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Members eNews

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Welcome to the first eNews for 2026!

In Focus: Paramount Consideration, Children's Rights and Child-Centred Practice

This edition highlights how children's rights, voices and identities shape high-quality practice. We unpack what does it mean when the safety, rights and best interests of children is the paramount consideration in everyday decision-making, and explore how seeing orientation through a child's eyes supports safety, belonging and participation. You'll also find resources to help educators bring these commitments to life.

Putting Children First: Understanding Paramount Consideration in Early Childhood Education and Care

Significant reforms to the [Education and Care Services National Law](#) came into effect on 27 February 2026, marking one of the most substantial shifts in early childhood regulation since the introduction of the National Quality Framework.

The Education and Care Services National Law introduce a new mandatory statutory duty requiring that the safety, rights and best interests of children is the paramount consideration in all their decisions and actions taken within any education and care service.

This elevates what was once a guiding principle into a legally enforceable obligation and requires every person involved in operating or delivering an education and care service including approved providers, directors, staff, contractors, and volunteers to prioritise children's safety, rights, and best interest above all other obligations.

At *fka* Children's Services (*fka*CS), we welcome this strengthened clarity. We recognise that children's safety and wellbeing are inseparable from their relationships, their identities, and their ability to participate meaningfully in their learning community. Our role is to support providers, leaders, teachers, and educators to translate this commitment into practice that is safe, rights-based, and responsive to each child's unique identity and needs.

Paramount Consideration and the Expectations Shaping the Sector

Paramount means first, above all else; non-negotiable. It is not something to be balanced against convenience, efficiency, or tradition. It is the primary lens through which every decision in early childhood education and care must be made.

This principle requires active decision-making. It asks adults to pause, assess the impact of their choices, and explain how each decision supports children's safety, rights, and best interests. It applies to every aspect of their work: governance, daily routines, curriculum, relationships, communication with families, and responses to incidents. No part of the service sits outside this responsibility.

Paramount consideration is both a legal requirement and an ethical stance. The [Victorian Rapid Child Safety Review](#) highlighted the need to strengthen the interest of children as a non-negotiable consideration. This new duty sits within a broader package of national reforms endorsed by

Education Ministers in 2025 to raise standards of child safety, accountability, and transparency across early education and care services.

The updated legislation reinforces that individuals must act to protect children from harm. The Review made it clear that although children have always been positioned at the centre of early childhood education and care, this principle has not always been consistently enacted or evidenced. In some cases, routines were prioritised over individual needs, children’s perspectives were not actively sought, and cultural or linguistic identity was not recognised as part of safety and wellbeing. Decision-making was not always transparent about how children’s best interests were considered.



Expectations have now been raised. Paramount consideration must be visible, deliberate, and demonstrable. Adults must be able to show how children’s

safety, rights and best interests guided their decisions, and how these decisions were informed by what they know about each child and their circumstances.

Understanding paramount consideration means recognising that children’s safety, rights, and best interests are interconnected. Physical safety, emotional and psychological safety, protection from harm, participation, identity, culture, language, and equitable access all contribute to a child’s safety and wellbeing. Paramount consideration requires us to hold these dimensions together in a balanced and intentional way.

What this will mean in practice

Having children’s safety, rights, and best interests as the paramount consideration will require clearer reasoning in decision-making, stronger alignment between policy and practice, and more intentional engagement with children’s perspectives. It will also require greater attention to emotional and psychological safety, not just physical safety, and deeper reflection on how identity, culture, and language shape children’s experiences.

In practice, this means shifting from ‘this is how we do things’ to ‘this is what best supports this child’. It means slowing down, questioning assumptions, and ensuring that every decision is founded in a clear commitment to children’s safety, rights and best interests.

How Providers Demonstrate Paramount Consideration

For providers, paramount consideration is enacted through the systems and structures that shape the service. It requires intentional governance, capable workforces, responsive operations, and transparent accountability. These elements create the conditions in which children’s safety, rights and best interests can genuinely guide practice.

