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PP 232100/00026

ISSN 1445-0496

Vol.5 No.4 2005

Early Childhood Australia Values

The rights of children ...

Leadership, excellence & respect ...

Courage, honesty & openness ...

Collaboration & diversity ...

Social inclusion of children ...

Justice ...

**Annual Report
2004 – 2005**

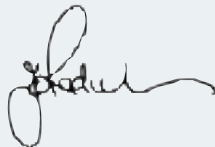
**The President's message:
Affirming advocacy**

Advocacy for children comes in many guises. Early Childhood Australia is an advocate for young children and for all those who support their growth and learning.

We need to recognise, name and affirm advocacy in all of its many forms. All of the work done by ECA branches, ECA members and the national organisation is advocacy. Every act of advocacy, no matter how large or small, makes a difference for children. This Annual Report details the scope and depth of Early Childhood Australia's advocacy work. It is the totality of this work that makes ECA a formidable advocate for children.

Early Childhood Australia is indebted to the early childhood professionals, especially ECA branches and members, who, as advocates for children, support ECA to do its work. Without them this organisation could not function. It is particularly important to acknowledge and appreciate the depth and extent of the work done by ECA state and territory branches.

This report is testament to their energy, commitment and focus on the wellbeing of children.



Judy Radich, National President



**Advocacy: A campaign
for children**

In 2004-05 Early Childhood Australia's advocacy has been innovative, broadly based and public. This report provides an overview of the work done by members of Early Childhood Australia at national and state/territory levels. That work is evidence of an ongoing campaign for 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.

**The Early Childhood
Australia Code of
Ethics Agenda**

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics Agenda has progressed substantially over the last 12 months. A survey of literature regarding ethical issues in relation to professional practice in the early childhood field has been completed. Workshops and forums have been held by ECA branches in all states and territories to canvass the issues with ECA members and other early childhood professionals. The interest in these forums is evidence of the significance of the Code for the early childhood profession. Further work will be done at Council 2005. The literature review and updates on the progress on the agenda are available on the ECA website.



Look out for the *new* Early Childhood Australia quality-assured catalogue for all children's services.

For your free copy, call
1800 356 900

Be a voice for young children
and become a member of
Early Childhood Australia

For information on member benefits, contact our membership officer on **1800 356 900** or email eca@earlychildhood.org.au

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/membership/membership.html

A statement of respect and commitment to Indigenous children and their families.

This year Early Childhood Australia revisited its Apology to Indigenous Australians.

The result was a statement of respect and commitment to Indigenous children and their families.

The following is an excerpt from that statement.

‘Early Childhood Australia draws attention to this statement of respect and commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and in doing so urges those committed to these ideals to translate these words into action. Prescribed actions are difficult to articulate and often mean local insights are overlooked. Instead, ECA suggests that consideration be focused on the following:

- Building relationships – this will take time, often many, many years, and a strong commitment to persevere despite, at times, substantial difficulties.
- Seeking local answers. What will work in one community may not work in another. Have conversations and make connections with local Indigenous people to develop respectful ways of learning and working together.
- Making the effort to act with integrity and in collaboration is better than doing nothing. Decisions are not always easily made nor directions clear but all actions are learning opportunities.
- The process is just as important as the action. All actions must be undertaken with respect, patience and humility.



Speaking out for children

Speaking out for children takes many different forms. Early Childhood Australia is making its voice heard for children, as an organisation and through its members. The National President has regularly made speeches and increasingly commented in the media about issues relating to children. Both the national organisation and state/territory branches have regular meetings with government and opposition members, as well as departmental officials who have responsibility for issues related to young children. This year the national ECA organisation met a number of times with the Commonwealth Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the Shadow Ministers for Family and Community Services and Children and Youth, and with their advisors. There were also many, many meetings with government officials in the Australian Government Departments of Family and Community Services; Education, Science and Training; and Defence.

Submissions, consultations and committees

At the same time, Early Childhood Australia—nationally and in all state/territory branches—spoke out for children on national and state/territory issues by making submissions, taking part in consultations and delegations, participating in reviews, forums and on committees and task forces. This work is demanding but is a crucial part of our advocacy, because it is in the discussions and negotiations that go on around these activities that gains can be made for children.

