

Little people, Big dreams



Little People, Big Dreams Conference 2025

Saturday, 11 October 2025
DoubleTree by Hilton Esplanade, Darwin

WELCOME

Welcome to the 2025 Little People, Big Dreams Conference, proudly presented by Child Australia in partnership with the Northern Territory Government.

As we gather on Larrakia Country, our shared enthusiasm for innovative strategies, transformative ideas and connecting with fellow professionals dedicated to shaping children, unites us.

Esteemed keynote speakers, delegates and exhibitors from across the country have converged to offer practical approaches for working with children across various settings. This conference aims to guide you in unpacking the latest research and best practices, nurture critical reflective thinking and showcase professional development resources and digital solutions tailored to your role.

As we embark on this journey together, I encourage you to embrace the spirit of collaboration, engage in conversations, share your experiences and absorb the wisdom woven throughout this gathering.

Our sincere appreciation goes to our sponsors, partners, speakers and delegates for their unwavering support in bringing this event to life. Your dedication mirrors our shared vision and we firmly believe that the relationships forged and knowledge acquired during this conference will extend far beyond its conclusion.

Let's seize this exceptional opportunity to ignite change, elevate Early Childhood Education standards and collectively amplify our impact.

We are excited to welcome you to this event, as it is through our collective efforts that we can genuinely enrich children's lives.

Tina Holtom
Chief Executive Officer
Child Australia

Our Supporting Partners



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Keynote Sessions and Expert Panel Discussion



Keynote 1

Wired to Connect: The Neuroscience of Seeing Ourselves and Every Child **Professor Selena Bartlett, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)**

Professor Selena Bartlett will explore how our brains are wired for connection and how being truly seen impacts a child's brain and well-being. Grounded in neuroscience, she provides insights and practical tools for parents, teachers and caregivers to foster resilient brains, emphasising that every child deserves to be seen and heard.



Expert Panel Discussion

Child Safety in Plain Sight:

Shifting Culture from Compliance to Vigilance

This impactful panel highlights child safety and promotes a culture of vigilance. Panel members will discuss strategies and mindsets to make safety a shared value. You can expect bold ideas, open dialogue, and a call to action for prioritising children's safety daily.

Panel Members

Professor Selena Bartlett
Neuroscientist, QUT

Nicole Talarico
Early Years Consultant, Talarico Consulting

Katy Brennan
Director, Quality Education and Care
NT Department of Education and Training

Connie Borg
Sector Specialist Team Lead, Child Australia

Keynote 2

Mindful Caring for Early Childhood Educators:

An Integrated Approach for Healthy Relationships, Reduced Stress and Greater Impact on Children

Charlotte Thaarup, The Mindfulness Clinic

As an Early Childhood Educator, your role profoundly impacts children's development. Mindful Caring offers tools to enhance your well-being, manage stress, and create positive influences. Themes include recognising your importance, addressing 2025 challenges, exploring mindfulness and its neuroscience, and practical techniques to start your mindfulness journey.



Keynote 3

Trauma-Informed Strategies Supporting Both Children & Educators

Sarah Forgan, Berry Street Education Model

In her keynote, Sarah will present findings from Berry Street's early years research, highlighting that self-care alone isn't sufficient for educators' well-being. She will discuss trauma-informed strategies that nurture both children and educators, fostering a culture of wellbeing that enhances learning and helps prevent professional burnout.



