

Welcome to the first ECA Branch Newsletter for 2007. The year has commenced with Early Childhood placed firmly on the political and public agenda.

Dr. Fraser Mustard, Thinker in Residence, continued to consult and give public lectures about the importance of investing in early years. Many members had the opportunity to hear Dr. Mustard at the DECS Our Children the Future seminar and at the one day conference held by the de Lissa Institute of Child and Family Studies. As Fraser's residency comes to an end we look forward to the recommendations and report.

The Premier and Ministers for Education, Minister for Families & Communities and Minister for Health attended the launch of the Elizabeth Grove Children's Centre. Also MP Jennifer Rankine, assisting the Minister for Children's Services, launched the *\$1 Million Dollar Book Initiative*. These activities attest to the high priority given to early childhood by the state Government.

Early childhood will continue to feature prominently at a national level. Leading up to the Federal Election the SA Branch, together with ECA National Office, will be drawing attention to early childhood issues in advocating for children and their families.

The professional development sub-committee is planning a number of events for the year, including an official launch of the revised *Code of Ethics* in the middle of the year. More information will be made available closer to the event.

This year commemorates 100 years of early childhood teacher education in South Australia. The tree planting ceremony and cocktail party in April promises to be a memorable event to celebrate the occasion.

Members are invited to attend monthly meetings which are held at EDC Milner St. Hindmarsh. If you want to be an advocate for the early childhood profession and are keen to have a more active role in SA branch activities, please contact any executive member or call me on 8204 0929.

Italia Parletta
President, ECA SA Branch

Adelaide Thinker in Residence: Dr Fraser Mustard, the Office for Youth Action-Team and the Importance of Investing in the Early Years



The A-Team: Left to right: **Emily Oliver** (Department of Families & Communities); **Christine Halving** (Queen Elizabeth Hospital, NWAHS, Department of Health); **Jessie Jovanovic** (University of South Australia); **Yanni Rose** (Department of Education & Children's Services); **Andrew Alexander** (Department for the Premier and Cabinet); **Tarnlee Austin-Butler** (Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth & Family Services, Families SA, Department of Families & Communities); **Steph Russell** (Central Northern Primary Health Care Services/Shopfront in Salisbury, Department of Health); **Kate Seaman** (Department of Health); **Adam Cirillo** (Department of Further Education, Employment, Science & Technology)

During Dr Fraser Mustard's second Adelaide Thinker in Residence term, this internationally recognised expert in the field of early child development worked with a team of 9 young professionals aged 25 or under to develop a set of creative and practical recommendations on the issue of early child development. A DFEEST Office for Youth initiative, the Policy Action or A-Team provided a youthful perspective on the necessary provisions for positive early child development for all South Australian children and their families. Spending four-and-a-half days together as a group, the A-Team gathered background knowledge about early child development in order to develop recommendations in response to the focus question:

Within the context of integrated service delivery, how do we engage young women with children from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure they benefit from the Children's Centres?

The "Children's Centres" referred to in this question are Early Child Development and Parenting Centres, designed by the State Government to provide integrated health, education, care and family support services for children between birth to eight years and their families. Evidence about the importance of universal access to such integrated service delivery is clear.

At a presentation on Thursday 15th March 2007 the A-Team presented Dr Mustard with their report, with visions of creating a cultural shift towards early child development and learning. With this vision in mind, the A-Team established five recommendations in response to the focus question. The first four recommendations are vital foundations for the development of quality Children's Centres. The final recommendation focuses closely on engaging parents with children so that there is collective benefit from these Children's Centres.

Recommendation 1 – Funding

Provide sufficient funding to develop and sustain Children's Centres.

- 1.1 Liaise across professions with economists, academics and researchers to investigate the initial financial outlay required to establish integrated early child development and parenting centres and the future potential returns to be made.
- 1.2 Source funds for staffing, resources, transport, parental leave, education and advertising by working collaboratively within Local, State and Federal levels of Government and across both small and corporate business providers and child and parent advocacy organisations who are stakeholders within local communities.
- 1.3 Review awards (pay, working conditions, and educational requirements) for all staff employed in integrated services, including early childhood educators, to assist in attracting, retaining and motivating staff through the creation of an Integrated Services Award and Union.

Recommendation 2 – Education and Training

Provide education and training in early childhood development.

