

Profiling people and programs

Interview with Cecilia Ebert, Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Adelaide

Cecilia Ebert is Team Leader in the Kurrajong Room (Baby Room) at the Lady Gowrie Child Centre in Thebarton. Earlier this year Cecilia was presented with an award at the inaugural NIFTeY (National Investment in the Early Years) Awards for Excellence in the Early Years. Cecilia was presented with an award in the individual category for "Promotion of Early Childhood Issues" for her work with infants and their families based on attachment theory.

What is your background in Early Childhood, what training do you have?

I was trained as a primary school teacher in Colombia where I taught. I was a nanny in Germany for three years, while learning the language. Then I moved to Switzerland where I continued to work as a nanny, and then I moved to Australia.

Here I trained full time at TAFE for a Diploma in Child Care. I completed a Graduate Diploma in Infant Mental Health. I am currently doing my Masters degree in Infant Mental Health. I also am a qualified trainer and hold seminars on attachment at Lady Gowrie.

Tell us about the work that you've been doing with infants and families based on attachment theory.

At the Gowrie we believe that secure attachment relationships with primary caregivers are essential for children and their families, particularly for children in the birth to

three age group. Secure attachment relationships are important for children's development, including brain development. Children need to have people in their lives whom they can trust to be there for them, to meet their needs.

In the Kurrajong Room each child has a primary caregiver and it is the caregiver's role to get to know the children and their families very well in order to best meet those children's needs during their time at the centre.

Primary caregiving helps parents to feel more at ease with placing their children in care and helps children to build secure attachments while in care.

It is not the staff members role to instruct parents on how to raise their children, however we do talk to parents about strategies for developing secure attachment relationships.

How have you applied your work in everyday practice?

As a primary caregiver I feel comfortable and able to talk to parents about problems, needs or issues they are having, for example, based on my early childhood knowledge, we can discuss attachment difficulties, behaviour, transitions or other issues.

Recently I was able to help a mother to see her infant's exploration through mouthing objects as a way that the baby was starting to know the properties of objects rather than asking for food. (The mother had thought the child wanted food)

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Launch of new name

The Australian Early Childhood Association officially became **Early Childhood Australia** at a launch held at the National Conference in Hobart.

Check out the new web site at <http://www.aeca.org.au/>

Pam Linke

Pam Linke, SA Branch member, presented the Barbara Creaser Memorial Lecture, "Talking to children about the hard things" at the National Conference. The criteria for selection to present the lecture is a person who is a well recognised and well respected early childhood colleague. Pam is well known for her passionate interest in parenting issues and the importance of appropriate infant care. She demonstrates on a daily basis her commitment to young children and families and her support of the practical work of early childhood professionals. Congratulations Pam on this well deserved honour.

The Barbara Creaser Memorial Presentation was awarded to Catherine Hydon from Victoria. This award is presented to an early childhood practitioner who is beginning to make her mark in the early childhood field. Catherine is a foundation member of the group, Real Rights for Refugee Children.



L-R Catherine Hydon, Pam Linke, Judy Radich (National President- ECA)

South Australian Branch Sponsors Early Childhood Educator from Timor-Leste



Sister Aurora Pires thanking Christy Ward, SA Branch President

The South Australian Branch sponsored an early childhood educator from Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor) to attend the National Conference in Hobart. Sister Aurora Pires, of the Canossian order, is the Principal of the Canossian Preschool in Dili.

Sister Aurora came to Australia as a refugee with her family in 1975 and gained her early childhood degree at Griffith University. She returned to Timor-Leste in 2000 to be part of the rebuilding of her country.

At the conference Sister Aurora presented a paper on 'Preschools in East Timor'. She stated that Timor-Leste has a population estimated at 820,000 including a rural population of 90%. Fifty one percent of the population under 33. There are 12 ethnic groups are each with their own language. The main language literacy is Tetum and Indonesian but Portuguese is the official language. There is a large percentage of children under 5 years of age with 10-12% dying before their 5th birthday. There are challenges in promoting community interest and understanding of the basic needs in education because pre-school education is a concept which is new to the majority of communities.

Until recently there was no formal training for preschool teachers, insufficient and inadequate equipment, a lack of appropriate resources and materials and a lack of strategic planning for documenting and replicating good teaching practice. Timor-Leste education standards have been amongst the lowest in the world with a 50-60% illiteracy rate and a shortage of trained teachers. However

the current government has made a strong commitment to education with it being one of the largest sectors in terms of expenditure in Timor-Leste.

