



**Early Childhood  
Australia**  
A voice for young children

# Newsletter

## Dear ECA Members and Friends,

At last the warmer weather has come with many signs that spring is well on the way. This issue is packed with updates, articles and an invitation to our next Provocation to Practice PL session.

Since our last newsletter ECA ACT Branch held our Annual General Meeting and dinner. We were thrilled to have Jo Krabman from the National Gallery of Australia talk about Arts and young children. Jo presentation tuned in our observation skills and how we all interpret what we see. The National Gallery is a fantastic place to take young children either as part of a group or as a family outing.

We also had an update on the National Quality Agenda which was presented by Wendy McDuff and Vanessa Smith from the ACT Community Services Directorate. As you can imagine it has been an extremely busy period as we move towards the implementation of the new National Quality Standards from 1 January 2012. Wendy and Vanessa provided insight in to what's happening behind the scenes and the direction

the ACT is heading in the coming months in relation to the national agenda.

A very big thank you to Jo, Wendy and Vanessa for speaking on the night and supporting ECA.

The 2011 / 2012 committee was voted in at the AGM and is as below;

Katie Brown – President  
Vanessa Whelan - Vice President  
Stacey Hodgson - Secretary  
Emma Layzell- Treasurer  
Marg Hourigan - Public Officer

### General Committee

Roby McLean  
Sharon Genero  
Sue Jennings  
Julie Rutups  
Robby McGarvey  
Michaeli Hillam  
James Lyra  
Stacey Naden  
Jessica Smith

Thank you to the 2010 – 2011 committee for all your hard work and ongoing commitment to ECA and to young children. I would also like to thank Vanessa Whelan who is our outgoing National Director. For the past six years Vanessa has represented the ACT on the Early Childhood Australia Board and has taken the ACT voice to these meetings. We have made a recommendation to ECA National for our new

Director who will be voted in at the AGM in October.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of our newsletter. This is an open forum for all ACT early childhood educators. If you would like to write an article, share your ideas or allow your children to have a voice please don't hesitate to contact the branch via our email [eacact@earlychildhood.org](mailto:eacact@earlychildhood.org).

Katie

“To take children seriously is to value them for who they are right now rather than seeing them as adults in the making”  
.Alfie Kohin

## Save the Date

ACT branch next  
Provocation to  
Practice PL session  
Saturday 5  
November 9am- 3pm



In July ECA ACT Branch sponsored two people to attend the Reggio Emilia Conference.

The branch was overwhelmed with applications. Thank you to everyone who applied.

Below are Joanne and Taryn's stories from the conference.

I was one of two people lucky enough to have been awarded a sponsored registration to the Hundred Languages of Children conference by the ACT branch of Early Childhood Australia. I would first like to thank the ACT branch for this fabulous opportunity and to encourage early childhood professionals to consider taking advantage of such opportunities in the future.

The Hundred Languages Conference was organised by the Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange held in Canberra from July 14 to 17. The keynote speakers at the conference are from Reggio Emilia, a small municipality in northern Italy that is renowned for their approach to early childhood education.

As you can expect from a four day conference, there were numerous opportunities to extend myself, both professionally and personally. A few of the highlights for me included listening to the keynote speakers (Angela Brozzi and Elisabetta Rasori), a presentation from Professor Mark Rose and the opportunity to interact and share ideas with colleagues from all over Australia.

Angela and Elisabetta spoke about the educational

approach in Reggio Emilia and provided details about several projects they had been involved with. These projects were awe inspiring and thought provoking and contained many ideas and practices that could be used in early childhood settings in Australia.

Another inspiring component of the conference was the presentation by Professor Mark Rose. He highlighted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is the oldest living culture in the world, and past educational practices have largely denied our society the opportunity to absorb and learn from this culture.

I also enjoyed the opportunity to interact with early childhood educators from around the country (and from New Zealand). These exchanges covered professional practice and provided an opportunity to compare our professional and personal experiences.

While I came away from the conference with ideas and enthusiasm, the challenge I now face is to translate these ideas into action. To do this, I plan to engage with staff, parents and community at my centre to take ownership of the ideas and implement the learning opportunities into our day to day practices.

