

Media Release

The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Children
Minister for Disability



Friday, 10 November 2023

VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Victoria's very best early childhood organisations and professionals were celebrated for the outstanding work they do setting children up for success at school and beyond, at the 2023 Victorian Early Years Awards on Thursday night.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn congratulated the 10 winners and 16 finalists at an awards ceremony in Melbourne.

Established in 2006, the annual Victorian Early Years Awards celebrates the exceptional work of the state's early childhood sector in improving the learning, health and wellbeing of young children and their families.

Aboriginal inclusion and perspectives in making early childhood services accessible to Koorie children and families were recognised for the first time, through a new award commemorating the life and legacy of Yorta Yorta and Wiradjuri woman Auntie Rose Bamblett.

The Yirram Burron and Perridak Burron Early Learning services in Ballarat took out the inaugural Auntie Rose Bamblett Koorie Early Years Legacy Award for their educational programs based on Aboriginal perspectives that enhance children's love for land and community.

This year also saw the first-ever Educator of the Year Award, which went to Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre Director Sue Bullock for using data, evidence-based practices and empathetic leadership to create a better quality learning and working environment for students and staff.

The Early Childhood Teacher of the Year award was presented to Glen Education Glover Street Kindergarten's Rachael Gemmill for leading her team to exceed in all seven areas of the National Quality Standard for education and care, and for using evidence-based strategies to support children's wellbeing.

The Minister's Award was presented to the Northern Schools Early Years Cluster, a community-based not-for-profit organisation that manages 15 kindergarten services in multicultural communities experiencing high levels of disadvantage across the municipalities of Merri-bek, Hume, Melbourne and Macedon Ranges.

By operating as a kindergarten to Year 6 model (K-6), the Northern Schools Early Years Cluster was recognised for helping children to develop a sense of belonging, connectedness and confidence during their transition from kindergarten to schools.

Awards were also announced in six other categories with award winners receiving \$15,000 to support their professional development or to further develop their program or initiative. To find out more about this year's winners, visit vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-awards.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"Congratulations to every winner and finalist for their outstanding contributions to children's learning and development – your brilliant work is what makes us the Education State."

"The Allan Labor Government's \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life reforms support every child to benefit from our skilled and dedicated early childhood teachers and educators - no matter their background or where they live."

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Winners of the 2023 Victorian Early Years Awards

Category 1: Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning

Fast-tracking 15 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten for children at risk, Northern Schools Early Years Cluster

Category 2: Supporting Parents to Build their Capacity and Confidence

The HoPES team strengthening the Early Years, Tweddle Child & Family Health Service

Category 3: Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships

Darebin Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group, Darebin City Council

Category 4: Promoting Children's Health and Wellbeing

By Five Paediatric Project, By Five

Category 5: Continuity of Early Learning

Greater Dandenong Early Learning Alliance, Keysborough Primary School

Category 6: Early Childhood Teacher of the Year

Rachael Gemmill, Glen Education Glover Street Kindergarten

Category 7: The Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Award

Early Childhood Education Team, Early Childhood Management Services Inc.

Category 8: The Aunty Rose Bamblett Koorie Early Years Legacy Award

Yirram Burron and Perridak Burron Early Learning, Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative

Category 9: Educator of the Year

Sue Bullock, Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre

Minister's Award

The Northern Schools Early Years K-6 model, Northern Schools Early Years Cluster Inc.