

Media Release

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



Friday, 7 November 2025

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS LEARNING

The winners of the 2025 Victorian Early Years Awards have been unveiled – recognising outstanding organisations and individuals improving outcomes for children in their critical early years.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn congratulated the winners and finalists who represent the dedication and leadership of Victoria’s early years sector from Maternal and Child Health services to playgroups and early learning programs.

Brave Foundation received the Minister’s Award for its Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens Program, a trauma-informed mentoring initiative that builds the confidence, wellbeing and life skills of young parents. Founded and led by people with lived experience, the program is strengthening engagement in health services and learning.

Megan Hancock was named Early Childhood Teacher of the Year for her inclusive, culturally responsive teaching that strengthens children’s language and literacy. Working with families, Elders and a Koorie Engagement Support Officer, Ms Hancock also leads the Koorie Champions Network, supporting educators to build cultural knowledge.

Sandra Houlahan received Educator of the Year for transforming local spaces into rich learning environments through programs like River Kinder which foster curiosity, resilience and environmental respect. Her partnerships with families, schools and health professionals help children transition to school and strengthen connections.

Each of the 10 winners receives a \$15,000 grant to further develop their initiatives, share what they know or support professional development.

Now in its 20th year, the awards celebrate the work of professionals and services improving the health, learning and wellbeing of children and families across Victoria.

Visit vic.gov.au/victorian-early-years-awards-winners to find out more about the inspiring work and achievements of this year’s winners and finalists.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

“This year we celebrate Victoria’s incredible teachers and educators for the 20th time – the Victorian Early Years Awards is a reminder that these are the people shaping generation after generation.”

“In every corner of Victoria, we see early years educators and services going above and beyond.”

Quote attributable to Parliamentary Secretary for Children Nathan Lambert

“Congratulations to all the winners and finalists this year’s VEYA awards which include an oral language program, a council-run playgroup for refugees and a bush kinder embedding First Nations culture.”

Winners of the 2025 Victorian Early Years Awards

Category 1: Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd

Category 2: Supporting Parents to Build their Capacity and Confidence

Hume Community Hub Playgroups – Hume City Council

Category 3: Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships

Supporting families through collaborative early intervention – Gowrie Victoria Broadmeadows Valley in partnership with MacKillop Family Services

Category 4: Promoting Children’s Health and Wellbeing

From ‘Working Towards’ to ‘Exceeding’ – Connie Benn Early Learning Centre in partnership with Heidelberg Psychological Services

Category 5: Continuity of Early Learning

The Mooroopna Oral Language Initiative – Mooroopna Primary School in partnership with Mooroopna Children and Families Centre, Greater Shepparton Foundation, Our Place

Category 6: The Aunty Rose Bamblett Koorie Early Years Legacy Award

Harrietville Bush Kinder

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

Home Road Kindergarten

Category 8: Early Childhood Teacher of the Year

Megan Hancock, Southern Rise Children’s Centre

Category 9: Educator of the Year

Sandra Houlahan, Shine Bright Elmore Kindergarten

Minister’s Award

Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens Program – Brave Foundation