

FLYING START

EARLY CHILDHOOD AWARDS

NOMINATIONS PACK



Government of
South Australia

Flying Start

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

From the heart:

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples as the First peoples of South Australia and as custodians of the lands, waters, skies and Communities where we live, learn and raise children.

We recognise Aboriginal peoples as having the longest living culture, raising children safe and strong in their identity, Community, culture, and connection to Country.

We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and their role as the first knowledge sharers for children. We follow in their footsteps.

Aboriginal peoples, working with and for children, are central in shaping our work. Their wisdom, advice, and guidance enriches our practices, creating a more inclusive and culturally safe environment for children and families.

We respect Aboriginal peoples' ways of being, doing and wise practices guiding our continual learning. Together we walk and build stronger, more supportive Communities for all children.



ABOUT

Your comprehensive guide to the Flying Start Early Childhood Awards

The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) is proud to announce the launch of the inaugural Flying Start Early Childhood Awards.

Our educators, teachers, leaders and early childhood professionals shape how our youngest South Australians learn, grow, and discover the world. As we roll out 3-year-old preschool, the dedication of this incredible workforce is more important and visible than ever before.

These awards are a natural extension of our Flying Start reforms. They celebrate the dedication, expertise, and heart professionals bring to their roles every day.

By nominating a service or individual, you are helping to shine a light on the inspiring pedagogy, practice and care of educators and services that help children thrive in learning and in life.

What are we celebrating?

We want to shine a light on all the amazing people across the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector working in:

- Long Day Care
- Sessional Preschools
- Aboriginal Organisations
- Allied health and community service organisations.

Whether it's a teacher who creates an amazing learning environment, a service that goes above and beyond for its local community, or a leader who inspires their team, we want to hear their stories.

Please note, applications are welcome across the sector and are not specific to Flying Start Partner Services.



The 2026 Flying Start Early Childhood Awards Timeline

| Date | Milestone | What it means |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 10 June 2026 | Nominations Open | Applications open across the ECEC sector |
| 10 June – 31 July 2026 | Nomination timeframe | This is your window to nominate. All entries must be submitted via the online portal by 5.00pm on Friday 31 July. |
| August 2026 | Judging Period | Our OECD panels will review all submissions to select our finalists and winners. |
| Wednesday 2 September 2026 | Finalists Announced | Coinciding with Early Childhood Educators Day, the finalists for all 7 categories will be publicly announced. |
| September 2026 | Finalist Photography | Professional photographers will visit the finalists at their services to capture “Practice in Action” for the awards ceremony. |
| 14 October 2026 | Awards Ceremony | Winners will be announced at an Awards Ceremony. |

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Submission Deadline

The nomination portal will automatically close at 5.00pm on Friday, 31 July 2026. Late entries cannot be accepted to ensure the judging process remains fair and on schedule.

Early Childhood Educators Day (September 2)

We have intentionally timed our Finalist Announcement to coincide with this national day of recognition. We encourage all services to use this day to celebrate their finalists and acknowledge the hard work of their entire team.

Finalist Photography

If you are named a finalist, our team will work with you during September to arrange a site visit. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your service’s environment and daily practice to the wider ECEC sector.

Note: Photos or videos of your service or an individual will be screened at the Awards ceremony and on OECD’s social media channels. Please be prepared to complete a Media Request form.

HOW TO NOMINATE

How to Nominate?

The Flying Start Early Childhood Awards are open to all early childhood professionals and services working across long day care, sessional preschools, Aboriginal organisations, allied health and community services in South Australia.

You may nominate:

- yourself or your service
- a colleague
- a service
- a provider
- a community service organisation (for example, allied health organisation)

If you are nominating someone other than yourself, please ensure that you have obtained their permission prior to submitting the nomination. Please also be prepared to include up to two referees to endorse your application.

Taking the time to nominate a colleague or a service is a great way to show how much you value their hard work.

Follow these 5 steps to complete a nomination.

Step 1: Select the Right Category

Read the 7 Award Categories and choose the one that best fits the person or service you want to nominate.

Step 2: Get Permission

Before beginning the application, you must speak with the person or service you are nominating and ensure all required permissions are in place.

- The individual or service must be aware that you are nominating them and agree to be nominated.

- By submitting a nomination, you agree to photos being taken at your site and shared publicly if you are selected as a finalist.
- For **individual nominations**, approval must also be obtained from their service and/or approved provider to participate in the nomination and any related promotional activities. This approval is completed as part of the online application process.
- For **service nominations**, approval must be obtained from the approved provider to participate in the nomination and any related promotional activities. This approval is included as part of the online application process.
- All permissions and approvals should be confirmed prior to submitting the nomination.

Step 3: Writing Your Nomination

When preparing your nomination for the Flying Start Early Childhood Awards, keep the following in mind:

- focus on one or two strong example(s) that demonstrates excellence across all criteria
- provide clear context, including the early childhood setting, community, or initiative involved
- use headings, subheadings, and bullet points if this helps to tell the story
- write in plain English, ensuring your nomination is easy to understand
- avoid acronyms and do not rely on assumed knowledge of early childhood programs or systems
- you may include up to 250 words per section, allowing you to provide sufficient detail and meaningful examples.

Step 4: Supporting Evidence

- You can upload up to 3 attachments (like photos, a short video, or feedback from a parent or carer to support your nomination.

Note: The judges look at your written answers first, so make sure your main story is in the nomination form, not just in the attachments!

