



Annual Report 2022 – 2023

Advocacy with Impact for the ECEC sector



ACA Victoria Strategic Plan 2023–2024

MISSION

A voice and support for our members; driving success for the early learning community.

VISION

Championing excellence in outcomes for the early learning community, leading to children's success in life.

VALUES



To lead with respect and integrity



To collaborate and innovate



To champion excellence



To embrace diversity, equity and inclusion

SUPPORT



Accessible and informed sector services with a commitment to membership value

- ▶ A membership engagement team committed to timely advice & guidance
- ▶ Having access to current and accurate information relevant to the sector
- ▶ Facilitating peer-to-peer dialogue & collaboration
- ▶ Access to exclusive membership offerings

DEVELOP



Engaging in and providing opportunities for members and sector-wide growth

- ▶ Relevant & purposeful Professional Development for members
- ▶ Developing an engaged and growing membership base
- ▶ Developing relationships within the sector, government and commercial partners

LEAD



Be recognised as the lead peak body for the early learning sector

- ▶ Build positive awareness of the sector
- ▶ Establish and implement policies and procedures to ensure best practice governance
- ▶ Being proactive and positively influence government policy and reform for all members

OUR PLATFORMS



MEMBER AND SECTOR ONLY RESOURCES



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS



ONLINE FORUMS



ADVOCACY



EVENTS



REPRESENTATION AT SECTOR EVENTS



CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION INITIATIVES



PROGRAM FACILITATION



MEMBER PORTALS



SOCIAL MEDIA

Message from our President

Success doesn't come from what you do occasionally. It comes from what you do consistently.

On behalf of the Australian Childcare Alliance Victoria (ACA Victoria) Board, I would like to acknowledge all our members for their commitment and contribution over the past 12 months. Your support, through membership, event attendance, member meetings and supplier engagement has contributed to our growth and continued drive for work as a peak-body in the Early Childhood Education & Care sector.

You will learn from the Treasurer's Report that ACA Victoria have announced a significant trading loss for the year ended 30th June 2023. This is an extremely disappointing outcome and the Board have taken full responsibility for this result. Despite this, we remain solvent and are working towards strategies that will ensure we do not repeat this. The CEO – Matthew Monaghan – we employed to spearhead growth of our organisation in May 2022 has since left in Feb 2023 and Keeli McNamara has stepped into the General Manager's role to lead the organisation. Keeli's business development experience has seen the organisation grow our sector supplier and sponsorship partnerships. Allowing us to offer more benefits to our members.

We envision the next 12 months to be a substantial but exciting time for Early Childhood Education and Care. We hope to contribute more to the sector through the various government endorsed project work and championing advocacy efforts. This will place us in a greater reputation for families and gain more traction with policy makers.

I would like to extend my gratitude to ACA National President, Paul Mondo, for his continued work advocating for our sector. Paul works tirelessly with Victorian and Federal Government stakeholders to make vital improvements across our sector. His work with ACA National and ACA Victoria have helped with the following sector initiatives:

- Engagement of a group of providers across Australia to apply for a Supported Multi-Employer Bargaining Process with the Fair Work Commission to negotiate collectively for more favourable terms and conditions for our employees. This will be supported with the independent report that ACA commissioned Dandolo Partners to undertake ways of funding the proposed wage increases;
- "Free Kinder" in Victoria resulted in LDC services receiving \$2000 of funding to cover families' gap fees;
- Commitment by Victorian Government to move towards 30 hours of funding in the year before school and further support is being initiated for workforce supply;
- \$5000 funds for Kindergartens to purchase new resources and equipment; and
- Various formal submission papers
- Media engagement to showcase and support these initiatives, as well as highlighting the struggles our sector is feeling with workforce shortages.

I also acknowledge the members of the ACA Victoria Board and their involvement in their volunteering capacities. I would like to recognise their commitment, dedication, and support over the last twelve months, and their unwavering passion for the early childhood education sector. Their contributions helped our organisation work towards the strategic objectives through the 3 pillars - Support, Develop and Lead, per our 2022-2023 Strategic Plan.

SUPPORT

Throughout this 12-month period we have endeavoured to provide you with accessible information with a commitment to membership value through regular member updates, fortnightly e-newsletters and call centre advice and guidance. We have reinvigorated our regular 'What's On Your Mind' online network meetings hosted by our treasurer, Sam Rosenberg and Board member, Brooke Erden, for members to question, share, and celebrate with other providers. We have commenced 'Open Door' nights with providers showcasing their service for our members to view and learn from. These 'Open Door' nights will continue into 2024 and we already have a waiting list of providers wanting to share their services with others.

DEVELOP

Through our 2 major conferences (IMMERSE & The Leaders Summit), along with the Leadership Retreat, Professional Development workshops, Open Door Series, What's on Your Mind and the advocacy work, it's our aim to engage our members and provide opportunities for sector wide growth.

The team at ACA Victoria have also pursued partnering with existing and new suppliers to provide our members with enhanced and stronger benefits, whether that's to give you discounted products and services, to innovate your systems and processes or to support your employee wellbeing with an advantageous Employment Assistance Program.

Members of the Board and ACAV team continue to cultivate connections with government and sector stakeholders so that we can be at the forefront of current developments and therefore provide our members with regular updates and support.

LEAD

Through our governance and procedures, and media engagement we continuously strive to be recognised as the lead peak-body for the Early Childhood and Education and Care sector.

Members of the Board have regularly joined various government working groups and forums to listen and learn and provide insight and advice on diverse topics to help support and champion our sector. These topics include, kindergarten funding, workforce participation and reviews, inclusion support, Child Information Sharing Scheme, Reconciliation, regulatory updates and reviews, training and practice, and change management reviews.

As an organisation we will continue to implement and review this strategic plan so that we may drive success for our early learning community.

I would like to thank our outgoing President, Sarah Tullberg who stepped away from the position on 30 March 2023. Sarah has worked diligently as President for ACAV over last 4 years, especially during one of our sector's most volatile and disheartening times – the COVID Pandemic. Sarah was instrumental in supporting our members with regular online updates and assisting Paul Mondo in his advocacy work with State and Federal Governments for our sector during this tumultuous time. Sarah remains an active board member to this day.

We also welcomed a new board member in November 2022, Jarrod Macdonald, and it was great to have fresh ideas and perspectives with board discussions. However, sadly for unforeseen reasons, Jarrod had to leave his position and we welcomed Jenny Kearney back with her extensive experience and meticulousness.

