



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The United Nations Special Session on Children in May 2002 captured the growing sense, world wide, that it is time to 'put children first'. In Australia, this has resulted in an increasing willingness to bring issues affecting children to centre stage, in both government and non-government decision making.

The Global Movement for Children (GMC) is a program of action that resulted from the UN Special Session on Children and is a force for change. It calls for people throughout the world to take action and protect the rights of children. The language of the GMC is inclusive—using words like 'we' and 'our'—and so gives the world's citizens a sense of responsibility to take action on behalf of children around the world.

We have the knowledge, resources and legal imperatives to make 'the world fit for children'. The commitments expressed in the United Nations Convention in the Rights of the Child, and reinforced in the Outcome Document of the UN Special Session of Children, support the advancement of children's rights and issues. These obligations should be met, not only by governments, but by all of us. It is clear that more—much more—must be done if the world is to protect the rights and meet the needs of all children.

The Global Movement for Children (GMC)

AECA supports the Global Movement for Children and its focus on the rights of the world's children. The work that AECA has done, and continues to do, reflects the commitment to take action to protect these rights.

AECA also supports the Global Movement for Children's ten principles of child rights protection as listed below.

Leave no child out

Because every girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights, all forms of discrimination and exclusion against children must end.

We all have a role to play—leaders and citizens, public and private organisations, children and young people. What we demand of our leaders, we also demand of ourselves. The GMC calls on everyone, everywhere, to do as much as possible, in their own time and their own way, for and with children.

Nelson Mandela, spokesperson for the Global Movement for Children

Put children first

Governments must meet their obligations to children and young people. At the same time, everyone—including individuals, non-governmental organizations, religious groups, the private sector, and children and adolescents themselves—must recognize their responsibility to ensure that child rights are respected.

Care for every child

All children must enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, especially through immunization, good nutrition and diet, clean water and adequate sanitation, proper housing and a safe and healthy environment.

Fight HIV/AIDS

Children and adolescents and their families must be protected from the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS.

Stop harming and exploiting children

The violence and abuse that children suffer must be stopped now. This includes the sexual and economic exploitation of children.

Listen to children

Everyone must respect the right of children and young people to express themselves and to participate in decisions that affect them, consistent with their evolving capabilities. We must listen and act.

Educate every child

All girls and boys must receive a free primary education of good quality and this education should be compulsory.

Protect children from war

Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict.

Protect the earth for children

There must be urgent steps by every one of us—including governments, civil society and the private sector—to assure the wellbeing and security of future generations by safeguarding the environment at global, national and local levels.

Fight poverty: Invest in children

Because children suffer the most from poverty, the fight against it must begin with them. This includes investing in social services for the poorest children and their families, such as basic health care and primary education. At the same time, the wellbeing of children must be a priority objective of debt relief programmes, development assistance and government spending.

This material is taken directly from the Global Movement for Children Website
<www.gmfc.org/en/index_html>

The Program of Action agreed to at the Special Session provides a broad framework for action by all of those committed to the wellbeing of children. It highlights the need for a commitment to an advocacy and action program that focuses on children and acknowledges the joint responsibility we all have to ensure their wellbeing.

Advocacy for children comes in many forms—every act of advocacy no matter how large or small makes a difference for children. What the Global Movement for Children makes clear is that no one person or nation is exempt from the effort that is necessary to make the world a better place for children. The advocacy work that AECA continues to do, both as an organisation and through each individual member, supports the view that we can all be a 'voice for young children'.



AECA advocacy for children 2001–2002

The Australian Early Childhood Association Inc. is a national organisation with branches in all states and territories. This report covers the work that the membership of AECA does at national and state/territory levels. This work is testament to the energy and commitment of AECA members to contribute to the wellbeing of children. It reflects the diverse backgrounds and interests of our members as well as the range of issues faced by young children and those who care about and work with them. This report provides an overview of that work.