Issues on which ECA branches spoke out in 2004–05 included:

- In New South Wales: the ECA Code of Ethics, staff–child ratios, the Excellence and Innovation consultation paper, the QIAS draft quality practices guide, and federal election issues.
- In South Australia: the ECA Code of Ethics, justice for refugees, the implications for children and families of the state development

plan, breastfeeding, children in immigration detention centres, integrated sites for services for children, and childhood obesity.

- In Victoria: the ECA Code of Ethics, early childhood qualifications, and an early childhood curriculum framework.
- In the Northern Territory: the teacher registration board, the AEU preschool inquiry, school age entry, and the new pre-compulsory curriculum.
- In Tasmania: the supporting campaign for improved wages and conditions for children’s services workers.
- In Western Australia: the ECA Code of Ethics, registration of early childhood teachers, the role of the Childcare Advisory Council, the lack of government focus on children, and the full-time preparatory year.
- In Queensland: the ECA Code of Ethics, corporate child care, the introduction of the preparatory year, teacher quality (particularly the need for specialist early childhood teachers), and nutrition–safe food.
- In the ACT: the ACT curriculum renewal process, the national public health plan, and the ACT Children’s Plan.

Nationally, Early Childhood Australia made submissions to the Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and the Human Services Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family, and provided consultation feedback to the Child Care Inclusion and Support Program.

The breadth and depth of ECA’s work is nowhere more apparent than the range of committees and forums on which ECA members work to make a difference for children. In 2004–05, Early Childhood Australia participated in almost 100 national and state committees, working parties and forums. In addition, individual ECA members are members of many other committees etc., speaking out as individuals for children.

The national committees, forums etc. on which ECA or an ECA member has a voice include: the Australian Council of Children and Parenting, the National Childcare Accreditation Council, the Child Care Reference Group, the National Education Forum, Standards Australia CS-5 Playground Standards Review Committee, the Obesity Task Force Consultative Committee, the Indigenous Services Quality Assurance Forum, the Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy Reference Group, the ACAP, the Work and Family Reference Group, the Reference Group for the Implementation Committee for Child Custody Inquiry Recommendations, Review of Quality Teaching Awards, the steering committee for the Engaging Fathers Project – Father Inclusive Practice Framework, the World Forum Planning Committee, the Raising Children Network Steering Committee and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth.

In South Australia, ECA is represented on the SA Coalition for Refugee Children, the Curriculum Standards and Assessment Framework Executive Committee, Young Media Australia, Minister for Education and Children's Services Consultative Committee, Justice for Refugees SA, and the conference planning committee for the Our Children, Their Futures conference.

In NSW these forums etc. included the Department of Community Services Interim Early Childhood Teacher Policy Review Committee, Early Childhood Environmental Education Network, the Children's Services Health and Safety Committee, the Department of Education and Training Early Childhood Reference Group, the NSW Children's Services Forum and the Early Childhood Professional Experience Council.

Victoria participated in and/or convened the Qualifications Approvals Committee, Children's Services Committee, the Children's Services Forum.

In the NT the branch is a member of the State Liaison Forum.

In the ACT the branch is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Children's Plan.

In Tasmania the branch is represented on a number of committees including the Early Years Reference Group, the Ministerial Childcare Advisory Council, the Children's Services Employers Association of Tasmania, the Department of Family and Community Services State Planning Committee.

The Queensland branch is represented on the Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Education Advisory Board, the Early Years Reference Group and the Child Care Forum.

The ECA WA Branch is represented on the Child Care Industry Forum, NIFTeY, the Community Services, Health and Education Industry Training Council and the College of Teaching.

Supporting the early childhood profession

A priority of Early Childhood Australia's advocacy focus is to those who have some responsibility for the care, growth and development of young children. ECA has always done this through its hardcopy publications, through the organisation of seminars and conferences, and through the development of formal policy positions.

In 2004–05 there was a significant increase in media demand for ECA comment. Much of ECA's public comment to the media and in speeches has focused on the link between good outcomes for children; the qualities and qualifications of people who work with young children; and the requirement for conditions and wages, particularly in children's services, which acknowledge the expertise, significance, and the worth of work with young children. Also highlighted has been the link between early childhood leadership and quality outcomes for children in children's services and the early years of school. ECA commented too on the implications of the entry of the corporate sector into the provision of child care. These comments have focused on the need to ensure that the fundamentals of the system are robust and provide the framework necessary for a quality system, regardless of who provides the service.

