

# Turn it up

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Early  
Childhood  
AUSTRALIA INC.  
... voice for young children

## May 2009 Edition

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jo Darbyshire

Hello to all our ECA members and friends, I have just spent a beautiful clear Toowoomba Autumn morning outside in the sun with a group of Kindy children. It was one of those rare occasions when everyone seemed engrossed in the play and I could sit back and observe for a while. We had a Year 10 school girl with us for the day and the children quickly involved her in a running game. It led to their own version of *Hide and Seek*. Some children knew the game and followed the rules of counting, not looking, and continuing to look until they had found everyone. Others would peek, give up, or start looking well before the count reached ten. At some point everyone seemed to be hiding and no one was looking. We have tried to create quiet private spaces in our playground but like most Kindys, for supervision reasons, there are not many hiding places, perhaps four or five. Even though they quickly discovered all the possible spaces to hide in and everyone knew exactly where to look the level of anticipation and excitement from those waiting to be found remained high. Here was a safe place to experience all those emotions that children are exploring (fear, excitement, anticipation, playing in a group, and waiting) and it was a lot of fun. What was needed was time, the space, a flexible program and staff that valued child led play for this to occur.

Recent emails from an ECA Queensland member have expressed frustration that Early Childhood Teachers have been fighting for recognition of the importance of play for the past thirty years (or longer) only to see the gains disappearing in the push to prepare children for school, the focus on outcomes and the emphasis



on literacy and numeracy skills. She feels there is increasing pressure on Early Childhood Teachers to use worksheets, textbooks, and whiteboards during the day while specialist lessons and assembly times interrupt the 'flow' of the day. This member is frustrated at the lack of suitable outdoor play spaces for young children and the fact that in many situations the only time to spend outside is at morning tea or lunch time. Of course this is only one person's opinion based on situations she has been involved in (many are probably Prep groups) but when it was raised at our ECA Executive meeting there was a *general consensus that the lack of recognition for the value of play is still a very common concern throughout Queensland, Australia and probably much of the world (see the book "Crises in the Kindergarten" by Edward Miller and Joan Almon).*

With so many changes happening in Early Childhood at the moment it is easy to become disillusioned and dispirited. Society has changed and we need to be flexible enough to change with it so that we are meeting the needs of the current generation of children. At the same time we need to hold tight to all the things that we feel are important for young children and make sure that we manage to keep them

