



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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# IN BRIEF

We are a peak body for Australia's early childhood education sector, amplifying the value of quality early education and care for all Australian children. Representing community and small providers, we are a member based, not for profit organisation.

Our constant connection to our members enables us to deeply understand their needs, advocate for them, and resource them to deliver quality outcomes for children.

We exist because we believe all children deserve quality early education and care — it underpins Australia's future.



WE  
SUPPORTED



OVER 1,600 EARLY  
EDUCATION SERVICES



WHO EMPLOY OVER  
20,000 EDUCATORS

## OUR VISION

For all of Australia's children to have access to quality early education, regardless of economic circumstance or where they live.

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

## CELA HAS BEEN SUPPORTING EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE PROFESSIONALS FOR OVER 40 YEARS

## OUR MISSION

To deliver effective and expert support for our members, to enable them to deliver quality early education and care for all Australia's children. To influence policy makers and government by amplifying the voices of community based and small providers, and to promote the value and importance of community based early education.

## OUR ADVOCACY FOCUSES ON 5 KEY AREAS



1. ACHIEVING QUALITY  
EARLY EDUCATION

3. ENSURING  
VIABILITY FOR  
COMMUNITY AND  
SMALL PROVIDERS

5. CLOSING THE  
EDUCATIONAL  
GAP FOR RURAL  
CHILDREN

2. BUILDING A STABLE  
WORKFORCE  
THAT'S NURTURED  
AND VALUED

4. IMPROVING  
ACCESS FOR  
VULNERABLE  
CHILDREN

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



It is with great pleasure that I present the 2021 CELA annual report. 2021 has been a year of immense pressure for members as they navigate complex operating environments with frequent updates and changes. Our focus has been on connecting with members on a regular basis through our member news bulletins, website, social media and 1800 member support line to provide individualised and tailored support and information.

2021 has also been a year of relentless advocacy. We advocate to ensure key issues faced by our sector are escalated to the attention of State and Federal Government along with the solutions and measures we are seeking.

The emergence and spread of the Delta variant disrupted life as we knew it from major cities to regional and remote communities. Our sector was heavily impacted as we grappled with hard lockdowns, confusion about transmission and safety, workforce shortages, and the rollout of the national vaccination program.

Many of our ECEC services were closed for long periods, creating severe financial pressures. Others lost staff and enrolments as families opted to keep children home. Many members were fatigued, fearful, and struggling to keep up with constantly changing rules and regulations. Sustainability became a very real concern.

Informed by widespread feedback from our members, CELA redoubled our advocacy efforts. We pushed for the inclusion of our sector as a priority group for vaccinations, sought nuanced funding support for ECEC services and clarity regarding medical advice around transmission. CELA's evidence-based research and deep knowledge of our sector was valued by Government as a source of credible insight and timely advice. We met and liaised regularly with State and Federal Governments, and as CEO, I represented CELA at the NSW Early Childhood Education Advisory Group in order to represent member views.

From commencement of the Greater Sydney lockdown, the Early Childhood Education Advisory Group met 2-3 times weekly with the State Government's Early Education and Care Directorate. As a collective of sector leaders and

representatives, we were able to bring existing and anticipated operational issues to the notice of the Directorate and Government. It was a positive collaboration, where all worked in the best interests of those they represent.

In addition to these advisory group meetings, I continued to independently represent CELA to Government, providing additional information and suggested solutions to matters including protecting the ongoing financial viability of services, policies around COVID-19 vaccinations for our sector, national workforce strategy, and wellbeing of staff and families.

CELA also joined forces with like-minded peak bodies Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) and Community Child Care Association (CCC) in a combined position and joint correspondence to Government.

I am deeply appreciative of the efforts of our team, and of the thousands of members who openly shared their experiences, greatest concerns and financial vulnerabilities, trusting us to represent them. Every day, our team reached out to offer support, and to gauge first-hand how members were affected by the ongoing pandemic and how they were faring as they reopened services. As our advocacy achieved progress, we swiftly conveyed developments back to our members.

Knowledge, data and sentiment gathered from CELA members during the pandemic has been a powerful foundation for our advocacy. Going forward, your input will continue to help us bridge communication with Governments and decision makers whose support is vital, to ensure the survival, viability and development of community and small providers of early education and care.

Michele Carnegie

Chief Executive Officer  
Community Early Learning Australia

A large, stylized tree graphic in a light blue color, set against a darker blue background. The tree's branches and leaves are composed of numerous hands of various skin tones, symbolizing community and impact. The tree is positioned on the left side of the page, with its canopy extending towards the center.

# SNAPSHOT OUR IMPACT

# ADVOCACY TO SUPPORT MEMBERS



## MATTERS ADDRESSED

- ▶ Vaccination priority
- ▶ Workforce shortage and fatigue
- ▶ Financial viability and the need for suitable funding for services and educators impacted by COVID-19 restrictions
- ▶ Ventilation
- ▶ Health and Safety of children, educators and families
- ▶ Multitude of operational matters from concierge to responding to service closure due to COVID-19 cases
- ▶ Start Strong Free Preschool
- ▶ ECEC qualifications design and delivery
- ▶ Access to quality early education and care for all Australian children, in particular our most vulnerable
- ▶ Safety of the educational and work environment for children, educators and families
- ▶ Financial viability and sustainability of community and small providers
- ▶ Wellbeing of the early education workforce



## WE MET WITH / COLLABORATED WITH

- ▶ The Honourable Sarah Mitchell MLC, NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning
- ▶ The Honourable Alan Tudge, MP Minister for Education
- ▶ The Governor General
- ▶ NSW Early Childhood Education Advisory Panel
- ▶ Mr Andrew Laming, MP
- ▶ Reserve Bank of Australia
- ▶ NSW Treasury
- ▶ Media

## TRAINING THAT AMPLIFIES QUALITY

OVER  
**7,000**  
EDUCATORS  
TRAINED

OVER  
**40**  
TOPICS  
COVERED

OVER  
**700**  
HOURS OF TRAINING  
DELIVERED

“ The facilitator’s manner was the most engaging I’ve seen online. Great timing for responses from participants. Provocative questioning. I will use them as provocation questions with members of my team.”

“ I love the presenter, she is as engaging in the online format as she is face to face. Her articulation and knowledge about the subject matter was evident and all aspects were clearly explained to optimise attendee understanding.”

## RTO CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

CELA has been delivering child protection training as a Registered Training Organisation for over 10 years. Our highly regarded CHCPRT001 Identify & Respond to Children and Young People at Risk course has been developed by sector experts and covers the responsibilities of mandatory reporters in NSW, teaches how to identify significant

harm and risk factors, and outlines what’s required in the provision of child safe environments. During 2021, we offered this course in three modes of delivery to ensure that every style of learner is catered for, and that our programs are accessible regardless of location.

OVER 1,000 EDUCATORS TRAINED



**319**

VIA SELF PACED

Participants can complete the course online in their own time and convenience. The course is divided into 6 modules and takes approximately 6 hours, in addition to assessment tasks.



**261**

VIA WEBINARS

Three 2-hour webinar sessions, plus additional time to complete assessments.



**505**

VIA INSERVICE

CELA facilitators deliver training in person or by webinar at a date and time that suits the customer.



# RECOGNISED AS SECTOR EXPERTS

Engaged by Government to run three programs that reached over 1,000 ECEC professionals across NSW:

## COMMUNICATING QUALITY RATINGS

Online training covering how early educators can communicate the value of quality ratings to families.

- ▶ **303** early education services attended 10 sessions
- ▶ **12** new sector resources were developed

**"Very clear, relevant, rich information and an area that may not have been focused on or thought about in detail before."** Training session attendee

## GOVERNANCE & COMPLIANCE FOR NSW EARLY EDUCATION PROVIDERS

A program designed to assist NSW Approved Providers and Education and Care services in understanding their governance and compliance responsibilities.

- ▶ **368** attended to date
- ▶ **45** resources have been developed

**"I think this is the best approved provider program support I have seen in the time I have been in the industry."** Training session attendee

## EARLY EDUCATION LEADERS PEER NETWORK

A place where early education leaders can connect, learn, share and thrive via an interactive forum and ongoing events such as mini conferences and training sessions.

- ▶ **756** leaders in early education joined the network
- ▶ **614** leaders in early education attended 10 events
- ▶ Forum covered **41** different topics
- ▶ Over **200** resources were added to the resource library
- ▶ **3** Early Education Champions were engaged to lead and govern the Network
- ▶ CELA took on the role of the 4th Champion to provide the operational foundations, enabling the continuation of the network.