The current Board, includes a diverse range of providers who along with their sector and service knowledge, bring with them expertise in a variety of ways. Sam Rosenberg is an accountant and takes on the treasurers' role in a thorough manner and is enthusiastic about numbers and members. Nick Moutzouris is the Co-Vice President and is an ECT and provider. Nick offers experience with reconciliation, ECT engagement and is devoted to the sector. Nicole Liewellyn is also the Co-Vice President and brings with her, Human Resource and employee wellbeing capabilities and isn't afraid to

ask the difficult questions. Sally Orr is ACA Victoria's secretary who also has the ability to mentor and coach and brings a wealth of experience in business operations, employee services and networking. Jenny Kearney is a longstanding member of the Board and has seen ACA Victoria grow over time. She carries experience, knowledge, and unwavering dedication and is always ready to help in anyway possible. Lastly, Brooke Eerden, is a Board member who connects and sustains relationships with her ability to talk to anyone, anytime. Brooke brings fresh ideas and knowledge that helps support decision making.

The Board give their time and efforts to ACA Victoria because they are committed to its vision and objectives.

I also show my appreciation to the entire Keeli McNamara and the ACA Victoria staff for their ongoing dedication and adaptability. On this note, I would like to thank Matthew Monaghan (outgoing CEO), Belle Spillman, Julianne Smith, Gillanne Bull, Michelle Losurdo, Luci Tassone, Evangeline Cachinero, Romy Harcourt, Carolyn Booth, Ryan Perera and Karen Chittenden for their time with ACA Victoria. I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

ACA Victoria is excited to announce that we are in the process of completing and submitting our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This allows us as an organisation to take meaningful action towards sustainable and strategic action to advance reconciliation.

ACA Victoria are pleased to present the Annual Report for the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) Victoria for the 2022 – 2023 financial year. This report covers operations that took place within the 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 period.

With the work of the ACA Victoria's team, the Board and our members, ACA Victoria will grow further to achieve it's vision.



Tonii Tran
President
ACA Victoria

Message from our General Manager

ACA Victoria continues to support our members with the ongoing challenges they face, through the member support line and the ABLA support line for complex HR issues. The re-introduction of the member online forum which has been renamed “What’s on your Mind” will continue monthly assisting our members and offering the opportunity to connect with peers.

Sector suppliers have increased substantially over the past 12 months, much of the success was due to combining our sector supplier offering with exhibition opportunities with many suppliers committing to both our Immerse Conference and the Leadership Summit. The strength of these relationships enables us to continue to offer quality events to our members along with special member offers on products and services.

A focus on professional development opportunities for our members saw workshops covering various topics, including:

- Recruitment & Retention of Staff
- Effective Communication & Influencing Skills
- Effective Digital Engagement & Marketing
- Occupational Health and Safety & Manual Handling

These workshops were delivered by industry specialists (Sally Orr, Catharine Hydon, Belle Spillman & Sue Ellson). We will continue to offer quality, sector relevant workshops monthly, consulting with members to ensure these continue to be of relevance.

In addition, ACA Victoria ran two successful Conferences:

- Tasmania Leadership Retreat – held at the Hobart Conference Centre with expert presenter, Steve York, the day focused on Negotiation Tactics
- IMMERSE – held at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre in April, we had a range of guest speakers discussing trending sector topics

Strong government relationships continue with various projects rolled out. Child Information Sharing Scheme & 3-year-old Kindergarten Funding, we will continue to identify and secure funding opportunities, with a number of projects secured for 2023- 2024.



Keeli McNamara
General Manager
ACA Victoria

ACA Victoria Board Members



Tonii Tran
President
Approved Provider: Starfish Early Learning

Tonii Tran is the founder and Managing Director of Starfish Early Learning Centres, a group of 6 centres, all located in the Eastern, South Eastern and Northern districts of Melbourne. Tonii has a Bachelor of Business (Banking and Finance) 1996 and Graduate Diploma in Education (Early Childhood) 2011.

Tonii currently oversees the management and leadership of all these centres. She is a great learner and provides coaching and mentoring to her team. Her focus is on the research & development of reciprocal relationships with families, children and educators, pedagogical documentation, project work and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Tonii believes in the values of belonging, leadership, collaboration, learning and joy and advocates for the Early Childhood Education and Care sector.



Nicole Llewellyn
Co-Vice President

Nicole is the Owner and Approved Provider of Kool Kidz Mill Park as well as the Director of Kiddie Cove; a purpose built 130 place centre which opened in 2016. Nicole is also the Nominated Supervisor at Kiddie Cove Early Learning Centre.

Nicole has a significant background in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations which has been invaluable to her role in managing more than 70 permanent employees across the two centres. Nicole has been a member of ACA Victoria since 2018.



Nick Moutzouris
Co-Vice President

Nick Moutzouris is a registered VIT teacher and is the Director and owner of Monash Vale ELC in Clayton and Bridge Road Early Learning Centre in Richmond.

Nick manages these two companies alongside his family. Nick understands the challenges the sector faces and brings to the role robust financial skills, strong negotiating skills, a thorough knowledge of the sector and an innovative approach, derived in part, from previous roles in the real estate industry.

Nick is dedicated to improving outcomes for stakeholders in the Early Childhood sector.



Sam Rosenberg
Treasurer
Approved Provider
Buddies Early Learning Centre

Over many years, Sam has developed and runs multiple services, priding himself on providing top quality service with a difference for the children in his care.

Sam is a Chartered Accountant, the Director of Childcare Management Systems, a childcare consultancy, and Early Childhood Training – an RTO specialising in Early Childhood qualifications.

Sam has operated 12 services since 1996 under the Kinder Haven or Buddies ELC brand. Operating a consulting service to sector stakeholders and an RTO delivering training for Certification III and Diploma in Early Childhood. In addition, Sam has also sat on Boards of sector peak bodies for approximately 15 years.



Sally Orr
Secretary
Executive Director
Meraki Early Learning Centre

Sally has extensive experience as an Executive Director in a variety of services, including start-ups and turning around underperforming centres. She is driven to provide high quality care for all children and to support small business owners in their journey of growth and improvement.

With over 20 years' experience in the sector, she has a passion for mentoring, coaching, and helping people find their voice in the workplace. She is dedicated to developing fresh leadership styles, finding comfort in the uncomfortable, and imparting the essential skills that today's leaders need to stand out from the crowd, enabling their dreams to become a reality. Sally has a Diploma of Children's Service, a Bachelor of Business in Accounting and is an Accredited Organisational Coach.



Sarah Tullberg
Approved Provider: Knox Childcare & Kindergarten

Sarah Tullberg brings to the Committee 25 years of experience in all levels of ECEC service operations.

Sarah has been the Approved Provider of Knox Childcare and Kindergarten in Wantirna South since 2011. She has also previously worked as Operations Manager for another group of large, privately owned services (up to 159 places each), as well as many other roles in the ECEC sector prior to that position.

Sarah has previously held the positions of ACA Victoria President, Vice President and has been on the Board over six years.