- 2.1 Add neuroscience components to university curriculum for training of early childhood workers.
- 2.2 Add early childhood development components into high school curriculum.
- 2.3 Review university curriculum with the aim of developing "whole child educators".
- 2.4 Provide education and training for the up-skilling of existing health care professionals, early childhood educators and social workers in the areas of neuroscience and early childhood development and learning.

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- 2.5 Provide incentives and opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds (culturally and socially and/or people who are bilingual (or interested in learning a second language) to train in early childhood development.

Recommendation 3 – Community Awareness

Create awareness within the community about the needs and services associated with early childhood development.

- 3.1 Provide written and/or audiovisual resources and verbal information about early childhood services, tailored to specific localities.
3.2 Create a television and/or radio advertising campaign.
3.3 Engage and further educate prospective parents about the importance of early childhood development and the available services prior to conception and/or during pregnancy.

Recommendation 4 – Independent Authority

Establish an independent South Australian Early Childhood Development Council led by an Ombudsman for children and families to advocate for healthy early childhood development and learning.

- 4.1 Ensure that provisions for early childhood health, development and learning are established and maintained at a high level of quality.
4.2 Legislate to consult and involve the established Council in all levels of local, state and federal government decision making.

Recommendation 5 – Community Participation

Facilitating Community Participation in the Development, Implementation and Running of Children's Centres

5.1 Cultural Inclusion

- 5.1.1 Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and resources within the Centres.
5.1.2 Employ bilingual staff in Children's Centres.

5.2 Access to Centres

- 5.2.1 Provide transport to and from Centres and outreach services
5.2.2 Ensure that service provisions are "user friendly"
5.2.3 Review parental leave options and policies to allow parents more time to access Children's Centres and form attachments with their children

5.3 Community Engagement

- 5.3.1 Provide social opportunities through the Centres to engage community
5.3.2 Engage parents in mentoring programs with other parents and grandparents
5.3.3 Engage peer workers and volunteers with parents and children within Children's Centres
5.3.4 Provide incentives for males to work in Children's Centres to assist with engaging fathers
5.3.5 Initiate parent engagement with Children's Centres through activities such as clothes swap days and food days

5.4 Best Practice

- 5.4.1 Reduce repetition of information between services within Centres e.g. a shared network or database system

5.5 Facilitating Community Participation in the Development, Implementation and Running of Children's Centres

- 5.5.1 Holding functions as opportunities for people to voice their opinions as well as accessing people within the community context
5.5.2 Creating opportunities for members of the community to hold key positions within the Centres in relation to the planning, implementation and running and seek their constant contributions
5.5.3 Needs assessments designed and answered by members of the community
5.5.4 Decision making and action in partnership with members of the community
5.5.5 Constant evaluation of mechanisms facilitating community input

Importantly, the A-Team emphasises that we all need to develop a 'vested interest' in early child development. It takes a village to raise a child, but with dual-income families and social isolation the modern village is increasingly small. We all need to take on this responsibility in order that the village surrounding each South Australian child adequately supports their parents and provides them with a strong start. The A-Team are not merely handing over a set of recommendations, we are looking forward to the opportunity to continue to engage with whoever will work with us. Following Dr Mustard's departure it is vital that the Early Years momentum continues.

Jessie Jovanovic

University of South Australia

National Board Meeting Report

The first National Board meeting for 2007 was held in Canberra on March 16th and 17th. There was a full agenda and much to discuss. The following report provides a summary of some of the discussions and decisions which may be of interest to SA branch members.

Early childhood education programs/early childhood leadership/early childhood teachers as part of the teaching profession

Two speakers were invited to attend the meeting and address the Board. Professor Christine Woodrow from the University of Western Sydney discussed Early Childhood leadership and the pressure to change the content of Early Childhood teaching degrees. She indicated that data was being collected internationally re what it means to be an early childhood educator and reiterated that leadership must be a focus in early childhood teacher education. The ensuing discussion raised issues about the need for teacher registration bodies/institutes of teachers to be informed about and recognise that early childhood education teachers have sophisticated skills in teaching children and should be considered teachers in all Australian states. There was also discussion about the existence of curriculum in early childhood programs and the need to promote the fact that these currently exist and are in use in many states, for example SACSA here in South Australia. Among the questions raised were the following:

- We want people in early childhood settings trained as teachers and registered as teachers. What do early childhood teacher education programs need to contain to ensure both

social and intellectual content and pedagogy?