**"Well done everyone for pulling together such an awesome conference. Having access to such a depth of current knowledge and research without having to leave my service was awesome."** EELPN member



## COVID 19 Free Preschool sector support and 'Start Strong' Fee-Free Preschool sector support

During 2021, the NSW Department of Education engaged CELA to support the implementation of COVID 19 Free Preschool program. The program started in 2020 and has continued under the Start Strong Free Preschool program. CELA provides expert support via phone and email, plus valued feedback to the Directorate on a regular basis.

# WIDE REACHING CONSULTANCY



# 91

CONSULTANCIES IN  
NSW, VIC, SA & WA

across Long daycare, family daycare, Community preschools, regulatory authorities, councils, large not-for-profit organisations and government agencies and small stand-alone providers

CELA's expert early education and care consultancy team have helped many new and existing providers to achieve success at all stages of their journey including compliance, management of service approval process, policy development, leadership programs, strategic planning, governance structure reviews, market analysis, site inspections, new service plan reviews, grant preparation, mentoring, assessment and rating, solving operational challenges and optimising quality programs.



CELA's expert consultancy and support exceeded our expectations and was invaluable throughout the process of creating a new early childhood education and care service at Nepean Hospital.

Over 10 months, CELA's team were alongside every step of the way, assisting us to navigate complex situations and providing guidance and recommendations from planning and construction, to operational commissioning, to development of the full suite of policies, procedures and other essential documentation required to successfully complete service approval requirements.

Working with us, CELA applied early education management expertise to navigating the complex service approval process exceptionally well. Our new Somerset Cottage Early Childhood Education and Care Centre with capacity for 68 children was completed ahead of time and on budget and officially opened on Tuesday 7 July 2020."

Consultancy client



# SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS AND THE WIDER SECTOR

As 2021 draws to a close we are reflecting on our responsibilities and the role that CELA plays in supporting 1622 member services that employ over 20,000 educators. We are immensely proud to represent our members, and to amplify the voice of community and small providers of early education and care.

Year-round, CELA actively supports members via:

- ▶ Advocacy
- ▶ Phone Support
- ▶ Accessible and affordable learning and development
- ▶ Sector leading operational resources
- ▶ Rattler magazine and Broadside bulletins
- ▶ Regular member news updates including vital COVID information

In CELA's 40 plus year history, 2021 was one of the most confronting years for our sector, and one of the most demanding years for CELA.

Despite the circumstances, we continued to offer our full range of services, assisting members with daily advice and support, producing leading publications and resources, delivering our year-round training program, and taking the lead on advocacy as a uniting force for the sector. We were proud to be here when member needs were greatest.

CELA knows that our dedicated members do what they do for the benefit of communities and children. We have seen extraordinary actions by services in the interests of the children, families and the communities they serve.

*We support our members through  
every change and challenge*

*Our commitment to our members drives us to continually review and enhance the way we provide support.*

## ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL

Read about how St John's Catholic Preschool and Daycare supported their families through lockdown in our latest edition of Rattler magazine.

READ THE ARTICLE:

[Western Sydney service showed the true meaning of creating collaborative relationships with families and communities during the darkest days of Sydney's lockdown](#)



## WALLUM COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL AND FAMILY CENTRE

CELA member Lauren Maguire, Director of Wallum Community Preschool and Family Centre in NSW, shared how her local Directors' Network has helped her to work through the changes and pressures she's experienced through the pandemic, along some strategies that others may find helpful in our Amplify article.

READ THE ARTICLE:

[The power of networking: How a Directors' group is providing emotional support through the pandemic](#)

## BARNARDOS AUBURN CHILDREN'S FAMILY CENTRE

Find out how CELA members Barnardos Auburn Children's Family Centre, Birrahlee preschool in Sydney's Lane Cove and Kamalei Children's Centre in the NSW Southern Highlands connected with children via remote learning in our Amplify article

READ THE ARTICLE:

[Making the most of learning in smaller groups plus inspiring remote engagement examples](#)

# OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT

## A RELIABLE, DEPENDABLE AND TIMELY SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS.

The complex and rapidly changing information about operational requirements, presented immense challenges in 2021. From social distancing to mask wearing rules, vaccination to funding support, we have worked hard to convert information into clear guidance quickly and to make it accessible through our channels including extensive outbound calling services to check-in and offer help.

At the peak of the crisis in September, we produced new information for members every 12 hours. CELA's COVID materials have been read and shared on with the sector by nearly 20,000 people.

Our social media posts about the pandemic reached tens of thousands of people, with our most viewed post about announcements regarding children's attendance, mandatory vaccination in local areas of concern and the implications for service operation reaching over 10,000 people.

## A PROACTIVE ADVOCATE

Gathering information from our members provided real-time insight that could be shared with Government and those making decisions regarding the needs of community and small providers. [Learn more about CELA's advocacy on behalf of members in the dedicated section on page 28].

## AGILE

For much of 2021 CELA members were capably supported by our team as we began working from home. As we reviewed our needs against changing modes of service delivery, CELA adopted a hybrid office-and-work-from-home model on a permanent basis. During the year we relocated our offices from Marrickville to Kent Street Sydney, where we now have access to studios for broadcasting our training sessions, collaboration spaces, and group training rooms equipped with state of the art technology. The CBD location is convenient for the team and for members, and it allows us to cost effectively use on-site production facilities to deliver our programs, and livestream events.

## A GO-TO PROVIDER FOR HIGH-QUALITY, ENGAGING ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAMS

In the past 12 months we again adapted our training delivery to suit the changing environment. After pivoting from face-to-face to online delivery in 2020, we extended our in-house capability in 2021 to include the production of quality live streaming. This change involved upskilling members of our learning & development team, sourcing additional equipment, and expanding the capabilities of our presenters and production teams. Our new livestream programs have proven to be incredibly popular.

## GROWING

We are pleased that the quality and relevance of our support is reflected in steady membership growth and retention, with many lapsed members re-joining. Our membership grew to over 1,600 services.

Our reach continues to grow beyond our members, with our communications channels reaching nearly 37,000 people within the early childhood education sector every week.



# MOTIVATED BY MEMBER INPUT

We connect with members regularly through phone, social media and email. Our members never fail to inspire us with their stories. We share an in-depth story about a member service in each edition of Rattler magazine, and invite members to share their views and reflections in our weekly Amplify blog.



## RATTLER 134 COOKS HILL PRESCHOOL

Cooks Hill Preschool Director Tash Croft tells readers how they moved from a rating of Meeting in all 7 areas, to a rating of Exceeding in all 7 areas, along with tips for other services going through A&R.



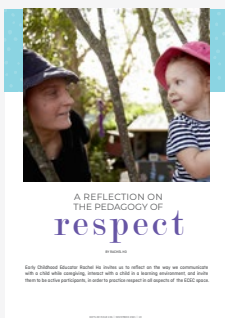
## RATTLER 135 BERMAGUI MOODJI GARDEN

Bermagui Preschool share their Moodji Garden project. It's a place that fosters intergenerational friendships and cultural understanding and embodies everything the preschool was recognised for in receiving their Excellent rating.



## RATTLER 136 ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL AND DAYCARE

Meet the Western Sydney service that showed the true meaning of creating collaborative relationships with families and communities during the darkest days of Sydney's lockdown.



## A REFLECTION ON THE PEDAGOGY OF RESPECT - RACHEL HO OF THE INFANT'S SCHOOL

CELA member Rachel Ho invites us to reflect on the way we communicate with a child while caregiving, interact with a child in a learning environment, and invite them to be active participants, in order to practice respect in all aspects of the ECEC space.



## AMPLIFY - A ROLE MODEL FOR INCLUSION

CELA member and HESTA award winner Karen Roberts shares how she is driven by children's rights and the importance of early education, and how other ECEC leaders can achieve their vision.

READ THE ARTICLE:  
[www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/october/shaping-the-future-of-early-education](http://www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/october/shaping-the-future-of-early-education)



## WHY EARLY LEARNING MATTERS

Meet the Western Sydney service that showed the true meaning of creating collaborative relationships with families and communities during the darkest days of Sydney's lockdown.

READ THE ARTICLE:  
[www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/august/why-early-learning-matters](http://www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/august/why-early-learning-matters)



# OUR TEAM

The CELA Team comprises a range of deeply knowledgeable professionals and specialists, whose expertise spans all areas of quality early childhood education including practice, policy and research, strategic planning, service approval, finance, marketing and business. In 2021 we expanded our team to include additional early education specialists who could liaise with our members to support them through our 1800 line.

**Message from Michele:** I am immensely proud of our talented and experienced CELA team. They are highly skilled and deeply knowledgeable about our sector, with many having worked in early childhood education during longstanding careers. They have worked tirelessly during 2021 to ensure our members were heard and supported. At the same time, they continued to guide members to advance their practice via our professional development programs, consultancy, phone support and resourcing.