Step 5: Submit and Approve

Make sure your application, including supporting documents, is submitted by no later than 5:00pm on Friday, 31 July 2026.

Helpful Tips for Success

- **Keep it Simple:** use plain English. Clear stories about improving children’s outcomes are what we are looking for.
- **Word Limits:** there is a limit of 250 words for each section.
- **Focus on Impact:** the judges will be looking for how the investment has changed a child’s life or impacted a community.



ENTRY GUIDELINES

2026 FLYING START EARLY CHILDHOOD AWARDS ENTRY GUIDELINES

Eligibility

- Categories are open to all employees within the ECEC sector in South Australia including eligible individuals, or services.
- Individuals and services may only submit one entry per year, and nominations must be submitted in one category only.
- Individuals who are nominated as part of a partnership or collaboration cannot submit a separate individual nomination in the same year.
- Service nominations may include multiple members, provided all have made a significant contribution to the achievement or activity.

Note: *The Outstanding Partnership & Collaboration Award category is open to collaborative partnerships and programmes where services work together to thoughtfully support children's learning, outcomes and wellbeing. It celebrates partnerships that bring together ECEC services, Child Health Development Checks (CHDC), allied health services, councils, schools, community organisations, and/or Aboriginal organisations.*

Good Standing and Due Diligence

- All shortlisted nominees must be in good standing with the OECD, regulator(s) and the broader community.
- The OECD will conduct endorsement checks and due diligence on all finalists.
- The OECD reserves the right to remove nominees from the Awards program at any stage if concerns are identified.

Nomination Requirements

- All sections of the nomination form must be completed in full.
- Information provided in the nomination fields may be used for marketing and promotional purposes.
- All decisions made by the judging panel are final, and no correspondence will be entered into regarding outcomes.

Finalists

- Finalists may be featured in promotional materials, including photography and showcasing their contributions and practice.
- Finalists (and nominators, where applicable) must be available for an interview and photography session in September of 2026. The OECD will confirm dates and times directly with finalists.

Awards Ceremony Attendance

We look forward to celebrating with our finalists!

Finalists are expected to be available to attend the Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 14 October 2026 from 5.30pm – 8.30pm.

Each individual finalist will be offered up to 3 tickets for colleagues to join them on the night.

Each service finalist will be offered up to 10 tickets for team members/provider representatives to attend.

For service nominations, ticket allocations may vary depending on venue capacity.

Prizes

Award recipients across the Flying Start Early Childhood Award categories will receive prizes in the form of a grant.

Prize funding is designed to strengthen early childhood practice and must be used for:

- Professional learning and development
- Activities that support engagement with children, families, and the community (including Aboriginal Community)
- Resources, tools, or initiatives that enhance quality practice within early childhood settings or service areas.

Professional Learning Grant

Winners of individual Flying Start Early Childhood Award categories will receive a **\$10,000 professional learning grant** to support their ongoing development.

This applies to recipients of:

- Early Childhood Educator of the Year
- Early Childhood Teacher of the Year
- Excellence in Early Childhood Leadership Award
- Aboriginal Early Childhood Award (where awarded to an individual)

The grant may be used for:

- professional learning expenses
- reasonable travel and accommodation, in line with Australian Taxation Office (ATO) rates.

Funding is capped at the stated amount. Recipients are responsible for managing any additional costs that exceed the grant value.

Service Grants

Winners of Flying Start Early Childhood Award service categories will receive a **\$10,000 service grant** for professional learning and development within their service.

This applies to recipients of the:

- Warm and Welcoming Award
- Outstanding Partnership and Collaboration Award
- Uplifting Quality Award
- Aboriginal Early Childhood Award (where awarded to a service)

The grant is intended to support:

- resources, materials, or tools to strengthen practices
- professional learning and development initiatives
- staff backfill and release time to support planning, research, and implementation.

Eligible expenses may include:

- paid release time, backfill, travel, or accommodation to participate in professional learning (travel and accommodation should align with ATO reasonable rates)
- formal professional learning such as conferences, workshops, seminars, online courses, subscriptions, or relevant professional resources.

Funding is capped at the stated amount. Recipients are responsible for managing any additional costs that exceed the grant value.

Promotion and Participation

Winners and finalists are required to participate in the Early Childhood Awards promotional activities before and after the ceremony, as requested by the OECD.

This may include:

- media articles
- website, photography and video content
- social media content
- promotion of the Awards program in future years.

Judging Process

All nominations are subject to an initial review by the OECD before progressing to the judging panel to ensure they:

- are complete and meet eligibility requirements
- do not raise probity concerns
- align with recognised early childhood frameworks and quality standards in South Australia.

Assessment

Eligible nominations are assessed through a structured process:

- a judging panel, appointed by the OECD, will independently assess and score nominations against the published criteria. The independent assessment is conducted via Awards Force, an online awards management platform, with submissions allocated to judges based on their expertise
- the panel will convene to undertake a consensus discussion, finalise scoring, and determine a shortlist for each category, typically comprising up to three nominees
- reference checks will be conducted for shortlisted nominees. Applicants or referees may be contacted to verify information or provide clarification
- the panel will consider all relevant information and determine the finalists and overall winner for all 7 categories

Additional considerations

- the Aboriginal Early Childhood Award will be assessed using a culturally guided approach, supported by the Aboriginal Leadership Committee

- for service-based nominations, relevant quality ratings and assessment outcomes may be considered
- additional checks (e.g. legal, compliance, conduct, or ethical matters) may be undertaken where required.

