

September 2003

## Profiling Early Childhood Programs and People

This month's interviews are with two early childhood education students who are student members of ECA - Kylie Sharrock and Jo Lipp

### **Kylie Sharrock**

*What are you currently involved in?*

I am in my second year of the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, which I am studying part-time while fitting in work commitments. I have been working in the Research Unit in the Department of Education and Children's Services for two years, and in September I will be moving on to work at the University of South Australia as a Research Officer in the de Lissa Institute. I also work as a nanny for two girls, aged 6 and 8 years. Earlier this year I acted as a volunteer student facilitator at the Birth to Three Symposium, as part of the Our Children The Future 2003 conference, and in August I volunteered with Windmill Performing Arts, assisting with music, movement and visual art workshops for children at Windmill's presentation of Robinson Crusoe. I have been a student member of ECA Inc. since April of this year, and assist with the coordination of the monthly branch newsletter.

*How did you become interested in studying for the degree in Early Childhood Education?*

I have had an interest in Early Childhood Education since high school, but after Year 12 I had no interest in studying! I worked in casual retail jobs for 12 months, then began work in the South Australian government through a traineeship scheme in 1996. My work in the Department of Education and Children's Services renewed my interest in Early Childhood Education, and with the support of my family and colleagues I found a way to fit university study into my life. I am eternally grateful to the people who supported my decision to return to study, I know that I have found the field that I belong in.

*How did you get involved in Early Childhood Australia?*

I was interested in finding ways to make a contribution to ECE while studying, and I had read the ECA's publications and heard about their work while studying. The Vice-President of the SA Branch, Andrea McGuffog also works at the Department of Education and Children's Services, and convinced me to come along to a meeting.

*What have you gained from becoming a student member of the ECA?*

One of the greatest benefits is to be in touch with others in Early Childhood Education and to learn about the realities of ECE work. It has been very helpful to extend my knowledge of the network of early childhood in South Australia and nation-wide. I have met some inspiring people with great knowledge and experience. I also enjoy knowing that I'm actively involved in the field. I intend to continue my membership with the ECA for the duration of my study, and later as an early childhood professional.

**Jo Lipp**

*What are you currently involved in?*

I am currently in my second year of study towards the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. I work three times a week in OHSC at Reynella South School, which is a K-7 school, so I work with a wide range of ages. I have recently participated in the Windmill workshops for Robinson Crusoe. This was a wonderful project from which I gained valuable experience.



*Kylie Sharrock (left) and Jo Lipp*

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## Profiling Early Childhood Programs and People

Kylie Sharrock and Jo Lipp

Interview with Jo Lipp cont from p 1

How did you become interested in studying for the degree in Early Childhood Education?

After studying for a year in Marketing, I realised that I was not and would not be passionate about marketing in 20 years time. It seemed that I could not give anything of myself to it. I decided that education and young children was an area of interest, I was the local babysitter and I used to make friends with neighbours who had children so I could visit their babies. Early Childhood is an area that is very diverse and it will allow me to work with an age group that is wonderful and full of adventure.

How did you get involved in Early Childhood Australia?

Kylie Sharrock and I car pool to university and have become good friends. She told me that she was doing some work the Early

Childhood Australia. I thought it was a great idea and Kylie asked if I would like to help her, as she was quite busy herself. I had heard and seen some of the work that the ECA has done in the past and was very interested, so I agreed to get involved.

What have you gained from becoming a student member of the ECA?

I have gained an insight into the large amount of policy that professionals have to develop and review. I have realised that there are so many areas and opportunities available to Early Childhood professionals, not just in centres and schools. I feel that being a member of the ECA has and will continue to add to my professional development and learning. In some small way I feel that I am contributing to safe and responsible practice in the education of young children. The ECA is an organisation that I hope to continue working within and hopefully one day as a professional member.

