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Early Childhood Australia values

- The rights of children
- Leadership, excellence and respect
- Courage, honesty and openness
- Collaboration and diversity
- Social inclusion of children
- Justice

Just released from ECA

Facing up to cultural differences in child care

Diversity and difference: Lighting the spirit of identity

Aunty Kerry Mundine & Miriam Giugni

Early childhood practitioners will benefit from this inspiring yet confronting insight into the perceptions of cultural/racial equity of young children from a variety of backgrounds.

\$14.95 (inc. p&h) (2006, 22 pages)
ECA Code: RIP0603



Modern-day eating concerns in our young children

Everyday learning about fussy eaters

Dr Robyn Leeson

Parents and carers can cook up healthy eating habits in babies, toddlers and preschoolers who are fussy about food. Includes background information about why such difficulties arise.

\$14.95 (inc. p&h) (2006, 28 pages)
ECA Code: LAH0603



President's message



In 2005–06,

Early Childhood Australia has extended the reach of its advocacy for young children through

work that has been innovative, broadly based and public. That work is evidence of an ongoing and growing commitment to speak out for young children. It reflects the diverse backgrounds and interests of ECA members and the range of issues faced by young children and those who care about and work with them.

A major theme of Early Childhood Australia's advocacy in 2005–06 with government, key officials and in the media has been to argue for policy-makers to accept the implications of evidence which shows that **improving the structural quality of children's services is fundamental to good outcomes for children**. The development of a young child's brain, particularly in the first three years of life, will have an immediate and long-term impact on life choices.

Structural quality in children's services leads to warm, sensitive, stimulating and consistent provider–child interactions (process quality). Structural dimensions which allow this are high staff–child ratios, smaller group sizes, specialist early childhood teachers and staff with other early childhood qualifications, and the income/wages and conditions of those working directly with young children. What is worth noting is that the evidence is clear that the more those working with children know about how children develop and learn, the better the quality of their interactions with children and the better the outcomes for children.

One effect of the structural limitations of the current children's services is the high turnover of staff. What is compelling about this reality is that it has not caused an uproar among parents whose children are in our services. Imagine if each year there was a similar turnover of teachers in the first year of schooling—there would be uproar. Why is this not the case for children birth to five in children's services?

This year too ECA has further strengthened its relationship with the early years of school through the development of a strong alliance with the Australian Primary Principals Association. Some of the issues that are currently facing the early years of schools are similar to those facing the birth-to-five age group.

The challenge ahead is to persuade parents that what is happening now in services is not okay and have them join with us as allies to persuade governments to tackle the hard issues.

In this, my last message as president, I want to acknowledge the indebtedness of Early Childhood Australia to the early childhood professionals, especially the National Executive, 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.

I also acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the staff in the national office and the sustained leadership and drive of the Chief Executive Officer, Pam Cahir.

Judy Radich, National President

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Advocacy—speaking out for young children

Each year we note that speaking out for young children takes many forms. What is reported here is how Early Childhood Australia, both nationally and through its state and territory branches, has advocated for children in the past 12 months. What is not reported, but which is equally important, is the myriad of ways individual members of Early Childhood Australia who have responsibility for young children advocate for them everyday in the programs they deliver, in the professional support they provide, in the partnerships they build with families, in the discussions they have with others and most importantly in the unhurried, sensitive encounters they have with the children for whom they have responsibility. This report is an affirmation of that work and testament to all who advocate for young children.

Early Childhood Australia—Code of Ethics review

Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics was groundbreaking work when it was first developed more than 10 years ago. It remains a testament to the professionalism and commitment to children of early childhood professionals. Two years ago work began on the ECA Code of Ethics Agenda. That work, with its focus on review and renewal, is essential to the maintenance of a contemporary early childhood code of ethics. This year the Agenda process has included the publication of a literature review, a survey of people interested in the work of the Agenda and meetings in all state/territory branches. The work on the Agenda will culminate at the 2006 ECA National Council, where a new code will be endorsed. Thank you to members of the national working group, and to Lennie Barblett from the ECA branch in Western Australia who provided the leadership for this task.

