

# The 2024 June Wangmann Memorial Lecture

## Speaker Bios



MACQUARIE  
University

### **Title: Stakeholder engagement: The fertile edges of early childhood practice**

This discussion about stakeholder engagement is built on stories about audacious early childhood educators practicing sophisticated stakeholder engagement in their preschool and community. I will map the actions taken by educators as they develop the alliances needed to deliver responsive ECEC to an underserved community in their postcode. These alliances occurred in the broader context of an early childhood market underpinned by policy which promotes competition between services. There is a market logic to stakeholder engagement: mapping customer journeys supports organisations to attract new customers and can lead to impactful change in business models. However, stakeholder engagement has far greater potential. Our current ECEC system is marked by disparities in access, resources, opportunities and cultural responsiveness. Like the educators from my case study, we all work in the competitive markets that dominate our current political economy. Market logics play out at the street level in services, they play out in organisations deliver training and advocate for policy change, they play out in our universities as we compete for students and research money. Strong stakeholder engagement takes us out of the siloes produced by markets and enables us to create fertile niches of democratic and transformative practice. Our discussion is guided by the delicate moves of educators who invited each other, allied professionals and families they knew and did not know to alter practice as usual and build a shared, sustainable early childhood ecosystem. These educators offer us insights into the power of stakeholder engagement. They help us move our gaze away from universalist approaches and market-driven competition. They allow us to recalibrate our gaze towards a democratic vision of responsive services and allies working together to serve all children.

### **Keynote:**

**Associate Professor Jennifer Skattebol | Centre Deputy Director TeEACH | Western Sydney University**



Associate Professor Jennifer Skattebol is in cahoots with exceptional educators to improve the outcomes of children and families in high poverty areas. Her research spans the systems which perpetuate disadvantage to practices and interventions that make a difference at the coalface. This transdisciplinary work requires knowledge of political economics, social policy, critical child development, and learning theory. In her most recent engagement with stakeholders, Somali refugee mothers taught her about the value of religious practices for children with autism and how ECEs might work productively at the interface of seemingly-conflicting cultural and early intervention beliefs. Jennifer is the deputy Director of Transforming early Education and Child Health Research Centre.

## Panel

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### **Paula Hind | Family Coordinator | KU Macquarie Fields Preschool**



A proud Wiradjuri woman- facilitates change as an Early Childhood Teacher trained family coordinator in an inclusive preschool. Her close relationships with local elders have endured through a generational transition where the baton has been passed from gentle 90-year-old uncles to a lively generation of 80-year-old aunts. Paula will share her learnings about local dynamics and the cultural protocols of passing wisdom and networks through the generations.

### **Natalie Grenfell | General Manager of Inclusion Programs | KU Children's Services**



**Natalie Grenfell** is the General Manager, Inclusion Programs. Natalie has a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood), Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) and Graduate Certificate in Business Administration. She is responsible for overseeing programs to support Inclusion and Diversity across KU Children's Services. Having worked in the sector for over 30 years, Natalie has worked in many roles from direct service delivery as a Centre Director, teaching Child Studies at TAFE, Children's Services Advisor and Early Childhood Consultant as well as senior executive roles in a number of not for profit Early Childhood organisations. Natalie is Vice President of NSW Early Childhood Australia.

### **Dr Catherine Jones | Early Childhood Teacher & Educational Leader | Goodstart Early Learning Kurri Kurri**



**Dr Catherine Jones** is an early childhood teacher and educational leader in the preschool room at Goodstart Early Learning Kurri Kurri. She has worked in the early childhood sector for over 25 years and holds extensive experience in teaching and leadership. Catherine's own research has focused on workplace well-being and job satisfaction, and she is involved in research projects concerned with increasing preschool participation for children in low socio-economic areas.