

**Early Childhood Australia values**

The rights of children

Leadership, excellence and respect

Courage, honesty and openness

Collaboration and diversity

Justice

Social inclusion of children

**Build strong relationships  
with your families**



Everyday Learning Series reduced to ~~\$40.00~~  
\$14.99 for bulk subscriptions (min 50).

Find out how:

Call 1800 356 900 or visit our website  
[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/edl](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/edl)

**Enhance health and wellbeing  
– new ECA book**

**Stress in early  
childhood:  
Helping children  
and their carers**

Patrice Thomas

Reducing stress opens up more opportunities for positive experiences—for both children and the adults who care for them. *Stress in early childhood* offers practical strategies for stress management that can benefit us all.

**\$39.95 (inc. p&h) (2006, 40 pages)**  
**ECA Code: PUB39**



**To order**

1800 356 900 (freecall) or  
email [eca@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:eca@earlychildhood.org.au)

Order safely and securely online:  
[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)



Changes to quality assurance systems will support improved high-quality practices in early childhood services

The Minister for Family, Community Services and Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Mal Brough, has announced some significant changes to the quality assurance systems that are in place in centre-based long day care, family day care and outside school hours care.

These changes will see unannounced validation and spot visits as well as the direct employment and training of validators by the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC).

The details of these changes will be published in coming editions of the NCAC publication *Putting Children First* and on the NCAC website, [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au).

Early Childhood Australia has believed for some time that the quality assurance systems have not delivered on quality programs and practices for children in the way we had hoped. The proposed changes have the potential to support services to improve their practice in ongoing and everyday ways.

**Early Childhood Australia believes that quality should be embedded in everyday practice and not just apparent on the one or two days of the validation visit.**

However, the proposed changes on their own can't deliver quality childcare services; there are structural issues which need to be resolved in order for this to be possible (see *Policy Briefs*, issue 2—'Quality in children's services').

These issues include, but are not limited to:

- robust, evidence-based regulations and standards which require child-staff ratios and group sizes that enable the interactions between children and adults and children and their peers which underwrite quality teaching and learning relationships
- university-qualified teachers who understand how young children develop and learn and have significant content knowledge, i.e. literacy and maths etc.
- wages and conditions which support a stable and qualified workforce.

Notwithstanding these very real concerns, the announced spot visits will contribute to quality if they concentrate on supporting improved practices and provide ongoing mentoring and support.

Clearly, the focus of the unannounced spot visits should be on the service's progress towards meeting the non-occurring indicators in each quality area that were identified in their validation visit, the *Continuous Improvement Plans* they have developed and the implications of the moderator's comments for their practice.

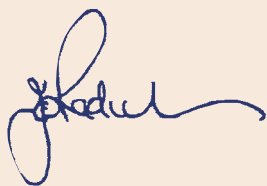
We need to see the identification of non-occurring indicators, the *Continuous Improvement Plans* and the moderator's comments as real tools to support services to improve their everyday practices and work with children in an ongoing way.

Doing this would be important evidence of the professionalism of the sector. The sector cannot be in the position where it implies a serious lack of confidence in its own practice. To reject the unannounced spot and validation visits is tantamount to saying we are only confident of exposing our practice to scrutiny when we have the time to get ready.

These visits, if welcomed, will engender family and community confidence in the service we provide and the work we do with children everyday.

We know that—without early childhood qualified teachers in leadership positions; without child–staff ratios and group sizes that reflect the evidence of what is necessary for quality outcomes; and with continuing high turnover of staff—many services will struggle to deliver the service they would want to for children. In the end, if this community is serious about the provision of high-quality care and education for our youngest children then it will have to deliver the resources necessary to provide this. Children are entitled to no less.

In the meantime the changes proposed should be welcomed and used to make gains for children. It is time now to focus the quality assurance systems on improvement and support the best possible practice in the current difficult circumstances.



**Judy Radich**  
National President

## References

Royal Children's Hospital (2006). Quality in children's services. *Policy Briefs*, 2.  
[www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/PB2\\_Qual\\_childsrv.pdf](http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/PB2_Qual_childsrv.pdf).

## Media release from the Department of Family and Community Services

### Child care overhaul to boost quality

18 May 2006

Families and Community Services Minister Mal Brough today announced a major overhaul of child care accreditation in Australia to help parents feel confident their children are receiving high quality care.

Officially opening the National Family Day Care Conference 2006 in Alice Springs, Mr Brough said the changes would strengthen and improve the Quality Assurance system.

'From July 1, child care centres seeking to be accredited will no longer be told the date of their assessment, which will ensure services consistently provide a quality service not just when they are inspected,' Mr Brough said.

'In addition the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) will introduce random spot visits within the next 12 months on child care services across Australia, ensuring services meet standards and quality improvements are maintained on a day-to-day basis.

'It is my intention to provide greater certainty to parents that good quality care is being achieved not only on the day of accreditation but is maintained every day.'

Mr Brough said he has also asked the NCAC to recruit assessors on a full-time basis to ensure consistency and boost its capacity to carry out the increased number of visits and spot checks.

The NCAC will also be simplifying the Child Care Quality Assurance process by creating uniform system, which will fold the current Quality Assurance systems for Long Day Care, Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care into a single system.

'Before any changes are implemented we will conduct a consultation process with child care workers, child care services, community organisations and families,' Mr Brough said.

'I will also continue to pursue the state and territory Ministers to ensure licensing and regulations are in place, and that minimum standards are consistent and enforced.

'Parents deserve to know that their children are in a safe environment.'

Mr Brough used the conference to further explain the Howard Government's 2006–07 Budget initiatives on child care, including the groundbreaking decision to uncap FDC and OSHC.

