

# Media Release

**Ingrid Stitt MP**

Minister for Workplace Safety

Minister for Early Childhood



Thursday, 11 November 2021

## WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR 2021 VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS AWARDS

The exceptional work of Victoria's early childhood education sector has been recognised and celebrated at the 2021 Victorian Early Years Awards.

Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt announced eight winners across seven categories – personally selecting the winner of the prestigious Minister's Award from the list of finalists.

Winners were chosen from categories of improving engagement in learning, supporting parents, building collaborative community partnerships, improving health and wellbeing, exemplary practice in early childhood education, leadership, and significant service improvement.

Each winner receives a grant of \$15,000 to be used for either professional development or to support their nominated early childhood initiative.

Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre was given this year's Minister's Award in recognition for the success of their Bush Kinder for Mental Health program – addressing the rise of anxiety and mental health issues in young children through play-based learning and reconnecting children with nature.

Established in 2016, the core elements of the program are now embedded in everyday practice across their service to support the wellbeing and development of babies through to preschool children.

Early Childhood Teacher of the Year was awarded to Louise Bayley from Kalkallo Preschool for her work in promoting cultural understanding, equality and diversity as well as building strong partnerships with families and tailoring learning environments and supports to improve children's and families' health and wellbeing.

Now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year, the Victorian Early Years Awards celebrates leadership, outstanding achievement, exceptional dedication and innovation in improving outcomes for children and their families. This year's event was held online and hosted by children's entertainer, Jimmy Rees.

For the full list of winners, visit [education.vic.gov.au/veya](https://education.vic.gov.au/veya).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

*"The early childhood sector has been incredibly resilient and dedicated in giving Victoria's youngest children the best start to life despite the challenges of the pandemic over the past two years."*

*"Congratulations to all of our inspiring winners in the Victorian Early Years Awards for your outstanding achievements and hard work in creating positive opportunities and outcomes for Victorian children and families."*