- What are key elements in a curriculum for 0-3? How can early childhood teacher education programs demonstrate that they provide this? How can early childhood education teachers then be supported in their first year of teaching?
- What do teacher registration boards/institutes of teachers think 'curriculum' looks like? What does it look like in Pre-school –Year 3? What would it have to look like with children birth –three years to be considered curriculum?
- What does a leadership agenda look like?

The second speaker was Helen Tracey, Deputy CEO, Teaching Australia. Teaching Australia was established in November 2005 as the national body for the teaching profession with funding provided by the Australian Government. It is currently developing a voluntary accreditation process for initial teacher preparation programs in Australia. Accreditation forums are being held across Australia. The Adelaide forum will be held at the Mercure Grosvenor Hotel on Thursday April 12. For further information contact www.teachingaustralia.edu.au.

Discussion with Helen related to early childhood education teachers in the profession, the definition of schooling, the development of standards for early childhood teaching and the possibility of ECA setting up a reference group to contribute to the thinking of Teaching Australia around early childhood teachers and teaching.

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Quality Agenda - FACSIA review of QA system

Judy Radich, Past President of ECA is continuing to represent ECA on the National Advisory Group which is providing input and expert advice to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs about the development of the new Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) System. ECA Nationally is developing a response to the paper about this as are other branches, including the SA Branch.

Code of Ethics

Each branch has been asked to organise a launch of the Code of Ethics. Tasmania was the first branch to do so, as part of a one day conference held in March. A plan to support branch launches was tabled at the Board meeting and plans are underway for the launch in SA.

Christy Ward
SA Board Member

Book Review

Young Children: Thinking about the scientific world

Author :Fleer Marilyn (Ed.). Monash University.

Publisher: Early Childhood Australia Inc.

Date of Publication: 2007.

Reviewed by: Dr Sharon Russo , University of South Australia



Young Children: Thinking about the scientific world is an easy-to-read book that draws on opinions from a wide range of leading researchers and practitioners in science education to explain how children develop scientific concepts. One unique aspect of this small book is the inclusion of examples of children 's

developing scientific ideas compared with established scientific concepts. Other chapters in the book revisit past research on electricity, questioning, the human body and light and colour. The final chapter considers the importance of raising children 's awareness about caring for the environment.

The book is packed with information about children 's thinking in science and provides useful information for teachers, students and parents. It is well illustrated and would make a great addition to the professional bookshelf in schools and centres because it provides easy to find topics, examples and expla-

Integrated Child Care Quality Assurance Draft Standards and Framework Consultation

As many members would be aware, the new National Childcare Accreditation Council Integrated Child Care Quality Assurance Draft Standards and Framework has been released for sector consultation. Submissions are now due by the 10 April 2007. A copy of the draft can be accessed at <http://www.ncac.gov.au/>. An Early Childhood Australia SA Branch working party consisting of Pam Linke, Louise Cornelius, Jessie Kenyon and John Buckell is in the process of collating responses from ECA members.

A first draft of our paper has been circulated to all members who have provided current e-mail addresses. The timeframe is very tight and member's contributions to the paper are due as close as possible to 3 April to allow time for collation. Your comments, questions, issues etc may be sent to ECA via buckell.john@saugov.sa.gov.au. All services and individuals are encouraged to provide grass roots feedback, either through ECA or directly to the NCAC – all of us who have experienced accreditation have a tale to tell.

Some of the issues identified by the working party and executive include:

- The huge challenge this task entails for developers and administrators of the system
- The loss of a tiered system of standards and the perception of a move from improvement towards compliance
- The lack of detail, especially in the standards for infants
- The problems of interpreting the standards across diverse services such as long day care, out of school hours care, vacation care, family day care, in-home care and combinations of these, from remote and rural to metropolitan locations serving hugely diverse communities
- The pressure on validators
- Yet more change for the sector

We welcome and encourage your input

John Buckell

On behalf of the SA Executive CCQA Working Party

Prize winner

Claire Brideson was awarded the ECA Prize at a celebration for graduates from the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Program, University of South Australia. The prize is awarded to a graduating student who demonstrates excellence and commitment to the care and education of young children. Claire is pictured with her son and daughter and Christy Ward from ECA-SA Branch who presented the award. Claire has just obtained a teaching position and we look forward to her future involvement with ECA.