- 1. Governance that prioritises safety, rights and best interests:** Policies, risk assessments and decision-making frameworks must explicitly centre children’s safety and rights. This includes safety, best interests, cultural safety, participation, and protection from harm. Governance should make it clear how children’s best interests are considered, documented, and reviewed.

- 2. Workforce capability that supports safe, rights-based practice:** Educators need time, training, and reflective supervision to embed safe, ethical, and responsive practice. Paramount consideration requires investment in the people who hold children's daily experiences. This includes building capability in child safety, trauma-informed practice, cultural responsiveness, and reflective decision-making.
- 3. Operational processes that uphold safety and strengthen family partnerships:** Processes such as enrolment, orientation, communication, and transitions should support safety, belonging and participation. For multilingual families, this includes accessible information and culturally responsive engagement. Operational decisions must demonstrate how children's best interests were prioritised.
- 4. Accountability that is transparent and improvement-focused:** Monitoring practice is about ensuring that children's safety and rights are consistently upheld and that services learn from incidents, feedback, and reflective review. Providers must be able to show how decisions were made, why they were made and how they align with the paramount consideration.

How Teachers and Educators Demonstrate Paramount Consideration

Educators enact paramount consideration through the countless decisions, interactions, and judgements they make every day. Their responsibility is not simply to implement provider policies. It is to understand how their own practice actively shapes children's safety, rights, and best interests. Educators hold professional, ethical, and legal responsibilities that require reflective, accountable, and informed decision-making.

- 1. Relationships that create safety, trust, and connection:** Children experience safety through the quality of their relationships. Educators build this by being attuned, predictable, responsive, and respectful. This includes noticing children's cues, supporting emotional regulation and creating environments where children feel secure, understood, and valued.
- 2. Pedagogy that supports wellbeing, participation, and identity:** Educators design learning environments and experiences that promote children's wellbeing, agency, and sense of belonging. This includes ensuring children can participate meaningfully, express themselves and see their identities reflected in the environment and curriculum. Pedagogical decisions must be grounded in an understanding of each child's needs, strengths, and context.
- 3. Professional judgement that is reflective and accountable:** Educators are responsible for examining how their decisions affect children.

This involves asking:

- Does this decision uphold the child's safety and rights?
- Does it support their best interests?
- Have I considered the child's perspective?
- Could my assumptions or routines be creating barriers?

This reflective stance is central to ethical, rights-based practice and a core part of educators' professional identity.

- 4. Advocacy that protects children's rights and wellbeing:** Educators advocate for children when routines, decisions or practices compromise safety, inclusion, or rights. This includes raising concerns, challenging assumptions, and working collaboratively with colleagues and families to ensure children's needs are met. Advocacy is not an optional extra. It is a core expression of

paramount consideration. Educators are not passive implementers. They are active, informed professionals whose decisions profoundly shape children's daily experiences and whose judgement plays a critical role in upholding children's safety, rights, and best interests.

Examples of paramount consideration in action

Safety and wellbeing: A provider ensures clear reporting pathways and trauma-informed policies. An educator responds to children's cues and creates predictable, physically and emotionally safe environments.

Identity and belonging: A provider embeds cultural safety in policy and invests in multilingual resources. An educator uses children's home languages and builds relationships that affirm identity.

Participation and voice: A provider designs processes that invite family input and children's participation. An educator listens to children's ideas and adapts routines to meet individual needs.

Final reflection

Paramount consideration is a shared responsibility that sits at the centre of ethical early childhood practice. Providers create the organisational conditions that support safe, reflective, and accountable decision making. Educators bring this principle to life through the relationships, interactions, and judgements that shape children's daily experiences.

Upholding children's safety, rights, and best interests requires clarity, consistency, and a willingness to examine how decisions are made. It asks adults to slow down, question assumptions, and ensure that each decision can be explained through a child centred lens. It also requires careful attention to the individual child: their needs, their ways of communicating, and the context in which they are growing and learning.

