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## University of Melbourne early learning centre a finalist in awards

A Victorian research, demonstration and exhibition centre based at University of Melbourne has been named a finalist in the 2012 HESTA Early Childhood Education & Care Awards.

The facility — led by University of Melbourne Early Learning Centre Director Jan Deans and her team — was established to demonstrate innovative pedagogical practice and exemplary early childhood education and care service delivery.

The service, which is used by children, families, early childhood education professionals as well as the wider community, has been nominated for the Advancing Practice Award.

The judges commended the team, and the facility, for its commitment to the advancement of the sector through the production of interactive educational materials including web-based 'eclassrooms', regular demonstration seminars, and DVDs with supporting teacher notes.

According to Ms Deans, who has been involved in the sector for over 40 years, the aim of the interactive resources is to provide professional development opportunities that encourage early childhood educators to undertake critical reflection of practice.

"To help our children reach their potential as seamlessly as possible, we first have to ensure that early childhood educators have the most contemporary and accessible knowledge available," Ms Deans said.

"That's why, for teachers and student teachers, we have developed a range of DVD and web-based resources that focus on early childhood curriculum design and implementation, including project-based learning and practice, that responds to state and national standards platforms.

"We hope that, through providing these resources and actually demonstrating how to apply them, we can improve and support a high standard of practice, which in turn, will flow on to more positive outcomes for the children."

The centre offers knowledge across a large number of areas including management and leadership in early childhood, arts-based teaching and learning, education for sustainable development, coping and resilience in young children, and early-years literacy and numeracy.

Ms Deans and her team also share the centre's knowledge and resources internationally — through cross-cultural collaboration agreements and visiting teacher programs with nations including China, Singapore and Japan.

The winner of the Advancing Practice Award — and Outstanding Educator Award — will be announced at a gala dinner during Early Childhood Australia's National Conference, at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre on World Teachers' Day, Friday 5 October 2012. The Advancing Practice winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant, provided by ME Bank.

HESTA is one of Australia's largest super funds, with more than 750,000 members and \$20b in assets. It is chosen by more people working in health and community services than any other fund.

Visit [hestaawards.com.au](http://hestaawards.com.au) to book tickets for the event or learn more about the awards.

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