'The uncapping of FDC and OSHC places means that these services are free to expand, new services can be created and both can offer Child Care Benefit places, as long as they meet the criteria,' Mr Brough said.

The Howard Government is investing a record \$9.5 billion for child care and the 2006–07 Budget did even more. The Government also increased JET funding so that income support parents moving back into the workforce face few out of pocket child care costs. Mr Brough said the Howard Government has more than doubled the number of funded places from 300,000 under Labor to an expected 700,000 by 2009–10.

This media release is available on the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website, [www.facs.gov.au/Internet/Minister3.nsf/content/family\\_day\\_care\\_18may06.htm](http://www.facs.gov.au/Internet/Minister3.nsf/content/family_day_care_18may06.htm)

# Confronting domestic abuse



The *Violence Against Women, Australia Says No* campaign was launched in June 2004 to raise community awareness of the criminal aspects of domestic violence and sexual assault, and send a clear message that violence against women is totally unacceptable.

The national helpline for the *Violence Against Women, Australia Says No* campaign is confidential and can be reached 24 hours a day on 1800 200 526.

More information is available on the *Violence Against Women, Australia Says No* website, [www.australiasaysno.gov.au](http://www.australiasaysno.gov.au).

Domestic violence is a complex issue with long-term effects; and it can seriously jeopardise young children's emotional development.

Papers published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* asserted that:

- 'Domestic violence is a complex pattern of behaviours that may include, in addition to physical acts of violence, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.
- 'Women experience domestic violence at far greater rates than men do, and women and children often live in fear as a result of the abuse that is used by men to maintain control over their partners.
- 'Women who have experienced partner abuse want to be asked about it and are more likely to disclose if asked in an empathic, non-judgemental way. Doctors can make a difference.' (Hegarty, Hindmarsh & Gilles, 2000)
- 'There is extensive evidence of the adverse effects of domestic violence across all age groups and cultural backgrounds.
- 'The impact of domestic violence may be long-term, affecting emotional adjustment, physical health and subsequent relationships.
- 'Shame and isolation militate against disclosure.' (Astbury et al., 2000)

## References

- Astbury, J., Atkinson, J., Duke, J. E., Eastal, P. L., Kurrle, S. E., Tait, P. R., & Turner, J. (2000). The impact of domestic violence on individuals. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 173, 427-431. Retrieved 22 May 2006, [http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/173\\_08\\_161000/astbury/astbury.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/173_08_161000/astbury/astbury.html).
- Hegarty K., Hindmarsh, E. D., & Gilles, M. T. (2000). Domestic violence in Australia: Definition, prevalence and nature of presentation in clinical practice. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 173, 363-367. Retrieved 22 May 2006, [http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/173\\_07\\_021000/hegarty/hegarty.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/173_07_021000/hegarty/hegarty.html).

## Together a Partnership 2006 Conference



### Weaving our Children's Voices

7-9 September 2006

Crowne Plaza, Darwin

Presented by the Early Childhood Australia Northern Territory Branch.

### The conference has something for everyone...

Families, community groups and professionals working in the areas of early childhood, education, children's services, child protection and health.

### The conference promises to be an exciting opportunity

- Increase skills, update information on new developments in early childhood and be challenged and validated.
- Ignite your inspiration and motivation.
- Catch up with old friends and acquaintances, meet new people and establish new networks.

Whether you have worked in the field for many years or are new to the area, we know you'll take away a whole host of new ideas and strategies. So put aside the 7th to the 9th of September, as this conference is not to be missed.

### For more information

See the Northern Territory Branch webpage at [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au).

# 'Thank you so much for this essential service.'

I have found it so useful to be able to print off relevant articles for teachers, carers and parents...'

## Have you signed up to *ECA WebWatch*?

...It is a terrific source of information and has helped us source some excellent material to assist staff and families. I never delete the emails you send, I often find myself going back to revisit the information as it becomes relevant.

—Mandi, head of early learning, Maranatha Christian College

It is by far the most informative, relevant and professional site I have read. More to the point—it is practical!!

I have used many of the articles in various classroom situations such as for programming, advocacy, interacting with families and printing some for general reading in the staff room.

—Michael, TAFE lecturer

Thank you so much for giving early childhood teachers the opportunity to gain the most current and helpful research, ideas and tips. The weblinks are absolutely invaluable. Sometimes it has taken me so long to find something worthwhile reading over the internet. It has been so easy to follow the links from your WebWatch. Keep up the great work.

—Julie, early childhood teacher

I am just writing to say how excited I am by your newsletter and that I use the information all the time to improve my practice. I have shared some of the information with my colleagues at my work in LDC and it is so helpful to have all this current and up-to-date information at one site.

Thank you so much!

—Barb, early childhood practitioner

Thank you for producing WebWatch. It's highly informative and now an indispensable part of my professional reading and research.

The Early Childhood Australia site has been extremely well constructed and is very user friendly. I use it with my TAFE students that are currently studying at certificate and diploma levels of Child Studies. I hope that they too find it a valuable source of information and hence become members of the organisation.

—Julie, TAFE lecturer



## Early Childhood Australia's **free** online services:

- **ECA WebWatch** e-newsletter
- **Supporting Best Practice** web directory

**Subscribe to ECA WebWatch** – send a blank email to [subscribe@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:subscribe@earlychildhood.org.au)

Past issues online at [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/eca\\_webwatch](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/eca_webwatch)

**Access Supporting Best Practice** at [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/sbp](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/sbp)



## Early Childhood Australia

Established in 1938, Early Childhood Australia is:  
– a national peak body, non-profit organisation  
– a leading specialist early childhood publisher  
– promoting high quality services for children from birth to eight.



• Advocacy • Publications • Membership •

Find out more:

1800 356 900 (freecall), [eca@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:eca@earlychildhood.org.au)  
[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)