

## ACA Victoria Executive Board Nomination 2024

---

**Nominee:** Brooke Eerden

**Service Provider:** Dandenong Ranges Childcare Centre

**Describe your experience in the early childhood education and care sector.**

With 20 years of experience in early childhood education, I started my career as an educator, fulfilling various roles for 6 years. Subsequently, I progressed to the position of director, which I have held for the past 14 years. In addition, for the last 11 years, I have assumed the responsibilities of PMC/Nominated Supervisor after my family became the approved provider of the service. I remain actively engaged and work full-time at my service.

**Tell us what makes ACA Victoria's mission meaningful to you.**

The mission of ACA Victoria resonates with me as it aligns with my commitment to every family and child having access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education. Their emphasis on empowering children with their distinctive talents, skills, and ideas reflects my own dedication to nurturing lifelong learning within my service. As a passionate advocate for the early learning sector, ACA Victoria's backing of privately owned long day care centres and their evidence-based impact on policy make a significant difference, ensuring that children have the best start in life through educational excellence.

**Describe any Board Leadership experience you have had to date.**

My board leadership experience is extensive, with broad roles such as serving on my children's kindergarten committee in a fundraising role and occupying a general position on my children's football club committee. Over the past three years, I have also been a proactive member of the ACA Victoria executive committee, engaging in monthly board meetings, attending ACAV hosted events, assisting with co-hosting online "What's on Your Mind" sessions, aiding the office team with member inquiries, and assisting with facilitating interactions with members on social media platforms.

**Outline any skills, connections, resources, or expertise you can provide to improve the services ACA Victoria offers to its members.**

With over two decades of experience in early childhood education, I possess a wealth of skills and insights that can support ACA Victoria's offerings to its members. Operating 1 modest 45-place service has given me a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by smaller providers, enabling me to represent and advocate for them effectively. My roles as an educator, a director and PMC/Nominated Supervisor have equipped me to provide practical, actionable advice on everyday operational issues encountered by service providers. My extensive involvement in the sector has allowed me to establish

strong relationships with educators, service operators, and industry experts, creating a network that promotes collaboration and the sharing of knowledge. Assisting with hosting "What's on Your Mind" sessions and interacting with members on social media have been instrumental in building a strong sense of community and making sure members feel heard and supported. Furthermore, my ongoing studies towards a Bachelor of Business with a major in People Management have provided me with valuable perspectives on Human Resource Development, leadership, team management, and strategic planning. These competencies are crucial in devising customised solutions for workforce development and addressing operational hurdles, thereby enhancing ACA Victoria's support for its members and securing sustained success in the sector.

**Confirm that you can commit to the time required for meetings and other duties as outlined in the Executive Board Position Description.**

I can confirm that I am committed to dedicating the necessary time for meetings and other duties as outlined in the Executive Board Position Description.

**What are your thoughts on the key challenges and opportunities facing the Early Childhood Education and Care sector?**

The Early Childhood Education and Care sector is facing some challenges, especially around workforce shortages and wages. Additionally, recent and proposed reforms, particularly in industrial relations, have the potential to bring positive changes, but they also create uncertainty and pressure for service providers. Each service is experiencing these changes differently, depending on their unique situation. We're also seeing shifts in how funded kindergarten programs for 3 and 4-year-olds are delivered, alongside the growing use of AI and other technologies. While these innovations can offer new opportunities, it's important to implement them thoughtfully, making sure we don't lose the personal touch that's crucial in early childhood education. Managing children's behaviours and securing extra funding are ongoing challenges for some services as well. It's an exciting yet overwhelming time for the sector, full of both hope and uncertainty. Being part of ACA Victoria's supportive network is so important right now. By leaning on one another and sharing our experiences, we can work through these changes and move forward together.

**Indicate how you might use your time on the ACA Victoria's Board to address these challenges and opportunities.**

As a member of ACA Victoria's Board, I would use my time to stay up-to-date with sector news and developments, ensuring that I have a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry. I will be a strong voice for all privately owned service providers, especially single and small services, advocating for their unique needs. I'll continue my active participation in monthly board meetings and attend ACA Victoria events to remain engaged and informed. Additionally, I would

prioritise liaising with members, ensuring their concerns are heard and addressed, and providing them with the support they need as we navigate these changes together.

### **What are your ideas to enhance ACA Victoria's engagement with its members?**

To build on the great work already being done, here are a few ideas to further enhance ACA Victoria's member engagement:

- Focusing on personalised support by creating connections between members for one-on-one mentoring, particularly for smaller service providers, could offer a tailored experience to address specific challenges they face. These sessions could focus on operational issues, navigating reforms, or workforce management.
- Expanding peer-to-peer networking by organising smaller, local meetups or member-led discussion circles could allow for more in-depth conversations and shared experiences on a regional level, creating stronger connections within the community.
- A member-driven content platform could also be developed, where members contribute articles, blog posts, or case studies on their experiences and best practices. This peer-generated content could provide fresh insights and foster a sense of ownership and collaboration.
- Introducing a mentorship program that connects experienced service providers with newer or smaller members could offer practical support and guidance, further enhancing community ties and knowledge sharing.

These initiatives would complement existing efforts, providing more personalised, localised, and peer-driven engagement for members.