These changes reflect a shared national commitment that children's rights, safety and best interests must always come first. For families, communities, providers, and educators, the strengthened statutory duty reinforces the importance of creating environments where children can learn, play, and grow within systems designed to protect them at every level.



How fkaCS can support you

We support services in bringing this principle to life through professional learning on child safety, rights, relational pedagogy and cultural responsiveness; coaching that strengthens reflective and ethical decision-making; and multilingual resources that support belonging and participation. Our focus is on helping services build practice that is safe, inclusive, and grounded in children's rights.

For further support or advice, contact us on (03) 9428 4471 or visit fka.org.au/contact.



Orientation Through the Child's Eyes: What Paramount Consideration Looks Like in Everyday Moments

Paramount consideration requires adults to make decisions that clearly support each child's safety, rights and best interests.

Orientation is often the first place where children experience whether this principle is enacted and whether adults see, hear, and respond to them with care and intention.

This resource builds on our article, "Paramount Consideration in Early Childhood Education & Care: What It Means for Children's Safety, Rights and Best Interests," by showing how the principle becomes visible in everyday orientation moments.

Paramount consideration requires adults to make decisions that clearly support each child's safety, rights, and best interests.

[The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#) (VEYLDF, 2016) highlights that children's sense of belonging, identity and wellbeing is shaped through relationships and environments that are responsive and respectful.

[The National Quality Framework](#) (NQF, 2026) and [the Child Safe Standards](#) (2022) require services to create conditions where children feel safe, included and able to participate.



Below are child voice scenarios that show how shared responsibility is expressed in real moments with real children. Each example illustrates how educators make a child's safety, sense of belonging, identity, and participation the paramount consideration when responding to what the child is communicating. These moments also highlight the organisational conditions that can support or restrict educators as they make these decisions.

Scenario 1: Amir



Amir

"I don't know these people. Everyone is talking to my family, not to me."

Paramount consideration :

The educator chooses to follow Amir's pace because he has the right to feel safe, acknowledged and included before anything else happens.

Educator Action:

The educator kneels, says Amir's name gently, checks that they have pronounced it correctly, and stays close so he knows he is not alone. They take time and waits for Amir to show when he is ready to look around, rather than rushing him through the space.



Scenario 2: Indra



Indra

"I'm here too. I want someone to talk to me, not just about me."

Paramount consideration :

The educator chooses to build a connection slowly and exchange information with Indra's family because feeling recognised and respected is essential to Indra's sense of safety and belonging.

Educator Action:

The educator turns to Indra first, offers a familiar object from the room, and gives her time to settle before asking any questions. They check in with Indra's family to find out what helps her feel comfortable, creating a shared understanding rather than relying on assumptions.



Scenario 3: Carlos



Carlos

“I understand some of the words they’re saying, but everything feels too big and too fast.”

Paramount consideration :

The educator chooses to adapt their communication and remain present because Carlos has the right to understand, participate and feel emotionally safe, even when everything is new.

Educator Action:

The educator uses gestures, visuals and a few words in Carlos’s home language, adjusting the pace so he can follow what is happening. They stay nearby until Carlos signals that he feels confident enough to explore, rather than stepping away too soon.



Scenario 4: Lani



Lani

“I don’t want Mum to go yet. Everything feels scary and loud. I need her close, it’s usually just the two of us.”

Paramount consideration :

The educator chooses to extend the settling time and involve Lani’s family because Lani’s emotional safety and sense of security matter more than following a standard routine.

