



October 2006

[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw\\_branch/eceen.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw_branch/eceen.html)

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*Our Vision  
"an active,  
environmentally  
aware  
community that  
ensures a  
sustainable  
future for our  
shared world."*



ECA NSW Branch proudly  
auspice NSW ECEEN

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## Water Aware Centres

### What's Happening with Water in Early Childhood

Children Services of the NSW north coast (ie Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Richmond Valley shire councils), have been invited to take part in Rous Water's water education program. The **Water Aware Centre Program** aims to enhance the interest, knowledge and skills of Children Services and to encourage and guide their practices and policies towards sustainable water use.

A "**Water Aware Centre**" can tick these four boxes:

1. The **children** took part in a **water education session**. It was a fun introduction through story and song; to water, its value, uses and conservation.
2. The **Centre** had a **water audit** and created a **water conservation action plan**. Rous Water encouraged the Centre Director to pass this plan to the management for adoption and implementation of at least two actions.
3. The **parent community** was informed through a **display and flyers** to take away; about the program, their local water supply and Rous Water rebates and conservation incentives.
4. The **staff** incorporated **water conservation activities into their program planning**. They were supported with the loan of a bucket of Teacher Resources. This included a CD, posters, books, tapes, folder of information and ideas and a bag of water saving devices.



**Barbara Jensen, the Rous Water Education Officer** said 'I am having a positive response during the visits and from the evaluation forms. The teachers are aware of the importance of water conservation and their role in empowering children to participate. I am very encouraged that the Centres are taking the time to discuss water management issues. It is also valuable that the ideas and practices in one Centre can be shared with other Centres through this program'.

'A collaborative Pilot Research Project between the Queensland University of Technology and Rous Water has been developed by Julie Davis titled, 'The Impact and Potential of Water Education in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings'. Rous Water is delighted to have this opportunity for a thorough evaluation and for the collection of case studies', Barbara said.



For more about the program and some of the educational materials visit Rous Water's website, [www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au) find *Water School* and the *Early childhood* section.

**Thank you Barb for sharing your experience. Pictures courtesy Friends Childcare Centre.**

## From The Earth to the Table and Back by Rachael Kinsella & Marion McMahon

Carinya is a TAFE long day care centre located on Newcastle TAFE campus. We believe Carinya is a unique place to learn and that the cycles of life have particular importance in the learning experiences and lives of humans.

Young children are capable of understanding the concepts and rhythms of nature from a very young age and the children and staff in the Discovery Room (0-3 year olds) have been active in the exploration of growing, harvesting, cooking and sharing food.



These experiences reflect the importance of teaching, learning and The Practice of Relationships (NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services, 2003). The children involved are Isabella (2.9), Joachim (1.9), James (2.8), Jur (2yrs), Cholhok (1.9), Anuk (3yrs), and Taja (2.3). The photos tell the story but also raise many questions. Experiences such as these are Environmental education at work.



*Look at Joachim's face as he watches Taja pull up a potato. Does he know potatoes grow in the ground? Is this the first time he has seen something come from under the earth? Is it important for children to know where food comes from and what are the ethical dilemmas associated with this? Food for thought.*



It's time to prepare what we have gathered. Taja knows how to steady her knife while she is cutting.



Elli (3) told us she loved broccoli and she has a crunch fresh from the garden. It is now commonplace to see the children at Carinya in the playground eating raw broccoli much to family's surprise.

*It is a valuable experience for many people to try new foods in their different forms raw and cooked nutritious vegies. They have tended the broccoli from a seedling to maturity.*

The children were involved in the preparation and cooking process then served up the vegies, we all shared

*The social interactions and skills learned during this experience are enriching.*

*Cooking and eating together seems to connect people on so many different levels. We talked at the table about where the vegetables had come from and how good they tasted to connect the children's experiences of gardening and eating.*



## From The Earth to the Table and Back by Rachael Kinsella & Marion McMahon



We had noticed Joachim had been standing around the garden after last week. Marion invited him to come and dig in the potato patch. Joachim ran to the exact place and pointed to where he had seen potatoes being dug up last week without prompting (remember Joachim is 1.9)

*Has Joachim been thinking about the experience when he is away from Carinya?*

*Did he want to repeat the process and in doing so verify his understanding?*

*What is he thinking?*

*What has he learned?*

*Has he connected the experience of gardening and eating food?*

*How old do children have to be before they can understand these realities?*

*We believe the understanding of real life experiences starts at birth and children are capable of learning environmental awareness from a very early age.*

*What can you remember from your childhood outdoor experiences?*

Five days later Jur ( 2yrs) digs in a pot plant and Marion connects Jur's actions to the gardening and the potato patch by asking him if he wanted to dig in the garden. Cholhok (1.4) and Anuk (3) soon followed Jur and Marion into the garden where they all dug for potatoes together and picked the ripe broccoli. Many children became involved taste testing the raw broccoli and Anna (staff member) had a taste for the first time then cooked it at home that night.