Paul Mondo
Approved Provider
Bimbi ELC & Deer Park Early Learning and Kindergarten

Paul has extensive experience in Early Childhood Education and Care, which began with his employment in the family business. Over the years, he has built, bought, and sold various services and is currently the Approved Provider of Bimbi Early Learning and Kindergarten in Airport West and Deer Park Early Learning and Kindergarten.

Reflecting his enthusiasm for the sector and ensuring the viability of Early Education and Care in Australia, Paul is also President of the Australian Childcare Alliance National. He plays a key role in advocating for the interests of members at a Federal and State Government levels.



Brooke Eerden
Director: Dandenong Ranges Childcare Centre

Brooke Eerden and her family own and operate Dandenong Ranges Childcare Centre, with Brooke as Nominated Supervisor and Director. Brooke has fulfilled a variety of roles within the Early Childhood Education & Care sector since 2004, including as an Educator. This has given her a comprehensive understanding of the benefits and challenges those working in the sector face.

To further develop her skills and passion for working with and leading others Brooke is currently studying her Bachelor of Business at Deakin University majoring in People Management.



Jennifer Kearney

Managing Director: Kekeco Childcare Pty. Ltd.

Jennifer Kearney has been operating Early Childhood Education and Care services for more than 16 years specifically running three Long Day Care services within Mitchell Shire. She has extensive hands-on experience at a day-to-day level in operating these services, which gives her valuable insights into the Early Learning sector.

Jennifer brings extensive business operations experience in several industries including operating ECEC services, Board leadership experience, finance, marketing and a commitment to addressing challenges and opportunities in the sector.



Jarrod MacDonald

Service Provider: Explorers Early Learning

Jarrod is an advocate for quality education and care, promoting best practice and believes that sharing information and experiences enables better quality services and lifts the profile of the Early Learning sector.

Jarrod has been actively involved in the early childhood sector for more than 19 years, both across Early Learning and OSHC. He has extensive experience as both an educator, Manager, and leader. Currently GM - Operations for Explorers Early Learning operating 17 premium Early Learning centres. Co-Owner of Maples Early Learning and Partner at Explorers Greenvale.

SUPPORT

Accessible and informed sector services with a commitment to membership value

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)



Early in 2022, the Australian Childcare Alliance Victoria received a grant to provide our members the information and resources they need to implement Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) within their services.

The planning process took into consideration the needs of the members and current workforce climate in the sector. ACA Victoria planned to deliver short workshops and training sessions targeted at three audiences with four separate topics, with a combination of online and face-to-face delivery modes. This would enable our members to access sessions they needed based on their level of knowledge, role, and availability.

ACA Victoria identified 4 overarching topics:

- Overview
- Processes
- Practicalities
- Ask Anything

Working closely with the Education Department, we designed the content and the delivery method for all CISS sessions, this included creating an informational infographic for all communications, and engaging a consultant to co-present the 5 Practicalities session. Two of our face-to-face sessions were delivered prior to our October Member Meetings and a Regional face-to-face was delivered to provide an opportunity for collaboration and networking.

A major part our project plan was to offer members the opportunity to attend workshops and/or training sessions based on their individual needs. As indicated in the survey, there was a varying degree of understanding about the schemes. In partnership with the Department, we developed a range of workshops and training sessions aimed at Service Providers, Directors and Educators. There were 13 planned in total, 4 face-to-face and 9 online, over September and October 2022.

Overall, we had 486 registrations across all the sessions.

- The total number of attendees was 220
- This included 177 at the online events and 43 at the face-to-face events.
- The number of individual members that attended was 128

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) – CoP’s

ACA Victoria was pleased to partner with the Department of Education in 2023 to embed the Child Information Sharing Scheme in Year 2 of the Child Information Sharing Scheme Building Grants Program. ACA Victoria established Communities of Practice (CoP’s) sessions throughout regional Victoria, Geelong, Traralgon, Bendigo and Shepparton. The CoP’s were peer-led and promoted a spirit of sharing and collaboration.

The direction and themes were determined by the unique needs of each community, and they included community members from organisations that represented families from diverse backgrounds.

The CoP’s were run as face-to-face round table events across the state and organised online events.

Furthermore, a CISS session was held at ACA Victoria’s IMMERSE Conference in April 2023. Nerida Mason from the Department of Education completed a presentation on CISS. In addition, Debbie Cole ran an interactive session for educators building on the skills learnt, focussing on embedding the schemes into their everyday work with families.

Throughout the CoP’s the major theme to arise from discussions was the lack of training educators have completed, therefore ACA Victoria in conjunction with the Department of Education ran a series of webinar training sessions which were well attended.

ACA Victoria successfully expanded its reach to engage with an audience beyond its existing membership base, consequently raising awareness of the organisation among a new demographic. New membership opportunities will be explored as the solid relationships are cemented.



Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Funding



The Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in Long Day Care (LDC) project was designed to improve the engagement and provision of state funded Kindergarten Programs in private LDC services and increase the number of children accessing a funded Kindergarten Program.

The project aimed to:

- Support children's access to Kindergarten Services, including those who often miss out such as children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)
- Improve LDC providers understanding of and access to the kindergarten and quality supports funded by the State Government

The specific objectives of the project included:

- To increase engagement with funded Kindergarten Program delivery (including three-year-old kindergarten) by private LDC providers
- To contribute to an increase in the number of children in LDC accessing a funded Kindergarten Program (including ESK)
- To increase the understanding and uptake of Kindergarten funding available through the Victorian Government to support service provision in LDC, including ESK and School Readiness Funding
- To broaden the LDC sector understanding of the Central Registration and Enrolment (CRES), its benefits and opportunities

As part of this project, 6 surveys (281 responses were received) were conducted to identify potential topics, programs delivery and resources. The main purpose of these surveys was to understand the level of engagement in relation to kindergarten funding in LDC and the general knowledge and understanding of providers within those services.

The information collected from the surveys was used to assist in the development of resources such as guidance materials and forums.

Around 225 people attend five online forums, where the following topics were covered:

- Introduction to guidance materials
- Three-year-old kindergarten
- ESK and SRF
- Free Kinder
- Supporting vulnerable children
- Supporting vulnerable families

As part of the project, 6 surveys were distributed targeting all members and forum participants. The number of respondents and details about the survey are outlined in the table below.

Member Benefits

ACA Victoria's core membership is for Approved Providers of Early Learning services across Victoria and Tasmania. Being a non-for-profit and member funded organisation, we work closely with government bodies at a Local, State and National level to lobby for affordable, high-quality, and sustainable Early Childhood Education.

ACA Victoria believes that all children are entitled to excellence and equality in Early Childhood Education & Care. Our members can access a range of services, timely information & expert advice. Going forward, it is our desire to continually build on quality exclusive membership offerings.

