



President's Report

SEPTEMBER 2011



Hello fellow friends of
ECA Queensland Branch

It is hard to believe how fast this year is travelling. I am sure that we will soon start seeing Christmas decorations emerge at our major department stores next month. This seems to create fear and alarm in even the most sane adult, however this may only be my projection of anxiety as I consider the 'to do list' that needs to be achieved before Summer holidays (...and perhaps the fact that I still haven't paid off the last Boxing Day sale credit card bill)!

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ECA Queensland Branch committee has been working diligently. It is wonderful to work with the executive committee team of dedicated, motivated, skilled and enthusiastic colleagues, who volunteer their time so that we can undertake the work involved with being on the ECA Queensland Branch committee. On Saturday the team met for a strategic planning day. Part of the agenda was to provide feedback to national office on the draft national strategic plan as well as to develop a list of Queensland early childhood priorities. A number of issues emerged and an action plan was established.

One of the key priorities identified by the group was an apparent disappearance of child initiated play in the early years. A working party has been established to investigate this and to support a focused campaign highlighting the importance of play for learning and how the National Curriculum, literacy and numeracy can each be achieved by allowing children to learn through play. A number of members have contacted the committee expressing the pressure they are feeling with an increased move in schools from child initiated play experiences to formal and structured experiences. The sector seems to blame the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, however,

from those promoting the Australian Curriculum, it has been clear that 'play' is an authentic tool for the delivery of this curriculum. For those of you who read this and feel that play within schools is almost 'dead in the pan', hopefully the following may brighten your spirits: The International Play Association has succeeded in its bid to have Article 31 audited. Countries around the world who are signatories of the Convention of the Rights of the Child will be audited for infringements in relation to children's play. A summary of the pilot audit that was used to secure the action of the United Nations is available at <http://article31.ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/GlobalReportSUMMARY-201010.pdf> and some members may find this informative for activism in your own community.

There is global attention in the western world on the importance of the early years. Our Commonwealth and State Government are committed to early childhood initiatives aimed at giving all children the best start and the opportunity to participate in early childhood education. Despite all of these initiatives and current understanding of what is best for children, remuneration for professional educators is still at crisis. Pay disparity across the educational sectors and schools continues with the real crisis within the childcare sector. Given the importance of consistent and qualified staff in supporting children's wellbeing and increasing professional expectations, the issue of remuneration needs to be addressed. On Saturday 20 August the Big Steps in Child Care (Industrial Campaign) held a summit for child care professionals in Brisbane to discuss issues affecting the sector. This national campaign aims to obtain professional wages for childcare workers. All ECA Queensland Branch members should be alerted to this campaign to investigate aims and objectives of the campaign and support people working to obtaining the remuneration deserved by professionals. Visit www.bigsteps.org.au

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) have instigated a leadership program which provides free leadership training for teachers working in the school based sector. I encourage early childhood teachers to consider this opportunity for further knowledge, skills and qualifications in the area of leadership or perhaps investigate a program that is more suitable for your needs. Early childhood teachers are often the leaders within their local community by highlighting early childhood issues and suitable teaching approaches to support the education and development of children. Strong early childhood leadership is essential for ensuring the continued voice of the young child.

The National Office of ECA responded quickly to the Commonwealth Government's plan of sending unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Australia to detention in Malaysia. The plan is a breach not only of children's human rights, but also their special rights as children and as refugees. It is unfortunate that discussions about refugees can open the flood gates to such hysteria. As advocates for children, we need to support people to think beyond this fear and to ignore boundaries, race, religion and colour and focus our attention on the fact that the people that we are concerned with are children. The full media release can be read on the ECA website and provides recommendations.

I wish everyone the very best as we move into the last quarter of the calendar year. I hope we have stimulated some ideas, been able to inform and have provided an opportunity for you to provide some member feedback. All feedback and input from members may be emailed directly to ecaql@earlychildhood.org.au or posted to ECA: Qld Branch PO Box 685 Springhill 4004.

Lisa Palethorpe

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ECA Life Membership Presentation

It is a great pleasure to acknowledge the contributions that Margaret Brannock, Juliette Job and Noelene McBride have made to ECA Qld branch, ECA Nationally and children, families and EC colleagues over many years of involvement. Each has held important committee positions:

Margaret has held the roles of Queensland Branch President, Branch secretary and National Board during her years with ECA. During this time the branch has developed into an active, viable and respected group that is considered a 'peak body' of EC in Qld. While Margaret was President Queensland Branch hosted a very successful ECA National conference, the co-ordination of which required tact, energy, courage and leadership all of which Marg demonstrated in this significant role.