Educator Action:

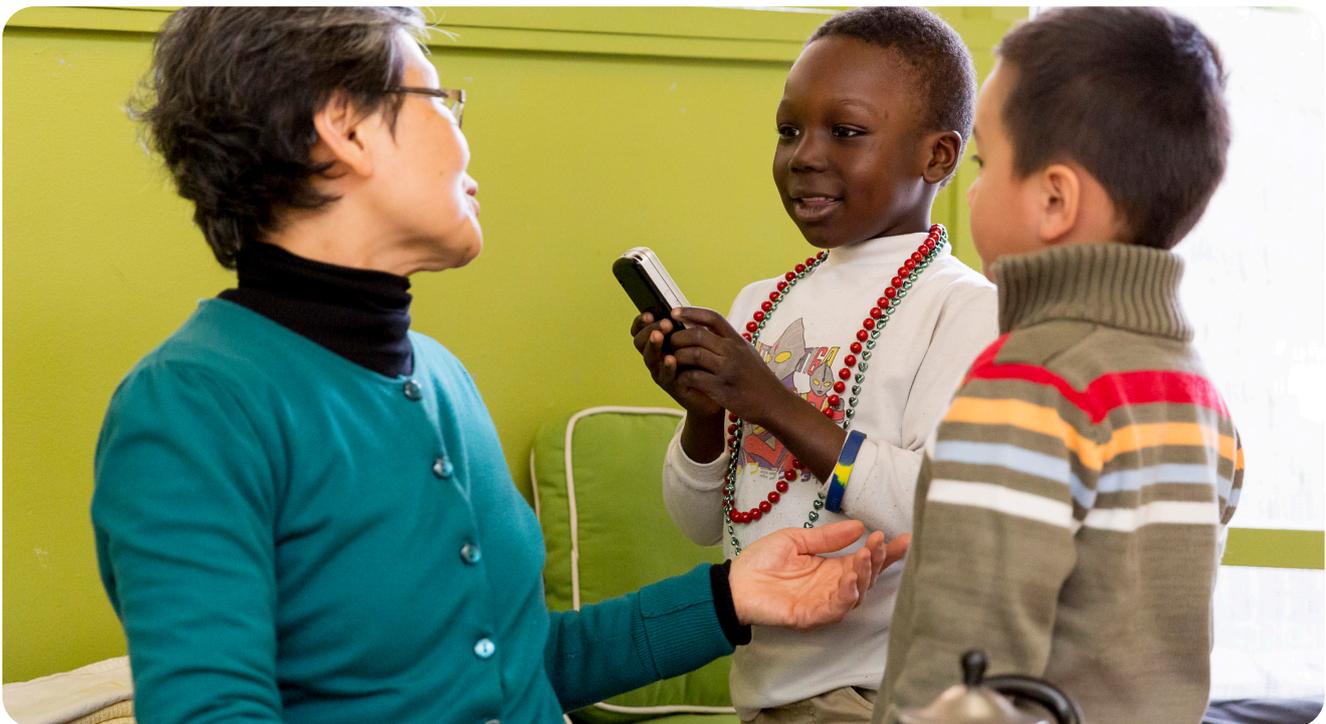
The educator notices Lani’s tight grip on her mother’s hand and the way she leans in for reassurance. Instead of encouraging a quick goodbye, the educator invites Lani’s mother to stay as long as Lani needs. They find a quiet space where they can sit together and checks in with the family about what helps Lani feel secure during transitions.



These decisions are intentional and relational. They reflect a shared commitment to creating environments where every child feels safe, recognised, and ready to participate before anything else takes place.

Across the scenarios, educators slow their pace, stay close, check pronunciation, use familiar or home language cues, build connection gradually or invite a parent to remain longer. These are deliberate choices made because the child's experience in that moment matters more than efficiency, speed, or routine. Although these actions may appear small, they are only possible when educators have the time, support, and flexibility to place each child's safety, wellbeing and security and best interests first.

Providers play a vital role in shaping these conditions. Policies, staffing patterns, time allocation and communication practices all influence whether educators can act in ways that make children's safety, rights and best interests the paramount consideration. When services design their systems around children's rights and best interests, educators can respond with care, presence and awareness of each child needs.



