

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Thursday 5 September, 2019

CELEBRATING INSPIRING EARLY CHILDHOOD WORK IN VICTORIA

Early childhood educators and programs whose work improves the lives of children and their families across the state are being recognised and celebrated by the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Education James Merlino today announced the 20 finalists in this year's Victorian Early Years Awards. These finalists were nominated for their outstanding contributions to the early childhood sector in across Victoria.

Finalists include a bush playgroup incorporating local Aboriginal knowledge in Balnarring, a child health and development hub for refugee families in Roxburgh Park, a literacy program in the Wimmera and a campaign that is helping families in Heidelberg West participate in book-making projects.

Now in its 14th year, the Victorian Early Years Awards recognise the crucial work of early childhood professionals in helping young children to learn and thrive. The announcement coincides with Early Learning Matters week, running from 31st August to 6th September.

Award winners in each category will receive up to \$15,000 to continue their exceptional work in kindergarten services, schools, local councils, Maternal Child and Health services and other early years organisations across the state.

The awards celebrate the achievements and commitment of early childhood professionals across seven award categories, including supporting parents and the early childhood teacher of the year.

Early childhood education is the foundation for lifelong wellbeing and learning, and the Labor Government is committed to expanding services delivered to children and their families.

Making Victoria the Education State starts with the early years. This is why, in an Australian first, the Labor Government is investing almost \$5 billion over the next decade to deliver 15 hours per week of funded three-year-old kindergarten programs, to be progressively rolled out from 2020.

Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony on Tuesday 22 October at the National Gallery of Victoria.

For more details on this year's finalists, see: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-finalists-2019.aspx>

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education, James Merlino

"The Victorian Early Years Awards are a fantastic opportunity to recognise our early childhood professionals, and the inspiring work they do every day to set our youngest Victorians up for success in life."

"To every early childhood professional and service making a difference across Victoria – thank you for your dedication to children and their families, helping them to thrive and get the most out of their early childhood education."

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