The OECD reserves the right to remove a nomination from consideration, or not present an award in a category, if standards are not met or concerns are identified.

Finalist Selection and Recognition

Finalists will be notified by phone and confirmed via email by Wednesday 2 September. All decisions are final and remain confidential until publicly announced.

By accepting finalist status, nominees agree to:

- participate in promotional photography, audio, and/or video
- grant permission for ongoing use of this material by the OECD.

Nomination materials become the property of the Office and may be used to promote the Awards and showcase excellence in practice.

Finalists and winners may be invited to contribute to sector learning, departmental initiatives, or promotional opportunities.

CONTACT

Flying Start Early Childhood Awards Team

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FLYING START
EARLY CHILDHOOD AWARDS

AWARD CATEGORIES



Award Category 1: Warm & Welcoming Award (Service)

Award Category 2: Uplifting Quality Award (Service)

**Award Category 3: Outstanding Partnership &
Collaboration Award (Service)**

**Award Category 4: Aboriginal Early Childhood Award
(Individual or Service)**

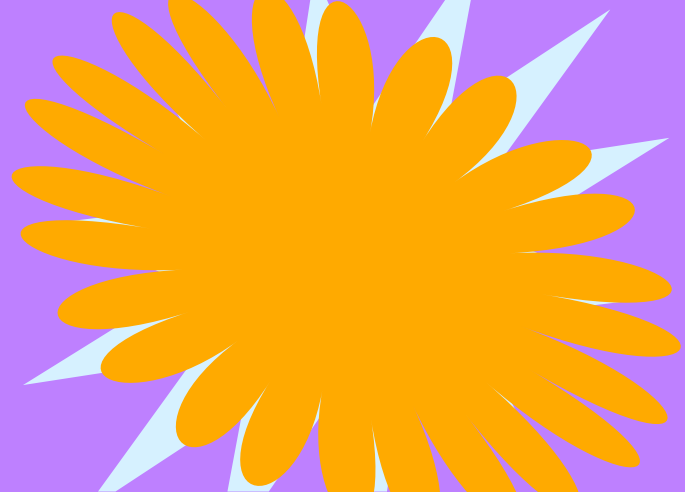
**Award Category 5: Early Childhood Educator of the Year
Award (Individual)**

**Award Category 6: Early Childhood Teacher of the Year
Award (Individual)**

**Award Category 7: Excellence in Early Childhood
Leadership Award (Individual)**

AWARD CATEGORY 1:

WARM & WELCOMING Award



Purpose of the Award

This award recognises ECEC services that create warm, welcoming places where children and families belong and genuinely want to be.

It celebrates services that actively partner with families, and the broader community, to support enrolment and attendance of children, strengthen relationships, foster belonging, and support families in meaningful ways.

These services are inclusive, trustworthy, and culturally safe, recognising that strong family and community connections are central to giving children the best possible start in life.

Eligibility

This award is open to approved ECEC services in South Australia, including:

- Long Day Care
- Preschool (Government and Non-Government)

Services may choose to highlight a specific family engagement initiative, family support program or community partnership as part of their nomination.

Services of all sizes and contexts are encouraged to nominate. What matters most is not scale or resources, but the difference everyday practice makes for children and families in our local community

This award particularly recognises services that demonstrate inclusive practices for all children and families, including those experiencing vulnerability or requiring additional support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- children with disability or developmental delay
- children with additional needs (e.g. behavioural, social-emotional, health or learning needs)
- children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage (e.g. financial hardship, housing instability, family stress)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children in out-of-home care or with complex family circumstances.

Services should demonstrate how their practices intentionally support equitable access, meaningful participation, and a strong sense of belonging for these children and families.

The Application Process

There are two steps in the application process.

Step 1: Respond to the selection criteria.

- up to 250 words per question
- write in plain English
- optional: up to 3 attachments, which could include a short testimonial, photo, video or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) excerpt.

Step 2: Reference and endorsement

Provide contact details for a referee (up to two) who can support your nomination

Selection Criteria

Nominees should address all criteria below.

Please briefly outline the work, initiative, or collaboration to provide context for the application and assist the judges in their assessment.

1. Creating a Culture of Belonging: Describe how the service creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for children and families, beginning with the outreach and first point of contact.

Consider how the service intentionally supports all children and families to feel valued, respected, and included from their earliest interactions with the service.

Tip: Demonstrate how the practices actively foster a sense of belonging for children and families from diverse backgrounds, cultures, languages, and abilities, including those experiencing vulnerability or requiring additional support.

Describe how the environment, communication approaches, and enrolment processes reduce barriers and strengthen engagement, particularly for families who may need additional support to connect.

2. Authentic Partnerships in Practice:

Describe how the service works in sustained and meaningful partnership with families and communities to support the learning and wellbeing of all children.

Highlight how this approach is embedded in everyday practice and reflects a commitment to building strong, respectful relationships across your service.

Tip: Provide examples that demonstrate how ongoing collaboration with families and communities has positively influenced outcomes for children, reflecting a consistent and service-wide approach.

Consider how the service builds trust and maintains respectful relationships with all families, including those experiencing vulnerability or whose children have additional needs. This may include

how the service collaborates with community services, adapts communication approaches, and works alongside families to respond to the individual strengths, circumstances, and needs of each child.