Joanne Duncan from Totom Multicultural Early Childhood Centre

**Off to Reggio Emilia!** Taryn Cameron-Smith

Right, my bags are packed and I'm all set to travel to Reggio Emilia! Well, not really but after attending the Reggio Emilia Information Exchange Conference in Canberra recently I was so inspired and

I'm determined to one day visit the schools of Reggio. Hearing directly from Angela Barozzi (Pedagogista) and Elisabetta Rasori (Atelierista) was very inspiring and it is very easy to get all caught up in the excitement that you begin to lose sense of reality. No I can't pick up the Reggio program and drop it into my learning space; however I can adopt aspects of the Reggio approach and knit them into our culture and school philosophy. So instead of booking my plane ticket I have been working on what changes I can make to my learning space and program.

There were two things that stood out to me throughout the conference. The first being the important role of the atelier and atelierista. I would feel very fortunate to have access to an arts specialist on a daily basis and specific arts space in our school but as that is not realistic another approach needs to be taken. There is a definite emphasis on the importance of the arts and allowing children to express themselves through a range of good quality art mediums and tools. Since the conference I have begun to think about how I can provide the children with these resources and invaluable experiences on a daily basis in an enriching and authentic way. I am setting up experiences that children can choose to be part of through their daily investigations and encouraging them to use these materials for a range of reasons (for experimentation, to express their ideas etc).

Eventually I would like to have an arts area within my room with resources readily available for children to choose themselves depending on their need, and to incorporate the arts across our whole day linking it in with other parts of the program. On a daily basis I am asking myself 'how can I incorporate the arts at lunch time, through circle time and in our outdoor learning space?' and while this is a learning process not only for myself but also the children I think the process in itself will be of great benefit to each of us.

The other thing that stood out to me at the conference was the importance of listening to children. So often we are busy trying to organise our children into activities and pushing them into our predetermined outcomes that we don't actually stop and listen to their individual thoughts, ideas and questions. The pedagogistas from Reggio shared a few of their projects over the course of the conference. Their projects are too many and varied to go into detail but I understood them to have evolved from not just the teachers ideas but mostly from the children. Yes, the teachers do get together on a regular basis and discuss where the projects may go, what learning could take place and ideas they may have but ultimately they listen to the children. As teachers I think we so often feel we need to have all the answers but it is such an enriching experience if teachers and students can

learn together. In our learning space the term "let's google it!" has become part of our everyday language. I am also learning to stop and just listen to the children as they think aloud and share with me their ideas and questions. We often come up with more questions which lead us to more research and further learning experiences.

So while I would love to one day travel to Reggio Emilia and experience the schools there on a first hand basis I am going to get started with my own teaching practise and learning space. This is one of the first experiences I have had with the Reggio approach and it holds many of the educational philosophies of my own and I will continue to research it to learn and incorporate more into my practise. The conference certainly was an inspiring time and I hope I can continue to pass this excitement onto my children as we experiment, question, listen and learn together

## **ECA ACT Reconciliation Action Plan**

ECA, nationally, is committed to supporting reconciliation and as a branch we are committed to making it happen.

As a branch we are committed to creating a reconciliation action plan (RAP). The branch will be looking at other RAP's and how we can develop a respectful, genuine document which truly represents the ACT and the Early Childhood Services we represent. This plan demonstrates our organisations' commitment to forming, building and maintaining relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

The branch is still in the beginning stages of creating our RAP and are looking for involvement from our members. If you are able to send us your thoughts on:

What does reconciliation mean to you?

What does it mean for your organisation?

Send through your thoughts to [ecaact@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:ecaact@earlychildhood.org.au)

Together we can make a difference

ECA ACT Executive Branch

ECA ACT Branch would like to invite all Early Childhood Educators to our next Provocation to Practice professional learning session:

**Know, can do and understand:**

**Exploring planning, documenting and assessment practices in the EYLF**

Presented by Catharine Hydon. Melbourne based Early Childhood consultant and ECA National Director

Saturday November 5 2011

9am – 3pm

The Canberra Irish Club, 6 Parkinson Street, Weston.

Cost \$50 members and \$60 non-members

Morning Tea and Lunch Provided.

Please email [ecaact@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:ecaact@earlychildhood.org.au) to register.

Ensure you include your name, membership number (if applicable) and name of service you work for or course being studied .

Numbers are strictly limited. Payment will be on the day. Cancellations less than 72 hours prior to the event will be required to pay full registration fees.

## **National Board Update- By Vanessa Whelan**

### **National Council 7 th-8<sup>th</sup> October- Tasmania**

Thought I'd give you a quick update to let our new members know about how ECA National Council operates. Every year all the state branches and the National organisation come together in one of the states (rotating around) to share news and maintain close relationships with the branches and national organisation.

