

## Annual General Meeting Report.

The ECA SA Branch AGM took place on 20th November 2006. President Italia Parletta was able to report on a successful year which among other activities, saw the branch involved in

- representation on a number of committees
- a 'Make Your Vote Count' campaign during the State Government election
- co-sponsorship of workshops and supporting members to attend conferences through the Professional Development Subcommittee
- discussing a number of early childhood issues and topics in meetings, often with guest speakers
- producing a quarterly email newsletter
- sending delegates to ECA National Council
- winning a contract to provide articles for children's services for the Professional Support Coordinator

The executive for the next year are: Italia Parletta: President, Kate Ryan: Vice-President, Rebecca Heath: Secretary, Pam Linke: National Publications Chair, Caroline Donald: Membership Secretary, Jessie Jovanovic: Treasurer, Christy Ward: National Vice President, Emma Anderson, John Buckell, Kaye Colmer, Louise Cornelius, Alexandra Diamond, Sue Emmett, Joan Gilbert, Cathie Home, Carol Horewood, Lee Jones, Jo Lipp, Andrea McGuffog, Gayle Mills, Gail Mondy and Jayne Sherringham.

### Guest speaker

Our guest speaker at the AGM was Mark Henley, an economist employed by UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide as Manager of Advocacy and Communication. His advocacy focus is on aspects of poverty and disadvantage in the South Australian community, particularly gambling, utility prices, consumer debt and credit issues and homelessness

Mark also has a strong connection with education, having two adolescent children and being Chair of the Heathfield High School Governing Council.

Armed with some hard-hitting statistics, Mark spoke with great conviction about the need to address the very real issues relating to poverty here in South Australia and indeed across the globe. Health (particularly of the indigenous population), domestic violence, child protection, and gambling were cited as major complexities compounding the effects of poverty in our state. Mark revealed that over 1/3 of South Australian households rely on government benefits as the primary income and that 1 in 5 young people live in a household where no one has a job.

His statistics were at times confronting and disturbing and question time demonstrated the audience engagement and concern with the subject and appreciation for the presenter. We would like to thank Mark for a challenging presentation.

## ***WORKING TOGETHER: Making a difference for South Australian children***

On 8 November 2006 over 730 early childhood enthusiasts from across a broad spectrum of state and commonwealth government and non-government agencies, organisations and services participated in the first Our Children the Future early childhood seminar held at AAMI Stadium.

Central to the OCTF: Making a Difference for South Australian children seminar was the opportunity to be professionally challenged and learn from such highly regarded international experts as Dr Fraser Mustard and Professor Ferre Laevers.

Professor Laevers, Director of the Research Centre for Experiential Education at Leuven University Belgium, messages emphasising the importance of relationships were matched by his engaging style of presentation and video images of theory into practice. By building positive relationships with children and focusing our attention on children's wellbeing and their involvement in learning experiences, we can really make a difference to the learning experiences and outcomes for young children.

This message was extended by Dr Fraser Mustard, Adelaide Thinker in Residence and international expert on child development and leader in bringing together community and scientific networks, business, education, health, research and private citizens to champion early childhood development. Dr Mustard provided compelling evidence of the conditions that support young children to have the start in life that will make a difference throughout their life. He challenged the audience to focus on a coordinated approach to supporting children and their parents.

### **NIFTeY Awards**

An important aspect of bringing the audience together was the awarding of the NIFTeY (SA) Awards of Excellence in the Early Years and the SA Early Childhood Australia Student Awards by Hon Jennifer Rankine MP, Minister Assisting in Early Childhood Development. The awards highlighted the array of people, programs and activities that are having a positive impact on young South Australian children.

Congratulations to Andrea McGuffog on receiving a NIFTeY Award in the category of "promoting early childhood issues". The award was given in recognition of Andrea's leadership role in advocating for early childhood issues and for encouraging and mentoring early childhood professionals to take on leadership roles.

Our congratulations also go to the recipients of the ECA (SA) Early Childhood Student Awards, Marisa Belperio and Sally Rossiter.