Submissions and committees

This year the National President made speeches and commented regularly in the media about issues relating to young children. Both the national organisation and the state/territory branches of Early Childhood Australia have had many meetings with ministers and other Government and Opposition members of parliament,

as well as with Departmental officials who have responsibility for issues relating to young children.

The breadth and depth of ECA's work is nowhere more apparent than in the range of committees and forums on which ECA members work to make a difference for young children.

Supporting the early childhood profession

This is a key part of ECA's advocacy work. The research is increasingly clear that knowledge and expertise in how young children grow and learn is a fundamental structural input to the quality of what happens on the ground for young children.

ECA Biennial Conference 2005

The 2005 Conference, *Kaleidoscope: Changing images of childhood*, held in Brisbane, was an outstanding success. With over 1000 registrations, the conference lived up to its promise to challenge the early childhood profession to reflect on the way popular culture and technologies, cultural diversity and the changing relationships in early childhood education and young children's health impact on their professional practice and the lives of young children. Thank you to the Queensland Branch and their tireless conference committee. Well done!

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Early Childhood Australia's redeveloped website was launched in September 2005. The site is a rich source of support for early childhood professionals and the families with whom many of them work. It has greatly increased the reach of ECA's advocacy work. ECA has been uncompromising in its commitment to quality—assure the information about good practice that is provided. The Supporting Best Practice part of the site provides over 2000 links to ECA quality-assured information held on other sites via an easy-to-access taxonomy. *ECA WebWatch*, a fortnightly e-newsletter, provides news and information about early childhood practice and policy.

Advocacy through publications

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. 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.

This year ECA set out to increase the reach of its publications and provide a stronger growth platform within the publications program. That work has resulted in a tenfold increase in subscriptions to the *Everyday Learning Series*. ECA has also entered into a partnership with the Australian Primary Principals Association to publish a book to support parents with a child enrolling in the first year of school.

Subscriptions to all ECA subscription series rose.

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The internationalisation of *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* (AJEC) continues, with Committee members from Singapore and New Zealand and regular international contributions. ECA has been publishing its flagship magazine *Every Child* for over 12 years and subscriptions have grown steadily in that period.

Titles in the *Everyday Learning Series* were:

- *Everyday learning about maths* by Jenni Connor
- *Everyday learning about imagination* by Lyn Bower
- *Everyday learning about healthy bodies* by Nadine McCrea
- *Everyday learning about fears and anxieties* by Diana Roe

The new *Research in Practice Series* titles were:

- *Young gifted children: Meeting their needs* by Louise Porter
- *Active children: Healthy now and later* by Linley Campbell and Josephine Musumeci
- *Young children as active learners* by Andrea Nolan, Anna Kilderry and Roslyn O'Grady
- *Managing change with infants and young children* by Pam Linke

Other publications included:

- *Stress in early childhood: Helping children and their carers* by Patrice Thomas
- *Travelling teens: A parents' guide to family relocation* by Pam Linke (reprint)

ECA's book catalogue—an advocacy tool

ECA underwrites its income by onselling the publications of other publishers. All publications sold in this way must meet the ECA quality criteria. Over time the ECA catalogue has grown and, in the past two years, the catalogues have linked all publications to the quality areas identified by the National Childcare Accreditation Council for the Quality Improvement and Accreditation Systems for long day care centres, family day care and outside school hours care services.

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

- Jenni Connor
- Alison Elliot (Editor, *Every Child* magazine)
- Marilyn Flear (Editor, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*)
- Geraldine Mackey (to October 2005)
- Judy Radich (ex-officio as National President of ECA)
- Carmel Richardson



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Women need to get active on super

On average, single women enter retirement with lower savings than single men, and couples are better off than single people, according to new research from the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.

The research found that the difference in men's and women's situations is largely due to the differences in superannuation savings—the result of women's career interruptions due to family responsibilities and lower average wages compared to men.