Reflecting on Orientation Through a Child-Centred Lens

For educators

- What decisions did I make during orientation, and how did I ensure the child's safety, rights, and best interests guided those decisions?
- How did I respond to the child's cues, and what evidence did I use to decide whether to slow down, stay close or step back?
- In what ways did I address the child directly and support their participation in a way that upheld their dignity and agency?
- How did I adapt my communication so the child could understand, feel safe and take part in what was happening?
- How did I work with the family to exchange information that helped me make decisions in the child's best interests?
- What moments required flexibility, and how did I justify those decisions in relation to paramount consideration?

For providers

- How do our policies and procedures support educators to make decisions that prioritise each child's safety, rights and best interests?
- What structures or expectations might unintentionally pressure educators to follow routines rather than follow the child?
- How do we ensure multilingual families can participate fully so educators have the information they need to make child-centred decisions?
- How do we allocate time, staffing and space so educators can respond to children at their own pace rather than the service's pace?
- How do we document and review decisions to ensure they are deliberate, transparent, and aligned with paramount consideration?
- How do we support educators to confidently justify decisions that differ from standard practice when this is in the child's best interests?

These moments show how paramount consideration is enacted in practice. Educators make decisions that centre each child's safety, rights and best interests, and providers create the conditions that allow those decisions to be responsive and child centred. Together, they shape orientation experiences where children feel safe, welcome, and supported as they enter a new setting.

References

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2026). Guide to the National Quality Framework. ACECQA.
- Commission for Children and Young People. (2022). Child Safe Standards: Creating a safe environment for children and young people. Victorian Government.
- Department of Education and Training. (2016). Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all children from birth to eight years. Victorian Government.
- Department of Education. (2025). Rapid Child Safety Review. Victorian Government.



From the Multicultural Resource Centre

Resources to Strengthen Rights-Based, Culturally Responsive Practice

As this month's articles highlight, children experience safety, belonging and participation through the relationships, environments and decisions that shape their everyday moments.

Paramount consideration isn't abstract, it becomes visible in the way educators slow down, listen, adapt, and honour each child's identity, culture and language.

The Multicultural Resource Centre (MRC) is here to support that work. Our collection of multilingual books, cultural story materials and identity-affirming resources helps educators create environments where children feel recognised, understood and safe to participate. These resources also strengthen partnerships with families by making home languages and cultural knowledge visible in the program.

To help you embed these ideas in practice, we've selected four recommended books from the MRC, what each title brings to your learning environment and practical ways you can use them with children and families.

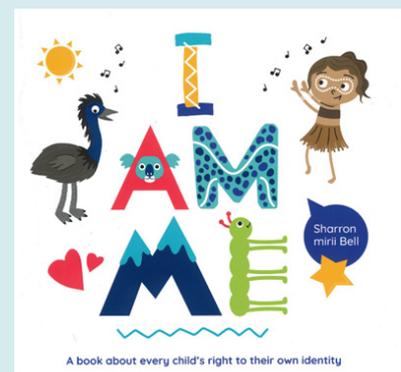
I am Me

By Sharron mirii Bell

I Am Me celebrates identity, confidence and each child's right to feel seen and valued, opening up simple conversations about belonging and what makes every child unique.

Practical ways to use it with children and families:

- Share during group time to spark conversations about "what makes me, me."
- Invite families to contribute words or stories that reflect their child's identity.
- Use it as a prompt for drawing, storytelling or self-portrait experiences.



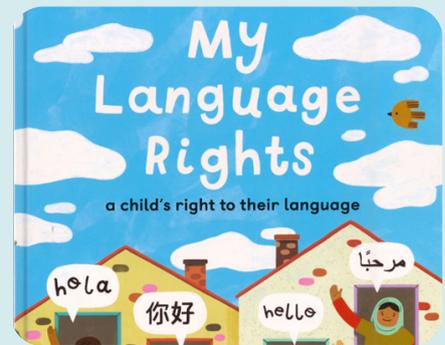
My Language Rights

By Judy Thompson and Tete Garcia

A clear, empowering message about the value of multilingualism and every child's right to use and protect their home language.