3. Impact and Sustainability: Describe the impact of the family and community engagement practices over time, and how these approaches are sustained within the service.

Highlight the difference the practices have made to outcomes for children and families, and how they are embedded as part of ongoing service delivery.

Tip: Provide evidence of impact and continuity, such as family feedback, increased participation, smoother transitions, and practices that are maintained over time, including through staff changes.

Consider how the approach has improved outcomes for children and families, particularly those who may face barriers to participation or require additional support. This may include improved attendance, stronger family confidence, increased inclusion, or better access to services, as well as how these practices are embedded and sustained.

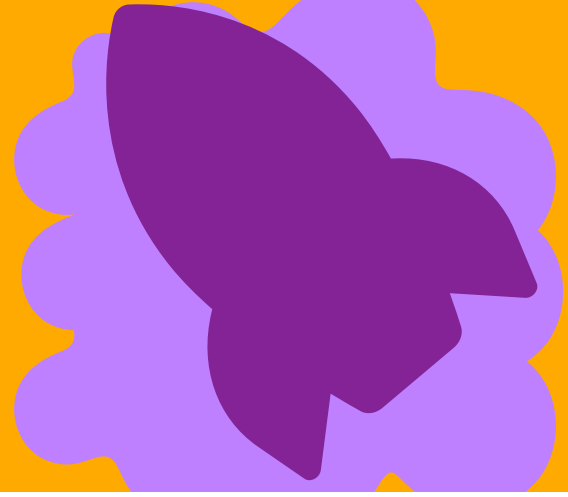
Nomination Tips:

Applications should reflect inclusive, equitable practice and demonstrate how services support children and families experiencing vulnerability or requiring additional support.

- **Focus on impact**, explain what changed for children or families, not just what was actioned.
- **Be specific**, show how the approach leads to positive outcomes for children and families. One clear, specific example is better than many, to demonstrate your impact.
- **Use everyday language**, write the way the practice/initiative would be explained to a colleague
- **Services of all sizes and contexts** are encouraged to apply.

AWARD CATEGORY 2:

UPLIFTING QUALITY Award



Purpose of the Award

The Uplifting Quality Award recognises ECEC services and Approved Providers that have made meaningful progress in lifting the quality of their service/s and practice across all Quality Areas.

It also celebrates strengthened practice over time, moving from working towards to meeting, or from meeting to exceeding, the National Quality Standards.

These services demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement through warm and responsive practice, intentional play-based learning and embedded reflective practice.

This award recognises whole service growth that has led to improved experiences and outcomes for children

Eligibility

This award recognises services or Approved Providers that have demonstrated sustained improvement in quality over time within South Australia.

Eligible nominees include:

- approved ECEC services located in South Australia
- approved providers who support improvement across one or more services, noting that while the approved provider may be based outside South Australia, the service(s) they are nominating must be located within South Australia

- services that have demonstrated progress within the National Quality Standard
- services showing an ongoing commitment to quality improvement and reflective practice.

The Application Process

There are two steps in the application process.

Step 1: Respond to the selection criteria.

- up to 250 words per question
- write in plain English
- optional: Up to 3 attachments, which could include a short testimonial, photo, video or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) excerpt.

Step 2: Reference and endorsement

Provide contact details for a referee (up to two) who can support your nomination

Selection Criteria

Nominees should address **all** criteria below.

Please briefly outline the work, initiative, or collaboration to provide context for the application and assist the judges in their assessment.

1. The Improvement Journey: Describe the service or provider's journey to improve quality, including the key areas of focus and the approach taken to strengthen practice.

Outline what prompted the improvement process, such as assessment and rating outcomes, team reflection, or feedback from families, children, or the community.

Tip: Clearly demonstrate the starting point for the improvement journey and the key strategies used to drive change across the service.

Consider how improvements were planned and implemented, and how they contributed to building stronger, more consistent practice over time.

2. Embedding Quality Practice: Describe how quality improvements are embedded in everyday practice across the service.

Highlight how changes are reflected in daily routines, relationships, and learning experiences, and how they support consistent, high-quality outcomes for children.

Tip: Demonstrate how improvements are sustained through intentional, play-based learning approaches, reflective practice, and shared understanding among educators.

Consider how educators are supported to understand, contribute to, and continuously strengthen quality practice within the service.

3. Impact on Children and Families: Describe the impact of the quality improvements on outcomes for children, families, and the service.

Highlight how these improvements have enhanced children's learning, development, and wellbeing, as well as family engagement and confidence.

Tip: Provide clear evidence of the difference the improvements have made, such as changes in children's engagement, wellbeing, family confidence, or service practice, and how the impact is measured and monitored over time.

Consider how feedback, data, and reflection is used to demonstrate success and how improvements are built upon to ensure sustained outcomes.

Nomination Tips

Applications should clearly demonstrate a service-wide commitment to continuous quality improvement and how changes in practice have led to better outcomes for children and families.

- **Focus on impact**, explain what has changed for children, families, and the team, and how these improvements are making a difference.
- **Tell the improvement story**, clearly explain where the service or Approved Provider started, what prompted change, and the key steps taken to lift quality over time.
- **Show how quality is embedded**, describe how improvements are part of everyday practice, including routines, relationships, and learning experiences.
- **Use everyday language**, write in a way that would explain the practice to a colleague.