## Book Review

**Title:** *Learning about feelings Learning at home series, Number 1 2003*

**Author:** Pam Linke, Child and Youth Health

**Publisher:** AECA

The *Learning at Home Series* has been especially developed for parents, family day care carers, grandparents and others who care for children in the home. This new series is aimed at informing and supporting parents and carers in their most important task starting young children on the pathway of a lifetime of living and learning. The first issue in the series *Learning about feelings* is written by bestselling ECA Inc author Pam Linke.

The book sets out to explore the challenges that children face in learning to manage their feelings and emotions so they can be safe, optimistic and enthusiastic about life and learning. It provides a concise introduction about the importance of feelings and immediately provides strategies on how caregivers can best help babies and young children learn about feelings.

The book has been produced in an easy to manage size and length. The text is clear and interspersed with large photos

of children. The author uses a direct but friendly writing style to provide theory based, easy to read, information and practical advice. Bold section headings make it easy to quickly identify the various ages/stages covered babies, toddlers and preschool/early school. Within these three main sections parents and carers can find information about what development to expect at that particular age/stage, how they can best support children's emotional development and what practical experiences and opportunities are most valuable to children.

A complete reference list is provided at the end of the book together with suggestions on further reading material and books which adults can read with children to support them in managing their own feelings and emotions. The book should prove to be a valuable resource for parents and carers wanting to know how best to understand and support children's emotional development.

Claire Brideson & Nici Slack

Claire and Nici are second year students in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education program at the University of South Australia.

Claire has two children aged 8 and 4 years and Nici has three children aged 8, 5 and 2 years.

## Early Childhood Australia South Australian Launch

The South Australian Branch of Early Childhood Australia successfully launched its new name on Wednesday, August 27. There has been some form of the organisation in South Australia since the late 1930s when it was formed as the Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development.

The organisation has had a series of name changes becoming the Australian Pre-School Association in 1974, the Australian Early Childhood Association in 1980 and its most recent incarnation in 2003 - Early Childhood Australia. The changes of names themselves reflect the changing focus of the organisation over time - beginning with a focus on children in the pre-school setting and over time expanding that focus to include all children aged birth to eight years in a range of settings. The change to Early Childhood Australia puts the emphasis on children and their early years rather than on where the organisation is located.

The current make up of our membership also reflects the diversity of our organisation with members from DECS, Child Youth and Health, Diversity Directions, child care centres (private and community-based), pre-schools (both private and state), schools, local councils, family day care schemes, child care support programs, Aboriginal education programs, lecturers and students from the University of South Australia and the TAFE institutes.



At the launch L-R: Steve Marshall, Jill Huntley, Christy Ward and Prof Philip Gammage

Jane Moore officially launched the name after speaking briefly about her experiences in advocating for children. Jane is currently a law student, and has worked as a social worker with children in care and with disabled children and their families.

Through her more recent work as a Family Mediator both with Centacare and in the Family Court she has worked with parents to assist them to resolve matters regarding their children, as an alternative to litigation. Along with her husband, Jeremy, Jane has been involved with the issue of refugees in

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# What is the future for ECE and care in SA?

If you have worked in early childhood in SA (and this to me encompasses all types of programs, birth to eight) you will have been part of many changes.

The significant changes could have been forecast through time capsules.

The first time capsule involved a very long period of eighty years from 1905 -1985 and was the Kindergarten Union. This was a statutory authority catering mainly for preschools with involvement with some specific childcare centres. Family Day Care was under the welfare system and OSHC hadn't yet been established.

The writing was on the wall that government would not continue with an incorporated body and so the second time capsule saw the establishment of the Children's Services Office in 1985. This Office brought together all early childhood services under one banner and gave us a Children's Services Act and a Minister for Children's Services. The Children's Services Office existed for ten years and again one could see the moves being made to amalgamate children's services with education.

Hence the third major time capsule saw the merging of the Children's Services Office with the Education Department in 1995 - a move lauded by many. Since 1995 we have seen a variety of departmental names and functional arrangements.

In the last decade particularly we have seen an increased focus on early childhood.