## RESEARCH & POLICY

- ▶ Felicity Dunn  
Executive Officer: Research and Policy

## FINANCE

- ▶ Nina Trofimova  
CFO
- ▶ Lisa Newmarch  
Finance Manager

## EXTERNAL FACILITATORS

- ▶ Catherine Lee
- ▶ Cynthia Levin
- ▶ Deb Williams
- ▶ Helen Thornton
- ▶ Jenny Hind
- ▶ Karen Roberts
- ▶ Keren Huggett
- ▶ Karthika Viknarasah
- ▶ Louise Murfet
- ▶ Lynda Gorman
- ▶ Maria Rositano
- ▶ Michele Urquhart
- ▶ Michelle McTiernan
- ▶ Mimi Wellisch
- ▶ Penny Birdsall
- ▶ Sarah Moore
- ▶ Tracey Sharp

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- ▶ Tracey Long  
Marketing & Communications Manager
- ▶ Maren Waltermann  
Digital Marketing and Data Strategist
- ▶ Lisa Cloumassis  
Design Specialist



## BOARD

- ▶ Wendy Lindgren
- ▶ Maria Pender
- ▶ Gary Withyman
- ▶ Gabrielle Connell
- ▶ Ariane Simon
- ▶ Fiona Burman

## CEO

- ▶ Michele Carnegie

## PEOPLE & CULTURE

- ▶ Hope Dawson  
People & Culture Manager
- ▶ Jo Wyatt  
Payroll Manager

## SECTOR SPECIALISTS / MEMBER RELATIONS

- ▶ Louise Black  
Learning & Development Specialist
- ▶ Kerrie Maguire  
Learning & Development Specialist
- ▶ Jennifer Moglia  
Early Education Specialist
- ▶ Kate Damo  
Early Education Specialist
- ▶ Narelle Myers  
Regional Early Education Specialist
- ▶ Aline Majado  
RTO Manager
- ▶ Martine Almodovar  
Operations Administration Assistant
- ▶ Eliza Doret  
Communications Coordinator
- ▶ Olivia De Govrik  
Administration Assistant



# OUR BOARD

CELA also thanks our Board for their ongoing confidence, trust and support during an especially challenging year. The CELA Board is comprised of six members plus CEO Michele Carnegie, each with extensive credentials in our sector and related fields. Their combined experience stretches across service management, government, early education and care teacher training in TAFEs and Universities, advocacy and business consulting.

## WENDY LINDGREN CHAIRPERSON

Wendy is a graduate of both the University of Newcastle and Macquarie University. She has extensive teaching experience, having taught across all sectors, first within the school system and later in the TAFE sector. Wendy was the Head of Child Studies in NSW TAFE for a number of years. She has also been widely involved in Australia's diverse community sector over many years.

## MARIA PENDER BOARD MEMBER

Maria was the Director of Clovelly Child Care Centre, a parent-managed, community-based, not-for-profit service, for more than 25 years. With a degree in Early Childhood and a Masters in Adult Education, Maria has taught in the Indigenous Early Childhood Bachelor of Teaching Program at Macquarie University with Warawara, and the Institute of Early Childhood. Maria has a strong affiliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues - as well as anti-bias, multicultural and disability issues.

## ARIANE SIMON BOARD MEMBER

Ariane is the Director of St Stephen's Preschool, Normanhurst, where she has worked as both a teaching and non-teaching Director. Ariane first became a Director at the age of 20 and has since worked both as a Director and as a teacher at Charles Sturt University and TAFE campuses all over the state. She is a strong advocate for the ECEC sector, leveraging her position on the Independent Education Union, Early Childhood Council to ensure early childhood teachers are supported in their work through better conditions and pay parity.

## GARY WITHYMAN BOARD MEMBER

Gary has broad experience in the government and private sectors. With a Master of Business in Employment Relations, Graduate Diploma in Employment Relations and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, he worked in the state public sector for 24 years before moving into the private sector for eight years. Gary established and successfully operated his own consulting business in strategic human resources and recruiting for senior roles for 18 years, from which he only recently retired. He is a Fellow of the Australian Human Resources Institute and was state president for 5 years during the formative years of the new Institute.

## GABRIELLE CONNELL BOARD MEMBER

Gabrielle Connell has been an Early Childhood teacher and Director for over 35 years. Currently, she is the Early Childhood State Representative on the Independent Education Union Executive as well as a member of the Early Childhood Services Council, and has been elected as the Early Childhood Services representative on the Quality Teaching Council for NESA. She is contracted by NESA as a Teacher Accreditation Supervisor supporting and mentoring new teachers through the accreditation process.

## FIONA BURMAN BOARD MEMBER

After teaching maths and science in NSW High Schools and basic adult education in TAFE, Fiona went on to study Law. She was employed as a Judges Associate in the District Court before spending some time in a general practice in country NSW. There she encountered many people whose limited education adversely affected their life choices and she noted the difficulties facing parents seeking the best for their children. Those difficulties included lack of publicly funded early childhood learning services and long day care. Fiona moved from the country to large city based corporations, where her belief in the importance of early childhood education for all children, both for the well-being of children and their parents, was confirmed.









# ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF OUR MEMBERS

An integral part of our work at CELA is year-round advocacy, representing the interests of our members, who are mostly community based services and small providers. Advocacy means we play a role in speaking with government to highlight issues and potential solutions, and to help legislators understand how policies affect early education service providers and ultimately the families they support. CELA advocates across five key priorities:

## 1. ACHIEVING QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION

Ensuring that all children in Australia have access to affordable, high quality early education and care, is one of CELA's key principles and underpins our commitment to achieving best practice standards nationally. Success means that increasingly, more centres and services will meet and exceed quality standards measured via the National Quality Standards (NQS), and that ultimately, best practice standards will become the norm across our sector.

## 2. BUILDING A STABLE WORKFORCE THAT IS NURTURED AND VALUED

Quality early childhood education and care depends upon the calibre and strength of our workforce. A stable workforce is also essential for building responsive relationships with children and families. The key to building the quality of ECEC in Australia is attraction, retention and development of a specialist workforce with enough graduates flowing through university early childhood education and care degrees to fill vacancies emerging in the coming years.

CELA understands the challenges and concerns facing the ECEC workforce, both now and into the future. Our members must be able to attract and retain quality entrants, manage workload and levels of workforce stress, and provide professional development, pathways and recognition. We are also concerned about the diversity of qualifications within the sector, and varying levels of understanding and preparedness of graduates (CELA, ASQA, Mitchell Institute). CELA will continue to work with training providers and universities to inform, build and develop consistent models of training to ensure early childhood educators are well equipped to enter and excel in their chosen profession.

## 4. IMPROVING ACCESS FOR AUSTRALIA'S VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Our most vulnerable children have the most to gain from early childhood education but are less likely to attend. Prior to COVID-19 over 750,000 children were living below the poverty line – this figure is likely to increase due to the economic impact of COVID-19. There are multiple barriers to vulnerable children accessing early childhood education and care, which include cost, transport and availability of safe, culturally responsive services. CELA is advocating for additional support and resourcing to enable the early childhood workforce to identify and respond to the increasing incidence of child vulnerability. We are also focusing specific training on this area. We also advocate to support providers to engage vulnerable children and families.

## 3. ENSURING VIABILITY FOR COMMUNITY AND SMALL PROVIDERS

Community and small providers of early childhood education and care provide crucial services as a centre point for many rural and remote communities across Australia. Most approved providers across Australia are in fact small and community providers, with their services making up over 30% of all early childhood education and care services (ACECQA). Research shows that community managed services are more likely to provide high quality early childhood education and care, with over 40% of community managed not for profit services, operating at a level which exceeds NQS quality ratings (ACECQA). However, our small providers do not have the resources nor financial reserves of networks of providers. Their capacity to withstand economic shocks is much lower than large service providers. We are acutely aware of the important role they play and of their unique challenges and vulnerabilities. CELA is striving to ensure the importance of community and small providers is recognised.

## 5. CLOSING THE GAP FOR RURAL CHILDREN

Despite the fact that early childhood is the period of greatest developmental plasticity with profound long-term influences, too many rural and regional children lack access to quality early childhood education and care. A range of barriers must be addressed as access to timely and quality early childhood education is a vital part of the solution to solving the widening gap in education, health and life outcomes between city and country.



In 2021, we exponentially increased our advocacy in the context of COVID-19. We focused on the safety and financial survival of community and small providers, many of whom did not have the reserves to cover losses sustained by the impact of lockdowns.

We proactively gathered impact data required in order to seek vital support for our sector. With safety and viability at the centre of our thinking, we contributed advice to Government on practical operational solutions.