Children in immigration and detention centres

Submissions to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) Inquiry into Children in Immigration and Detention Centre were made by AECA Branches in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. The South Australian Branch also wrote the background/position paper that was ratified by AECA Council 2002. This paper has been distributed nationally. All branches have participated in this work. The background/position paper provided a basis for work on this issue by all branches as well as articles in *Every Child*, *AECA Voice* and speeches by the National President including one at the World Forum that was held in New Zealand. This issue is one of the key elements of the AECA Agenda for Children.

AECA Federal Election Agenda for Children

This AECA Agenda called for:

- ▶ The appointment of an independent Children's Commissioner.
- ▶ A 'whole of Government' approach to considering the impact of policies on children.
- ▶ Government assistance, through increases in funding to children's services, to be leveraged for increased quality.
- ▶ A program of action, including Commonwealth financial support, for the funding of the first years of school.
- ▶ A properly funded, integrated and equitable system of support services for families and young children.
- ▶ A policy on asylum seekers that ensures that the rights of their children and unaccompanied minors, as specified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are protected.
- ▶ Wages and conditions for early childhood professionals that reflect the importance of their work.

- ▶ Action to ensure that people working with young children are appropriately qualified.
- ▶ The development of workplace relation's policy that acknowledges the family responsibility of workers with young children.
- ▶ A biennial State of the Nation's Children Report on the position of young children in Australia.

This Agenda has informed the work of the national organisation over the last twelve months. Over 20,000 copies were printed and all were distributed. It was also circulated on e-groups, discussed with Government Ministers, other politicians and been used by state/territory branches to support their work.

Celebrating children and those who work with them

AECA biennial conferences

Excellence for Children—AECA Conference 2001

The conference, organised by the NSW Branch, was an outstanding success. Over 1000 people attended a wonderful celebration of:

- ▶ early childhood;
- ▶ those who work with and advocate for young children; and
- ▶ AECA as an organisation.

Congratulations and thank you to the New South Wales Branch. The collaboration with NIFTeY enriched the conference for all who attended.

Children—The Core of our Society—AECA Conference 2003

Planning is well advanced for the next AECA conference to be held in Tasmania from 10–13 July 2003.

AECA Conference 2005

To be held in Brisbane. Planning has continued throughout the year.

This year many state Branches have been involved in or responsible for the organization of state-based conferences and other events that support children. The Queensland Branch again sponsored Under 8's week and was involved in Refugee Week. NT Children's Week was sponsored by AECA and that branch is also coordinating the next NT early childhood conference. South Australia is on the planning committee for the conference *Our Children, Our Futures*.

Awards, scholarships and lectures

The Barbara Creaser Memorial at the *Excellence for Children* Conference was delivered by Glenda McNaughton.

The Creswick-Kimpton Fellowship. AECA is a member of the selection and reference group for this scholarship and provides support for the work of the Foundation. Sue Lancaster is the current scholar.

AECA Branches in Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland presented Awards of Excellence to University and TAFE early childhood graduates. The Toowoomba Regional Group has initiated a similar award at the University of Southern Queensland. South Australia continues to be involved in the selection of the Jean Denton and de Lissa scholarships.

State and Territory Branches are also on the selection panels for the National Excellence in Teaching Awards sponsored by the Australian Scholarships Foundation.

Supporting the early childhood profession

AECA publications

AECA publications continue to support early childhood professionals across Australia. This year 24,000 subscription items were distributed, 4433 book orders were filled and 32,000 copies of *AECA Voice* were distributed. These publications are clearly well targeted and meeting a need. As a result, sales and subscription targets were met.