Advocacy

Advocating for our members and the sector is our core function. In brief, outlined are some of the areas ACA National represents our sector. For more information refer to the Lead section of this Annual Report.

- Workforce Issues
- Liaising With Government on CCS & ACCS Issues
- Improving Eligibility & Access Under CCS For All Children
- 3-Year-Old Preschool Funding
- Oversupply Within the Sector
- Universal Access Funding
- ERO-United Voice
- ERO-Independent Education Union
- Modern Award Reviews
- Claims Specific to The Children's Service's Award (CSA) & Educational Services Teachers Award (ESTA)
- Family Friendly Arrangement Proceedings
- Casual Clauses Proceedings

Networking & Learning

With Covid-19 well and truly behind us, our team was able to focus on delivering various events that would foster connection, networking, learning and growth.

Member Meetings

These were reintroduced with the 2022 AGM held at the Mulgrave Country Club. This was well attended, and it was great to see new nominees put their hat in the ring to represent our members.



Open Door Networking Series



Following feedback from our IMMERSE conference it was clear that our members wanted the opportunity to connect and learn how to strive towards excellence. As a result, in mid-2023, ACA Victoria launched our Open-Door Networking Series. These events allowed Approved Providers to invite other members to their centres to highlight achievements.

What's On Your Mind?



Launched in June 2023, our virtual event What's On Your Mind, provided an informal opportunity for members to discuss key topics surrounding the sector. Hosted by Sam Rosenberg, Treasurer of ACA Victoria, and moderated by other Board members occurred monthly.

Professional Development

Following constructive feedback from a focus group in October 2022, the planning for introducing Professional Development opportunities began. Members were able to access PDs at a reduced cost.

Read more about this in the Develop section of this Annual Report.

Hobart Leadership Retreat



On February 17-19, 2023, the Leadership Retreat was held in Hobart, Tasmania and featured guest speaker, Steve York. Held at the Hobart Function & Conference Centre with a stunning backdrop of breathtaking water views, this event was certainly noteworthy. Steve York was exceptional and provided everyone who attended with invaluable negotiation skills. There was great dialogue, networking opportunities and a chance for the 28 members to explore scenic Hobart.

ACA Victoria would like to thank Keeli McNamara (GM, Commercial & Business Growth) and our Board Members, Tonii Tran, Brooke Eerden, and Sally Orr for their support with this event.

We would also like to recognise Luci Tassone (Events & Sector Engagement Manager) & Ryan Perera (Events, Marketing & Projects Officer), for their remarkable organisation skills in ensuring everyone had a wonderful experience.



ACA Victoria's Early Learning Conference

IMMERSE 23

Date: April 28th - 29th 2023

Venue: Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre



Our two-day Early Learning Conference was held in April 2023 at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre. Without the support from our Platinum Sponsor/s Guild Insurance and Child Care Super this successful and important event would not have taken place. With up to 49 speakers covering a broad range of topics relevant to Early Learning educators and Approved Providers there was something for everyone. Our panel discussions centred around vital sector topics, including 'How to retain an education workforce in challenging times', 'Operating & Sustaining a Centre in Today's Climate', 'Designing & Building a New Centre', and 'Why I Joined the ECEC sector'.

Sector speakers included Sarah Louise Gandolfo and Catharine Hydon speaking on 'Empowering the Educator' and 'It's all About Children Learning' respectively. Kaley Chu, author of 100 Lunches had a conversation with Heather Barnes OAM reflecting on her journey in the ECEC sector. Dr Carina Garland MP gave an overview of the sector from a Federal level whilst Kim Little, Deputy Secretary gave an update on the Victorian Government Agenda for the ECEC sector.

Dr Stacey Fox, Dandelo Partners covered the cost & impact of different funding approaches to increase ECE sector wages. This report was commissioned by ACA National. Our very own Paul Mondo, Sally Orr and Nesha Hutchinson (ACA National) hosted a few of the panel discussions during the conference. In our breakout rooms there were discussions by PwC on 'Keeping your Service Fit During Times of Uncertainty & Complexity' and Nigel Ward, from Australian Business Lawyers & Advisers covered the Changes in Industrial Relations.

Health and Wellbeing was high on the agenda too. Seamus Evans demonstrated how to Overcome Adversity despite having Tourette's Syndrome. Mark Bunn spoke on Self-Care

especially regarding recovery, reconnection to the earth and reinventing yourself. Jem Fuller covered Personal Resilience, reminding us on how important it is to look after yourself so that you can look after those who depend on you. Nicole Lees from Be You presented on 'How to Create a Wellbeing Toolkit' and Annie Harvey dug deep into 'Building an Effective Road Map'. We were reminded on 'The spell of Digital Immersion' with Dr Huu Kim Le who revealed how children are being influenced from a young age through all the various social platforms and media messaging.

There was much excitement when attendees got to experience movement and song with Galina Zenin from Bonkers Beat ensuring that everyone was on their feet moving. Not to be outdone, Jayne Dance showed how dance can be incorporated into Early Learning.

Matt Moncrief and KT from MKR cooked up an indigenous storm featuring samples of crocodile popcorn, cured kangaroo meats and salami. There were ample tastings from the Wellbeing Food Co. that attendees could try out for their Early Learning Centres.

Pre-Dinner Drinks were sponsored by HESTA and there were great opportunities for networking amongst attendees.

The Conference Dinner, sponsored by TELUS Health featured the Baker Boys Band and the very entertaining Sapphire Dancers who turned dinner guests into Bollywood dancers in no time. The photo booth was quite popular along with the decadent dessert bar.

Thank you to all our speakers, presenters, entertainers, panel discussion speakers, board members and in particular, ACA Victoria staff who were critical in running this successful Early Learning Conference.



Sponsors



Exhibitors

ACA Victoria

Kangarootime Australia

Early Childhood Training

Chase Renewables

Officeworks

Bellbird

Step4

HESTA

Xplor Education

Care for Kids & Toddle

Modern Teaching Aids

Bonkers Beat

Kidsoft

PwC

Swinburne Online

Little Heroes

Be You & Beyond Blue

ECA (Early Childhood Australia)

1Place Childcare

Kimberly-Clark (Huggies)

The PE Tutor

Calisthenics Victoria

Westpac

TELUS Health formerly LifeWorks

Child Care Super

Melbourne City Mission

WBCM Environmental Australia

OSCAR Care Group

CBRE

EducationAll

Guild Insurance

Expect A Star

Tanda

ChildHR

Educating Kids

Tinnitots

Essential Resources

Kids Gourmet Food

Bunnings Trade

Road Safety Education

The Wellbeing Food Co.

Higgins Coatings





Workplace Relations



Workplace relations have important implications. Maintaining, improving, and managing these relationships can be stressful. ACA Victoria offers support to our members through our legal partner, ABLA.