This two day council is a formal meeting where ECA shares information regarding the strategic directions and reports back to branches on how the year has progressed. All states also have the opportunity to share a snapshot of what each branch is working on and there is also time spent in workshops discussing current common issues. There is also a session where a guest speaker facilitates an information session that is of interest to the organisation and branches at the time in the past we have had speakers on Media, Communication, & Policy Changes by Government.

The evenings give opportunities for branches to mingle and network informally over dinner or a few drinks. This allocated 2 days is a worthwhile opportunity to see the organisation at its best driving forward the business of ECA with all branches at the helm.

This year the ACT branch is supporting five members of the executive to attend this year's council where we will discuss the ACT issues and national issues with our peers from all over the country. The branch that hosts the meeting is able to invite members as observers. This is a great way for newer ECA members to experience ECA at the National level I hope many of you get to attend council at some stage so you can experience the wealth & breath of ECA, your organisation. On our return we will be letting you all know the latest news from ECA in our next newsletter so stay tuned.

### **Leadership Forum 20<sup>th</sup> July- Canberra**

On 20<sup>th</sup> July ECA Leadership forum was held in the ACT for the first time. This gave an opportunity for all state branches to be involved in a consultative process around this new initiative. All branch Presidents were invited with the national board of Directors and ECA's CEO –Pam Cahir.

The forum was hosted by Margaret Young National President of ECA, and to quote Margaret Young "This will be a real step forward for us all in the ECA national partnership – an opportunity to together focus

On our roles and responsibilities as ECA leaders and consider the opportunities, challenges, and joys of this."

ACT President Katie Brown participated and contributed to this initiative which gave the ACT an opportunity to input at the coal front. As this initiative progresses we look forward to being a part of this exciting new venture in assisting the ECEC profession sector to promote & develop their leadership abilities.

### **National Board of Directors**

The National Board of Directors is responsible for the strategic governance of the organisation as well as being responsible for supporting communication between the national organisation and the branches. If you have any issues that you would like raise at a national level bring them up at our ECA meetings, by contacting Vanessa Whelan on 6207 4984 or [vanessa.whelan@cit.edu.au](mailto:vanessa.whelan@cit.edu.au).

## World Forum on Early Care and Education May 2- 6<sup>th</sup> 2011 Honolulu Hawaii



Aloha!!!

What a wonderful opportunity to meet with over 800 early childhood administrators, trainers, caregivers, public officials, and advocates from 74 countries gathered in Hawaii for the 2011 World Forum on Early Care and Education to share, learn and exchange ideas, research, and projects expounding the quality of programs for young children from a diverse range of early care settings. It was great to see the biggest representation of Delegates came from Australia this year with around 15 presenters coming from both Australia and New Zealand.

A Forum fact presented- States Since its inception over 4,000 early childhood professionals from 95 countries have participated in the world forum events since 1999. From your very first step in to the World Forum Arena- you know you are part of a very special Occasion!!!

The daily Forum program starts with a plenary session with speakers from various parts of the world- giving insights into the challenges and accomplishments experienced by families and young children in their various countries. These sessions are then followed by concurrent workshops which allow you to choose a session of particular interest.

Throughout the schedule the program is designed to enable lots of opportunities to encounter a plethora of ideas; provocations and insights, networking opportunities abound with in the forum schedule for self-introductions to new people and

reconnections to former acquaintances and links to as many resources as you wish!

Monday commenced with Registration and group collaboratives on various topics- I attended a group called the "Inclusion Working group" which was set up to identify and explore issues facing those of us who promote inclusive practices and positive outcomes for children with special needs (within our programs)- we were able to meet and share with colleagues who face similar obstacles and challenges, giving practical suggestions for success. Our leaders for the session were Anne Sivanathan Malaysia, Deepak Raj Sapkota Nepal and Dr Roberta J. Goldberg USA. We now have a global goal to keep connected and continue to work on the emphasis of including children with special needs in early care and education settings- sharing ideas, possible resources and possible strategies for overcoming the challenges.