Titles published this year include:

- ▶ *Promoting Resilience in Young Children* by Sharne Rolfe.
- ▶ *Our Part in Peace* was written in response to the events of September 11. The authors are associated with the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood.
- ▶ *Autism Spectrum Disorder and Young Children* by Diana Roe. This book was reprinted six months after its release.
- ▶ *When Things Go Wrong: Managing Critical Incidents in Children's Services* by Chris Legg.
- ▶ *Beginning School Together: Sharing Strengths* edited by Sue Dockett and Bob Perry.
- ▶ *Parenting at Home and Away* was the result of a second successful collaboration with the Department of Defence and written by Pam Linke.
- ▶ *Building Bridges: Literacy Development in Young Indigenous Children* was the result of a project with the Commonwealth Department of Education. The book was written by Marilyn Flear and Denise Williams Kennedy and there is also a video of the same name.
- ▶ Four editions of the Australian Journal of Early Childhood including themed editions focused on Innovations in Preparing Early Childhood Professionals and Professional Ethics.
- ▶ Four editions of *Every Child* magazine including a special 'Year of the Outback' Issue.

Work has begun on a new *Learning at Home Series*. The first title will be published late in 2002.

AECA's publications program is dependent on the generosity and commitment of early childhood professionals who are the authors of AECA's publications, who review them

and who sit on AECA's publications committee. Thank you.

Seminars and forums

Seminars and forums have been held or jointly sponsored by all AECA state and territory branches. Across the country AECA has been responsible for at least one seminar every ten days on early childhood. Topics covered include: A curriculum framework for children's services, Behaviour management and young children; Children as curriculum planners; Early intervention, fair play; Constructing a curriculum for social justice; Medically supervised injecting rooms; Movers and shakers: Culture, context and movement for young people; Qualifications information: Reflections on the World Forum; Reggio Emilio, making a difference: Childhood protection workshop; Sustaining pedagogical innovation and critical reflection in early childhood services; The appointment of a Children's Commissioner; Vision workshops by an Aboriginal artist across the Top End.

Representing children

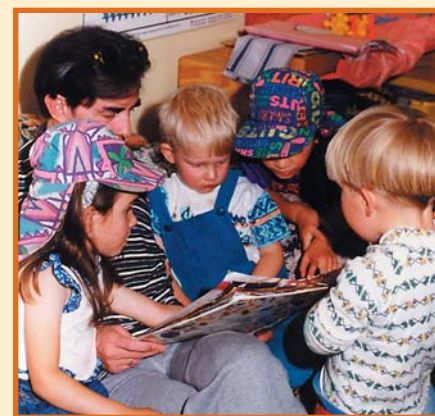
Submissions, consultations and committees

AECA nationally and all AECA branches have made submissions, participated in consultations and forums, met with politicians and government officials and been represented on a range of committees, task forces and Advisory Councils as has the national organisation. This work has covered national issues and issues of significance to particular states and territories.

The issues covered have included: In New South Wales (NSW) a summit on preschool school issues, the proposed early childhood curriculum framework, the shortage of qualified staff. In Queensland (Qld) issues included the child care regulations review, the Qld policy on enhancing early childhood education and care, quality standards in training and the review of the community services training package Tasmania (Tas) also responded to this review. In Western Australia (WA) two of the issues were qualifications in care and education and joined up early childhood services. The ACT responded to a report on the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people and the SA Branch contributed to an Australian

Broadcasting Authority review on content. In the Northern Territory (NT) issues included changes to the very successful parents and teachers programs. In Victoria (VIC) the issues included regulations for outside school hours care and the establishment of a registration board, Branches and the national organisation contributed to the review of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System and to the work of the Child Care Advisory Council.

AECA members participate nationally and at the state level on over 30 committees, task forces and reference groups. These include the Child Care Advisory Council, the National Childcare Accreditation Council, the National Education Forum, the Child Care Benefit Reference Group, the Curriculum Standards and Assessment Framework working party and Coalition for Refugee Children in SA; the Curriculum Frameworks Reference Group and the Early Childhood Reference Group and the flexible models research project in NSW; the Early Childhood Reference Group and Child Care in Schools working group in Tasmania, the early years curriculum development project reference group and reference group for trialing the implementation of the preparatory year prior to Grade 1 entry in Queensland.