Our advocacy expanded rapidly in scope and pace, with CELA's CEO Michele Carnegie making herself available 24/7 to provide insight and data to key decision makers.

We shared our efforts and outcomes with CELA members as quickly as possible via our most immediate channels – social media and our member news bulletins.

During the peak of the crisis, we updated our COVID member news page multiple times a day to reflect changes in rules and regulations.

### **Activities we undertake on behalf of our members include:**

- ▶ Liaising with State and Federal Ministers to explain issues and provide solutions
- ▶ Liaising regularly with senior agency staff who brief and appraise State Ministers
- ▶ Reporting on issues of importance to our sector via our publications Amplify and Broadside
- ▶ Sitting on multiple advisory panels to represent the perspective of community and small providers
- ▶ Providing targeted submissions to important reviews such as the National Quality Framework, Workforce Strategy and Early Years Learning Framework

### **To advocate effectively we ensure that we understand the views and needs of our members through:**

- ▶ Listening to feedback via member conversations
- ▶ Undertaking member surveys on specific issues
- ▶ Gaining feedback from the thousands of educators who are undertaking our Learning & Development program
- ▶ Our collective CELA leadership expertise







## BRIEFING KEY DECISION MAKERS

Led by our CEO Michele Carnegie, CELA secured numerous vital meetings with Government, policy-makers and key decision makers, providing briefings on issues impacting our members and the families they support. In a spirit of co-operation we also engaged with other key ECEC stakeholders in meetings and briefings with Government.

Throughout 2021, we met with those who could help us gain practical support for our members. Our aim was to ensure their safety and the sustainability of services across New South Wales.

On behalf of our members, CELA met with:

- ▶ Federal Government - The Honourable Alan Tudge, MP Minister for Education
- ▶ CELA was pleased to collaborate with Community Child Care (CCC) and Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) to brief Minister Tudge on collective concerns, and urgent need for support
- ▶ State Government - The Honourable Sarah Mitchell, MLC, NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning. On a regular basis we updated the Minister and her staff on significant and emerging issues impacting the ECEC sector in NSW and offered workable solutions for consideration
- ▶ The Governor General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) Our CEO was invited to meet Their Excellencies Governor-General and Mrs Hurley, a valuable opportunity on behalf of our sector to discuss a wide range of early education matters and to understand Their Excellencies' impressive knowledge and recognition of the importance of early education and ongoing impact of COVID 19 on our sector
- ▶ We participated on six NSW Advisory Panels and sub committees
- ▶ Mr Andrew Laming, MP, Member for Bowman Queensland and Chair of Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training
- ▶ The Reserve Bank of Australia
- ▶ NSW Treasury
- ▶ Members of the media who reported frequently on issues being faced by the ECEC sector and the families they support
- ▶ Many other peak bodies such as CCC and ELAA who worked collaboratively with us in 2021

# WE MADE PROGRESS ON KEY ISSUES FOR OUR SECTOR

Advocacy drove progress on a number of key priorities for our sector.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

As stay at home restrictions came into force in NSW in July, early childhood education and care services in the 12 local areas of concern were hit hard and attendances plummeted. CELA made regular phone contact with members in these locations and, hearing that CCS funded services were losing thousands of dollars each week due to lost fee income, ramped up federal advocacy.

The Commonwealth first allowed services to waive the gap fee for children — meaning families who chose to keep their child at home didn't have to pay fees, while allowing the service to still receive Commonwealth funding for enrolments. Our members told us about their concern that families were still seeking to unenrol their child as they didn't want to lose their allowable absences. Through our advocacy efforts and that of others, the Commonwealth increased the number of allowable absences for those in areas subject to stay at home restrictions. Members then told us that despite these Commonwealth supports, some were in a precarious financial position as families continued to keep their children at home. This led to Business Continuity Payments for services whose attendances were below 50 per cent, providing much needed viability support to ensure these services were open on the other side of the pandemic.

## WORKFORCE

Recruitment and retention of staff are material concerns for the ECEC sector that have immediate and long-term ramifications.

High quality children's education and care sets the foundations for lifelong learning and development and our State and Federal Education Ministers recognise the critical importance of the children's education and care sector, as well as the dedication and resilience of our workforce throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic.

CELA's advocacy goal relating to workforce is to build a stable workforce that is nurtured and valued. It is a challenging goal, particularly given the historically entrenched low wages and conditions for those working in the sector. COVID-19 only added to the stress for the education and care workforce, which was told it was 'essential' and yet was seemingly an afterthought when it came to priority eligibility for COVID-19 vaccination.

With the caveat that we are not satisfied with the government responses to building a stable workforce for our sector so far, and that there is more to be done, our advocacy support relating to workforce include:

- ▶ Collaboration with ELAA and CCC to survey our members regarding workforce; recommendations provided to the Commonwealth and used to inform State Budget advocacy for the sector
- ▶ Our contribution to the ACECQA Workforce Strategy, which of the 21 priority actions identified, found improving pay and conditions to be the highest priority identified by stakeholders
- ▶ Articles and resources informed by members' needs and questions



## INPUT TO ACECQA WORKFORCE STRATEGY

CELA contributed to the development of Australia's National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy (2022-2031).

Facilitated by ACECQA, we were one of the national sector stakeholders who provided input to help shape a ten-year workforce strategy to help ensure a sustainable, high-quality children's education and care workforce.

We surveyed our members to ask what was concerning them most on this issue.

The top three concerns member faced going into 2021 were:

- ▶ Recruiting staff  
Over half of all members have struggled to recruit staff
- ▶ Recruiting educators  
The sector continues to have many unfilled vacancies.
- ▶ The situation is worsening  
Members said compared to past years it has been harder to recruit

## While our support expanded, fees for existing members stayed the same

As a not-for-profit professional association, CELA is funded by income from membership fees, funds generated via our training programs, consultancy, and income from major special projects including the engagement of our services by government and private sector clients.

We receive no funding from federal, state or local governments.

Advocacy, conducted on behalf of our members, is a complex process. It requires research, the input of subject matter experts, preparation of detailed briefings and presentations, and attendance at numerous senior level meetings throughout the year.

In 2021, while we increased our advocacy exponentially, CELA membership fees for existing members did not increase. Our membership fee remained at \$320 a year for existing members, which is not a per person fee. This annual charge entitles a member service and all of its team to utilise the full range of services CELA provides.

As a peak body, we monitor our costs carefully and despite extra investment this year and last year, we compensated in other areas to make our operating budget stretch. Part of that involved the time and commitment of our team, who worked long hours, because the impact of our sector matters to them personally and to the children of Australia.



# SUPPORTING MEMBERS THROUGH CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS

The past year has created the greatest need for member support of any time in our history.

Due to the unpredictable spread of the COVID Delta strain in 2021, many of our members were acutely focused on health and safety in a constantly changing operating environment.

Many experienced extreme stress juggling the day to day requirements of delivering quality education and care, with health concerns for staff and the need to stay informed, to communicate accurately with families. As the spread of Delta progressed, services were also subjected to prolonged or repeated lockdowns which threatened financial sustainability.

Existing workforce challenges also escalated, including the ability to attract and retain staff, and a shortage of skilled early educators, creating daily struggles to find casual staff to cover illness, with many permanent positions remaining unfilled. This issue was accentuated in rural and remote areas where workforce shortages have been endemic for years.


Under extreme stress, many members reached out to CELA for advice and support. Anticipating ongoing need for information and contact, CELA proactively reached out to members throughout the year.

An important aspect of our work was to make swift contact with providers who suddenly found themselves in a newly declared lockdown zone. We ensured that they knew how to access our member resources and COVID-19 Updates, and reassured them that CELA is here to help them and only a phone call away.

We connect with members on a regular basis through our member news email bulletins, website, social media and 1800 support line to provide individualised and tailored information.

We focus on synthesizing the vast amounts of information available to our sector into succinct summaries in an easy to navigate format on our COVID-19 member news page and email bulletins. We also connect members to relevant organisations and services where needed.


As we move through each phase of the pandemic, we are here to ensure that members know what needs to be done next in order to continue to provide the best possible quality early education and care. To save members time and streamline the way we present information and resources, we have recently refreshed our website. The new-look website includes a new member hub where member benefits and information updates can be accessed in one handy place.



# MEMBER NEWS

## In this member news


- Start Strong Free Preschool – Advocacy
- Impact of Mandatory Vaccination – Member Survey
- Notice of CELA Annual General Meeting
- Teacher Accreditation with NESA
- COVID-19 is continuing to impact ECEC
- Updated Member resource – Re-evaluating COVID Priorities
- Christmas is coming – CELA Office closure dates



### Start Strong Free Preschool Funding – Advocacy Update

Start Strong Free Preschool is a welcome and critically important contributor to increasing enrolment in preschool and for many services, provides much needed additional funding for quality early education programs.