- Employee Entitlements
- Specific Award Advice
- Establishing Contracts
- Staff Performance Management
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Occupational Health & Safety
- Bullying & Harassment
- Privacy & Recruitment
- Termination & Redundancy

ABLA Workplace Relations Help Line received just over 300 calls in the financial year 2022 - 2023. The top three areas of enquiry related to wage rates & awards, leave matters and termination of employment questions.

Award Classification/Interpretation/Wage Rates	59	19.5%
Personal/Carer's Leave/Leave	47	15.6%
Termination of Employment	35	11.6%
Miscellaneous	22	7.3%
Performance Management	17	5.6%
Contract of Employment	15	5.0%
Redundancy/Stand Down	14	4.6%
Misconduct & Investigations	12	4.0%
Allowances	11	3.6%
Policies & Procedure	10	3.3%
Overtime/Hours of Work	10	3.3%
Notice of Termination	10	3.3%
Workers Compensation	8	2.6%
Union Matters	6	2.0%
Apprenticeships & Traineeships	6	2.0%
Probationary/Qualifying Periods	5	1.7%
Occupational Health & Safety/Coronavirus	5	1.7%
Bullying, Discrimination & Harassment	5	1.7%
Superannuation	3	1.0%
Commercial Dispute Resolution	2	0.7%

In the calendar year of 2020, there were 449 calls, mainly related to Coronavirus questions. In 2021, the number dropped to 329 calls, but it saw a slight increase to 354 in 2022. These figures are consistent with the trend of people returning to the workplace and reducing remote work.

Support

Members can contact our team for any queries including information on:

- Education Department Concerns
- Sector Funding Queries
- Early Years Framework
- National Quality Framework
- Quality Improvement Plans
- Assessment & Rating
- Membership Queries
- Supplier Queries
- Member Portal
- General Service Enquiries
- Kinder Funding Support
- Member Discounts

News & Updates

- Sector Publications
- Fortnightly eNews
- Latest Offers from Sector Suppliers
- Regular Sector Updates via direct email
- Social Channels

Discussion Group

Approved Providers have access to join our private Facebook group. This is an avenue where providers can ask questions anonymously and request feedback. Approximately 34 new members were invited into the group in the financial year.

Member Portal

ACA Victoria Members can login to their individual account on the Member Portal to access:

- Regulation & Government Resources
- Wage Tables Past and Present
- Meeting Presentations
- Manage Centre details
- Renew their Membership
- View, Download & Pay Invoices
- Register for Events at Member Pricing
- Manage Personal Event Bookings

Employment Assistance Program



TELUS Health **Improving Lives. Improving Businesses.**

ACA National successfully launched the ACA / LifeWorks EAP (Employee Assistance Program) to the sector on Monday 13th September 2022. LifeWorks later rebranded to TELUS Health offering Australian Childcare Alliance members the same benefits.

The EAP is a confidential support service that helps employees and immediate family members (if eligible) solve a wide range of problems and challenges at no cost to the individual. The EAP is accessible 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. ACA Victoria is grateful for the strong relationship built with TELUS Health and for offering our members great value at competitive rates.

Since its launch in September 2022 to 30th June 2023 -1016 staff members signed up to the EAP across {insert number} of centres in Victoria alone.



DEVELOP

Engaging in and Providing Opportunities for members and Sector-Wide Growth

Professional Development

ACA Victoria has implemented Professional Development workshops due to a Strategic Business & Opportunity Analysis conducted by Tim Brown, Ginger Ninjas Strategic Consultants. Professional Development workshops were identified as Revenue Opportunities and the single most essential area to add value and drive incremental revenue through partnerships, affiliations, commissions, and provisions of courses themselves.

*ACA Victoria – Strategic Business & Opportunity Analysis
Tim Brown – Ginger Ninjas Strategic Consults*

Below is a tableted summary of Professional Development Workshops and attendance rates from July 2022 – June 2023:

	Date Held	Professional Development Workshop	Number of Attendees
1.	28/02/2023	Recruitment & Retention	2
2.	16/03/2023	Occupational Health & Safety	5
3.	29/03/2023	Effective Digital Marketing	6
4.	02/05/2023	Effective Communication & Influencing Skills	8
5.	07/06/2023	Occupational Health & Safety	11
6.	22/06/23	Effective Digital Marketing	10

Attendees of these Professional Development workshops have provided ACA Victoria with positive feedback in relation to the relevance and importance of these topics to the sector.



Developing an Engaged & Growing Membership Base

Membership Numbers at 30 June 2023

SUMMARY	
Number of members at 1 July 2022	499
New members July 2022 – 30 June 2023	36
Renewing members July 2022 – 30 June 2023	448
Not renewed 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	51
TOTAL MEMBERS at 30 June 2023	484
Percentage renewed for the year	89%
Provisional members at 30 June 2023	4

Membership highlights

- % non-renewing members out 51
 - In our control non renewing total = 16 (31%)
 - Out of our control non renewing total = 35 (69%)

Definitions:

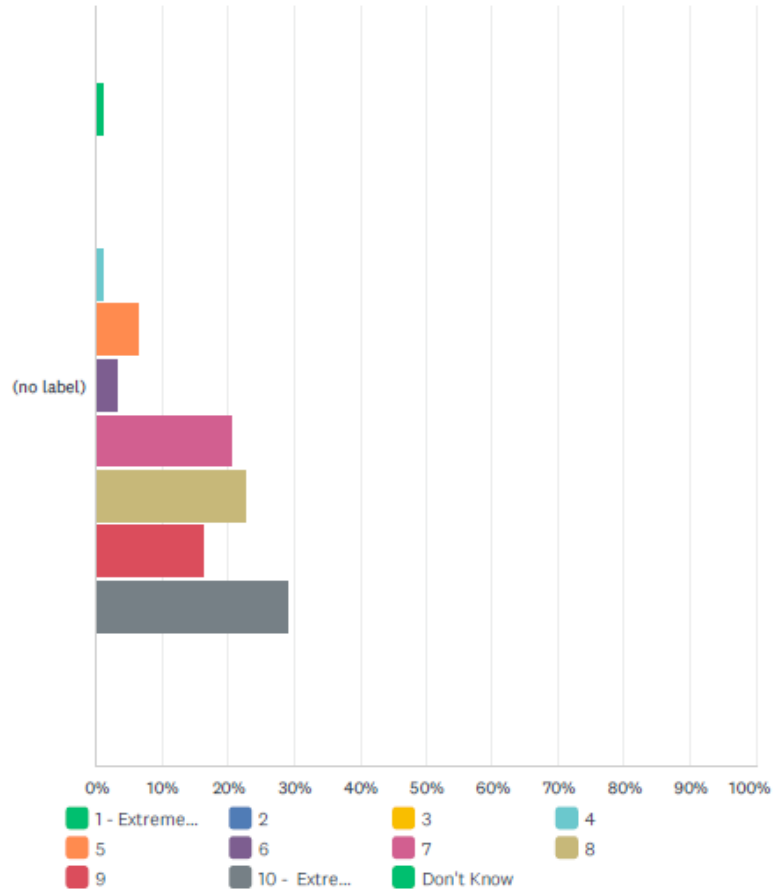
'Out of our control' denotes centre sales, centre closures and OSCH trying to sell/retire the centre. So membership renewal not an option.