There are 57 pre-schools registered in Timor-Leste with 22 based in Dili and the rest located in other districts. Eight of these are government owned and 49 are run by non-government organisations or privately. The school fees are US\$1 - \$8 per month or gratis.

Local and organisational support for the pre-schools comes from the government, non government organisations such as Plan East Timor and UN agencies such as UNICEF. With their support, preschools have been rehabilitated, educational materials and inservice for teachers, teacher training and training for trainers has been provided, a National Pre-School Curriculum has been developed and preschool policies are being developed.

At the conference, Early Childhood Australia (ECA) presented Sister Aurora with a membership to ECA and a range of recent publications to take back to share with other early childhood educators in Timor-Leste.

Notices

Launch and Panel

Wednesday, 27 August
Education Development Centre,
Hindmarsh, 7.00pm

Launch of Early Childhood Australia-SA Branch followed by a panel addressing the topic 'What is the future for early childhood education and care in South Australia?'

Three speakers will address this issue from different viewpoints and there will be time for questions.

Advance notice: Two public lectures by Ron Lally, September 8 & 9 sponsored by the de Lissa Research Centre and DECS.

Erratum

In the May newsletter, the article about the AECA Graduate Award presented to Jessie Kenyon contained an error. The name of the centre where Jessie works is the Adelaide Campus Children's Centre.

Profiling people and programs

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What does your research mean for the Early Childhood community, for approaches to practice?

At the Gowrie we hold training sessions for caregivers on attachment. We focus on ways to build secure attachment, how to read children's non-verbal cues and how to develop strategies to foster secure attachment. We have guest speakers including doctors, protective services officers, staff from the Women's and Children's Hospital and from Lady Gowrie.

We are also running a secure base project over an eight week period. After holding meetings and reading papers, we each chose a child in our room and questioned ourselves: How can I help this child? How can I help/facilitate the parent/child relationship? This project was purely to help child care workers understand and develop secure attachment, the parents were not involved. If the project is published then we will take steps to involve them also.

What plans do you have for the future?

I love what I am doing now and want to continue my work on attachment theory because I strongly believe that it is very important for children's development. I would also be interested in doing some training of early childhood workers in TAFE or university. The early childhood field needs more workers who have a strong understanding of attachment theory and how to put it into practice, as well as knowledge about infant mental health. In addition to training, the early childhood field needs the wider community to understand that the work that we are doing is essential and important, and more than just babysitting.

This understanding needs to be reflected in the pay and conditions that child care workers experience. Child care is everybody's business. If childcare workers stopped working tomorrow people would be unable to go to work, they would have no one to care for their children. Politicians and doctors need childcare too.

Kylie Sharrock and Joanne Lipp

de Lissa Action Research Scholarship Winners

The de Lissa Action Research Scholarship, 2003 has been awarded to:

Leeane Muirhead, Director, Smithfield Plains Kindergarten
Jillian Conrick, Director, Adams Road Children's Centre
Alison Copley, Occupational Therapist, Lyall McEwin Hospital

for their action research project entitled: "Occupational therapy in the preschool – an exploration of the impact."

Conferences

Honoring the child, honoring equity

This year also sees the third Honoring the child, honoring equity conference in Melbourne in November. This conference is organised by the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) which is located in the University of Melbourne. Many of you will know of Glenda MacNaughton who is the Director of the Centre.

The conference title for this year is "Honoring the child, honoring equity - taking action together to make a difference". I was fortunate to be able to attend the previous two conferences and will attend this year. It is one of the most exciting, challenging, thought provoking and supportive conferences for those interested in social justice and equity issues.

Are you interested in becoming a member of CEIEC? The Centre does much more than organise conferences. It gives life to its vision through advocacy and policy, publications and professional development and training.

Are you interested in accessing information about CEIEC and/or the conference then you might like to visit <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/LED/CEIEC>

Elizabeth Dau

18th Annual ECIA (NSW Chapter) Conference

Date: 21-22 August, 2003

Venue: Novotel, Brighton Beach, NSW

This conference will celebrate the work that is being done in Australia to advance the field of early childhood intervention, and assist young children with disabilities and their families.