AWARD CATEGORY 3:

OUTSTANDING PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION Award

Purpose of the Award

This award recognises collaborative partnerships and programs that support children's learning, development, health, and wellbeing outcomes. It celebrates partnerships that bring together ECEC services, allied health, health services, and/or community organisations.

These collaborations focus on understanding children's strengths, identifying developmental needs early, and responding through evidence informed, family inclusive approaches.

They play a critical role in supporting children experiencing developmental vulnerability or additional needs by enabling timely, coordinated, and targeted support. Working together, partners aim to do more to address developmental vulnerability and improve outcomes for 3 and 4 year old children, their families, and communities.

Through shared expertise and collaborative practice, they work to reduce barriers to participation, strengthen inclusion, and ensure all children can engage meaningfully in learning and everyday experiences.

This award reflects South Australia's commitment to shared responsibility, recognising that when professionals work together, children are better supported to thrive.

Eligibility

This award recognises partnerships between South Australian-based services and organisations that actively work together to support children and families.

- one organisation must submit the nomination as the lead partner. The lead organisation can be any of the partners involved; however, the partnership must include at least one ECEC service
- the nomination must clearly show active collaboration with at least one external partner
- the impact of working together on children's learning, development, health, wellbeing or inclusion must be demonstrated.

Partners may include (but are not limited to):

- other ECEC services
- organisations delivering child health and development checks (CHDC)
- allied health services (including those delivering Preschool Boost Programs)
- community organisations (including those delivering Preschool Boost Programs)
- local councils
- libraries or other community organisations.

Application Process

There are two steps in the application process.

Step 1: Respond to the selection criteria

- up to 250 words per question
- write in plain English
- optional: Up to 3 attachments, which can include a short testimonial, photo, video or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) excerpt.

Step 2: Reference and endorsement

Provide contact details for a referee (up to two) who can support your nomination

Selection Criteria

Nominees should address all criteria below.

Please briefly outline the work, initiative, or collaboration to provide context for the application and assist the judges in their assessment.

1. The Power of the Partnership: Describe the partnership or collaboration and its purpose, including the shared commitment to ensuring all children are supported to succeed.

Outline how the partnership was established, the needs it is responding to, and the children and families it supports.

Tip: Clearly identify all partners involved, their roles, and the shared goals driving the collaboration.

Consider how partners work together to identify and respond to children's learning, development, health and/or wellbeing needs. This may include how trust has been built, how responsibilities are shared, and how each organisation's strengths contribute to delivering coordinated and effective support.

2. Working Together in Practice: Describe how the partnership operates in practice to support children and families.

Outline the structures, processes, and approaches that enable effective collaboration and coordinated service delivery.

Tip: Demonstrate how collaboration is embedded in day-to-day practice through clear mechanisms such as shared planning, communication, and coordinated service responses.

Consider how partners work together using approaches such as shared care planning, information sharing, joint visits, coordinated referral pathways, co-located programs, regular meetings, developmental screening, including Child Health and Development Checks (CHDC), and implementation support to strengthen practice. Describe how these approaches support smooth transitions and consistent, high-quality outcomes for children and families.

3. Impact on Children, Inclusion and Early Support: Describe the impact the partnership has had on outcomes for children and families, with a focus on inclusion and early support.

Highlight how the collaboration has strengthened early identification of needs and improved access to coordinated support.

Tip: Provide a clear example demonstrating how the partnership has supported earlier identification of needs, improved inclusion, or strengthened outcomes for a child or family.

Consider how the partnership enables children to fully participate in play-based learning and supports their wellbeing and development. This may include evidence such as improved engagement, family feedback, smoother transitions, or more timely access to support.

Nomination Tips

Focus on the partnership, not just the service

This award is about working together. Show how each partner contributes value and how collaboration strengthens support for children and families.

- **Explain why it matters:** Share the need or gap that brought the partnership together.
- **Use one strong example:** A simple story often shows impact better than a long list.
- **Keep it practical:** Describe what happens day-to-day using everyday language.
- **Focus on the difference:** Highlight what changed for children or families because of the collaboration.

AWARD CATEGORY 4:

ABORIGINAL EARLY CHILDHOOD Award



Purpose of the Award

This award recognises an outstanding contribution to the ECEC sector that strengthens outcomes for Aboriginal children, families, and Communities.

It celebrates a service or an Aboriginal person whose work is guided by culture, strong relationships, and connection with the local Aboriginal Community.

Through everyday practice, leadership, advocacy or service wide approaches, recipients of this award demonstrate strong cultural responsiveness, support Aboriginal cultural safety, value shared decision making and show a deep commitment to supporting Aboriginal children to thrive.

Eligibility

This award is open to either an individual or a service.

Individual Nominees

- an Aboriginal educator, teacher, leader or professional working in the ECEC sector
- individuals at any career stage, including early career, experienced or senior roles.

Please note for individual nominations, the nominee must identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Service Nominees

- approved ECEC services
- services nominating a whole service approach, program or partnership
- services demonstrating ongoing, genuine engagement with Aboriginal families and Community.

Aboriginal led services, services with Aboriginal staff, and services working in strong partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are strongly encouraged to apply.

This award will be assessed using a culturally guided judging process, supported by the OECD's Aboriginal Leadership Committee. The OECD reserves the right to invite a suitable cultural external stakeholder/partner to be part of the judging panel.

Application Process

There are two steps in the application process.

Step 1: Respond to the selection criteria

- up to 250 words per question
- write in plain English
- you can write as a team or as an individual
- optional: Up to 3 attachments, which may include a short testimonial, photo, video or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) excerpt.