Practical ways to use it with children and families:

- Read it with children to spark conversations about the languages they use at home and in the community.
- Invite families to share greetings, songs or stories in their languages.
- Use it to introduce language-rich experiences that celebrate and normalise multilingual practice.



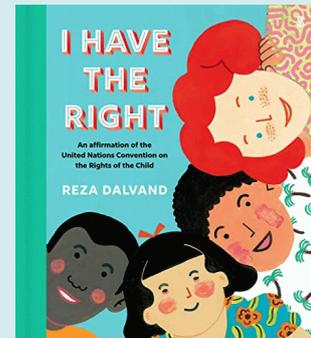
I Have The Right: An Affirmation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

By Reza Dalvand

A gentle, visually rich introduction to children's rights, helping children understand that safety, voice, identity and participation belong to them.

Practical ways to use it with children and families:

- Read it during group time to spark simple conversations about rights in everyday moments.
- Invite families to share what "rights" look like in their home or culture.
- Use it as a springboard for drawing, role-play or discussions about fairness, safety and belonging.



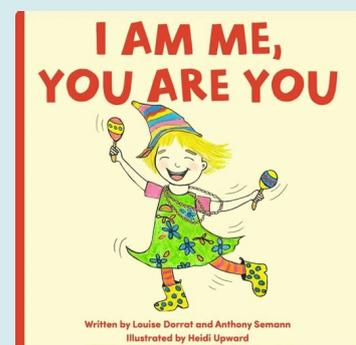
I Am Me, You Are You

By Louise Dorrat & Anthony Semann; Illustrated by Heidi Upward

A celebration of difference, respect and connection, helping children recognise that everyone brings their own strengths, feelings and ways of being.

Practical ways to use it with children and families:

- Read it to open conversations about similarities, differences and kindness.
- Invite families to share stories or photos that reflect their own ways of being together.
- Use it as a prompt for collaborative art or play experiences that highlight diversity and belonging.



fkaCS Updates

Coming Soon – *fka* Children’s Services Annual General Meeting

We’re pleased to let our members know that the next *fkaCS* Annual General Meeting is coming up soon in Term 2.

As a community-owned, not-for-profit organisation, our Board plays a vital role in guiding our strategic direction and ensuring we remain responsive, accountable and connected to the communities we serve.

We’re also seeking expressions of interest from *fkaCS* members to join the Board who are passionate about early childhood education and care, social impact and community voice. If you’re interested in contributing your skills and perspective to a values-driven organisation, we’d love to hear from you.

Stay tuned for more information about the AGM and joining the Board. In the meantime, please get in touch to learn more about joining the *fkaCS* Board at fkacs@fka.org.au

Strengthen Your School Readiness Funding planning for 2026

Support for multilingual children and families throughout the year.

With 2026 kindergarten well underway, it’s important to ensure your approach meaningfully reflects the strengths, experiences and aspirations of the children and families in your service.

fkaCS can work alongside your team to strengthen long-term planning and embedded practice through:

- Coaching and tailored consultancy
- Strategic planning support aligned to your SRF goals
- *fkaCS* Orientation and Engagement Kit
- Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion Packages
- Cultural Inclusion Reflective Practice Toolkit

We also offer free telephone support and advice to help you determine the right next steps for your service.

Call us on 03 9428 4471 to speak with one of our Pedagogy and Practice Consultants about support for your 2026 planning or visit us at fka.org.au/professional-support

fkaCS Updates

Explore new courses and a refreshed fkaCS website

We're excited to share our updated website and new online courses that make it easier than ever to access the tools, learning, and guidance that support your work with children and families.