'In our control' relates to the following reasons: unreachable, committed to renewing but failed to pay, financial issue or perceived lack of value.

- Member Face-to-Face Visits
July 2022 – November 2022 = 50
December 2022 – June 2023 (no visits due to maternity leave)
- 96.77% Members said they would renew their membership

Q8 Overall, how satisfied are you with the service and member benefits provided by us? (1 = Extremely Dissatisfied, 10 = Extremely Satisfied)

Answered: 93 Skipped: 7



	1 - EXTREMELY DISSATISFIED	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - EXTREMELY SATISFIED
(no label)	1.08%	0.00%	0.00%	1.08%	6.45%	3.23%	20.43%	22.58%	16.13%	29.03%
	1	0	0	1	6	3	19	21	15	27

Feedback from survey held in January 2023

“Our ACA Membership has provided us with invaluable information over and over again. They are always informative, and the staff offer great assistance when needed. With the volume of information and services provided along with membership benefits, the annual cost to be an ACA member is so affordable and worth every dollar”.

“We’ve Loved being a member for many years now. Always so supportive and will give time to us when needed”.

“Grateful for the ongoing development”.

“We would just like to say thank you for your ongoing support for our sector and for always listening to our concerns”.

“I have been a member for over twenty years and plan to continue membership until I decide to retire”.

ACA Victoria is listening to the feedback both positive and constructive from our members and endeavours to face the challenges together with the national bodies support.

Developing Relationships within the Sector, Government and Commercial Partners

ACA Victoria continues to work with the Department of Education and these programs are outlined throughout this report.

Partner Relationships

ACA Victoria is proud to have strong partnerships with businesses that have developed a solid reputation for delivering high quality services and that can offer a genuine benefit to our members.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our valued Partners, whose invaluable support plays a pivotal role in the seamless operations of ACA Victoria.



Sector Suppliers

ACA Victoria would like to thank our valued sector suppliers during the 2022 – 2023 financial period. Our suppliers offer a variety of products and services to our members at either member pricing or with a special offer. Thanks to the efforts of the Business Development Manager and the ACA Victoria team we saw an increase with 37 new suppliers introduced to our sector.



LEAD

Be recognized as the lead peak-body for the early learning sector.

Being proactive & positively influence government policy & reform for all members

ACA National Advocacy

As a non-partisan organisation, Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) aims to maintain positive relationships with all political parties, with the overarching objective of ensuring that every child in Australia children is given the same opportunities and has the **Best Start in Life**.

During the first half of this financial year, the political focus was monitoring the upcoming Industrial Relations changes through collective bargaining anticipated to go through the Fair Work Commission in June 2023. This work was supported with the independent report ACA National, commissioned Dandolo Partners to undertake, to understand how to fund wage increases and different modeling around this, in anticipation of the impact of Fair Work Commission outcomes.

ACA National was also busy responding to an unprecedented number of submissions and participating in stakeholder consultation with a range of Federal departments. Some of the themes of these consultations and submissions included workforce issues, gender equality, barriers to accessing affordable ECEC, birth to five years national strategy, terminology used to classify ECEC occupations, and what contributes to the costs of ECEC.

Following the federal election, ACA commended the Albanese Government for their win and for recognition of the importance of the early learning sector, in terms of affordability for families and addressing the workforce crisis, particularly with the introduction of the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Plan for Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022*. This Bill which came into effect in July 2023, offers universal 90 per cent childcare subsidy and prioritises affordability of Early Learning Services.

ACA continued to engage with Minister for Early Childhood Education, Anne Aly, and Minister for Industrial Relations, Tony Burke, to advocate for our members, workforce, families, and children across Australia.

We advocated that all government policy meets the following major ACA recommendations:

- Increase Affordability for all Families
- Improving Educator Remuneration with Direct Government Funding
- Improve Support for Children with Disability

Ongoing Government Engagement Channels

This financial year, as ACA President, I participated in DESE Early Childhood Education and Care Reference Group, which broadly covers all things related to funding for the sector.

I was also invited to contribute to the ACEQCA Workforce Strategy Development discussions and maintained regular engagement with the Minister for Education, Jason Clare. These regular interactions allowed ACA to participate in an ongoing dialogue with relevant Government departments on a state and federal level.

Summary of Submission Papers/Reports

ACA National produced the following formal submission papers during this financial year:

- ACA Employment White Paper Submission - December 2022
- Equity Measure Joint Proposal - Removing Barriers to affordable ECEC - December 2022
- ACA Submission: Hourly Rate Caps - October 2022
- ACA Submission to Senate Education & Employment Legislation Committee:
 - Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Plan for Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022
- ACA Workforce Policy Proposal - August 2022
- ACA Pre-Budget Submission - January 2023
- ACA Submission: Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Bill 2023 - March 2023
- ACA Submission: ECEC Terminology Workforce Strategy 28 March 2023
- ACA Submission: ANZSCO Consultation - April 2023
- ACA Submission: ISP Review
- ACA Submission: Draft National Vision for ECEC - April 2023
- ACA Submission: Early Years Strategy - May 2023
- ACA Submission: Productivity Commission Inquiry into Child Care - June 2023
- ACA Submission: In response to draft National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy - June 2023
- ACA Submission: NQF Staffing and Qualifications - June 2023
- ACA Mid-Year Economic Fiscal Outlook Submission - August 2023

Summary of Media Releases

The following media releases were produced:

- ACA Supports Affordable Accessible ECEC for Indigenous Communities – 26 September 2022
- ACA Supports Building a Pipeline to More Qualified Jobseekers – 24 October 2022
- Federal Budget Reflects the Albanese Government's Commitment to the ECEC sector – 26 October 2022
- ACA Supports More Affordable Early Learning but Workforce Crisis must also be Addressed – 24 November 2022
- ACA Commends Government Funding to Support ECEC Workforce – 3 May 2023
- Capping Enrolments Survey – 12 May 2023
- Early Learning Peak-Body Backs Supported Bargaining Authorisation to Help Raise Wages for Early Childhood Educators – 6 June 2023
- ACA Survey Report Families Turned Away from Childcare because of Critical Staff Shortages – Tuesday 13 June 2023
- ACA Dandolo Report Wage Increase Analysis – June 2023
- ACA Calls on Australian Government to provide Direct Wage Subsidies to Early Learning Educators so Families don't Foot the Bill – 26 June 2023
- Early Learning Peak-Body Will Continue to Work with ACCC in Childcare Inquiry – 6 July 2023

This was in addition to the countless media interviews by ACA Board Members at both Federal and State Levels about the issues affecting our members, which resulted in a large volume of media coverage throughout the year.