Marisa Belperio, a graduate of the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, de Lissa Institute, University of South Australia made an outstanding contribution to a partnership field placement with staff from the new Children's Museum, Adelaide, focusing on working in a consultative capacity for early childhood education. The project involved over 80 final year students working in teams to partner community organisations and apply their body of knowledge in a leadership role. Marisa demonstrated commendable team leadership skills and qualities, working sensitively and flexibly to meet challenges and implement a successful project. As a result, Marisa met with parliamentarians and was invited to become a member of the planning committee for the Children's Museum.

At university, Marisa demonstrated considerable analytical abilities in a highly professional presentation which made thoughtful recommendations to her peers, and in her personal critical reflection on her learning through the project as an early childhood educator.

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Sally Rossiter, a TAFE graduate in the Diploma of Children's Services studied part-time through TAFESA Regional from 2002 until 2005, and graduated with the Diploma of Children's Services earlier this year. While studying, Sally was also employed by the Goolwa Children's Centre where she now continues to work in a leadership role.

Sally excels in building strong links with families, and understands this is fundamental to building secure relationships with children. She achieves this in her role as a primary caregiver, and by regularly making communication with parents an integral part of her day. Sally's commitment to her profession is exemplary and recognised by all staff at the Children's Centre. Her initiative and willingness to share current professional learning with the other childcare staff has lead to her becoming a key member of the programming team.

Sally demonstrates the skills, knowledge and learning required to become an exceptional children's services professional.



From left: Andrea McGuffog, Elizabeth Puddy, Dr John Fraser Mustard, Marisa Belperio, Sally Rossiter and Italia Parletta at the award presentation

The success of the OCTF seminar, in terms of deepening our understanding about early learning and development and strengthening partnerships and engaging a cross sector audience, have provided an impetus to continue with this style of professional development. Building on the success of the past Our Children the Future conferences, planning has commenced on future seminars that will provide staff from across the breadth of services working with or for young children to learn from leading experts. Early Childhood Australia will be actively involved in the planning.

**If you hear of any potential visiting experts from overseas or interstate, or have feedback and ideas on how the seminars might work in the future, please contact Andrea McGuffog ([mcguffog.andrea@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:mcguffog.andrea@saugov.sa.gov.au)).**

*Do you need a gift for the person who has everything?*

Why not give an **Early Childhood Australia Gift Membership to a friend or colleague?**

You will both be contributing to Early Childhood Australia's advocacy work in supporting high-quality experiences for young children and those who care for them.

Simply fill out the online form at [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au) to order an ECA gift membership

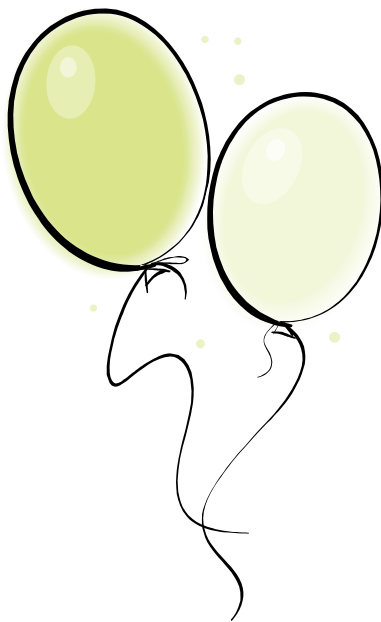
**NB. Order before 15 December to ensure pre-Christmas delivery**

Unsure of the different membership categories?

More information about membership is available on the website, or contact the ECA National Office: 1800 356 900 (freecall) or [eca@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:eca@earlychildhood.org.au)

**Benefits of ECA membership:**

- Staying up-to-date with news and information via the popular *Every Child* magazine, *Voice* newsletter and state/territory branch newsletters
- Making contacts and staying involved through participation in state/territory branch events
- Saving on registration fees to attend Early Childhood Australia conferences
- Receiving practical, up-to-date information and support through the Research in Practice Series, as well as the latest sector information and research via the *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*



*Early Childhood Australia  
SA Branch executive  
wish you all a safe and  
peaceful holiday season  
and look forward to a  
busy 2007 as we all work  
together for young children*