For more information contact The Conference Convener on (02) 9873 2593 or email the ECIA at ecia@systematics.com.au

Continuity and Change: Transitions in Education

Date: 27th and 28th November 2003

Venue: Novotel Brighton, NSW

This conference will focus on research that has been designed to enhance the quality of significant transitions, from pre-school to high school and beyond.

For more information contact Dr Diana Whitton at the University of Western Sydney on (02) 9772 6435 or email d.whitton@uws.edu.au

Scholarships

The Jean Denton Memorial Scholarship

\$16,000: Tax Exempt

This Scholarship fund was established by the Kindergarten Union of South Australia in 1977 and is now administered by the Jean Denton & Lillian de Lissa Scholarships Committee and the Public Trustee.

Applicants are invited for the Jean Denton Memorial Scholarship. The purpose of the scholarship is to advance knowledge in early childhood education. The scholarship is available to any person or persons working in Australia.

The scholarship is for advanced or postgraduate studies or research either within or outside Australia, the purpose or the benefit of which will be applied in the early childhood area within Australia. The scholarship is granted for a one year period.

Acknowledgement of applications will only be sent if the application is received more than 15 working days prior to the closing date.

Closing date: 10th October, 2003
No extensions will be given.

The Lillian de Lissa HECS Scholarship

Applications for the Lillian de Lissa HECS Scholarship 2003 are invited from permanent and contract (2 years minimum) employees of the Department of Education and Children's Services who are working with children birth-8 years. The scholarship is available to persons with a qualification in early childhood education birth-8 years that wish to undertake postgraduate studies within South Australia.

The purpose of this scholarship is to support an early childhood professional to undertake a postgraduate degree with an early childhood specialisation at a South Australian university.

Preference will be given to applicants who can:

- Provide evidence of any relevant publications, conference papers, seminars, workshop publications
- Provide evidence of leadership in professional organisations, working parties, etc.
- Indicate their ability to share the

benefits of the research/study with the early childhood profession at state or national levels

- Provide evidence of publication at a regional, state or national level
- Identify how the early childhood profession will benefit as a result of their completion of the intended award

Applicants will need to identify a time frame for completion of their award (for up to the equivalent of 3 consecutive years of full-time study). Payment of HECS fees will be made on a reimbursement basis, semester by semester. The scholarship is offered by the Scholarships Committee under the auspices of the Public Trustee of South Australia.

Closing date: 10th October, 2003

The Lillian de Lissa Full Scholarship

12 MONTHS MAXIMUM

Applicants for the Lillian de Lissa Scholarship for 2003 are invited from permanent and contract (2 years minimum) employees of the Department of Education and Children's Services who are working with children aged birth-8 years. The scholarship is available to persons with a qualification in early childhood education birth-8 years who wish to undertake postgraduate studies or research in early childhood.

The Lillian de Lissa Full Scholarship (equivalent to current salary, Step 3 - 12 tax free) (12 months). The purpose of the scholarship is to enable the applicant to take leave from employment to complete a higher degree or postgraduate research in early childhood education.

Special consideration will be given to applicants who have:

- significant experience in the field and have shown leadership qualities in the early childhood profession
- presented at conferences, seminars and have been involved in professional organisations and committees etc
- indicated their willingness to share the benefits of the research/study with the early childhood profession

Closing date: 10th October, 2003

APPLICATIONS TO ALL SCHOLARSHIPS MUST BE MADE ON THE APPLICATION FORM

**Application forms are
available from:**

Janine Flory

E-mail:

janine.flory@unisa.edu.au

or

Nicki Slape

(08) 8302 4584

Academic enquiries to:

Christy Ward

(08) 8302 4586

National Conference Update

The AECA National Conference was held in Hobart from 10-13 June. The lime green conference back packs and lime green conference beanies made a colourful sight in Hobart and made the presence of over 900 early childhood delegates very visible.

The conference was well organised with lots of stimulating and challenging ideas presented. The next newsletter will contain more information about the conference and about AECA National Conference, which preceded it.

Congratulations

Congratulations to this years NIFTeY SA: Awards for Excellence in the Early Years.

To see a list of the winners go to:

<http://www.niftey.cyh.com/webpages/stategroups/sa/sainfo/nifteysaawards.htm>