If regulations in regard to issues such as qualifications, staff–child ratios are weak, and the wages and conditions of staff in early childhood services are inadequate, the quality assurance systems, which are meant to provide a guarantee of quality, cannot achieve their mandate.

This year ECA has continued to advocate for the development of teaching standards for the early childhood field. ECA was represented at the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership conference on a framework for teaching standards and has met with the Chair and CEO of that organisation.

Seminars, conferences, panels and public meetings

Many seminars and forums have been held or jointly sponsored by all state/territory branches of Early Childhood Australia and by the regional groups in Queensland and New South Wales. Increasing effort is being made by all branches to ensure that the location for these events is varied.

These seminars provide an opportunity to focus on current issues, reflect on what is happening in early childhood programs and, importantly, talk and network with colleagues.

Issues addressed in these seminars and forums were diverse. Topics covered included the ECA Code of Ethics review, connecting children to popular culture, childhood obesity, risk management, protective behaviours, women's health, controlled crying, breastfeeding, how early childhood educators evaluate their practice, state regulations, Indigenous education, and contemporary approaches to curriculum. In Queensland there was much comment on the preparatory year for schooling, research and best practice in early childhood settings, and integrated sites for early education.

Many ECA Branches play an active ongoing role in the support and organisation of conferences and

Children's Weeks. This is particularly the case for the ECA branches in Queensland and the Northern Territory, who have ongoing roles in the organisation of Children's Week.

The ECA Biennial Conference

The Queensland Branch has done outstanding work in organising *Kaleidoscope – Changing Images of Childhood*, the 2005 Early Childhood Australia Biennial Conference held in Brisbane in October. ECA's strength as a voice for young children is dependent on the willingness of members to contribute in this way. Thank you.

Publications and online advocacy

ECA is a trusted source of information—the information that we provide carries the assurance of quality. This role as a knowledge broker leverages the authority of ECA early childhood expertise. As such, it is one of the organisation's most powerful advocacy tools.

In this role Early Childhood Australia advocates for children through its publications program and has done so for many years. ECA publications are peer-reviewed and represent a commitment to the provision of high-quality information to those who are responsible for the growth and development of young children. The strength and success of ECA's advocacy through its publications program is evident in the over 100 per cent increase in income from sales and subscriptions over the past five years. In 2004–05, 8436 orders were processed, 23,200 copies of *ECA Voice* were distributed, 40,000 people read *Every Child* and 28,911 subscription items were sent out. As well, a total of 28,198 books were sold and 4,692 customers were served.

The re-branded *Everyday Learning Series* is increasingly popular and work has continued on the internationalisation of *The Australian Journal of Early Childhood*

(AJEC), with committee members from Singapore and New Zealand and regular international contributions being included.

In 2004–05 there were two themed editions of AJEC dealing with Controversy, innovation and other alternatives, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Titles in the *Everyday Learning Series* include:

- *Everyday learning about friendship* by Marie Hammer and Pam Linke
- *Everyday learning in the kitchen* by Jo Darbyshire
- *Everyday learning about talking* by Julie Campbell
- *Everyday learning about brothers and sisters* by Gerrie Mackey

New *Research in Practice Series* and Special Titles topics included:

- *The overlooked curriculum: Seeing everyday possibilities* by Alma Fleet and Janet Robertson
- *Understanding feelings: Emotional literacy in early childhood* by Reesa Sorin
- *Engaging families: Building strong communication* by Roslyn Elliott
- *Storytelling and young children* by Jane Smyth
- *Observing and planning in early childhood settings: Using a sociocultural approach* by Marilyn Fleer and Carmel Richardson
- *Travelling teens: A parents' guide to family relocation* by Pam Linke

Other issues featured in ECA publications, such as the *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, *Every Child* and *ECA Voice* have included:

- Response to changes in Government immigration detention legislation
- Creative arts in a special edition of *Every Child*
- Grandparents encouraging children's curiosity
- The silencing of sexuality in early childhood education
- Children of parents with mental illness

- Bullying in early childhood
- Childhood obesity
- Sociocultural theory and practice
- Stress and the quality of child care
- Indigenous Australia perspectives in early childhood

Early Childhood Australia's catalogue: An advocacy tool

The ECA quality-assured catalogue is a significant advocacy tool. It now links all publications – ECA's own and those from other publishers – to the quality areas identified by the National Childcare Accreditation Council in the Quality Improvement and Assurance Systems for long day care centres, family day care and outside school hours care services. The demand for it has been such that a reprint was necessary.