Juliette in her role of Treasurer has coped with the introduction of a GST; developed 'structures' to support the financial management of the branch; taken on board the finances of branch groups; managed the National conference budget & finances; worked with the Communities for Children project - Little Voices Big Noises & managed the finances of this initiative; supported the employment of an administration officer and bookkeeper. Juliette was also been the 'go to' and 'hands on' person for our branch for many years.

Noelene was prepared to take on the position of Branch President at a time in her life when most people might have felt she deserved some 'me time'. Her networking, passion and enthusiasm has continued to contribute to the respect that the early childhood profession has for the ECA Qld branch particularly in the academic sector. Noelene has been the driving force behind the Branch newsletter and the successful lift out Talking Point. She also established many successful partnerships with groups such as Playgroup Association.

During the times that these three members have been involved in the Queensland Branch of ECA they have been involved with:-

- a qualifications review
- discussion and implementation of professional recognition and registration of EC teachers
- ECA national conference in Queensland
- changes from preschool to prep
- celebrations of 50 years of Under 8's week
- establishment of Communities for Children project *Little Voices Big Noises*
- COAG reform agenda for Early Childhood
- review of DECKAS Kindergarten funding
- discussions on allowance of parental leave in Australia
- banning smoking in cars
- establishment of *Birth to Three* conference
- formation of QECSN
- National Regulatory Impact Statement consultations
- formation of Children's Services Alliance
- roll out of Kindergartens in Queensland
- Early Years Learning Framework consultations
- Quality Agenda for Early Childhood discussions and consultations

Margaret, Juliette and Noelene have hosted Professional Learning sessions and seminars that have included Jennifer Sumsion, John Irvine, Mem Fox, Paula Barrett and Quentin Bryce. Meetings have been held with Ministers and politicians; an interesting panel to discuss the Prep year; hosted events with ECA National staff; represented ECA on reference groups; promoted ECA at open days, seminars and conferences; emailed; written letters and reports; delivered financial statements; read, phoned, networked, stuffed envelopes, listened, considered and generally smiled throughout. What amazing volunteer hours have been contributed!

While in these various positions Margaret, Juliette and Noelene have balanced their commitments to ECA with busy family and professional lives. Each has demonstrated many of the values of ECA: Leadership, Excellence, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Openness, Collaboration and Justice as they have worked for the rights of all children. We thank them for their time and honour it with a life membership to ECA.



ECA Life Member, Margaret Brannock with Executive Member Marilyn Casley



Bulimba Childcare Centre wins Quest Business Achievers Awards

The Bulimba Child Care Centre is pleased to announce that it won the Quest Business Achievers Award in the Child and Family Services category and Linda Wilson, working as the Centre Administrator, won the Employee Excellence Category.

Bev Book, Co-Director, explained: "There are many keys to the Bulimba Child Care Centre's (BCCC) ongoing success. We feel that the most important factor is our links with the community. In building and nurturing ongoing and meaningful relationships with children, families and local businesses, BCCC has led the way in providing top quality early childhood education and care. This has supported families in their efforts to find a work/life balance, and has created a social hub where families of similar aged children have met and developed rich friendships which have blossomed. Our new presence on Facebook had assisted with keeping in touch with up to the minute events and news from the Centre as it happens."

Di Farmer, MP for Bulimba believes the award is well deserved. "The centre is such an integral part of the local community here in Bulimba. The staff work very hard to ensure that everyone involved has a voice in the centre's operations..." Ms Farmer said. "They make a practice of being at the forefront of whatever is considered best practice in child care..." she added.



Recent research indicates that the qualifications of staff who work with young children are directly related to the quality of learning outcomes experienced by these children. This is a big success factor. BCCC recently won the prestigious *Workforce Council Award for Innovation* in developing a Culture of Learning in the Centre. With two fully qualified and registered Early Childhood Teachers, all other staff more than qualified for their roles, four studying towards their Bachelor in Early Childhood Education and one towards a diploma, learning is very much a part of Centre life. Being involved in Action Research with other Early Childhood Education providers in South East Brisbane, this year has stimulated much professional discussion and learning.

