancy  
Programs**

**Policy &  
Research**

**People  
& Culture**

**Samantha  
Wilmore**  
People & Culture  
Manager

**Finance**

**Nina Trofimova**  
CFO  
**Jo Wyatt**  
Finance &  
Payroll Manager

**Board**

**Eve Hawkes** **Michele Schiller**  
**Arthur Wang** **Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett**  
**Fiona Black** **Rob Shwetz**  
**Louise Murfet** **Michelle Cutler**

**CEO**

**Michele Carnegie**

**External  
Facilitators**

**Marketing &  
Communications**

**Carrie Rose** **Jenny Hind** **Vicki Fatches**  
**Deb Williams** **Karthika Viknarasah** **Katie Dickson**  
**Ella de la Motte** **Michele Urquhart** **Guita Badaoui**  
**Emma-Jayne Peard** **Sally Wilkins**  
**Eva Bowers** **Tracey Sharp**

**Tracey Long**  
Marketing & Communications Manager  
**Katie Sutherland**  
Senior Writer  
**Kellie Booth**  
Digital Marketing & Website Specialist  
**Lisa Cloumassis**  
Design Executive







# Our board

CELA thanks the Board for its ongoing confidence, trust and support during the year. The CELA Board is comprised of 8 members, each with extensive credentials in our sector and related fields. Their combined experience spans early childhood education and care, management, advocacy, academia, research, leadership and marketing.

## EVE HAWKES

### CHAIR

Eve's vast experience within early childhood education and care supports her work on the CELA board and gives her valuable insight into the day-to-day issues faced by early childhood educators across the sector. She is committed to implementing exemplary board governance and is a strong advocate, meeting regularly with local and state ministers about the issues that face the sector.

Eve has expertise in a wide range of service delivery models including early intervention itinerant support, long day care, community-based preschools and campus-based care. Director at Engadine Preschool Kindergarten since 1994, she is also a founding member of the Sutherland Shire Preschool Alliance. Her leadership roles, including her current role as Chair since 2023 and board director since June 2022, demonstrate her ability to drive change and make a significant impact.

## ROB SHWETZ

### DEPUTY CHAIR

Rob has over 25 years of experience in marketing communications, sustainability management, and creative leadership, and a proven track record of delivering results that align with the values and vision of purpose-driven organisations. His mission is to champion positive systemic change and provide a voice for those who are not empowered to speak for themselves.

A former partner and strategist at The Growth Activists, he is currently Deputy Chair and board member of Results Australia, a non-partisan international aid and development organisation funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and board member of Shaun Parker and Company. He holds an MBA from the Berlin School of Creative Leadership, Steinbeis University.

## ARTHUR WANG

### TREASURER

Arthur brings over a decade of experience in management consulting and financial advisory, working with clients across private, public and NFP sectors on business strategy, transformation, financial and risk management. He is also a strong advocate for youth and education, committed to fostering growth and excellence in the early learning sector, and has led numerous pro-bono engagements and fundraising initiatives for community organisations.

A member of the AICD, Arthur previously served as a Board Observer for Good Return and was the National Coordinator of Australia's largest financial literacy competition, reaching over 300 schools and 10,000 students. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce and Laws degree from UNSW and has represented Australia as a delegate to international forums, including the OECD in France, the Stanford Summit in the USA, and the Peace Conference of Youth in Japan.

## MICHELLE CUTLER

### COMPANY SECRETARY AND GOVERNANCE MANAGER

Michelle brings extensive governance expertise to CELA, gained across global commercial firms and Australia's for-purpose sector. She has advised boards and executives on governance, risk, policy, and strategy, with particular strengths in corporate restructures, federated associations, and building effective board cultures. Her leadership experience includes over a decade in senior roles with charities and member associations, most recently as Acting CEO of Community Legal Centres Australia. A former lawyer with international firms Freshfields and Allen & Overy, and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Michelle ensures CELA's governance framework is strong, accountable, and future-focused.





## **FIONA BLACK**

### **ELECTED DIRECTOR**

Fiona has worked in a variety of roles within council ECEC environments, including Cert III and diploma positions, teacher roles, and ultimately, that of director. Commencing her career in private and community-based long day care services, she now holds the position of Director at Koala Child Care Centre at Sutherland Hospital, where she is an educational leader and is directly involved with children aged birth to 6 years.