ECA publications program is dependent on the generosity and commitment of the early childhood professionals who write, review and promote the program.

Early Childhood Australia is indebted to the work of Pam Linke as Chair of the Publications Committee. Pam's leadership energy, commitment and personal efforts as a writer have continued to shape the ECA publications program and our sales and subscriptions continue to grow. She has been supported by a dedicated publications committee. Thank you to:

- Alison Elliot – Editor, *Every Child*;
- Marilyn Fleer – Editor, AJEC;
- Carmel Richardson;
- Gerrie Mackey;
- Jenni Connor.

Online advocacy

In the last year ECA continued to increase its presence as an online advocate for young children and major work has been undertaken on the redevelopment of the ECA website.

The new site, launched at the Annual Council meeting in 2005, will provide rich support for the early childhood field.

The redeveloped www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au provides a stronger focus on supporting the work of early childhood professionals in services and the early years of school. The site will provide direct access to early childhood information – quality assured by ECA – held on other sites and will keep subscribers up to date with the latest information on the web through *ECA WebWatch*, an online newsletter. Other features of the new site include secure e-commerce and a facility to join ECA online.

The Internet gives ECA the capacity to respond more quickly to issues, to be more public and to increase the reach of its advocacy for children. ECA has continued to send advocacy emails in response to events such as the such as the tsunami disaster and to post comment on issues such as the changes to the immigration detention laws, which saw some real gains for families but left many issues unresolved. These emails also carried a Christmas message to all on our e-list. Members who have provided their email addresses have been sent links to current issues about early childhood practice. These have been extremely well received and were the genesis of the *ECA WebWatch* that will be a feature of the new website. Other issues that have been featured on the website in 2004–05 include mental health issues among refugees; concerns about children and families in immigration detention centres; comment from ECA's National President on the outcomes of the ministerial Task Force on Child Support; the Secretariat for Aboriginal and Islander Child Care's seven priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families; child protection; and obesity in young children – where ECA was number one on the Google search engine for some weeks.

This year the content on the existing site has been increased significantly with a resultant increase in visitors. ECA policies are clearly an important resource, evidenced by the continued high level of online request for copies. The quality of ECA policies is testament to the work done by ECA members in the national working parties that take carriage of these policies.

Celebrating those who work with children

Awards

Early Childhood Australia in South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Victoria present awards of excellence to university and TAFE graduates in early childhood. Similar awards are sponsored by a number of ECA regional groups. This year the NSW Branch presented the inaugural ECA Advocacy Award to recognise outstanding advocacy efforts on behalf of children. South Australia continues to be involved in the selection of the Jean Denton, Lillian de Lissa and Margaret Trembath scholarships. State and territory branches are on the selection panels for the National Excellence in Teaching Awards, sponsored by the Australian Scholarships Foundation, and ECA is a member of the judges panel for the National Quality Schooling Awards, which include a pre-primary category. Nationally, Early Childhood Australia awards the Early Childhood Australia Doctoral Thesis Award and administers the Barbara Creaser Young Advocates Award and the Barbara Creaser Memorial Lecture. These are awarded biennially and announced at the Early Childhood Australia conference.

Working together in early childhood

The National Children's Services Forum

The National Children's Services Forum (NCSF), which includes the majority of children's services national peak organisations, continues to work effectively for children.

Early Childhood Australia auspices, chairs and is a member of this group. This year the National In-home Care Association joined the Forum. NCSF continues to provide an important forum for the sector to discuss issues of common concern and interest and to meet with departmental officials. This year the NCSF has met twice with the Minister. The issues canvassed included children in detention centres, services for Indigenous young children, child-care workforce issues, and supply and demand for child care, including planning issues.

In 2004–05, work was also done on a strategic plan for 2005–06. NCSF

reaffirmed the proposition that the link between the Forum member organisations and their constituencies is fundamental to the operation of the Forum and the efficacy of its work and that the following NCSF goals should be understood within this framework:

- to promote the wellbeing of young children and families through collaborative action supporting the ongoing provision of affordable, high-quality children's services;
- to promote children's services which recognise and address the issues of disadvantage and diversity in Australian society; and
- to support the development of capacity of member organisations to work together collaboratively.