Step 2: Reference and endorsement

Provide contact details for a referee (up to two) who can support your nomination.

Selection Criteria

1. Culture as the Foundation: Describe how Aboriginal culture, Community and identity are central to everyday practice or service delivery.

Tip: Describe how Aboriginal children see their culture, Community and identity reflected in the environment, relationships and learning experiences.

For individuals, outline how your culture and cultural knowledge guides your practice and influence others you work with.

2. Strengthening Community Connections and Trust: Describe how respectful relationships with Aboriginal families and Community are built and genuinely maintained.

Tip: How are culturally safe spaces created where families feel welcomed, heard and respected?

Share an example of working with Community, such as local Elders, an Aboriginal organisation or families, that strengthened support for children.

3. Shared Decision Making: Describe how Aboriginal families and Community are supported to lead and influence decisions.

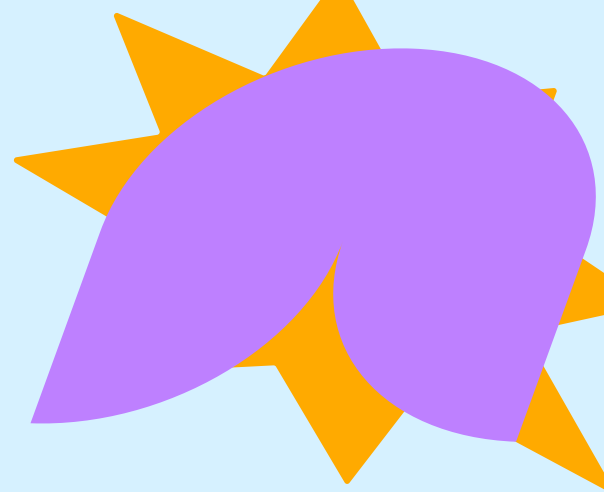
Tip: How are families or Community members involved in planning, delivering or reviewing programs or practices?

Share an example where a community led approach shaped how the service or practice operates.



AWARD CATEGORY 5:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR Award



Purpose of the Award

This award recognises a Certificate III or Diploma-qualified early childhood educator, at any stage of their career, who makes a positive difference for children every day through their pedagogical skill, and warm and inclusive practice. It celebrates educators who support every child to learn and thrive by creating safe, nurturing environments where children can build confidence and develop a strong sense of identity.

This award honours the impact of everyday practice and the important role educators play in children's learning, wellbeing, and development, particularly children who may need extra support

Eligibility

This award is open to early childhood educators working in South Australia.

- Certificate III or Diploma qualified educators (qualification must be recognised on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority qualifications page – ACECQA)
- indicate the highest level of qualification held
- educators currently working in a South Australian approved education and care service
- individuals at any stage of their career, including early career, experienced or senior educators
- educators who consistently demonstrate strong practice and a positive impact on children.

Application Process

There are 2 steps in the application process.

Step 1: Respond to the selection criteria

- up to 250 words per question
- write in plain English
- optional: up to 3 attachments, which may include a short testimonial, photo, video or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) excerpt

Step 2: Reference and endorsement

Provide contact details for a referee (up to two) who can support your nomination

Selection Criteria

Nominees should address all criteria below.

Please briefly outline the work, initiative, or collaboration to provide context for the application and assist the judges in their assessment.

1. Quality Practice in Action: Describe how children's learning, development, and wellbeing are supported through everyday practice by the nominee.

Highlight how the approach creates a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment, and reflects high-quality early childhood practice.

Tip: *Demonstrate how the nominee creates a safe, intentional and engaging environment for children, and what their high quality practice looks like through day to day work. This may include how play based learning is supported, how strong and positive relationships are built, and how ongoing reflection is used to review and strengthen practice.*

2. Inclusion and Supporting Every Child:

Describe how the nominee supports all children to experience inclusion, value, and grow in confidence.

Highlight how the practice responds to diverse learning needs, strengths, and abilities to ensure all children can engage meaningfully.

Tip: Demonstrate how their practice is adapted to support individual children, enabling them to participate, communicate, and experience a strong sense of belonging.

Consider how the environment, interactions, and learning experiences are tailored to meet children's individual needs and provide an example of how these adjustments have supported a child to feel confident, included, and engaged.

3. Making a Difference: Describe the impact of the nominees' practice on outcomes for children, families, and/or the service.

Highlight how the work contributes to children's learning, development, and wellbeing, as well as broader improvements in practice.

Tip: Provide clear evidence of the difference the work makes, such as family feedback, observed improvements in children's confidence or wellbeing, or contributions to strengthening team practice or workplace culture.

Consider how the impact is measured and reflected on, and how efforts continue to support positive and sustained outcomes.