There have been many international debates about quality of services and Australia in the mid eighties was the first and only nation to implement a Quality Improvement and Accreditation System for long day care centres which was tied to funding arrangements. This system has since been reviewed and refined. We have more recently seen the introduction of quality assurance processes in Family Day Care as of July 2002 and in OSHC from July of this year. Research recognised that all services need to be of high quality and in fact research in Canada shows that if a child from a two parent, middle class family have a child in poor quality care they cannot ameliorate the damage (imagine what that means for other families in less fortunate circumstances).

We are seeing more women return to the workforce and it is possible for a child to spend 11,700 hours in a care service (aged between 6 weeks and five years, fulltime). This is considerably more than a primary student who spends a maximum of 8,800 hours in a primary setting. Now you can see why high quality centres are paramount for children and families.

In the last decade we have seen a much greater acceptance of the work that preschool staff undertake with children and families and the significant role they play in community capacity building. Preschools have been accepted as part of the education system.

There has also been significant work undertaken in some areas of SA to strengthen

the bonds and links between all early childhood services and to provide an articulate voice for early childhood in general. And of course as Phillip has alluded to, there has been significant international research which has shown the wisdom of financial spending in the early childhood years. Last reports show that for every pound spent in early childhood it yields a saving of approximately eight pounds later on.

Now we are in the midst of more change. If we are aiming to provide the best possible start in life for all children and capitalise on the system we already have in early childhood and is unique to SA, then a time capsule I open in twelve months time I hope, might look like this:

- A system who undertakes support for all early childhood services regardless of their funding body
- A system which provides universal programs for all children, with some targeted programs for those families needing extra support
- A system that values early childhood in its own right and is not seen as an early intervention strategy or a precursor to something else
- A system which recognises learning as a continuum and values that which has gone before, including family and community learning, and builds upon it.
- A system which looks at the nomenclature. I read something recently where the author talked about how demeaning it is to be seen as only that which goes before.

So how do pre-schools and junior primary

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## Reflections on attending National Council

Italia Parletta and Caroline Donald report on their participation in National Council July 2003

As first-timers at National Council we went along not knowing what to expect and arrived on the first morning feeling both intrigued and nervous. The formal meeting room, large number of people, many of whom seemed to already know each other, official place names and microphones were intimidating at first, but we soon discovered that the atmosphere of the meeting, although efficient, was friendly.

It was wonderful to be put faces to many familiar (and famous!) names and to be with so many energetic and articulate people who all had the interests of young children as their focus.

Discussion of issues at a branch and national level made it possible to hear

others' perspectives. We enjoyed hearing what each state branch had been working on throughout the year and how this contributed to the achievements of ECA nationally.



L-R: Caroline Donald, Italia Parletta, Christy Ward, Andrea McGuffog and Pam Linke.

At times we seemed to be moving slowly, but looking back we realise that we achieved an impressive amount of work. The state-of-the-art technology helped. It was so good to be able to sit and watch as our combined words and then our editing of them appeared on the screen on the wall in front of us (thanks to Annette's keyboard skills). It was even more impressive to see our two statements, on the extension of school hours and on children in family breakup, on the website the day after we worked on them.

Sharing lunch and dinner together provided the opportunity to connect with members from other states and also to spend informal time with members from our branch. There was a sense of excitement about the launch of the new name and logo and a very positive outlook for the future of ECA.

Our thanks to ECA SA Branch for the chance to be part of this historic National Council.

# What is the future for ECE and care in SA?

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staff feel? Perhaps we could also look at the word school. If we are truly trying to build community capacity and involve families in meaningful ways we need to acknowledge that 'school' does not have happy memories for all.

School by one dictionary definition means a place of instruction. With our changing views of curriculum I think we can find a more appropriate name - something which reflects family and community involvement. This would also reflect the other allied services of health, counselling, etc that we are now recognising we need to work closely with. It also reinforces the notion of holistic learning and we know the importance of seeing and working with the child in the context of the family.

