

Media Release

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



Friday, 8 November 2024

CELEBRATING OUR VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS AWARDS WINNERS

The winners of the 19th Victorian Early Years Awards have been unveiled – recognising the outstanding people and programs that support and nurture our youngest Victorians.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn congratulated the 10 winners and 17 finalists at the 19th annual awards ceremony last night, acknowledging their creativity, talent and professionalism supporting Victorian children from birth to eight years and their families.

The Minister's Award was presented to Jacinta Anderson, an early childhood teacher at Moe Heights Preschool, who supports children's growth and development through fun and fulfilling learning experiences tailored to each child's needs.

Pauline Dent, from Rosedale Uniting Early Learning, was named Early Childhood Teacher of the Year and Margot Serena, from Craig Family Centre, was named Educator of the Year – both for demonstrating innovative and excellent practice in early childhood education and care.

Mildura Rural City Council's innovative Enrol to Kinder Day was recognised for helping families overcome barriers to kindergarten enrolment. More than 120 families attended the community event where parents received help completing enrolment forms and obtaining paperwork such as birth certificates and receiving immunisations.

Rosedale Uniting Early Learning leads the sector in integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture into every area of learning, including play, arts and crafts, and language. The kinder has made a positive impact on Koorie families with specialised staff training and partnerships with local elders who share their culture.

Go Goldfields' Maryborough drop-in centre, The Nest, focuses on building confident and capable parents in a safe and supportive environment. The Nest ensures parents don't navigate early parenting challenges alone by providing multiple services and fostering a strong sense of community.

Awards were presented in four other categories, with all winners receiving a \$15,000 grant to develop and share their inspiring work with their communities.

The Victorian Early Years Awards celebrate the outstanding work of the early years sector at improving the health, wellbeing, learning and development of children from birth to eight years and their families. The awards recognise leadership, outstanding achievement, exceptional dedication and innovation.

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

"These awards celebrate the leadership, outstanding achievement and exemplary practice of Victoria's early years professionals, whose skill and dedication gives every child the best start in life."

"This year's finalists again exemplify the innovative work happening in the early years sector every day to support the health, wellbeing, learning and development of Victorian children."

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Winners of the 2024 Victorian Early Years Awards

Category 1: Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning

Mildura Rural City Council in partnership with Connected Beginnings Mildura

Category 2: Supporting Parents to Build their Capacity and Confidence

Go Goldfields in partnership with Regional Development Victoria, Central Goldfields Shire Council, Maryborough District Health Service, Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Category 3: Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships

City of Ballarat in partnership with the Grampians Public Health Unit and Uniting Ballarat

Category 4: Promoting Children's Health and Wellbeing

Tiny Dots in partnership with Dot to Do Early Intervention

Category 5: Continuity of Early Learning

Go Goldfields in partnership with Central Goldfields Shire Council, Maryborough District Health Service, Best Start, Loddon Early Childhood Improvement Branch and all Central Goldfields kindergartens and schools

Category 6: Early Childhood Teacher of the Year

Pauline Dent, Rosedale Uniting Early Learning

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

Chloe Edgar, education leader at Discovery Tree Early Learning Centre

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

Rosedale Uniting Early Learning

Category 9: Educator of the Year

Margot Serena, Craig Family Centre

Minister's Award

Jacinta Anderson, early childhood teacher at Moe Heights Preschool