



## GETTING OUT AND ABOUT – AWARD WINNING PRACTICE

***McKinnon Kindergarten's Margaret Chua has won Victoria's top early childhood road safety award. Margaret won the Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Award, sponsored by VicRoads, which was presented at the 2015 Early Childhood Conference, Together we grow – investing in our future, in May.***

Educator, Margaret Chua, won the 2015 Road Safety Education Award through her commitment to supporting children reach their potential and ensuring children are getting out into their community whilst learning valuable skills as road users.

McKinnon Kindergarten is part of the Glen Eira Kindergarten Association (GEKA) whose underlying philosophy is to equip

children to be part of the community. This philosophy underpins the premise of the Starting Out Safely program which is about educators working with children and their families to develop skills, behaviours and attitudes that assist children to be safer on our roads as passengers, pedestrians and users of bicycles/wheeled toys.

“At GEKA, our philosophy supports children to develop important life skills that will benefit them well into their future years. We believe that by supporting children to regularly visit the community, they will learn in a ‘real life’ way how to be safe and responsible in the wider world. McKinnon’s philosophy views children as “*capable and resourceful*

*learners who are active contributors to their own learning.*” With that in mind, it is the belief of all GEKA educators that children are capable of learning about the local and wider world by being an active part of it” said Melissa MacMaster, Manager, Education and Curriculum at GEKA.

Margaret won the award due to the way she and the teaching team incorporate road safety education into day to day activities, story-telling, group time and engaging with children when playing with toys and toy vehicles. However it is the regular excursions in the local area, including trips to the local supermarket or to the park and using public transport that make a real difference to children practicing their road safety skills.

“Winning this award is a huge achievement for the Kindergarten and the whole GEKA organisation. I was proud to deliver an acceptance speech with Margaret that acknowledged the hard work of the team at McKinnon and all our kindergartens for their commitment to safety awareness in the local community”.

**Elana Trevaks, Executive Officer, GEKA**

She uses Google maps and street directories with the children to plan the excursions and identify local landmarks, as well as look at places to cross the road and potential traffic hazards. The children then use the *Stop! Look! Listen! Think!* song when they are out and about. They particularly like taking public transport and waiting for the boom gate at the train crossing.

Road safety education is part of the broad curriculum at other GEKA services too.

“At GEKA, we believe it is essential that children are a part of the wider world. It helps to build their capacity as an active citizen of the world, enables the curriculum to be extended in authentic ways and also advocates for the capabilities of young children as competent co-contributors in the here and now” says Melissa, “In order for us to explore the world with children, we firstly need to ensure that children understand how to keep themselves safe.

“We embed and promote road safety education into the everyday curriculum; children learn to walk on the footpath away from the road side; to look both ways before crossing the road – and to cross at designated crossings; they even learn how to ‘walk’ responsibly and to take care of the person with them (holding hands in pairs). Children talk about what they know, with each other and with their families – the education we provide has a ‘ripple effect’ within the community as everyone learns from each other!”

The educators at GEKA take the time to support children to question and make sense of new information so they can apply it in real life. All GEKA educators eagerly participated in the Road Safety Education Professional Development session facilitated by ELAA. This provided them with an opportunity to get ideas and strategies for supporting children and families to participate in regular outings into the community and to be ‘road safe’.

After the session, GEKA provided information to families about the correct way to use child car seats and the recommended age/height requirements around when children should use a booster seat or can sit in the front seat. The educators found it a really worthwhile session and recommend it to everyone working with young children.

Families at GEKA services are provided with road safety education, via their children and also through the regular GEKA Newsletter. However, GEKA believes that the best way to educate families is having them participate in regular outings in the community. Educator’s lead by example when talking about road safety with the children and families join in.

GEKA has received wonderful feedback from families about the excursions and how getting children out into the

community makes a real difference to their knowledge of road safety and the wider world. A parent at one of their services commented after a local excursion “this is a day the children will never forget!”

Congratulations to Margaret, the team at McKinnon Kindergarten and GEKA for the great work they are doing in road safety education – the positive learning outcomes speak for themselves.

To organise a road safety professional development session please contact the RSE team at [rse@elaa.org.au](mailto:rse@elaa.org.au)