Conference Program



07:30	Registration, Coffee on Arrival, Exhibition			
08:15	Welcome to Country			
	Conference Opening The Department of Education and Training			
	Conference Welcome Tina Holtom, Chief Executive Officer of Child Australia			
08:40	Keynote Session 1	 Selena Bartlett	"Wired to Connect" The Neuroscience of Seeing Ourselves and Every Child	
09:30	Panel Session	Panel members: Selena Bartlett, Katy Brennan, Nicole Talarico and Connie Borg		"Child Safety in Plain Sight" Shifting Culture from Compliance to Vigilance
10:10	Morning Tea and Exhibition			📍 Ballroom Foyer / Litchfield Foyer
10:45	Keynote Session 2	 Charlotte Thaarup	"Mindful Caring for Early Childhood Educators" An Integrated Approach for Healthy Relationships, Reduced Stress and Greater Impact on Children	
11:45	Keynote Session 3	 Sarah Forgan	"Trauma Informed Strategies Supporting Both Children & Educators"	
12:30	Lunch Buffet and Exhibition			📍 Ballroom Foyer / Litchfield Foyer
13:40	Breakout Sessions			
	 Ballroom A	Ballroom B	Litchfield Room	 Reflections Room
	Selena Bartlett	Charlotte Thaarup	Gee Van der Watt & Leanne Crawford	Belle Spillman & Jess Foster
	Queensland University of Technology	The Mindfulness Clinic	Neurominded	Our Business Mentors
	"Children in the Digital Age: Neuroscience with Practical Guidance to Enhance their Mental Well-being"	"Mindfulness, Resilience and Thriving in Early Childhood Education"	"Supporting Divergent Play & Socialisation using a Neuro-affirming Approach"	"Creating a Positive Workplace Culture: Building Trust, Inclusion and Shared Responsibility"
14:40	Nicole Talarico	Dr Kathryn Murray	Connie Borg and Fiona Rudkin	Nicole Brown
	Talarico Consulting	Future Strong Education Consultancy	Child Australia	Following in Their Footsteps
	"Child Safety in the Cyber Playground: Pedagogical Responsiveness to Safeguard Children's Digital Identity"	"A Calm Brain is a Thinking Brain: Connecting Neuroscience to the Design of the Learning Environment"	"See it. Stop it. Say it. A Proactive Framework Focused on Adult Behaviours"	"Changing the Narrative: What Educators can Learn from First Nations Ways of Knowing"
15:30	Afternoon Tea and Exhibition			📍 Ballroom Foyer / Litchfield Foyer
16:00	Sarah Forgan	Nicole Brown	Renee Wright & Michelle Csapo	Vanessa Burton & Jarrah Aleman-Abellana
	Berry Street	Following in Their Footsteps	HumanAbility	Early Childhood Australia NT
	"Implementing Trauma-informed Early Years Strategies"	"Walking Beside, Not Ahead: Educators as Allies for First Nations Children"	"Earn While You Learn (EWYL) and the ECEC Sector"	"Inclusive Practice through Sensory Play: Why it Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Settings"
16:45	Networking Sundowner 		📍 Ballroom Foyer	

Breakout Sessions

Ballroom A

Sponsored by:



Children in the Digital Age: Neuroscience with Practical Guidance to Enhance their Mental Well-being

Professor Selena Bartlett, Queensland University of Technology

This interactive workshop will equip you with neuroscience-based strategies to support children's emotional health and development in a hyperconnected world.

Child Safety in the Cyber Playground: Pedagogical Responsiveness to Safeguard Children's Digital Identity

Nicole Talarico, Talarico Consulting

Rapid technological advances challenge authorities in protecting children's online safety, highlighting the need for education on issues like trolling and self-generated content.

Implementing Trauma-informed Early Years Strategies

Sarah Forgan, Berry Street Education Model

Sarah will share trauma-informed strategies for early years education, offering practical tools to support educators' resilience and effectiveness for children and families.

Ballroom B

Mindfulness, Resilience and Thriving in Early Childhood Education

Charlotte Thaarup, The Mindfulness Clinic

This workshop presents a new approach to resilience through mindfulness, promoting clarity, connection and calm. You will explore a framework for accountability from Transactional Analysis and utilise the Circle of Concern vs. Circle of Influence to transition from reactivity to empowered action.

A Calm Brain is a Thinking Brain:

Connecting Neuroscience to the Design of the Learning Environment

Dr Kathryn Murray, Future Strong Consultancy

Create Early Childhood learning environments using the Brain-SET Environments Formula® to foster calmness, connection and deep thinking through intentional design and soothing elements.

