



**NECDA**

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

"Building a better Future for Children"

# NECDA'S 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## REPORT

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF  
SERVICE TO THE ECD SECTOR



# Empowering ECD: A Conference with a Difference

## The National ECD Alliance 2nd Annual Conference Celebrating 20 Years of Service to the ECD Sector

The National Early Childhood Development Alliance (NECDA) hosted its 2nd Annual Conference on 19 November 2025 in Cape Town. The event was a resounding success, bringing together key stakeholders from across the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector including a group of grade R's from Kids Buzz ECD .

The overarching theme, "Strengthening Partnerships," anchored the day's engagements, while the sub-theme, "Empowering ECD: From Policy to Practice," set the tone for insightful discussions and thought-provoking panel sessions.

In his opening address, NECDA Chairperson Mr. Rex Molefe underscored the importance of collaboration, innovation, and sustained commitment to advancing the ECD agenda. He highlighted the urgent need for innovative financing models, accelerated leadership development, and stronger partnerships to drive quality outcomes for young children.

### Conference Panel Sessions

**1. From Policy to Practice:** Closing the Gap Between ECD Legislation and Classroom Reality

**Panelists:** Rex Molefe (Motheo Training Institute Trust), Dadasai Taderera (SmartStart), Prof. Sigamoney Naicker (Reimagining Education), Dr. Monica Stach (Cotlands), Dr. J. Setshedi (DHET), Dr. Shirley Lloyd (CIPPT)

**Moderator:** Tracy Fortune (ELRU)

**2. Professionalising the ECD Workforce:** How Accelerated Leadership Elevates Teacher Status

**Panelists:** Bafana Luvuno (ETDP SETA), Queen Baloyi (Khanimamba), Tracy Fortune (ELRU), Tseli Scharer (Ntataise Lowveld), Sheila Martin (ORT SA Cape), Puleng Motsoeneng (Ntataise Trust), Dr. Shirley Lloyd (CIPPT), Ella Mokgalane (SACE)

**Moderator:** Rex Molefe (Motheo Training Institute Trust)

**3. Funding the Future:** Innovative Financing Models for Universal Quality ECD

**Panelists:** Siven Maslamoney (Yellowwoods Social Investment), Londi Lutuli (Sasol), Kulula Manona (Chief Director, DBE ECD Directorate), Daniel Mc Laren (Ilifa Labantwa)

**Moderator:** Lyndsey Petro (Grow ECD)



#### **4. Strengthening Partnerships**

**Panelists:** Rex Molefe (NECDA), Giles Gillett (NASCEE), Leonard Saul (South African Congress for ECD) represented by Melissa King, Ma-Lord Mefane (SANECD), Dr. J. Setshedi (DHET), Dr. Shirley Lloyd (CIPPT)

**Moderator:** *Mareldia Tape (Grassroots)*

#### **Official Proceedings and Addresses**

The conference was officially opened by Cllr. Francine Higham, Mayoral Committee Member for Community Services and Health in the Western Cape. The keynote address was delivered by Ms. Kulula Manona, DBE Chief Director, on behalf of the Minister of Basic Education, Ms. Siviwe Gwarube.

Programme Director Ms. Leigh-Anne Williams, well-known TV and radio personality from SABC 3's Expresso and Good Hope FM, delivered an eloquent and engaging programme throughout the day.

Closing remarks were offered by Mrs. Gloria Nkosi, NECDA Board Secretary (Hope Worldwide SA). A heartfelt vote of thanks was delivered by NECDA COO, Mrs. Abigail Peacock, who acknowledged the invaluable support of DGMT, OMT, Yellowwoods Social Investments, SmartStart, and many other partners, together with NECDA Treasurer Mrs. Caroll Warmberg (ITEC) who sincerely thanked Members of Board and Secretariat for the voluntary time invested to ensure the conference was a success.

NECDA Board Member Mr. Malcolm Mooi (Dr CL Smith Foundation) shared an inspiring video honouring past office bearers, strategic partners, and member organisations, showcasing their ongoing commitment and solidarity with the sector.

#### **Key Highlight**

A defining moment of the conference was the signing of the Declaration of Commitment Charter by all delegates. This symbolic and unifying action affirmed the collective dedication to strengthening partnerships and advancing universal access to quality ECD services across South Africa.

The 2025 NECDA Conference stands as a powerful testament to the strength of collaboration and the shared commitment to improving outcomes for young children. As the ECD sector continues to navigate both challenges and opportunities, gatherings such as this play a critical role in catalysing progress and inspiring collective action.

Yours in ECD  
NECDA Secretariat