A number of branches are part of or convene similar groups. In Victoria there is the Children's Services Forum, in South Australia the Unified Professional Association, in New South Wales the Children's Services Forum, in Tasmania the Early Childhood Reference Group and in Queensland the Child Care Coalition.

Advocacy through alliances and collaboration with other agencies and organisations

Early Childhood Australia continues to develop and maintain strong links with agencies with an interest in early childhood. These include; the Australian College of Educators; the Defence Community Organisation within the Department of Defence; education au; COTA National Seniors; NIFTeY; the National Childcare Accreditation Council; Community Child Health Victoria; Good Beginnings; the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care; Child Care Information Exchange; Pademelon Press; Children, Youth and Women's Health Service, SA; Modern Teaching Aids; McArthur Management Services; the Australian Scholarships Group; the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect; the Chinese Welfare Institute; Belgiovane, Williams and Mackay, a major advertising agency; IBM Global Services Australia; and the children's services national peak organisations.

ECA has worked on two projects and with organisations with which ECA already had strong relationships: COTA National Seniors; and as part of a consortium with Monash University, Melbourne University and the Curriculum Corporation.



Governance

During 2004–05, work continued on the formalisation of ECA's approach to governance and the further development of policies which document the roles and responsibilities of the National Executive, establish its functions and practices, and provides the framework within which the National Executive exercises its stewardship of the organisation's mission. These policies define the organisational culture, values, operating principles and parameters within which the National Executive expects ECA's operations to be managed. This work has led to proposals for constitutional change which will be resolved in the coming year. When completed, this work will be available on the ECA website.

This year ECA has completed negotiations on an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement with staff which includes a provision for twelve months parental leave including four weeks' paid leave.

Early Childhood Australia membership

Early Childhood Australia's membership is broadly based and continued to increase in the past 12 months. This is not surprising, given the enormous amount of work being done by ECA branches across the country and ECA nationally. A number of branches have given a priority to promoting ECA to early childhood students through graduates awards, sponsoring membership for students who take leadership roles in branch, and reduced fees for students at professional development activities. This focus on students was supported by ECA promotional material targeting student membership. These early contacts with the newest members of the early childhood profession are important, ensuring that ECA continues as a strong advocate for children. Increasingly, branch newsletters are moving online. The regional groups are functioning well, with two in Queensland and four in New South Wales. In Tasmania the branch meets regularly at a location that enables members from across the state to attend. Regional groups are important in spreading the reach of ECA beyond the capital cities and provide a focus for early childhood advocacy in these districts. The aim is to have an ECA member in every early childhood service and classroom, every tertiary institution, government department and professional organisation that has an interest in the wellbeing of young children.

All ECA members play a significant role in the organisation's work for children. Some take on particular leadership roles in the ECA state and territory branches and in regional groups. ECA acknowledges the dedication and commitment of these people. ECA also acknowledges here its appreciation of those members who take on leadership roles in the national organisation as office bearers and as members of the National Executive.

The members of the National Executive are:

- Judy Radich – National President
- Ros Cornish – Deputy National President, Tasmania
- Andrea McGuffog – South Australia
- Judy Kynaston – New South Wales
- Lennie Barblett – Western Australia

- Renata Harris – Northern Territory
- Joy Williams – Victoria
- Margaret Brannock – Queensland
- Gillian Styles – ACT
- Margaret Young – National Treasurer
- Pam Linke – Chair of the Publications Committee (non-voting)

The work of the National Executive requires a level of dedication and commitment that would not be possible without the support of their employers.

Thank you to:

- The NSW and Tasmanian Lady Gowrie Child Centres
- Children, Youth and Women's Health Service, South Australia
- Country Children's Services Association of New South Wales
- The State Government Departments covering education, training, children's and family services in South Australia and the ACT
- Edith Cowan University
- Uniting Church in Australia – Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.
- Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory and, in particular,
- The Cooloon Children's Centre Management Committee and staff for their support of ECA's National President, Judy Radich

Thank you also to all those who make a valuable contribution through working in state and territory branches.

Thank you to all staff in the National Office for their hard work and dedication this year.

Colquhoun Murphy Solicitors continue to act as ECA's honorary solicitors – thank you.