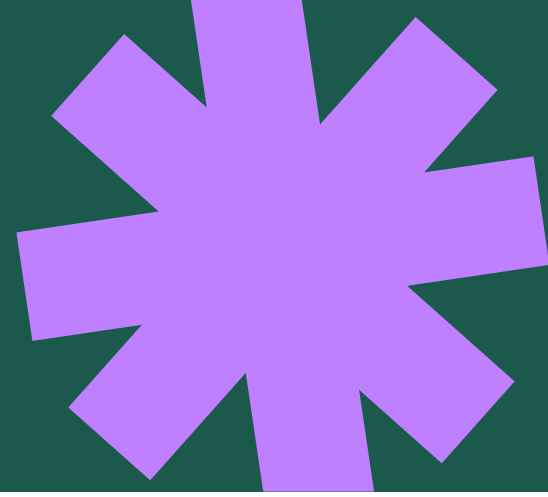
Nomination Tips

- **Keep it simple:** Write in your own words about everyday practice
- **Be specific:** Share one clear example rather than listing many activities
- **Show the impact:** Explain the difference made for children, families and th service
- **Use real moments:** Everyday experiences are just as valuable as big achievements



AWARD CATEGORY 6:

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER OF THE YEAR Award



Purpose of the Award

This award recognises a degree qualified Early Childhood Teacher, at any stage of their career, who leads high quality, inclusive teaching and learning through strong pedagogy and reflective practice.

It celebrates teachers who make a meaningful impact on children's learning, wellbeing and development through intentional program design, evidence informed practice and strong relationships.

The award particularly recognises teachers who support children with diverse learning needs, strengths and interests, and enables them to participate and thrive, including those experiencing developmental vulnerability.

Eligibility

This award is open to Early Childhood Teachers working in the Early Childhood Education and Care sector in South Australia, including:

- provisional or fully registered degree-qualified early childhood teachers with a valid teacher registration number as issued by the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia
- teachers currently working in a South Australian approved Early Childhood Education and Care service.

Application Process

There are 2 steps in the application process.

Step 1: Respond to the selection criteria

- Up to 250 words per question
- Write in plain English
- Optional: (up to 3 attachments) include a short testimonial, photo, video or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) excerpt

Step 2: Reference and endorsement

Provide contact details for a referee (up to two) who can support your nomination.

Selection Criteria

Nominees should address all criteria below.

Please briefly outline the work, initiative, or collaboration to provide context for the application to assist the judges in their assessment.

1. Pedagogy and Practice: Describe how the nominee's pedagogical knowledge is applied to deliver meaningful learning experiences for children.

Highlight how the understanding of pedagogy informs planning, teaching, and reflective practice, and supports intentional, responsive, and engaging learning.

Tip: *Demonstrate how the pedagogical approach guides play-based learning, observation, and assessment to support children's strengths, interests, and developmental needs.*

Consider how learning experiences are adapted and designed to promote ongoing development, and how work is collaboratively shared with teachers, educators, and leaders to strengthen practice. This may include shared planning, reflective discussions, and contributing to a cohesive, continuous improvement approach that supports positive outcomes for children.

2. Inclusion and Supporting Every Child:

Describe how the nominee's teaching is outworked to ensure all children can access, participate in, and engage with learning.

Highlight how their practice responds to diverse learning needs, strengths, and interests to support inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Tip: Demonstrate how the program is intentionally planned and adapted using observation, assessment, and reflection to support inclusive practice.

Consider how the teaching enables children to experience confidence, inclusion, and a sense of achievement. Provide an example of how the intentional teaching has supported a child or group of children to actively participate and engage in learning.

3. Demonstrating Impact and Professional Influence:

Describe the impact of the nominee's teaching on children's learning, development, and wellbeing, and how the practice influences others within the early childhood setting.

Highlight how their teaching supports positive outcomes for children and contributes to a culture of continuous improvement.

Tip: Demonstrate how the effectiveness of the teaching is elevated using evidence such as observations, documentation, and feedback from families or colleagues, and how this informs ongoing service improvement.

Consider how shared knowledge supports colleagues and contributes to professional learning within the team or service, strengthening collective practice and outcomes for children.

Nomination Tips

- **Keep it simple:** Write in your own words about everyday teaching practice
- **Be specific:** Share one clear example rather than listing many activities
- **Show the impact:** Explain the impact the teaching has on children
- **Use real moments:** Everyday teaching experiences are just as valuable as big achievements.



AWARD CATEGORY 7:

EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP Award

Purpose of the Award

This award recognises an individual who demonstrates outstanding leadership in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

It celebrates leaders who strengthen service quality, inspire and support others, and lead meaningful improvement that enhance outcomes for children, families, and educators.

This award recognises leadership. It celebrates people whose everyday actions, decisions, and relationships help create positive, inclusive, and high-quality learning environments.

Eligibility

This award is open to individuals working in leadership roles within the Early Childhood Education and Care sector in South Australia.

- Educators, Early Childhood Teachers, Centre Directors, coordinators or leaders working in an approved Early Childhood Education and Care service

Application Process

There are two steps in the application process.

Step 1: Respond to the selection criteria

- up to 250 words per question
- write in Plain English
- optional: up to 3 attachments, which may include a short testimonial, photo, video or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) excerpt.

Step 2: Reference and endorsement

Provide contact details for a referee (up to two) who can support your nomination.

Selection Criteria

Please respond to all 3 questions below.

Please briefly outline your work, initiative, or collaboration to provide context for your application and assist the judges in their assessment.

1. Leadership in Practice: Describe how the nominee's leadership is demonstrated in everyday practice.

Consider how their leadership is intentionally shown through actions, decision-making, and interactions with children, families and colleagues to support high-quality outcomes.

Tip: Demonstrate how leadership is evident in daily practice and contributes to a positive, inclusive and high-quality environment. This may include leading by example, guiding and supporting the practice of others, and contributing to a respectful and collaborative team culture.

You may wish to describe how this approach influences others, builds team capability, and supports continuous improvement within the service.