Walking Beside, Not Ahead: Educators as Allies for First Nations Children

Nicole Brown, Following in Their Footsteps

Nicole is a proud Larrakia woman, who brings deep First Nations cultural insight and strategic expertise to every space she enters. No question is off limits, and your input will help shape a truly meaningful discussion. Let's strive for ways we can do better together

For more information on the topics and speakers, scan here to go to our website:



Breakout Sessions

Litchfield Room

Supporting Divergent Play & Socialisation using a Neuro-affirming Approach

Gee Van der Watt and Leanne Crawford, Neurominded

This session explores the nuances of divergent play in early childhood, focusing on neurodivergent children or those who have experienced trauma, and will provide insights and strategies for educators to foster inclusive play environments that support every child's learning journey.

See it. Stop it. Say it.

A Proactive Framework Focused on Adult Behaviours

Connie Borg and Fiona Rudkin, Child Australia

The Adult Behaviour Traffic Light tool helps staff identify and respond to adult behaviours by categorising them into green (safe), amber (concerning), and red (harmful) to foster a culture of safety and professionalism.

Earn While You Learn (EWYL) and the ECEC Sector

Michelle Csapo and Dr Renee Wright, HumanAbility

High-quality Children's Education and Care relies on a skilled workforce. Shortages persist, but traineeships and government initiatives, including school-based models, are attracting talent and facilitating entry into the sector.

Reflections Room

Sponsored by:



Creating a Positive Workplace Culture: Building Trust, Inclusion and Shared Responsibility

Belle Spillman and Jess Foster, Our Business Mentors

Foster a positive workplace culture in early childhood settings by emphasising shared values, inclusion and team accountability. This session is designed for leaders and educators aiming to improve professional practice and team well-being.

Changing the Narrative: What Educators can Learn from First Nations Ways of Knowing

Nicole Brown, Following in Their Footsteps

Nicole Brown is a proud Larrakia woman and award-winning advocate for Australia's First Nations peoples. She has over a decade of experience across Indigenous affairs and will answer your questions about First Nations engagement and cultural connection.

Inclusive Practice through Sensory Play:

Why It Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Settings

Vanessa Burton and Jarrah Aleman-Abellana, Early Childhood Australia NT

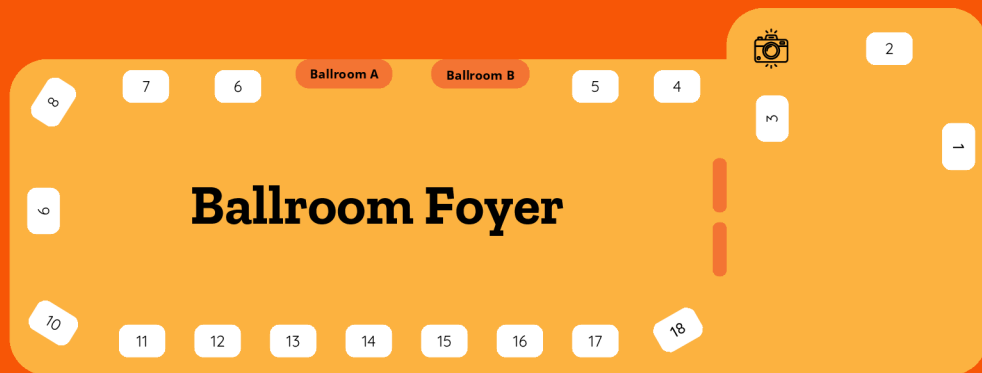
Explore how sensory response patterns affect children's behaviour and engagement in ECEC settings. Interact with sensory tools and resources to understand their real-world applications.

For more information on the topics and speakers, scan here to go to our website:



The Market Place

Swing by the Market Place and meet our incredible exhibitors and sponsors, who will be showing you the latest and greatest resources in the ECEC Sector.



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LPBD

