

President's Report

This is an abbreviated version of the report given to the Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch) Annual General Meeting 12th November 2007

I am pleased to present the 2007 President's Report of the SA Branch of *Early Childhood Australia*. Again this year we have demonstrated our commitment to advocating for young children and supporting the early childhood profession through a wide range of activities. This was facilitated through the work of our 2007 executive committee which has representatives from diverse backgrounds and organisations that work with and for young children. The committee includes members from *Inclusive Directions*, Family Day Care, Child Care, Children's Centres, *Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)*, *Children, Youth and Women's Health Service*, *TAFESA*, *Young Media Australia*, and the *University of South Australia*.

This report details the branch activities undertaken throughout the year.

Response to reviews, documents and forums

These included

- A response submitted to the Department for Families and Communities on the draft document *Keeping them Safe in our care – new directions action plan*
- A comprehensive response to FaCSIA on proposed changes to Child Care Quality Assurance System
- A response to Community Services and Health Training Package Review, with particular reference to the Diploma in Children's Services
- A Federal Election Forum held in collaboration with *AAIMHI* and *NIFTeY*. Candidates spoke on key early childhood issues in a panel discussion chaired by Dr Michael Rice
- "Australia's Shame" postcards were produced jointly with *AAIMHI* and *NIFTeY* to raise awareness of Australian government spending on early childhood compared to other OECD countries, and paid maternity leave. Postcards were sent to candidates standing for election.
- Contributions were made to the DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework currently being implemented across the state
- Branch executive members participated in the

CCQAS consultation forum held in Adelaide.

- SA branch was invited by Fraser Mustard, Adelaide Thinker in Residence, to give input and feedback on recommendations for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Centres across the state.
- Consultation and recommendations to Quit SA for "Smoke-free Education and Childcare Guidelines" document for schools and early childhood centres
- Representation on the legislative review of the SA Education Act and Children's Services Act steering committee.

Response to Early Childhood in the media

The SA branch responded to a range of early childhood issues from the media, in particular:

- availability of childcare places
- status of accredited centres in SA
- State Government release of a four year \$14m campaign to combat early childhood obesity
- comment on children's independence for *The Little Big Book Club*.

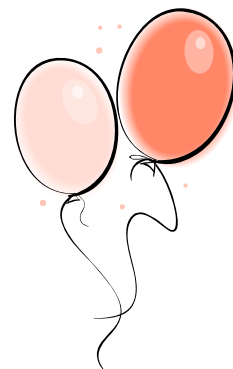
Committee Representation

ECA SA Branch continues to actively contribute to and be represented on the following committees:

- Minister for Education and Children's Services Advisory Committee for Children with Disabilities
- Minister for Education and Children's Services Consultative Committee Legislative review of State Education Act and Child Children Services Act steering committee
- Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) Early Years Literacy Program Stakeholders' Forum

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*Early Childhood Australia
SA Branch executive
wish you all a safe and
peaceful holiday season
and look forward to a
busy 2008 as we all work
together for young children*



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- DECS Learner Wellbeing Project Steering Committee
- SACSA Executive Committee – DECS
- University of South Australia Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Programs' Advisory Group
- Young Media Australia Board
- National Excellence in Teaching Awards
- De Lissa Scholarship Committee
- Margaret Trembath Scholarship Committee
- Professional Support Coordinator Sector Advisory Group - Gowrie Training Centre

ECA Awards

One year membership of ECA is awarded to a graduate from the University of South Australia's Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Degree, and TAFE SA's Diploma of Children's Services. The 2007 recipients were Claire Brideson from UniSA and Natasha Proud from TAFESA, Croydon Campus.

Professional Development

- The revised ECA Code of Ethics was officially launched 28th July by Hon Minister Jennifer Rankine, MP assisting in Early Childhood Development. Members celebrated with guests from Department of Health, DECS, UniSA, TAFESA, students, Family Day Care, Schools, Child Care, Children's Centres and representatives from other early childhood organisations.
- SA executive members presented workshops on *Learning Stories* and *Engaging Families, Engaging Children* at DECS' Flinders Regional District conference.
- Other professional development opportunities were promoted and distributed to members via email and included in branch newsletters.

Margaret Trembath Scholarship

This was awarded to Dr Marilyn Fleeer to fund her project entitled *A cultural historical study of childhood and child development in Denmark and Australia*.

Meetings and Guests

Monthly meetings have been held. Guest speakers at these meetings were:

- DECS Project Officer, Victoria Buchanan on the implementation of Learner Wellbeing Framework in schools and centres across the state.
- DECS Birth to 3 Policy Officer, Margaret Creeper, on the implementation and findings of the Early Years Literacy project - Aboriginal resource.
- Flinders University Senior Lecturer, Susan Krieg, on the new Early Childhood Course
- **PSC Newsletter Articles**
- ECA SA Branch sources articles for the *Professional Support Coordinator's* newsletter. To date articles have included: *Integrated Services*,

Routines, Partnerships with families and Getting the most from what you read.

Membership

Branch membership continues to include representation from health, education, early childhood professionals and organisations with an interest in the early years. As part of succession planning recipients of ECA student awards are encouraged to become actively involved in branch activities.

As my term as SA Branch President has ended, I will be reverting to my previous role as a committee member. I would like to thank members of the executive for representing ECA in committees and for their commitment to the Branch. Thank you also to the members on subcommittees, in particular those who contributed to the Professional Development subcommittee, newsletters, submissions and reviews.

Thank you to Andrea McGuffog and Pam Linke for their support in addressing national and branch issues. Finally, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Christy Ward for her cooperation, professionalism and commitment to supporting me as President over the past two years.

