

Fostering Independence in the Early Years Conference

Monday 21 July 2025

8:30am

Registration Opens - gift bag collection
Biscuits, Coffee, Networking

9:00 – 9.15am

Conference Commences - Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome speech

Keynote

Presented by Dr Rachel Jones

A Missing Piece – the Physical Domain of Child Development

This session will explore why the physical domain is so important in child development and how it underpins cognitive, social, emotional and language learning. Research highlighting the connection between brain development and child development will be explored. This session will encourage educators to think broadly about children's physical development: the type of learning experiences offered in ELC settings, the vocabulary used and the importance of child and educator interactions to promote the physical development and movement.

10:00am: Morning Tea

10:30am: Breakout: Session 1

Rotation 1

Presented by Dr Rosalyn Muir

How do young children learn to take charge of their own thinking?

This workshop delves into meta cognition, thinking about thinking, and why it's a game-changer in early childhood education. Discover what meta cognition really is, why it's crucial for learning and self-regulation, and what it looks like in practice. Walk away with practical, play-based strategies to support children as they become more aware, more reflective, and more independent in their learning. Come curious - leave empowered!

Rotation 1

Presented by Lili-Ann Kriegler

The Power of Play: Breaking the False Dichotomy Between Learning and Play

Are you tired of having to choose between play and learning? Caught between fears of 'just playing'; and worries about damaging creativity through direct teaching? This session shatters the false dichotomy that's paralysing early childhood education. Drawing on recent AERO research highlighting the vital role of intentionality, discover how structure can amplify creativity rather than limit it. Explore the Four Exponential Knowledge Components (Know, Connect, Mobilise, Communicate) that transform simple interactions into powerful learning experiences. Then master the Seven Dynamic Learning Zones – a practical framework that enables educators to transition fluidly between child-led and educator-guided experiences with competence and ease. From Free Play to Auto-Generative Creativity, learn when to step back, when to step in, and how to honour both children's agency and learning goals simultaneously. Discover how every material in your environment – from popsicle sticks to play-dough – holds unlimited potential for conceptual understanding and language development. Perfect for educators, leaders, and anyone seeking permission to plan real learning while safeguarding creativity and child agency.

Key Takeaway: You don't have to choose between play and learning – intentional structure is the bridge that amplifies both.

Rotation 1

Presented by Dr Rachel Jones

Enough Sitting – Get Ready to Move!

This interactive and hands on workshop will explore new and innovative ideas to promote physical development and movement in ELC settings. Both the inside and outside environments provide excellent affordances for movement and physical development. The workshop will provide a platform to discuss ideas, resources and will encourage all educators to think creatively about their pedagogy and practice to promote movement and physical development.

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11:30am: Breakout Session 2

Rotation 2

*Presented by Dr Rosalyn Muir
Repeat of first session*

Rotation 2

*Presented by Lili-Ann Kriegler
Repeat of first session*

Rotation 2

*Presented by Dr Rachel Jones
Repeat of first session*

12:30pm: Lunch

1:15pm: Tour of KDS Kindergarten

1:30 – 2.30pm: Breakout Session 3

2.30 – 3.00pm: Panel

Rotation 3

*Presented by Dr Rosalyn Muir
Repeat of first session*

Rotation 3

*Presented by Lili-Ann Kriegler
Repeat of first session*

Rotation 3

*Presented by Dr Rachel Jones
Repeat of first session*

3:00 – 3.45pm: Keynote

Presented by Lili-Ann Kriegler

Learning is a Loop, not a Line: The Infinity Learning Loop That Changes Everything

What if everything we thought we knew about child development was only half the story?

This dynamic closing plenary explores the Infinity Learning Loop – the powerful, reciprocal relationship between children and their environments that transforms our understanding of development, informs curriculum design, and shapes educational policy. Drawing together insights from the day & presentations on physical development, executive function, and play-based learning, discover how children don't just receive from their environment – they actively create it. As children develop, this loop amplifies, gaining power and sophistication. Learn why early childhood educators are uniquely positioned as architects of amplifying learning loops, not just deliverers of content. Leave with five research-backed, immediately implementable strategies that transform your practice tomorrow. Perfect for educators, leaders, curriculum designers, and policy makers invested in maximising the transformative potential of early learning environments.

Key Takeaway: You are not separate from the learning loop – you ARE the loop.

Closing Remarks 4:00pm

Conference Closes