For most of our members, funding guidelines have been very well received, helping more children access high quality early education and care, however for services in high SEIFA bands it can mean significant losses. This week we wrote to Minister Mitchell about our concerns, and continued our conversation with the Minister's office to discuss suggestions for how this could be remediated, as well as writing to the NSW Premier and Treasurer. We will keep you updated as to how this progresses as soon as we have advice to hand. Thank you to those members who have raised the issue and worked with us to prepare our advice to Government.



### Impact of Mandatory Vaccination – Please complete our Member Survey

There are serious shortages in the education and care workforce which have been driven by various factors like pay, conditions and lack of community recognition. The COVID-19 pandemic has served to exacerbate workforce shortages.

From 8 November, education and care workers are required to have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. At CELA we are hearing anecdotal reports about the impact this is having on the education and care workforce but would like to collect some 'hard data' from our members. This will be used to inform our workforce advocacy strategy to both State and Federal levels of government.

Please spend 6 minutes completing our survey now, your input is greatly appreciated.

[COMPLETE SURVEY](#)

### Notice of CELA Annual General Meeting

All financial members are invited to attend the Community Early Learning Australia AGM.

**Date:** Wednesday 8th December  
**Time:** 10pm  
**Where:** 201 Kent Street, Sydney

Agenda to be provided in due course

Kind regards,  
 Wendy Lindgren  
 Chairperson

Please RSVP by 1 December

[RSVP](#)

### NESA - Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher (HALT) Assessors – expressions of interest

NESA is inviting expressions of interest from eligible teachers from the early childhood education sector to become trained HALT Assessors and External Assessors. Successful teachers assuming these roles will assess and complete reports about applicants' evidence modules informed by the HALT Standards in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Standards) and conduct site visits to observe teachers practice and impact against the Standards.

You can [download the expression of interest form here](#). Expressions of interest should be emailed to NESA by 29 November 2021

### COVID-19 and its impact on ECEC

Over 300 early childhood education and care services in NSW have needed to close due to COVID-19 cases in the past month. As vaccination rates among adults and eligible children are high and set to continue to rise, children aged 0-4 attending early childhood education and care will soon be the largest group of unvaccinated people who mingle together. Read our analysis

[Read our analysis](#)

#### Commonwealth support

The Commonwealth Government has announced that it will provide support to education and care services until 30 June 2022 because of the continued impact of COVID-19. This includes support relating to:

- Absences;
- Cap Fee Waivers; and
- Enrolments.

Children will have 10 extra allowable absences for the 2021-22 financial year. This is on top of the standard 42 allowable absences and the additional allowable absences provided for families previously in a COVID-19 hotspot. These will be applied automatically.

If a state or territory restricts access to child care in a region for more than 7 days, more absences will be provided.

Services can now waive gap fees for a child that does not attend care because they, or a member of their household, have been directed to isolate due to COVID-19.

This will apply for the duration of the isolation period as specified by the health advice.

Services can also waive gap fees and receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) where a child cannot attend care because the service, or a room within a service, is closed due to COVID-19 on advice from the state or territory government. This will apply for the duration of the closure outlined in the advice.

Services can continue to waive gap fees for children not attending care where a state or territory restricts access to child care in a region. This will apply from day one of restrictions (with any duration of time being eligible).

#### Staying safe and organised in relation to COVID-19

Download our [COVID-19 Vaccination Status Log](#) and our [updated Re-evaluating COVID-19 Priorities](#) resource to ensure you are up to date with requirements relating to COVID-19.

**If you have a positive case**

The Department has developed a [flow chart to follow in the event you are notified of a confirmed case](#).

If you are notified of a confirmed case in your service, please contact your local Public Health Unit and the department's Information and Enquiries line on 1800 619 113.

The department will work with you and Health to advise you of next steps.

**Close contacts**

The best way to protect young children, and avoid disruption to their education, is to make sure that all eligible members of your household are vaccinated (including children over 12 and adults). All teachers, school staff and early childhood educators also must be fully vaccinated by 8 November 2021.

NSW Health has developed updated advice that may be shared with families if their child has tested positive to COVID-19 or is identified as a close COVID-19 contact and is required to self-isolate.

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/covid-19/Pages/isolation-advice-for-parents-and-carers.aspx](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/covid-19/Pages/isolation-advice-for-parents-and-carers.aspx)

# MEMBER NEWS

Our aim throughout the year has been to continue to be the source of truth for our members. No matter the time of day, our team has been available to help members work through every new announcement, to ensure that they are clear on what needs to be actioned.

We update our COVID related member news web page as changes occur, often on a daily basis, giving our members a regular, clear and concise picture of key national and local updates, advice for providers, directors and staff, and FAQs around the wide reaching operational matters unique to a pandemic.

When information is changing rapidly, we also share highlights in a weekly, curated summary email that includes links to important updates on our web page, as well as references to external sources of trusted information.

During 2021, we sent 20 member news emails, each attracting an exceptional open rate and feedback, showing that members very much value the time and emphasis we put into providing simple, timely information.

# AMPLIFY!

CELA's blog Amplify has cemented its reputation as the go-to source for discussion about early education and care sector topics. Our weekly publication is distributed to almost 20,700 ECEC sector professionals each week and includes sector news, advocacy, interviews and opinions by sector experts and educator reflections.

Amplify continued to grow its readership and reputation throughout 2021. We delivered 81 original articles to our readers including COVID specific interviews with OzSage experts around why ventilation is vital, considerations for keeping safe as we navigate out of lockdown and how our sector is coping with COVID in rural and remote areas.

Many of our articles were widely shared throughout the sector and on social media, and some articles were referenced in government sector notifications as a source of knowledge and truth.

Our team is dedicated to delivering timely news and information designed to help our sector to navigate the changes and challenges they face while continuing to inspire quality practice.

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



**Why ventilation is vital — CELA's advocacy plus OzSAGE experts answer our questions**

[READ MORE >](#)

Great info, very important in our spaces. We have all doors and windows open and encourage outdoor access all day. Have purchased some CO2 monitors to see how effective ventilation in our space is as our children return. Via Jodie Cox on Facebook



**How we can help transition to school after lockdowns**

[READ MORE >](#)

This is very helpful, thank you.  
Via Tash Smith on Facebook



## Unprecedented challenges - How CELA is advocating for you during the current outbreak

[READ MORE >](#)

THANK YOU!

During the whole pandemic, this would have to be the very first time I have felt like we are truly being considered. The mental strain on directors' health is taking a toll. We are situated in a small community where we know our families on a very personal level. Having no formal mandate on who can and can not attend makes the conversation very difficult. To have a clear, enforceable directive around access to services would alleviate the stress, worry, and general anxiety for those having the difficult conversations with families. While we understand we must be here to provide an essential service, and the best option is to have children access early education, the risk to staff, other children, our hospital system, and the wider community outweighs this option at this time - during a pandemic.

Again - THANK YOU

Via Stacey Smith in blog comments



## Key takeouts from the ACECQA workforce strategy

[READ MORE >](#)

At the 2010 and 2011 consultation periods, the powers that be were told that there will never be enough ECT's for the sector, it was also advised that Diplomas with experience could do a further 12 months study to be qualified as an ECT, if these recommendations from the sector were listened too we would not be in this situation. Training is appalling due to the content and not enough prac hours, we should be looking at more apprenticeships for all jobs.

Also unless the sector is paid more and government funds it the sector will continue to decline due to the high workload which is increasing exponentially, this workload is not benefitting children in fact it detracts from quality time with children, we need to start fresh in the childcare sector and listen to us on the ground who have the solutions, all this money spent on workforce strategies over the years has not helped at all and not much confidence in this strategy being any different, in fact can see a lot of wasted money spent in the wrong areas. More money, less paperwork, better training, solutions are simple and for rural and remote increasing the zone rebates would be another strategy to help those areas, but again no one listened...

Via Leonie Arnold in blog comments



# RATTLER

Rattler continues to be one of the most respected early education journals published in Australia. During 2021 we released three digital and one printed edition 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.

For our December printed compendium, we asked the children at CELA member service Bermagui Preschool to create a collage depicting how ECEC has been a hub for community during COVID. We also featured some of our best articles from our three digital publications.

Featured articles included:



## Creating community connections

Keeta Williams explores why authenticity is important when building community connections, and shares three examples of how services have engaged their local community in authentic ways.



## The power of singing with young children

Dr Sarah Powell of Macquarie School of Education shares insights from her research project on creative approaches to engaging children and addressing social or learning needs by integrating singing into the ECEC environment.