She is passionately committed to building a sustainable and fulfilling career centred on the holistic development of children in ECEC. In her dual role as a director and an early childhood professional, she focuses on fostering children's self-awareness, promoting their growth, and establishing meaningful bonds with families to create a lasting impact. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood.

## **CATHRINE NEILSEN-HEWETT (PHD)**

### **APPOINTED DIRECTOR**

Professor Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett is the Academic Director of The Early Years at the University of Wollongong; is a member of the National Early Childhood Development Council; and a member of the Preschool Outcomes Measure expert advisor group.

Cathrine works in cross-disciplinary teams and conducts translational work with community and industry partners to support high-quality ECEC practice that enhances outcomes for children. She has co-led seven large-scale early childhood pedagogical studies valued at more than \$15 million, across three Australian states, in over 600 early childhood educational services, and with more than 4000 children.

Cathrine brings particular expertise in pedagogical reform, and her work on children's behaviour, self-regulation, child assessment and early childhood pedagogy has impacted educational practice, programs and policy both in Australia and internationally.

## **MICHELE SCHILLER**

### **ELECTED DIRECTOR**

Michele Schiller is a passionate advocate for early childhood education and a seasoned financial expert. An experienced CPA accountant with a diverse background in business ownership and banking, she brings a unique perspective to the ECEC sector.

Michele is the Founder and Approved Provider of Little Possums Preschool and Early Learning Centre in the NSW far western town of Warren.

An accomplished finance, risk management and governance professional with a long career in tax accounting, banking and management consulting, Michele has held strategic roles for numerous businesses. Her impressive business acumen and understanding of regional early childhood education is an enormous asset to CELA and our member-base.

## **LOUISE MURFET**

### **ELECTED DIRECTOR**

Louise's career as an early childhood educator and director spans more than four decades. Her first role was as Assistant Director and room leader in a long day care centre. In 1992, Louise became Director of Jacaranda Preschool in Caringbah NSW, a role she held until her retirement in 2023.

Louise is a founding member of the Sutherland Shire Preschool Alliance and sits on the board of Children's Services Community Management. She has also served as the President of the Community Administered Preschool Association and as Convenor of the Sutherland Directors Group.

Louise holds a Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Education, Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management, and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. In 2022, Louise received the NSW Government Community Service Award in recognition of her passion in advocating for children, families and the ECEC sector.