*Early childhood educators can be aware of opportunities throughout the day when they can extend children's understanding and experiences about the natural world.*



Children are learning so much from these experiences in all developmental areas however more importantly they are learning to nurture and care for nature and each other. As our society becomes increasingly dominated by technology and large corporations nature education is of paramount importance in the lives of young children, for the future of our planet and its inhabitants. Early Childhood Educators play a significant role in harnessing the natural world as a teaching curriculum in Australia. Experiences such as these can be commonplace in Early Childhood centres and environmental education should be included in tertiary training for teachers and child care workers because the learning opportunities are lifelong and help people become environmentally responsible just like we are responsible in other developmental areas.

What can **adults** learn from this?

*Everyday experiences can teach us about the whole child (communicating, thinking, investigating, thinking, problem solving, active, healthy, social, feeling, creative, spiritual and moral - NSW Curriculum Framework, 2003)*

*Children learn from each other and some things are more deeply understood through doing.*

*Regardless of age, children are capable of understanding and knowing more than we realise.*

*We have the opportunity to seize the moment each day and extend our own and a child's learning.*

*Which moments do we choose?*

*This documentation has been provided by **Rachael Kinsella** and **Marion McMahon** who are early childhood educators at Carinya Children's Services Centre, Hunter Institute of Technology, Newcastle.*

What's on

**OCTOBER 21**

**ECA Wagga Training Day.**

will include an Environmental Sustainability Workshop.

**OCTOBER 24 4:00PM**

**Randwick City Council** will present an Environmental Ideas Forum at Bowen Library, Anzac Parade, Maroubra. It will launch a Sustainability Children's Resource Collection & environmental education workshop series. For more information contact Fiona Campbell 9398 0898.

**NOVEMBER 7 5:30PM**

**ECEEN Network Meeting.**

**Clovelly Child Care Centre**  
40a Arden Street, Clovelly

**ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCES**

**OCTOBER 3-7**

*Australian Association of Environmental Educators AAE National Conference Bunbury WA*

[www.aaeconf2006.org](http://www.aaeconf2006.org)

**NOVEMBER 24-26**

*Hand in Hand Pathways for a sustainable future in the early years through environmental education.*

The first early childhood environmental Conference in Australiasia, to be held at New Zealand's Christchurch College of Education  
<http://ecteacher.interact.ac.nz>

**SPROuts Practice' Award 2006**

**SPROuts are on again this year. Have you considered entering?**

**You have to be in it to win it!!!**

**Want to know more?**

**Download an entry form at [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw\\_branch/eceen.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw_branch/eceen.html) or call 9398 4374 or [nswceen @earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:nswceen@earlychildhood.org.au)**

**HERE'S AN EXCELLENT RESOURCE  
Early Childhood Australia Booklet**

*Everyday learning about healthy bodies* is a great starting point for encouraging children to develop sound habits that will ensure their future wellbeing.

By Nadine McCrea

**ECEEN 2006 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**'Getting Outside in Winter'** was held on 12 September at Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre at Erskineville. Twelve keen participants contributed to an informative meeting. Sally Beesley of John Mewburn Child Care Centre shared her experiences with the Early Intervention program on the use of outdoor play spaces. Kumara Tarr explained the background to her fascinating research project 'Enhancing Environmental Awareness through the Arts.'

A big thank you to the old committee for their time and effort.

A warm welcome was extended to the new committee members.

Helen Nippard continues as Convenor and the members of the 2006 ECEEN committee are Monica McAuliffe, Deb Watson, Karen Dresser, Rachael Kinsella, Jodie O'Leary, Nicky Roditis and Belinda Rawlings.

ECEEN looks forward to another exciting year!!!

If you would like to join in, please contact Julie Gaul on 9398 4374 or [nswceen@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:nswceen@earlychildhood.org.au)

**Why not try something that is more respectful of the environment?**

**KidsGrow Sustainable Gardening**

<http://www.lifeisagarden.com.au/kidsgrow/kidsgrow.asp> and **Easy Being Green** at [www.easybeinggreen.net](http://www.easybeinggreen.net)

**Looking for environmental educational ideas???**

Try a Resource Kit, available on loan for 2 weeks. It contains reference & children's books, videos & much more...

**BECOME A FRIEND of NSW ECEEN**

*Be our friend.....*

A Friend is entitled to borrow resource kits, enter the SPROuts Award & attend free network meetings  
So why not join..... only \$22.

Go to [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw\\_branch/eceen.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw_branch/eceen.html) and

download a form to-day!!!



*Our aim is to bring together interested people and organisations in order to promote the paramount importance of integrating environmental education into all facets of young children's lives in NSW*

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