Italia Parletta

President, ECA SA Branch

Early Childhood Australia Biennial Conference



3-6 October 2008

Canberra, ACT

For up-to-date information about the conference go to the ECA website at <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/>

The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) is excited to announce a new 3 year project focusing on children's health and wellbeing. Called *Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in the Early Years*, the project aims to reduce the percentage of children under five who are overweight or obese. It is a joint initiative of DECS and the Department of Health through the Australian Government's Australian Better Health Initiative. The project is part of the State's Strategic Plan and the Department of Health's *Eat Well, Be Active* Healthy Weight Strategy for SA 2006-2010.



healthy eating
& physical activity
in the *early years*

Data from South Australia's Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS) shows the number of overweight four-year-old children and adults in this State is increasing. One in five four-year-old children in South Australia is overweight or obese. This is a result of eating much more energy in food than is used up in physical activity. Children who are overweight are at greater risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and mental health issues when they are adults. Interventions for staff, families and children under 5 years are the priority of this project.

At the heart of this project is professional development for educators working in preschools, child parent centres, child-care centres and Family Day Care. This will involve exploring ways to promote and encourage healthy eating and being active in each setting through:

- A Practitioner Research Project in nine DECS districts, each year over three years.
- A locally defined inquiry question in each site exploring an aspect of healthy eating and physical activity. The relevant SACSA Developmental Learning Outcomes will provide the frame for local inquiry questions.

Penny Kazimierczak, who has worked in preschools, childcare and in physical activity (music) and nutrition, will manage the project.

Penny can be contacted on 8226 8862 or email Kazimierczak.Penny2@saugov.sa.gov.au

The future of the mind - A challenging presentation.

The guest speaker at the SA branch AGM was Professor Martin Westwell, the Director of the new Flinders Centre for Science Education in the 21st Century at Flinders University. His topic was *The future of the mind: The early years*.

In a wide ranging talk, Martin Westwell talked about the development of the mind in early childhood, some of the factors which affect this development and some of those which are believed to influence development but, in reality, do not.

The mind can be seen as formed by the personalization of the brain as a result of individual experience affecting synaptic connections. Martin spoke about the dangers of stress for the young brain, the importance of maternal and carer responsiveness and the negative influence of violent media. He questioned the emphasis being placed on catering for different learning styles, stating instead that we should be encouraging all children to be multi-sensory learners. He also argued against "hothousing" and Brain Gym, saying that these had no scientific backing. He stressed the proven value of exposure to the blue light present in natural light from the sky, as opposed to the yellow light which comes from the artificial lighting in which many children and adults spend their time.

It was an entertaining presentation which affirmed some of what we see as best practice in early childhood care and education, while challenging some of what we believe and introducing new ideas. Martin frequently addresses specialist education and scientific meetings, gives many talks to general audiences and is often interviewed on TV, radio and in the press on a range of scientific issues. He has won a number of awards for communicating science to non-scientists and it is easy to see why. If you get a chance to hear him speak, don't miss it.

Caroline Donald



Smoke Free Education and Childcare Guidelines

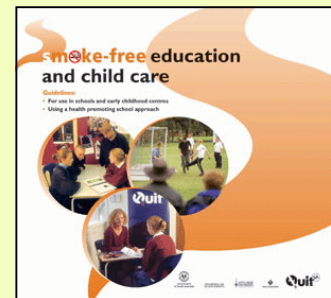
The Smarter than Smoking SA Project, within Quit SA, is coordinated by Sally Hounslow. The project has the broad program goal of preventing young people from becoming or continuing to be smokers through conducting effective programs in schools and with young people in the community. The program objectives incorporate school education, publications and merchandise, training and media just to name a few. One of the resources that is currently being updated and will be distributed to all schools and childcare centres in South Australia shortly is the *Smoke Free Education and Childcare Guidelines*.

The *Smoke Free Education and Child Care Guidelines* have been written to meet the need for safe, consistent and reasonable tobacco management in schools and early childhood centres. Its aim is to assist staff and care providers who are committed to the health and well being of the young people and adults who use their services to work with their communities in health promotion and the provision of a smoke-free environment. It encompasses information about tobacco experimentation, adoption, dependence and quitting and translates the findings of research in these areas into achievable processes and goals for early childhood centres and schools. When using this resource it is important to bear in mind that staff and care providers are required to respect families' primary responsibility for their children's health and welfare and also to meet their duty of care and occupational health and safety obligations to all people in their centres and schools. We recommend these guidelines as a practical and reasonable resource to support a smoke-free, health promoting environment in early childhood centres and schools.

The guidelines can be downloaded from <http://www.oxygen.org.au/>

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Choosing Fright-free Fight-free viewing

Young Media Australia (YMA) has launched a new intervention for parents of children under 7. The short professionally produced DVD supported by a simple, easy to read booklet, aims to raise parents' awareness of potential impacts of violent media, provides practical tips for "creating a family friendly media zone" and includes the *Fight-free Media List*, a list of 200 TV programs, movies, short DVDs and computer games selected by YMA as non-violent.

The new resource was launched by the Honorable Steve Georganas, Federal Member for Hindmarsh at the Mercury Cinema on 28 November 2007. Guest speaker at the launch was Professor Philip Gammage whose topic was *The changing context of childhood: Risks and realities* and guests also saw a short on screen address by the patron of YMA, Steve Biddulph.

The list of non-violent media and other information about the effects of the media on young children is also available from the Young Media Australia website at <http://www.youngmedia.org.au>

It is hoped that education, child care, health and welfare professionals in South Australia will use the DVD and booklet package to raise awareness within their parent communities.

For information about the package, contact Pamela Wright helpline@youngmedia.org.au or PH 08 8376 2111.