For many of delegates Super Tuesday was a fabulous start to The World Forum

Ukulele Tour #18 with Kimo Hussey an absolute master ukulele player and teacher- he commenced the day by taking us to the Iliahi public elementary school (Na Kamalii O Iliahi) Home of the mighty dragons Ukulele group in Wahiawa



Mr Tom Yamamoto- and the beautiful children of Iliahi Elementary School welcomed us. We had a ukulele lesson on how the children are taught the rules and responsibilities of belonging to the group, followed by a fun

Hula lesson taught to us by the very patient-good humoured children! We were then treated to a 45 minute concert by the children, from here we visited the Ko'olau Ukulele factory to see the making of ukuleles- Interesting to learn that it takes 8 years to dry the wood before even starting to craft a ukulele (mostly koa wood)

Throughout the day Kimo spoke to us on his experience and the history of the ukulele and emphasised our unique positions as educators and facilitators of learning programs for young children and offered inspiration and encouragement -yes for us to indeed think of the possibilities of introducing and using the ukulele as a musical tool for teaching harmonies, beat rhythm and most of all the having of fun!!! - The Ukulele is also a powerful healing instrument for all who learn and play and for us to remember that the joy of ukulele music is good for the soul and heart!!! When we returned to the Sheraton we had our own lesson in the art of ukulele playing and as a very excited group we did make a melodious and harmonious tune- much to our mutual surprise and glee!

Many of us purchased Ukuleles and have returned to our places of work inspired to cultivate

These new found skills and knowledge and share with our staff and children the joy of learning to play the Ukulele.

A memorable presentation was Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> of May hearing from Professor Dr Sakena Yacoobi from Afghanistan who spoke about "Poverty and Children" She gave a heart wrenching experience of a father being forced to sell one of his children for two bags of wheat due to the devastation of extreme poverty- explaining the fathers deep remorse and sobbing in recounting why he was in this situation, to try and feed the other five children, he felt he had no other means of survival- Sakeena assured him of her organisations support and

thankfully was successful in re connecting the child with the family and said despite these desperate measures that many families are facing on a daily basis please do not be sad she urged - there are many positive things happening in Afghanistan for children and families.

Sakena as President and executive Director of the afghan institute of learning(AIL) leads a ground breaking and visionary organisation which works at the grassroots and empowers women and communities to find ways to bring education and health services to rural and poor urban girls, women and other poor and disenfranchised Afghans-Now helping over 350,000 women and children through it's educational learning centres, schools and clinics in both Afghanistan and Pakistan-she gave a very passionate delivery which saw us all shedding tears and reaching for the tissues!!!!

Several fellow Early Childhood Professionals from Canberra commented on how after attending the world forum- some for the first time, they felt energized and motivated to encourage and share with staff and educators all the new ideas and provocations gleaned.

On a personal level I found it was not only inspiring and motivating but a special time to renew friendships discuss and reflect on the past years exciting achievements, and be re-invigorated with new enthusiasm for the future possibilities.

Katherine Hellwig Director and Childcare Unit manager from Southside Community Services adds- "It was so inspiring and thought provoking it really made you come back to reflect on your practices and aspire to reach for the stars-everyone has had their batteries recharged and we all feel motivated with new insights to share.

Lastly as we bade farewell and one final Aloha to Roger and Bonnie(Co-founders for the World Forum Foundation) and our Hawaiian Hosts .

We agreed- we were all looking forward to sharing with our teams and fellow Colleagues , Early Childhood Professionals and Educators- this rare opportunity – we had experienced- a truly global exchange of diverse, inspirational, educational and social experiences which every single educator and staff member we work with contributes to

-Not only were the inspiring things what we saw and heard but

also with pride- our own everyday experiences - sharing the fantastic work we as teams-already do in our centers here in Canberra every day.

Please do look at the www. World forum foundation site and get a taste for what might become a personal goal to be at the next world forum. You won't be disappointed!-Mahalo!

Kia Ora Koutou katoa

Robby McGarvey(Director Manuka Childcare)

## Work Integrated Learning at Wiradjuri Preschool Child Care Centre

Wiradjuri Preschool Child Care Centre, located in the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra, has been staffed by undergraduate students for almost 20 years. In this time, pre-service students, mainly drawn from the third year cohort, have been selected to complete the teaching team working alongside permanent qualified staff and in this role they have delivered a program of education and care to the children enrolled in this community based early learning centre.

Wiradjuri has graduated almost 100 student teachers during this time. And these graduates now teach and work in a diverse array of workplaces, including government and private schools, preschools and early learning centres. Graduates also work in the Department of Education and other policy areas.

Until this year, students working at Wiradjuri, who are also enrolled in fulltime study, were unable to receive any academic credit for their work at the centre. Working at Wiradjuri was always situated alongside fulltime enrolment and participation in undergraduate studies. And while many of these units of study are related to working with young children none of them make explicit links to work within the centre.

Towards the end of 2010 two new units of study were proposed and eventually approved by the Faculty. These new units, *Early Childhood Curriculum and Pedagogy in Action* and *Knowledge, Identity and Ethics of Professional Practice* were specifically written to be linked to Wiradjuri under the banner of Work Integrated Learning. Students applying to work at Wiradjuri in 2011 had to commit to enrolling in these new units and to applying themselves towards successful completion of the units.