## Being in the here and now with children

Phillippa Yeend and Louise Black explore the important differences between supervision and engagement and how engaged interaction can benefit children.



## Using drama to support culturally and linguistically diverse children

Karthika Viknarasah looks at how educators can help children to become comfortable with the mainstream language as a source of communication, and to help children have shared experiences that they can draw from to facilitate play and socialisation.



## Leading to empower, empowering to lead: How can ECEC Directors plan for succession?

CELA explores how Directors can plan for succession.



## A reflection on the pedagogy of respect

Early Childhood Educator Rachel Ho invites us to reflect on the way we communicate with a child while caregiving, interact with a child in a learning environment, and invite them to be active participants, in order to practice respect in all aspects of the ECEC space.



## Physical activity without the star jumps

Dr Yeshe Colliver explores how we can integrate a play-based approach to assist educators to inspire children to initiate more physical activity, sustained over longer periods, which may result in longer lasting outcomes.



## Meet the Member – St John's Preschool and Long Daycare Auburn

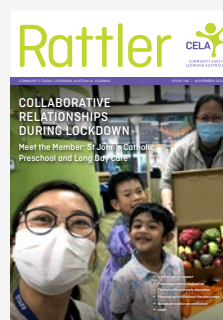
Tracey Long speaks with Director Cindy Adams about how this Western Sydney service showed the true meaning of creating collaborative relationships with families and communities during the darkest days of Sydney's lockdown



## READ RATTLER



EDITION 137  
DECEMBER



EDITION 136  
NOVEMBER

- ▶ Members - [read here](#)
- ▶ Non-members - [buy here](#)



EDITION 135  
JULY

- ▶ Members - [read here](#)
- ▶ Non-members - [buy here](#)



EDITION 134  
MARCH

- ▶ Members - [read here](#)
- ▶ Non-members - [buy here](#)



# BROADSIDE

Broadside is our feature newsletter, covering political issues and news affecting the early education and care sector. Each edition provides in-depth analysis of key issues of the day, giving members all the information they need to stay at the forefront of the sector.

In 2021 our CEO Michele Carnegie, along with our research and policy advisors, wrote the following Broadside summaries for the sector:



## Key takeouts from the ACECQA Workforce Strategy

The ACECQA Workforce Strategy Report highlights the workforce challenges the sector faces and proposes 21 actions to address them over the next ten years. We share key takeouts and what we are advocating for as the findings are implemented.



## Why Ventilation is Vital

With the announcement of a return to early education and care from 18 October, ventilation should be on every service's COVID safe plan.



## CELA's Advocacy during the Delta Outbreak

CELA CEO Michele Carnegie shares insights into our advocacy approach and key challenges the sector is facing.



## CELA's 2021-22 budget review

CELA's 2021-2022 budget review: Here's a brief summary of what of what you need to know, how it may impact you, and what still needs to be urgently addressed.



## NQF Review

The review of the National Quality Framework is a significant milestone in the quality journey for early childhood education and care.



# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

We regularly update our library of member resources to ensure that they are current and accurate. Our resources are focused on enabling continuous improvement for member services, with a spotlight on relevance, accuracy and pace. New member resources are often delivered to member in-boxes within a week of conceptualisation.

Our member resource library now includes: Sample job descriptions, sample operational policies, sample required policies, simple guides for services, team resource kits, sector discussion guides, COVID-specific documents, and pre-recorded webinars. We review and update all resources on a regular basis to ensure they are current.

Our refreshed website provides enhanced functionality for searching and sorting member resources, saving members time and providing a single place for information that will help to navigate the National Quality Framework and Standards and provide the best possible outcomes for children at their service.

**Member Resources**

Search Member Resources

AI | Broadbase (50) | COVID-19 (26) | Forms (25) | Infographics (2) | Philosophies (8) | Rattler (52) | Sample Job Descriptions (5)

Sample Optional Policies (8) | Sample Required Policies (25) | Signs (2) | Simple Guides (5) | Team Resource Kit (0) | Thinking About (0)

Webinars (26)

**COVID-19**  
**MEMBER NEWS - COVID-19 INFORMATION & ADVOCACY**  
It is important that all services are aware of current advice and updates regarding the COVID-19 virus. The amount of information (and misinformation) circulating can be incredibly overwhelming. Information is changing rapidly and the best way to stay up to date is to refer to reliable websites as a source of truth.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**COVID-19**  
**INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE REPORT**  
CELA, together with Early Learning Association of Australia and Community Child Care have released a report which highlights the significant workforce shortages in early education and care.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**COVID-19**  
**DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)**  
In response to Member requests, we have developed a COVID-19 policy. This policy will guide you in implementing vigilant hygiene practices that prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19. (Updated 26 November 2021)  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**COVID-19**  
**COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL**  
The tool will help you to navigate through a number of COVID-19 related scenarios, outlining hazards, risks, likelihood and potential control strategies.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**FORMS**  
**BEING A CHILD SAFE ORGANISATION**  
The following checklist is designed not only for educators and service leaders, but also management and those who have a responsibility for keeping children safe in the service/organisation.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**SAMPLE REQUIRED POLICIES**  
**DEALING WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS**  
Clear procedures are required to support the health, wellbeing and inclusion of all children enrolled at the service. Our service practices support the enrolment of children and families with specific health care requirements. Medical conditions include, but are not limited to asthma, diabetes or a diagnosis that a child is at risk of anaphylaxis. In many cases, if not managed appropriately, these can be life threatening.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**WEBINAR**  
**THINKING ABOUT CHILDREN'S VOICES**  
Thinking about Children's Voices, gives participants the opportunity to reflect on how they include children in the decision making that affects them. It takes a close look at the documents that support the child's right to speak and to be heard and for their decisions to be acted upon.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**WEBINAR**  
**BEING AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER: LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE**  
This member webinar will look closely at what theory is and help educators to define why theory is important. It will explore the value of engaging with theory and ways to engage your team.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**Rattler**  
**ISSUE 136**  
This edition of Rattler begins with a moving story about CELA member St John's Catholic Preschool and Long Daycare. Located in the Western Sydney suburbs of Auburn, the service's facilities were recently subjected to some of Australia's harshest lockdown rules.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

**COVID-19**  
**COVID VACCINATION STATUS LOG**  
According to the NSW Department of Education's 'COVID Safety in Early Childhood Education and Care Services' all ECEC services should keep a log of employees' vaccination status, including volunteers and contractors who attend child is at risk of anaphylaxis. In many cases, if not managed appropriately, these can be life threatening.  
[VIEW DETAILS](#)

## Amplifying Quality Education & Care

CELA is the peak body for Australia's early childhood education sector, advocating quality education and care for all Australian children. We are a member based organisation supporting over 20,000 early education professionals through our 1800 line, resources, consultancy, training and events.

# WEBSITE REFRESH

Training

Consultancy

Advocacy

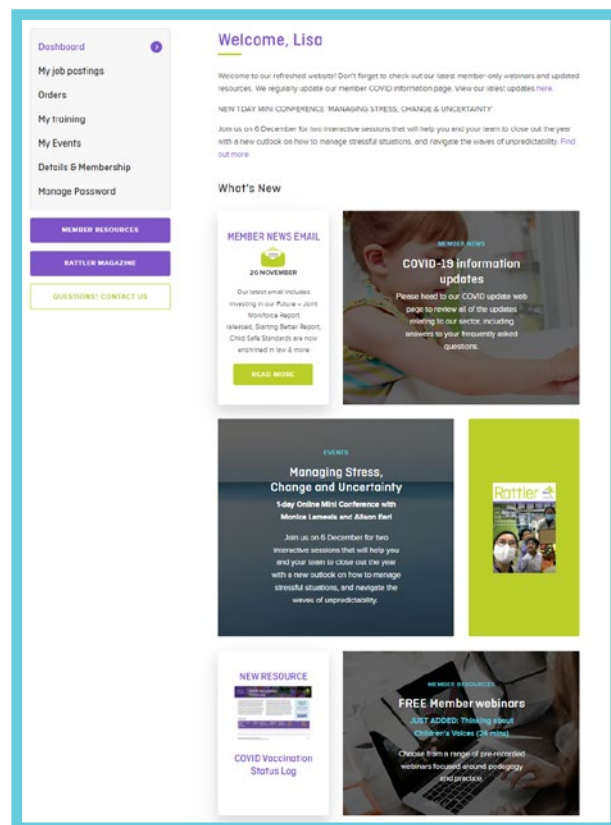
Join CELA

Member  
COVID News

In July, we launched CELA's new-look website, revealing a fresh 'make over' on the front end, supported by a major improvement of back-end functionality.