Working together in early childhood

The National Children's Services Forum, which includes the majority of child care peak organisations, continues to work effectively for children. AECA auspices, chairs and is a member of this group. It provides an important forum for the sector to discuss issues of common concern and interest and to meet with Government officials. Each year the forum talks to members of the national Parliament about children and issues related to their wellbeing.

A number of Branches are part of or convene similar forums. In Victoria there is the Children's Services Forum, in South Australia the Joint Early Childhood Affiliates, in New South Wales the Children's Services Forum, in Queensland the Child Care Coalition and in Tasmania the Early Childhood Reference Group.

AECA information and communications systems

AECA has done major work on its database in 2001–2002 and implemented a new financial system which has simplified and made more transparent its financial practices and procedures. The Finance Standing Committee has continued to provide expert support to the Treasurer and the Executive. Thank you.

AECA has also done significant work on the development of an early childhood knowledge management system which will result in a search and navigation tool for the planned early childhood Australia website. This tool will allow people to search the AECA site using their own lexicons. The project has been funded by the Department of Family and Community Services and builds on the work done by AECA in the development of the GST Community Tax Website.

Highlights

The public recognition of AECA members

- ▶ Tonia Godhard received an Order of Australia Medal for her work in the Early Childhood Field.
- ▶ Margaret Henry received an Order of Australia Medal for her work in the Early Childhood Field.
- ▶ Louis Bradfield received a National Excellence in Teaching Award.
- ▶ Helen Stephen received a National Excellence in Teaching Award
- ▶ *Child Watch* received a Child Protection Week Award and is now represented on the Child Protection Council in Queensland

Alliances and collaboration with other agencies including:

- ▶ The Department of Defence
- ▶ AECA participation in the NIETA awards
- ▶ Child Care Information Exchange
- ▶ The Van Leer Foundation
- ▶ Education.au
- ▶ Pademelon Press

Others

- ▶ The 2000 people who responded to the AECA web survey
- ▶ The overwhelming success of the AECA book sale
- ▶ The unsolicited feedback on AECA publications, media releases and the AECA *Voice* that featured one centre's charter of children's rights.
- ▶ The success of AECA marketing.

AECA membership

AECA membership is broadly based and increased in 2001–2002. Given the scope of work outlined here that is not surprising. There are now regional groups in Queensland as well as New South Wales and these have been an important strategy for making AECA accessible. It will be a great day when AECA can claim a member in every early childhood classroom, service, tertiary institution, department, and organisation that has an interest in the wellbeing of children.

All members of AECA play a significant role in AECA's work for children. Some take on leadership roles in the Executives of the State and Territory Branches. AECA acknowledges the dedication and commitment of all of these people. Some members also take leadership positions in the national organisation as office bearers and as members of the National Executive. This would not be possible without the support of their employers.

Thank you to

- ▶ Child and Youth Health in South Australia.
- ▶ Country Children's Services Association of New South Wales.
- ▶ The Departments covering education, training, children's and family services in South Australia, the ACT and the Northern Territory.
- ▶ The Liquor, Hospitality and Allied Trade Union in Western Australia.
- ▶ The NSW and Tasmanian Lady Gowrie Child Centres.
- ▶ The University of Southern Queensland, Monash University and Edith Cowan University.

And thanks in particular to:

- ▶ The Cooloon Children's Centre Management Committee and staff for their support of AECA's National President, Judith Radich.
- ▶ Colquhoun Murphy Solicitors who continue to act as AECA's Honorary Solicitors.

Members of the AECA National Executive

Judith Radich	National President
Ros Cornish	Deputy National President Tasmania
Lennie Barblett	Western Australia (from February 2002)
Lyn Bower	Queensland
Sue Devereux	Western Australia (until February 2002)
Maree Garrigan	Northern Territory (until 1 June 2002)
Marie Hammer	Victoria
Renate Harris	Northern Territory (from 1 June 2002)
Judith Kynaston	New South Wales
Andrea McGuffog	South Australia
Julia Zachara	Australian Capital Territory
Pam Linke	Chair Publications Standing Committee
Margaret Young	Treasurer