Karen Broomfield, Co-Director reinforces: "We know that this impacts on the way we work, which has in turn positively impacted on outcomes for children and families. Management at BCCC works hard to create a working environment that meets the needs of all staff members. Working hours planned around family commitments, regular RDOs, a newly developed Centre library and resources to assist with providing the very best physical environment possible."

Local businesses have been very supportive of the centre, which being a not for profit community centre, relies on the generous donations of time, professional skills and gifts from local volunteers and enterprise. These make up the bulk of Raffle prizes which are a major contribution towards our Fundraising goals.

This year the Centre has focused on a media campaign that aims to get us into the local and national papers more often. The Centre has far we been featured in MX magazine and *Care for Kids* online.

The Bulimba Child Care Centre was originally established in 1942 to meet the needs of families within the area who were having difficulties raising their children while their husbands and fathers were fighting in World War 2.

What sets this centre apart and makes it so highly valued by its families is that it is a non-profit community-based service with a strong culture of fostering family involvement and offers a friendly, nurturing, stimulating and educational environment. The Centre is run by a voluntary Parent Management Committee which provides leadership in policy management, mentoring and improving working conditions.

Please contact Bev Book or Karen Broomfield (07 3399 8971) for further information or to arrange an interview with the Co-Directors, or a visit to the Bulimba Childcare Centre

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New Online Resource from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

Leading Curriculum Change is an online professional learning opportunity for Australian teachers. The Professional Learning Flagship Program: Leading Curriculum Change will enhance Australian teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence to plan for, support and lead curriculum change; including school level implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Classroom teachers with formal or informal curriculum change leadership responsibility in schools are the primary audience for this program. Leading Curriculum Change will provide teachers with a unique opportunity to learn with teachers from across Australia in a national professional learning community. The program will be high quality, evidence-based, interactive and online.



The first round of the program will commence in September 2011 and will involve up to 2000 Australian teachers from every phase of schooling, every sector and every state and territory. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has responsibility for establishing professional learning flagship programs that support national education priority areas; are Australia wide in their scope; and are innovative in their design and delivery.

For more details about the *Professional Learning Flagship Program: Leading Curriculum Change* and to register an expression of interest please visit the AITSL website at <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/lcc>

New DVD Resource *Play: What do parents think?*

Sue Grieshaber (Queensland University of Technology) and Marilyn Casley (Griffith University)

Play: What do parents think? is a DVD and booklet that was developed after talking to parents and guardians about play and what it means for them and their children. Parents, guardians and children were attending one of four playgroups in Logan City and one community kindergarten in Brisbane.

Play: What do parents think? uses conversation starters to learn about parental insights into play. The aim was to gather stories from parents and use them as resources of 'lived experience' to assist early childhood educators to develop meaningful play experiences for young children in early childhood settings. It includes view about play from parents of various ages and genders, different ethnicities and socio-economic groups and from parents of children with a disability.

The DVD and booklet have seven short chapters:

1. Children's play at home
2. What do parents think children learn from play?
3. What were your experiences of play as a child?
4. Being included in play
5. Being excluded from play
6. What should educators know about your child?
7. Choosing an early childhood setting for your child.



The booklet describes the conversational method used to gather parental views and the stages of questioning that accompany the conversation starters. The four stages of questioning explore the facts, feelings and interpretations of a situation to assist in making decisions and moving forward. The four levels of conversation form a pattern of conversation:

1. Objective questions explore facts
2. Reflective questions explore feelings
3. Interpretive questions explore the meaning behind facts and feelings
4. Decisional questions explore implications and new directions.

The DVD and booklet show a range of parental views and understandings about children's play, some of which may be different from our own. Beliefs about children's play that differ from our own prompt us to reflect on our views and to think carefully about the differences, particularly if they cause discomfort. Talking openly and positively about differences is an important part of professional learning as well as learning about you.

***Play: What do parents think?* encourages open discussion as a way of exploring different perspectives and thinking about play.**

This project was supported by the Commonwealth Government Communities for Children Family Support Program (sponsored by the Salvation Army). It received ethical approval from the Queensland University of Technology Human research Ethics Committee (Approval Number 100000679).

Email ECA Qld Branch to order a copy of *Play: What do parents think?* at:

ecaqld@earlychildhood.org.au