2. Supporting Others to Grow: Describe how the nominee's capability and confidence are supported and developed within the team or service.

Consider how growth is intentionally fostered through everyday practice, including support for educators' learning, reflection, and continuous improvement.

Tip: Demonstrate how a commitment to growth is shown through building the capability and confidence of others, as well as ongoing development as a leader. This may include encouraging reflective practice, support continuous learning, and strengthens practice across the team.

You may wish to describe how this approach supports both individual and team growth and include a clear example of how practice has been strengthened through this leadership.

3. Demonstrating Impact and Improvement:

Describe the impact of the nominee's leadership on children, families, the service, or the wider community.

Consider how their leadership contributes to improvements in quality, practice and outcomes across the service or community.

Tip: Demonstrate how the impact is achieved and sustained through leadership. This may include improvements in practice, increased engagement, or enhanced outcomes for children, families and the service. Evidence of impact may be shown through feedback, changes in practice, or measurable improvements within the service.

You may wish to describe how improvements have been led or supported and include a clear example that highlights the difference made.

Nomination Tips

- **Keep it simple:** Use simple language and real examples that show what the nominee does, and the results achieved
- **Focus on leadership and impact:** Highlight the nominee's actions, decisions and how they improved outcomes for children, families and their team
- **Show support for others:** Include examples of how the nominee has built team confidence, skills, and reflective practice.



1. Data Collection Statement

- 1.1 This Data Collection Statement relates to personal information collected by the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD), Government of South Australia, as the promoter of the Flying Start Early Childhood Awards (Awards).
- 1.2 The OECD is committed to protecting your privacy in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) under the Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA) and, where applicable, the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).
- 1.3 Further information about how we manage personal information is available in the OECD [Privacy Policy](#).

2. Contacting us

- 2.1 For privacy-related enquiries, you can contact the OECD by email at OECD.awards@sa.gov.au.
- 2.2 Alternatively, you can contact us on 1800 868 657 during business hours (Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm ACST)

3. Collection of Information

- 3.1 The OECD collects personal information where it is necessary for the administration, management, and promotion of the Awards.
- 3.2 Where it is reasonable and practicable to do so, the OECD will collect personal information directly from the individual concerned. However, information may also be collected from third parties, including where a nomination is submitted on behalf of another person.
- 3.3 Where personal information is provided by a third party, it is the responsibility of that party to inform the relevant individual that their information has been disclosed to the OECD.
- 3.4 The types of personal information collected may include:
 - (a) names;
 - (b) contact details;
 - (c) employment information; and
 - (d) information contained within nominations and supporting materials.
- 3.5 By submitting a nomination, or participating in the Awards process, you acknowledge that personal information will be collected, used, stored, and disclosed in accordance with this Data Collection Statement.

4. Purpose of Collection

- 4.1 Personal information is collected for purposes connected with administering and promoting the Awards as part of the OECD's government functions.
- 4.2 This may include:
 - (a) assessing and verifying nominations;
 - (b) administering the Awards process;
 - (c) communicating with nominees, nominators, and event participants;
 - (d) coordinating Awards events and associated activities
 - (e) public recognition and promotion of finalists and winners.
- 4.3 As part of the Awards process and associated events, photographs, video recordings, and other promotional materials may be collected and used by the OECD for communication, promotional, media, and public recognition purposes, including publication on government websites, social media channels, and other promotional materials.
- 4.4 The OECD will take reasonable steps to ensure that appropriate, child safety, privacy, and information handling requirements are followed in accordance with applicable legislation, policies, and government requirements, where photographs or video recordings are involved. This will be in line with a service and/or provider's policies and procedures around child safety.

5. Consequences of Not Providing Information

- 5.1 If the requested personal information is not provided, the OECD may be unable to:
 - (a) process or assess nominations
 - (b) contact you regarding the Awards; or
 - (c) register an individual or service's participation in Awards-related activities.

6. Disclosure of Personal Information

- 6.1 The OECD may disclose personal information where necessary for the purposes described in this Statement, including to:
- (a) members of judging panels
 - (b) contracted service providers, including event coordinators, communications providers, and information technology service providers
 - (c) other South Australian Government agencies where authorised or required.
- 6.2 All third parties engaged by us are required to handle personal information in accordance with applicable privacy laws and government policies.
- 6.3 The OECD will not disclose personal information for purposes unrelated to the Awards without consent, unless authorised or required by law.

7. Security & Data Retention

- 7.1 The OECD takes reasonable steps to protect personal information from misuse, interference, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure.
- 7.2 These steps include:
- (a) secure storage of electronic and physical records
 - (b) access controls that limit information to authorised personnel
 - (c) the use of secure systems and government-approved service providers.

- 7.3 Personal information is retained in accordance with the State Records Act 1997 (SA) and will be securely destroyed or de-identified when no longer required.

8. Cross-border Disclosure

- 8.1 Personal information is not routinely disclosed outside Australia.
- 8.2 If disclosure outside Australia becomes necessary, it will only occur in accordance with applicable legislation and government policy.

9. Access and Correction

- 9.1 You may request access to, or correction of, your personal information as held by the OECD.
- 9.2 Requests can be made by contacting the OECD using the details above or in accordance with the OECD [Privacy Policy](#).

10. Complaints

- 10.1 If you believe your privacy has been breached, you may lodge a complaint by contacting the OECD.
- 10.2 Complaints will be handled in accordance with the OECD [Privacy Policy](#) and applicable South Australian Government requirements.