The units were designed to facilitate understanding of contemporary theories underpinning both curriculum development and professional identity. Students were required to participate in traditional face-to-face tutorials weekly as well as participating in online forums. Each unit contained a number of assignments directly linked to Wiradjuri. These included working as the curriculum leader, designing an audit of inclusive practices, reflecting on assessment for learning and using arts based enquiry to create a visual representation of the complexities of early childhood teacher identity.

The units are currently being evaluated and will be offered again next year. There is also a possibility that students situated in early learning settings other than Wiradjuri may be offered the opportunity of participating in these units. In addition to providing opportunities for students to work and study concurrently these new units also offer the prospect for students to engage in deep learning that is explicitly related to their own working context. This provides relevant and authentic occasions for engaging with both theory and practice in a deeply meaningful way.

The following comments are from students who participated in the inaugural presentation of these new units of study.

### **Johanna**

I am an undergraduate student studying a Bachelor of Education (Birth-8yrs.) As part of my studies I was selected to be a part of two new courses that were developed to be delivered in conjunction with working at the childcare centre at the University.

I feel that these units have been such a good opportunity to earn money while studying and also get an insight into what life will be like in the workforce in this particular area. Although practicum's offer an idea of what it's like to work in early years education, working for a year gives a greater understanding of the requirements and demands.

I feel that this opportunity has helped me to develop my ability to teach children and it has also given me the confidence to talk to staff and parents to address issues and communicate ideas. This structure, like anything new, still has to be refined but the basic concept is so appealing to people studying and needing part time work. I feel that this concept can be adapted to support individuals working in this type of environment and this will effectively lighten the load for students who are part time workers.

I am so grateful for this opportunity.

### **Hayden**

These two units of integrated learning have proven to be an interesting experience, personally, academically, and professionally. I was fortunate to have had a previous twelve months working at Wiradjuri, and I felt my experience was enriched by the inclusion of these units.

As a student, the main struggle in working at Wiradjuri has always been the balance of work and study. These units allowed us some relief from the workload as they recognised the sheer amount of experience and learning that occurs in the centre outside the normal university course. Prac placements are a great two or three week peek into the inner workings of a school, but the experience of working in, developing, and running a centre full time with the support of a mentoring teacher can give you that much more. In the same way, in combining our tutorials with our staff meeting, we were able to bring real and shared experience into the discussions that would lead to deep thinking being applied back in the classroom. I personally recall several times the conversations we had opening up a new path of thinking for me that suddenly changed how I saw children's learning and interactions, as well as the ethical issues they encompass.

Of course there is always a flipside. Having four units and doing assessments all the time is hard, but you get the chance to separate that and then work can be a bit of a break – a playground if you will. Having your work assessed reduces that a bit, and our planning and programming could be a little hurried as we worried about how it would look come grade time. However, I refer to my previous point that these units helped us really think about our practice, what was expected of us and how we could explore and extend

learning. In particular, I thoroughly enjoyed the arts-based representation assessment, wherein we created a work to explore our view of our own teaching body. It really challenged me to think about how I teach and what I value as an educator, and how I show this in my teaching.

I feel very grateful to have been able to participate in these units, and I am proud of the way they have helped me grow as an educator, and in some ways, as a person too.

### **Kate**

The two Early Childhood subjects I studied while working at Wiradjuri during semester one, *Early Childhood Curriculum and Pedagogy in Action* and *Knowledge, Identity and Ethics of Professional Practice*, provided valuable information and understanding of various concepts related to early childhood. I was introduced to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) - Being, Belonging and Becoming, and how to use assessment to maximise children's learning, as a tool for evaluating children and as a strategy for everyday learning. I support the socio-cultural approach to early childhood education as they both take into account the whole child including such things as children's abilities and interests, backgrounds, culture, relationships and their educators when assessing children's learning and development rather than trying to fit each child in a box and giving them a label. As I am a 'hands on learner', I feel fortunate to have gained both knowledge and skills from being able to practice the theory learned in the lecturers/tutorials while working at Wiradjuri. I have enjoyed participating in activities with the children, modelling behaviours and skills, communicating with children by talking and listening to them, nurturing and comforting them and developing good relationships with both children and their families. I believe I have gained a little more confidence on my journey toward becoming an early childhood educator as a result of both this knowledge and the practice.

Carmel Richardson  
Johanna English  
Hayden Whitfield  
Kate Conroy