We believe our ongoing advocacy has been instrumental in bringing about the following reforms under the Albanese Government:

- Child Care Subsidy Reforms aimed at improving affordability of Early Childhood Education and Care for families with multiple children
- Four-year extension of preschool funding which provided long-awaited certainty for Australian families and the many service providers that deliver a preschool program
- The Professional Development Subsidy to help Early Childhood Educators to gain additional training across four years
- The Paid Practicum Subsidy to Support Early Childhood teachers in training with paid placements to complete tertiary qualifications
- The Practicum Exchange to assist Early Childhood teachers in training to complete a professional exchange program to give them broader practical experience before qualification
- Changes to simplify and streamline access to Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (Child Wellbeing) from October 2023
- ISP Review being undertaken to examine the system and administrative barriers and burdens experienced by service providers and families trying to navigate additional support funding

ACA is extremely proud of its advocacy efforts during this financial year, which were instrumental in providing the government with meaningful information that allowed for the development of rapid, appropriate policy responses.

ACA Victoria Advocacy

The Victorian Government announced more reforms in Early Childhood Education as part of its Best Start, Best Life reforms. This included a commitment to moving towards 30 hours of Play-Based Early Childhood Education in the year before school. It also announced an abundance of further workforce initiatives to build the supply of qualified teachers and educators for Victorian ECEC services.

The Government also announced the beginning of “Free Kinder” from the beginning of 2023. This resulted in integrated LDC services receiving \$2000 of funding to be used to cover a parent’s gap fees. ACA Victoria supported its services to implement and understand this initiative.

I represented our members as part of the Minister’s Best Start Best Life Technical Advisory Group as the journey to 30 hours of pre prep began. I also participate in the Early Childhood Educator Traineeship Governance Committee.

More broadly, ACA Victoria partnered with the Department of Education to support services with the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and supporting Kindergarten services to improve quality and develop a better understanding of the relevant funding guidelines and practices.

In the May budget, the Victorian Government also committed to providing each funded Kindergarten Service \$5000 to be used for new toys and equipment.

The Victorian Government has led the country in expanding and funding Early Childhood Education and we are pleased to be able to contribute to the ongoing development and implementation of these policies in the year ahead.



{Insert Paul Mondo Signature}

Paul Mondo
President
ACA National

Building positive awareness of the sector

Early Childhood Educators Day



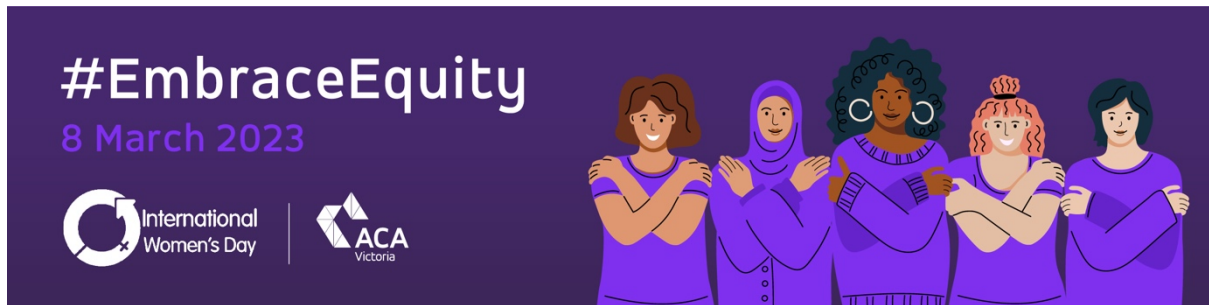
Early Childhood Educators Day was celebrated on Wednesday, the 7th of September, 2022. The theme, 'Shaping their World,' was designed around the concept that children who enjoy quality learning are more likely to be well-socialised, confident, and inquisitive about the world around them.

These fundamental skills teach our little ones to accept diversity, manage challenges to become more resilient and lifelong learners.



International Women's Day 8th March 2023

#EmbraceEquity



In honour of International Women's Day, held on the 8th of March 2023, ACA Victoria reached out to influential women in our sector and asked them to reflect on the theme – Embrace Equity. The purpose of this theme was to highlight the achievements and strength women have demonstrated worldwide, and to unite women of the past, present, and future to create a world of gender equality, inclusivity, free of any discrimination.

Aisha Grewal (Kangarootime Australia), Debbie Cole (Early Years Training & Consultancy), Angela Hunt (Centre Director – Sentia Learning), and our very own Board member Nicole Llewellyn (Owner & Approved Provider – Kool Kidz) all responded with inspirational videos about their own personal journeys of overcoming the challenges and barriers women face in their personal & professional lives.

By embracing IWD, ACA Victoria wanted to emphasise the importance of treating women with respect and dignity in all areas of life to make the workplace an environment where every woman feels supported and valued. Every voice deserves to be heard, and we are committed to amplifying the voices of women in our organisation and beyond.

Through our IWD campaign, we made a positive difference in women's lives everywhere by reaching our member and supplier network via direct email and social platforms, including YouTube.

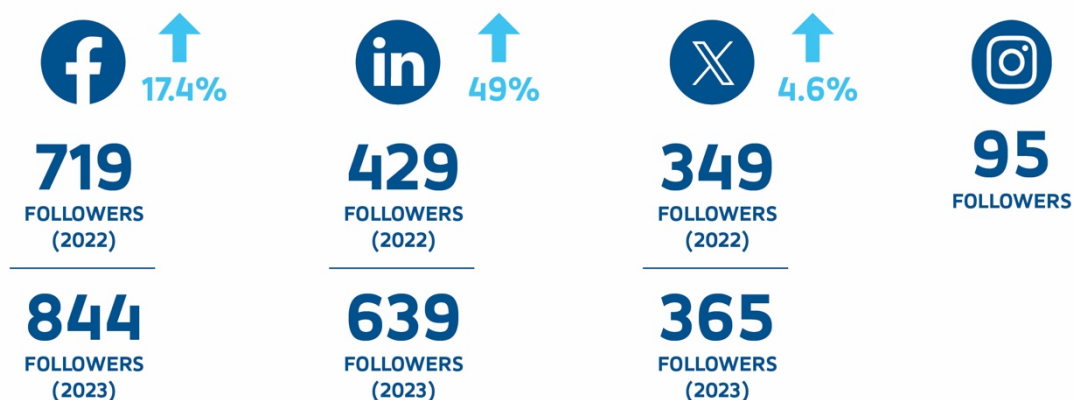


ACA Victoria Promotion

Socials Media Platforms

As part of our marketing campaign to create brand awareness, gain a broader reach, provide up to date and timely and accurate sector information to our members, ACA Victoria & ACA Tasmania has utilised social media platforms including, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, and Vimeo.