The updated fkaCS website offers clearer pathways to the resources you rely on, improved navigation, and a more responsive layout designed to support your daily practice.

Your professional learning resources have also expanded, with free online courses that strengthen culturally responsive, rights-based practice:

Possum Skin Pedagogy

Developed by Dr Sue Atkinson AM with Victorian First Nations Elders and knowledge holders, this course introduces seven key narratives that guide educators in embedding cultural knowledge, relational practice, and deep listening.



'Women Drumming' by Annette Sax, Taungurung artist.

Engaging with Multilingual Families about Kindergarten

A three-module series offering practical strategies to partner with multilingual families during enrolment and orientation, supporting belonging, participation, and strong transitions.

If it's been a little while since your last visit, now is a great time to explore what's new and see how these updates can support your work with children and families.



Click the buttons below to find what's waiting for you.

[Explore our website](#)

[Explore our courses](#)

Sector Updates

All Graduates Interpreting and Translating

Victorian funded kindergartens are eligible for free on-site, telephone and video interpreting and written translation through All Graduates Interpreting & Translating, funded by the Victorian Department of Education. Eligible early childhood support services can also access this support.

This service is designed to strengthen communication with parents and carers who speak a language other than English or who use Auslan, ensuring every family can participate meaningfully in their child's learning.

Why this matters for your service

Using professional interpreting and translation support can help you:

- Build stronger, more trusting relationships with multilingual families
- Make key information accessible and inclusive
- Choose from on-site, telephone or video interpreting options to suit your context
- Confidently facilitate conversations and meetings with parents and carers

Clear communication supports:

- Sharing insights about a child's learning and development
- Explaining important kindergarten activities and routines
- Supporting families through the transition to primary school

You can explore which free interpreting options best meet your service's needs [here](#).

Grants Now Open – Forest Hill & Warrawong Professional Learning

The Forest Hill and Warrawong Professional Learning Grants, offered through the Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies, are now open for 2026! These grants provide up to \$10,000 to support early childhood projects (Forest Hill) and professional learning opportunities (Warrawong).

Key dates:

- Applications close: 5 May 2025 – don't leave it to the last minute!

These grants are a great way to support innovation, professional development and community-led initiatives in the early childhood sector. If you've got an idea that will make a difference, now is the time to apply!

Apply & full guidelines:

Forest Hill & Warrawong Grants information & application click [here](#).

Sector Updates

Register now for mandatory national child safety training: new communication toolkit released

This toolkit helps early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers, regulators and stakeholders encourage all staff in the sector to register for mandatory national child safety training.

From 27 February 2026, all persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, Family Day Care Educators and other staff, volunteers and students in the ECEC sector must complete mandatory national child safety training in Gecco.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Resources to Support Your Understanding of the New Legislation

To help you understand what the new legislation means for your service, we encourage you to explore the following resources:

- [Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority \(VECRA\) – Child safety reforms: National and Victoria-specific legislative changes](#)
- [Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority \(ACECQA\) – Child Safety: Understanding paramount consideration](#)

Victoria’s Child Safety Regulator Is Changing: What Your Organisation Needs to Know

From 23 February 2026, Victoria’s Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards will move to the Social Services Regulator. For ECEC services, this means updated reporting

pathways, refreshed policies, and staff training to ensure ongoing compliance and child-safe practice.

Moore’s has prepared an overview outlining what these changes mean for your organisation and the practical steps to consider.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Play School Talks: The Power of Play in Pop Culture

Explore how play and pop culture shape childhood development in a lively talk with Emily Sexton and leading experts, offering fresh insights for families and educators. Play is fundamental to how children learn, grow and make sense of the world.

Join ACMI’s Head of Programming, Emily Sexton, as she chats with global children’s media expert David Kleeman, play advocate Anthony Semann, and early childhood researcher Professor Louise Paatsch.

When: 11 April, 6.30 pm

Where: Cinema 1, ACMI, Fed Square

To learn more, click [here](#).

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