Improved features of the refreshed website include:

- ▶ Faster page loading, which means that members can find their way around the website more quickly
- ▶ Integration of the training booking system into the main website so that users don't have to leave our website to book sessions
- ▶ Updated shop with faster check-out
- ▶ Separate shopping carts for training and shop purchases
- ▶ Development of a user-friendly member hub which allows members to easily:
  - ▶ Renew their membership online
  - ▶ View a history of purchases
  - ▶ Post jobs
  - ▶ Manage password
  - ▶ View member-only resources including tools, forms, policies and guides
  - ▶ Download Rattler magazine and Broadside
  - ▶ Easily access the latest member news and updates
  - ▶ View pre-recorded member webinars
  - ▶ And more...







## 8 REASONS TO LOG INTO THE NEW MEMBER HUB TODAY



ACCESS DAILY ECEC  
COVID NEWS UPDATES



VIEW WEEKLY  
ADVOCACY UPDATES



SEARCH AND DOWNLOAD  
LATEST RESOURCES



WATCH PRE-RECORDED  
MEMBER WEBINARS



POST AND  
EDIT JOB LISTINGS



RENEW YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP



DOWNLOAD THE LATEST  
EDITION OF RATTLER



FIND OUT  
WHAT'S NEW

LOG IN TO THE MEMBER HUB:  
[WWW.CELA.ORG.AU/MEMBER-HUB](http://WWW.CELA.ORG.AU/MEMBER-HUB)

# COLLABORATIONS FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR MEMBERS

## PARTNERSHIP WITH ABC KIDS

In June we partnered with ABC Kids to offer a free webinar titled Digital Technologies In Early Education. 173 people attended. Participants were given the opportunity to reflect upon the role of digital technology in early education program and practice by unpacking the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) 'Statement on young children and digital technologies.

Presented by Laura Stone, ABC Kids Early Education Producer and Linda Harrison, ABC Kids Early Education Consultant, attendees were given the opportunity to learn about the ways in which media and digital technology can be incorporated effectively to facilitate meaningful, deeper understandings and promote ongoing inquiry-based investigations in early learning settings. They were also provided with links to an extensive online catalogue of ABC Kids Early Education digital and non-digital teaching resources created in alignment with National Quality Approved Learning Frameworks.

[READ MORE >](#)

## CELA, COMMUNITY CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION INC.(CCC), AND EARLY LEARNING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA (ELAA) COMBINED VOICES

CELA has a history of joining forces with other like-minded peak bodies and sector leaders to amplify our members' voices on key issues. During 2021, we worked with Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) and Community Child Care Association Inc. (CCC) on several issues, most critically to form a combined position and joint correspondence to the Federal Minister for Education and Youth, The Honorable Alan Tudge, on the need for continuity funding for CCS funded services and other workforce issues faced by the sector.

[READ MORE >](#)





# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

During 2021, many members utilised lockdown and work from home requirements to develop their professional skills.

Our June to December 2021 Training Calendar included a range of 40 inspiring online learning courses. Over 7,000 early education and care professionals across Australia trained with CELA in 2020 and this year despite interruption of COVID lockdown, over 6,800 people participated in online training in 2021 at the time this report was published (November 2021)

Our carefully constructed courses are designed to be current, relevant and to support educators and directors to deliver quality practice, for the benefit of children.

In what was a difficult year for members, our aim has remained to provide engaging and valuable learning and development opportunities, and to make it as easy as possible for members to access them in a way that suited.

Online training has now gained widespread acceptance among the sector as a successful means to engage in professional learning. There has also been a noticeable decrease in services needing technical support, with many educators now experienced and confident using this medium.

The extensive lockdown in NSW impacted CELA's ability to deliver on-site training sessions organised prior to restrictions. During the year, dozens of planned on-site training sessions were postponed due to COVID-related reasons. Of these, half were converted to webinar training sessions, some were rescheduled for onsite delivery at a later date, and others are pending providers' decisions on how they would like to proceed.

Subsequently, many services have let us know that online customised training is now their preferred method of professional learning, even when restrictions are eased and on-site delivery is feasible.

With the main mode of training delivery being online, we were also able to utilise the expertise of regional and interstate external facilitators to meet the professional learning needs of many services. CELA's ability to choose from a diverse range of professionals allowed us to align the most suitable facilitator to course content.

The success of our high-quality online training was acknowledged in the overwhelmingly positive feedback we received in our surveys after every session.





## FREE LIVE WEBINARS

Hundreds of early educators benefited from free professional development, across a range of topics:

- ▶ ABC Kids Digital technologies in early education: pedagogy, play and partnerships webinar
- ▶ Expert storyteller Lillian Rodrigues Pang: Playing with Stories

Plus member only pre-recorded webinars uploaded to the member hub:

- ▶ Enriching block play in the outdoors - January
- ▶ Enriching Block play in the outdoors part 2 - February
- ▶ Cultural Celebrations - March
- ▶ Thinking about literacy - April
- ▶ Staff meetings to inspire - May
- ▶ Curriculum Development - June
- ▶ Linking Theory to Practice - July
- ▶ Children's Voices - August

In addition, each week, we offered a number of members free training sessions through our surprise and delight program.

Plus, free sessions have been delivered through the Early Education Leaders Peer Network:

- ▶ Book club
- ▶ Surviving or thriving?
- ▶ Building a child's sense of agency
- ▶ Press pause

# EVENTS

While COVID regulations meant we were unable to meet up in person for our annual Leadership Retreat and Mobile Meet, we were able to deliver a very successful event to recharge and inspire leaders as we finished the year.

In October we delivered Recharge, Recalibrate, Reconnect, a 1-day online leadership mini conference designed to give participants renewed confidence and the skills to navigate through future change and uncertainty.

**Participants were invited to:**

- **RECHARGE:** Find out how to beat resilience fatigue and restore energy with international positive psychology expert Alison Earl.
- **RECALIBRATE:** Discover how to lead with heart and soul with Childspace founder Toni Christie, and learn how to identify stress and plan for wellbeing with BeYou consultant Trish Osgood.
- **RECONNECT:** Share personal stories and experiences with peers in a supportive and safe space.

“

I enjoyed this mini conference as the connection with others reminded me that we are not alone in this situation. The term work life rocks - love this leadership reminder - care for self.”

Mini conference attendee

“

During a very stressful period of my career I was very grateful for this mini conference. Thank you.”

Mini conference attendee





# CONSULTANCY AND INSERVICE TRAINING

During times of change, demand for specialised customised training and consultancy continued to grow. In 2021, services, providers and prospective providers each had unique needs to navigate, creating consistent requests for bespoke assistance throughout the year. In 2021 we delivered thousands of customised training sessions and consultancies to our sector and members.

## Meeting diverse organisational needs

Our consultancy engagements were diverse and delivered in many cases online due to COVID, we continued to deliver CELA's usual high standard of sector expertise.

In the past 12 months, CELA has implemented Approved Provider governance training to organisations across NSW, WA, VIC and SA. Each consultancy provided state specific information, with access to resources and support materials. People who engaged in this training continue to provide feedback and appreciation of the content of the sessions, which enabled them to better understand the significance of their role as an approved provider.

Policy and procedure development requests increased in 2021 and provided an opportunity for CELA to work intensely with services

over extended periods of time. This engagement has resulted in CELA guiding the development of quality practices reflective of the National Quality Standards and service philosophies. We were engaged to develop suites of policies for providers, across long day care, community-based preschool and family day care.

Large organisations continue to request consultancy from CELA, in recognition of our team's diverse range of expertise and capacity to apply this to complex needs. We provided proposals for regulatory authorities, councils, large not-for-profit organisations and government agencies. Requests included support in the shape of reviews, mentoring, analysis and strategy, across all service areas.

## Online customised delivery continues to drive accessibility

Online customised training has further solidified itself as a successful and accessible means to engage in professional learning. There has been a noticeable decrease in services needing technical support to engage in online learning, with many educators now experienced in engaging with this medium. For many services, online customised training has been the preferred choice, even when restrictions are eased, and on-site delivery is feasible.

## Compliance training in strong demand

Compliance based training was in strong demand in 2021, with services seeing the benefit of this training for entire service teams. Compliance training is also prompted by regulatory authority checks on services, where supervision is often highlighted as an area in which services need to build competency, in response to health and safety matters.

## Many organisations see the value of our child protection training

We received numerous requests for repeat customised training related to child protection. Councils in particular value the customised aspect of CELA's child protection training. We are able to tailor our approaches to support child safe practices relevant to the various categories of staff employed by Councils, such as senior management, maintenance, library and event staff.



### CONSULTANCY CASE STUDY

CELA was approached by our member, an early learning centre in NSW, to develop a compliance and quality program to assist to check and monitor ongoing compliance within the service.