Social media platforms were used to launch and promote two major conferences, The Hobart Leadership Retreat & IMMERSE 23, as well as Member Meeting updates, Sector Supplier showcases, ACA National advocacy efforts and valued Partner cross promotions.



Instagram Launch

In March 2023, we launched our new Instagram account, @_acavictoria_ with the view to test the market and to increase awareness of who we are as a body amongst not only Approved Providers but their teams. It was our goal to target potential unreached members and suppliers. As a result of this test, we had nearly 500 profile visits, steady engagement (on stories the Instagram page) and reached 8,353 unique accounts.

Facebook

In the financial year, Facebook had an 8,300% increase in reach and close to 800% increase in profile visits. The number of new page likes was 94 with the key target audience being 85.80% female gender.

Early Learning Events App

The Early Learning App was launched through various social channels early 2022. This app allowed easy access of all event information and was another vehicle to drive ticket sales, and Exhibitor & Sponsorship interest.

Through this app users could register for ACA Victoria events, view Agendas, Speakers, Exhibitors, Sponsors, Venues, Accommodation, and Ticket Pricing, all on the one platform. It had the additional function of allowing users to ask questions about tickets and Exhibitors &

Sponsors, obtain more information about an event and provided notifications in real-time to event attendees.

Channel 9 News

On 17 January 2023, Paul Mondo, President ACA National was interviewed by Channel 9 News regarding the “Critical Childcare Worker Shortage”. The accompanying video posted to Facebook reach 3,815 organically and close to 13,400 in a boosted paid post. Having more than 72 comments and 35 post shares, it's evident that the workforce shortage issue will persist as a prominent topic of discussion on social media, with our National Body actively advocating for its members.



Establish & implement policies & procedures to ensure best practice governance

In October 2022, the ACA Victoria Board and staff members consulted with Tim Brown from Ginger Ninjas, Strategic Business Consultants, who ran extensive one-on-one interviews, gathering anecdotal information regarding the position of the organisation. Tim also held external research that led to a set of recommendations for the governing ACA Victoria Board.

The key findings and recommendations that resulted from this consultation are listed below

Key findings

- To focus programs and services around the needs of our Approved Providers (our core membership base).
- Continue with Professional Development sessions as this may be an additional income stream.
- To increase the knowledge base of the ACA Victoria Board and ACA Victoria team members.
- Approved Providers value in-person contact with the ACA Victoria team. The value of calling our members and checking in on their needs is of utmost importance.

Key Recommendations

- To adopt the new Mission, Vision, and Values to provide the basis for the strategic direction of the organisation and guide both the ACA Victoria Board, General Manager, and the ACA Victoria team to implement the approved strategies moving forward.
- Implementation of the recommended strategic pillars, which will guide the operational execution of the Board's mandate and guide the setting of organisational KPI's and activities by the General Manager.
- Setting up of structured 'sub-committees' that are comprised of relevant staff, the General Manager and nominated board members to work on each strategic pillar. This ensures that the board with their sector knowledge and experience may continue to have input, and relevance while ensuring that the ACA Victoria team are working towards the best interests of its members – based on the Strategic Plan.
- Cohesive and open communication to be encouraged between the Board and the ACA Victoria team.
- To move the structure of the organisation into line with 'corporate best practice', despite being a member-based organisation. Gaining insight from corporate, for-profit structures can

help ACA Victoria establish a credible brand and lay the groundwork for long-term and sustainable operations.

- Creation of new Board induction procedures, which includes external 'formal and ongoing training' in the duties and responsibilities in their volunteer roles as Executive Board Members. During this financial year, the Australian Childcare Alliance of Victoria Inc. Board have all undergone Governance training as part of the recommendations.
- To establish a central information repository for employees and management that will house all data pertinent to the company's history, present, and future operations.
- To refocus our membership base, their centres, and provide auxiliary services in developing their teams for incremental revenue.

Looking Forward 2024

Prepared by Keeli & the ACA Victoria Board

As we look to the future of ACA Victoria our Multi-talented team will continue to provide services to our members.

ACA Victoria will endeavour to conduct Member Surveys to gather data that will assist us to continue working towards targeting our members needs. As an organisation will continue to run the following events, networking opportunities and workshops:

PDs

- Continue with monthly PDs Feb-Nov
- Face-2-Face & online

Events

- Tasmanian Conference – February 2024
- Leadership Retreat – Sofitel Melbourne March 2024
- Conference – August 2024

Networking Opportunities

- Open-Door series
- Member meetings
- What's on your mind

ACA Victoria will also continue valued relationships with Sector Suppliers and use grants to support our members and the ECEC sector overall.

Sector Supplier

- Continue to ensure quality suppliers
- Sponsorship opportunities

Grants

- Workforce Planning
- Kinder Funding
- Best Start, Best Life

Final Summation

The National staffing issues have been evident throughout the sector this year, and ACA Victoria will continue our commitment to developing and influencing initiatives to attract and retain the Early Childhood workforce at all levels.

Our members' valuable feedback led to the implementation of various platforms for discussion including, Member Meetings, Professional Development Workshops, Online Forums, Social Media Groups, Face-2-Face Events and Networking Opportunities.

With the support of our partners and sector suppliers ACA Victoria had the ability to offer 2 major events, the IMMERSE Conference and the Leadership Summit. Our trusted partners continue to be Guild Insurance, Childcare Super, Officeworks, Bunnings, ABLA and Early Childhood Training. ACA Victoria now have a suite of suppliers who also support us and our members through various discounts and by participating in our events.

I would like to acknowledge the capability and commitment of the team at ACA Victoria who have worked tirelessly to bring to fruition new initiatives. A greater social media presence, frequent professional development sessions, delivery of special project, the 3-year-old kinder project and Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), and continued member support.

I thank the Board for entrusting me the position of General Manager. Looking ahead, as an organisation, we will continue to build and maintain the established sector partnerships, deliver comprehensive member services whilst championing for best practice and effective governance.

ACA Victoria have secured a number of projects to be delivered over a 2-3 year period, these projects include:

- Kinder Funding
- Workforce Planning
- Best Start, Best life

ACA Victoria will introduce new initiatives to ensure collaboration within our sector will continue to advocate and support our members through 2023/2024 and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keeli McNamara'.

Keeli McNamara
General Manager
ACA Victoria