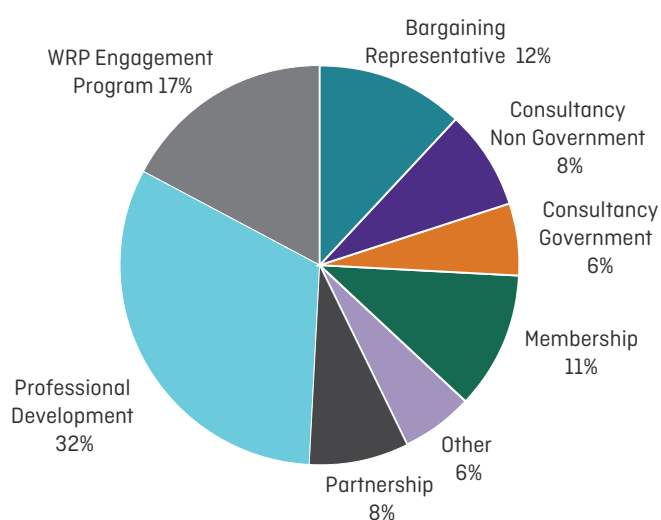
# Treasurer's report

Dear Members,

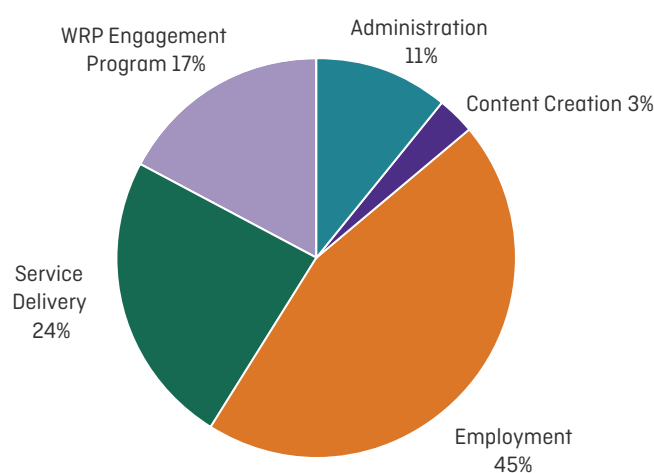
It is an honour to present the FY25 Treasurer's Report for CELA. I am delighted to report that our organisation continues to grow sustainably, delivering impactful services while maintaining a healthy financial position. This success reflects the shared commitment of CELA's management, staff, and community to excellence in early learning.

## Financial highlights

CONSOLIDATED INCOME PROFILE:



CONSOLIDATED EXPENSES PROFILE:



- **Achieving a surplus:** CELA closed FY25 with a \$34,570 surplus, reflecting sound financial management and operational efficiency.
- **Growing revenue:** Total revenue grew by 27%, from \$3.1m to \$3.9m, driven by a WRP engagement program, increase in professional development revenue, bargaining representation and consultancy.
- **Responsible investment in services:** Expenditure increased by 26%, from \$3m to \$3.8m, matching growing revenue. We strategically invested in service delivery and capacity building.
- **Strengthening cash reserves:** CELA's cash reserves increased to \$2.5m, providing strong financial security. Additionally, the FY25 surplus boosted our total equity to \$885k.

This financial progress would not have been possible without the dedication of CELA's CEO, staff, members, and partners. Thank you all for your commitment to advancing purposeful investment for our members and the broader early education and care sector. Together, we are building a sustainable and impactful future.

Thank you,

**Arthur Wang**  
Treasurer

# Audited statements

Important notice: Information used in the summary financial statements is extracted from the full financial report of Community Early Learning Australia (CELA) for the year ended 30 June 2025. The full report provides more details on the financial performance and position of CELA, including a description of the accounting policies adopted by CELA, explanatory notes and the independent auditor's report. The full report is available separately on request from CELA.

## Financial Performance

	2024/2025	2023/2024
<b>Income</b>		
Professional Development	\$1,261,216	\$1,124,950
Consultancy - Govt	\$252,216	\$851,314
Consultancy - Non Govt	\$294,734	\$138,553
Membership	\$435,146	\$400,529
Partnership	\$309,169	\$288,531
Bargaining Representation	\$447,615	\$123,780
WRP Engagement Program Income	\$657,097	\$0
Other	\$225,478	\$137,253
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$3,882,671</b>	<b>\$3,064,911</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Employment	\$1,735,209	\$1,475,994
Service Delivery	\$937,161	\$934,762
Administration	\$422,796	\$582,358
Content Creation	\$95,837	\$56,030
WRP Engagement Program	\$657,098	\$0
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$3,848,101</b>	<b>\$3,049,144</b>
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>\$34,570</b>	<b>\$15,767</b>

## Financial Position

	30/06/2025	30/06/2024
Total Assets	\$2,822,736	\$2,196,873
Total Liabilities	\$1,937,229	\$1,345,936
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$885,507</b>	<b>\$850,937</b>



### IMPACT INVESTMENT

Advocating for the issues that impact our sector is at the core of everything we do. From groundbreaking pay increases through to significant sector reforms, as well as subsidising membership cost and development of high-quality professional learning, our investment is impactful for members and the wider sector.



# Partnership

CELA is proud to have partners with a common focus on caring for our members and the wider community. We thank Guild Insurance for their continued support in making a difference to the future of Australia's early education sector. With their help, we can provide invaluable sector support for our members.

This year, Guild Insurance continued to support their customers by placing them with an expert who understands the issues and cares about finding the right solution. We applaud their many years of care and commitment working with the early education and care sector.







COMMUNITY EARLY  
LEARNING AUSTRALIA

Phone	(02) 8922 6444
Email	<a href="mailto:info@cela.org.au">info@cela.org.au</a>
Web	<a href="http://www.cela.org.au">www.cela.org.au</a>
Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/communityearlylearningaustralia">www.facebook.com/communityearlylearningaustralia</a>
Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/celaust">@celaust</a>