Over the course of a year we implemented compliance and quality checks, compliance-only checks, follow-up visits to support action planning and attended board meetings to brief the board of management on our support, findings and future actions.

The outcome was the provision of in depth reports after each visit to reflect service strengths and identify recommendations. The service was able to make supported and consistent efforts to implement CELA's suggestions and continuously improve the education and care they provided. By the end of the year, the service was in a strong and compliant position, which enabled some time to be allocated to shared reflection on exceeding practices. This program will be renewed and implemented again in 2022.

CELA's expert consultancy and support exceeded our expectations and was invaluable throughout the process of creating a new early childhood education and care service at Nepean Hospital.

Over 10 months, CELA's team were alongside every step of the way, assisting us to navigate complex situations and providing guidance and recommendations from planning and construction, to operational commissioning, to development of the full suite of policies, procedures and other essential documentation required to successfully complete service approval requirements.

Working with us, CELA applied early education management expertise to navigating the complex service approval process exceptionally well. Our new Somerset Cottage Early Childhood Education and Care Centre with capacity for 68 children was completed ahead of time and on budget and officially opened on Tuesday 7 July 2020."

Consultancy client



# GOVERNMENT SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

## Recognised as sector experts

During 2021, the NSW Government engaged CELA to develop and deliver several important Sector Development Programs for the early childhood education sector. Being selected to develop and lead these projects demonstrates our respected reputation as subject matter experts capable of providing high quality training, support and information that is relevant to our sector.



### COMMUNICATING QUALITY RATINGS

The NSW Department of Education contracted CELA to develop a program providing educators and management with confidence and tools to improve how quality ratings are communicated to families. The strategy involved a training and support program to improve understanding around the value of Quality Ratings and guidance in how to have discussions with families.

CELA developed a program comprising:

- ▶ A five-hour livestream training program
- ▶ Resource kit
- ▶ An online community of support
- ▶ 1-1 mentoring and
- ▶ A follow-up to track service progress and confidence.

The program, repeated over ten dates until April, was over-subscribed. In response, CELA expanded session sizes to meet demand and to support the sector.

Hundreds of early education services attended across the 10 sessions and 12 new sector resources were developed, addressing the topics covered in the program.

At the conclusion of the program, over 70% of attendees rated the program as 'excellent and usable'. Services also said that they felt more confident about communicating with families about quality ratings.

**"Very clear, relevant, rich information and an area that may not have been focused on or thought about in detail before."** Training session attendee





The NSW Department of Education Early Education Directorate contracted CELA to design a governance program to improve the understanding of Approved Providers roles and responsibilities.

The program we designed comprises:

- ▶ Comprehensive online training via livestream session
- ▶ An information portal that contains over 100 comprehensive self paced online learning resources
- ▶ Four micro-events to examine select subjects in greater detail

The program launched in October 2021 and will run through to April 2022.

**"I think this is the best approved provider program support I have seen in the time I have been in the industry."** Training session attendee



## COVID 19 Free Preschool sector support and 'Start Strong' Fee-Free Preschool sector support

During 2021, the NSW Department of Education invited CELA to support the implementation of COVID 19 Free Preschool program. The program started in 2020. It has continued under the Start Strong Free Preschool program. CELA provides expert support via phone and email, plus valued feedback to the Directorate on a regular basis.

## EARLY EDUCATION LEADERS

### PEER NETWORK

During 2021, the NSW Department of Education contracted CELA to develop a pilot program, creating a network for leaders in early education.

The objectives were to:

- ▶ Help reduce leaders' sense of isolation
- ▶ Enhance professional practice by engaging with each other
- ▶ Deliver an education program that brings best practice to leaders with a relevant, accessible and inclusive approach.

CELA launched the Early Education Leaders Peer Network in April 2021 for a 12-week pilot.

Over 700 leaders have joined the network, 6 events were hosted, 41 topics were discussed in the forum and over 200 resources were added to the resource library.

The Network comprises:

- ▶ A website
- ▶ Comprehensive peer-reviewed and evidence-based resource library of over 2,000 pieces
- ▶ Real-time chat forum for leaders to connect, share and form interest groups
- ▶ A program of events including an online conference

Topics have included:

- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ How to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan
- ▶ Critical reflection
- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Music and movement for development
- ▶ Child agency

In addition, a one-day, online conference held in May included sessions with an expert child psychiatrist, leading academics, and other sector experts. Members left every session with updates on latest thinking, plus actionable material and tools to implement in their service.

The pilot program proved that the Network is successful and needed by ECEC leaders. Together with Early Education Champions, Janelle Gallagher, Narelle Myers and Kate Phipps, CELA is now managing the program as an ongoing and permanent service for the sector.

**"Well done everyone for pulling together such an awesome conference. Having access to such a depth of current knowledge and research without having to leave my service was awesome."** EELPN member

# STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic planning is integral to sound internal governance. CELA's strategic plan provides longer term direction, outlines our priorities and goals, and informs our day-to-day decisions.

Our strategic direction is anchored in our Purpose and Vision.

**PURPOSE:** To deliver effective and expert support for our members, to enable them to deliver quality early education and care for all Australia's children. To influence policy makers and government by amplifying the voices of community based and small providers, and to promote the value and importance of community based early education.

**VISION:** For all of Australia's children to have access to quality early education, regardless of economic circumstance or where they live.

## Achieving our Vision

To achieve our vision means we must be trusted and present in the lives of our members, walking alongside them as they develop and deliver high quality ECEC services. We do this in both proactive and reactive ways.

In 2021, our regularly updated pandemic management strategies were conveyed to CELA members via proactive calls made by our team. The calls also served as a check-in to ensure members had everything they needed to function effectively for their communities. Through these calls we had a real-time pulse check of sector needs and sentiment that informed our

advocacy on behalf of our members.

We continuously research, test and adopt new and better technology to support our outreach and communication practices. This improves efficiency, and more importantly, it increases access to our services, especially for members in rural and remote areas.

Our ever-present support is reflected in our 10% growth in membership, and in our 94% retention rate. Our goal is to maintain or exceed this standard over the coming year.

We strive to offer market leading training, events, resources and consultancy, with an aim to stay ahead of developments on behalf of members. We guide and assist members to maximise their professional development, optimise service delivery standards, and help them to navigate the ever-changing environments in which they support children and families in their communities.

As well as offering a wide range of member services, we also seek partnerships with aligned organisations to offer material benefit to our members through shared information and specially priced products or services.

And at the forefront of our work for members is our ongoing advocacy. We strive to represent the best interests of our sector in relevant decision-making discussions with State and Federal Governments.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

The 2020/2021 financial year has been highly successful for CELA, despite the pandemic and its negative effect on planned face to face training. The overall annual surplus shows significantly improved performance, compared to the deficit originally expected at the time of budgeting, while maintaining a high level of reinvestment into our member benefits and the wider sector.

This was enabled through the organisation's success in adapting business operations to the changing environment, and delivering consultancy services and online training tailored to sector needs. CELA also secured multiple government contracts to deliver key programs at the beginning of the year, substantially uplifting its income.

When compared to previous financial years, CELA has experienced positive financial performance across a number of key areas:

- ▶ Membership revenue and training income are higher than in the last financial year
- ▶ Contracted programs increased by 52% over the previous two years
- ▶ The net annual result turned around from a deficit in 2018/2019, to a noteworthy surplus in 2020/2021, while at the same time making significant reinvestment in the sector through advocacy, development of new resources, training programs and website, as well as a significant increase in proactive and reactive member phone support and external communication

# PARTNERSHIP



We are 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.

This year Guild Insurance provided invaluable support for their customers, including the continuation of a free employment law hotline designed to help early education and care services navigate questions and obligations around employee relations during the pandemic.





# SUMMARY

Resilience and renewal are words which come to mind as we reflect on the past year and look ahead to the next 12 months.

Resilience, because our sector has truly demonstrated its ability to persevere, and renewal because the last tumultuous year required us to further investigate new ways of working that would ensure we connect with our members and deliver training in a timely and reliable way.

Just as services adapted to new operational protocols and procedures, CELA also adapted.

We accelerated our advocacy, upgraded our technology, enhanced our website, publications, and resources, and expanded our 1800 phone line support to members.

At CELA we look ahead with optimism, confident in the adaptability of our sector, and in our own ability to innovate in challenging circumstances. Together we have endured, and in many respects advanced, through our third year of almost constant community crisis.

However, what has not changed, is CELA's clarity of vision. Our purpose is to support our members and to amplify the value of community early learning throughout Australia.

And despite the difficulties that confronted our sector, we are united in a common vision — that all of Australia's children deserve quality early education and care, and that it underpins Australia's future.



COMMUNITY EARLY  
LEARNING AUSTRALIA

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