A system which helps children develop the dispositions for learning. Developing a disposition to apply what has been learnt and to want to learn more is fundamental to children's success. Children's constructions of their identities develop as a result of their interactions with the environment. They construct complex perceptions of themselves through their experiences with the world and their interpretations of their own place in it. It is essential to provide quality learning environments in early childhood that foster and enhance for all children, positive self-concepts, optimism and a desire to learn (Gammage). We would see better state/commonwealth relationships and lobby for more care places.

According to the report, Growing Up - Investment in the Early Years, December 2002, by the Federal Labor Party the national shortages include: OSHC 30,000 places LDC 18,000 places FDC 2,000 places 40 towns with major Aboriginal populations with no Aboriginal children's services.

We also need to raise the status and remuneration rates for childcare staff. Perhaps we also need a positive and relentless media campaign which promotes the use of care services for families and reduces the guilt families can feel. We have a FDC system, unique in Australia through its state government sponsorship, which is on the brink, whilst we await the outcome of the Commonwealth Broadband Review.

Should operational funding be withdrawn by the commonwealth, the state will need to address this. We need as a profession to see all early childhood services as a choice for families not as in competition to the

particular service we work in.

We need to establish more programs for particularly the birth to three age group to maximise the best start for children. We need specific, highly qualified support and advisory personnel working across birth to eight services.

We need to acknowledge that the potency of early childhood programs is measured in long term outcomes (seen as reduced incidence of crime, poverty, teenage pregnancy, etc) rather than as easily measured short term outcomes.

We need to recognise that attachment, consistency and social interaction in early childhood are central to healthy cognitive and emotional development. If children don't get this in the early childhood programs it can lead to later adult dysfunctionality.

With the rapid economic and social change which is occurring we need to ensure the best supports for children and their families. It has also been my experience that many staff working with the 5-8 age group do not receive the support they require and indeed flock to early childhood training and development in droves when it is provided.

As a long time member of early childhood professional associations it is so important that we are able to speak with one voice for young children - this is why groups like ECA are so important and warrant the time and commitment we give to it.

In summary, Peter Moss from the Thomas Coram Research Unit in London suggests that reforms they are undertaking in Sweden may be useful to look at. "The objective is a single profession, working with a wide age range and across different settings - from young children in nursery to teenagers in gymnasias. The thinking is radical, that integration requires new practice across the system - not traditional methods of school teaching extended down the age range" (*UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood*).

Whatever way we go, we need to honour the child and the family and provide the best possible supports to ensure that each and every child can achieve their very best. We also need to support all staff working across the birth to eight age group so they can provide the best possible education and care there is.

Jill Huntley

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## Early Childhood Australia South Australian Launch

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detention since late 2000. She has been particularly concerned about children in detention and those now on Temporary Protection visas and their plight was the push she needed to begin her law studies. Jane challenged us to ask ourselves what kind of society we reflect based on our treatment of children.

The launch was followed by a panel of speakers who addressed the question, What is the future for early childhood education and care in South Australia?

The panel was chaired by Dr Glenn Cupit, ECA member, and the three speakers were: Philip Gammage, Professorial Research Fellow and Adviser to the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), Steve Marshall, Chief Executive, DECS and Jill Huntley (ECA member).

The text of Jill's speech is presented elsewhere in this month's newsletter.

## Conferences

20-21 November, 2003

Aboriginal Studies:

Real aspirations, Real partnerships,  
Real difference

University of Western Sydney,  
Bankstown Campus

Information and updates:

<http://www.asa.nsw.edu.au>

27-28 November 2003

Continuity and Change:

Transitions in Education

University of Western Sydney

Novotel, Brighton NSW

Contact: Dr Diana Whitton at  
[d.whitton@uws.edu.au](mailto:d.whitton@uws.edu.au)

## War Play

Most children, at some time or other, play games that involve weapons or superhero games. It is especially popular with boys around the age of four to want to be superman or another warlike hero.

More information on this topic is available from the child and Youth health Website at:  
<[www.cyh.com](http://www.cyh.com)>