In retirement, single women relied most heavily on government pensions, closely followed by single men; and compared to couples and single men, it was more common for single women to say they had to sell their home or move to lower-cost accommodation because of their financial circumstances, the research said.

HESTA CEO Anne-Marie Corboy says it doesn't have to be all doom and gloom.

'We see research like this all the time and it is really disappointing that all it does is scare women. We should be saying to people it doesn't have to be like this, there are things you can do to help sort out your super now.'

HESTA has developed the '7 step super workout' to help women take control of their super and get the most out of it. ▶

'The challenge for women especially will be to concentrate on the essentials: the benefits of starting to save early, low fees and charges, returns and a fund that understands a woman's life circumstances.'

'Now is the time to do some research and prepare for retirement even if it is a long way off. It's never too early to get your super in order because it could mean thousands of extra dollars in retirement,' said Anne-Marie.

The '7 step super workout'

Step one involves consolidating (or combining) your super accounts.	'If you have more than one super account, you could be leaking precious retirement money in duplicate fees and charges, wading through more paperwork than you need to and missing out on the benefits of accumulating wealth,' Anne-Marie said.
Step two is looking for your lost super. Visit www.unclaimedsuper.com.au .	'If you have changed names, jobs or addresses in the last decade you may be one of 3 million Australians with unclaimed super,' Anne-Marie said.
Step three is to find out whether you can stay with your fund if you change jobs.	'Portability is a feature which allows a member to stay with the same super fund when they change employers and doesn't require the member to complete new application forms,' Anne-Marie said.
Step four is to check all the fees that your fund charges to find out whether there is a better option.	You can use HESTA's Fee Comparison Calculator on their website to help you.
Step five is finding out whether your fund pays commissions to advisers.	'Funds that pay commissions generally charge higher fees to members to cover the commissions, so check your fund's practices,' Anne-Marie said.
Step six is looking at the extra benefits you can access through your super fund.	'HESTA offers members access to low-cost housing and business loans, low interest credit card, low-cost health insurance, low-cost banking, commission-free financial planning and managed investment funds with no entry or exit fees (through third party suppliers),' Anne-Marie said.
Step seven is to check the returns on your super fund.	'You should check the sort of returns the fund has achieved over the long and short terms and whether you have a choice of investment options,' Anne-Marie said.

For more information about HESTA's '7 step super workout', visit www.hesta.com.au

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Online advocacy

In addition to the work reported earlier, it is important to note the way 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. [In the last seven months of 2005–06, 66,000 copies of ECA WebWatch were sent to people who have subscribed to this service.](#) These e-newsletters carried comment and information about many issues.

A survey tool has now been included on the site and will be used in future to get information from the early childhood field on a range of issues. All of this work will be ongoing.

Celebrating those who work with children

This year Pam Linke, Barbara Piscitelli and Sue Harper were awarded the Order of Australia. These awards acknowledge personal contributions, but equally they are a testament to and an acknowledgement of the significance of young children and the value of the work done by early childhood professionals wherever they are.

This year the Barbara Creaser Memorial Address was given by Karen Martin from Queensland and Michelle Ortlipp from Victoria was the recipient of the ECA Doctoral Thesis Award. Congratulations to these five outstanding early childhood professionals.

Early Childhood Australia in South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, 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. The majority of ECA branches are on the selection panels for the National Excellence in Teaching Awards, sponsored by the Australian Scholarships Foundation. ECA is a member of the judge's panel for the National Quality Schooling Awards, which include a pre-primary category, and the local government quality childcare awards.

The establishment of the biennial McArthur Management Services/ECA Travel Scholarship was announced at the ECA Biennial Conference in Brisbane.



Working together in early childhood

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 and chairs this group. 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 forum met three times and each meeting involved FaCSIA officials. NCSF also undertook a national day of advocacy in which delegations of NCSF members met with more than 30 Members of Parliament. The issues raised included the importance of investing in young children and what this means for early childhood services, the challenge to quality assurance given the structural problems in children's services, the need for evidence based standards, affordability, and government funding.

Advocacy through alliances and collaboration

[ECA continues to have strong relationships with organisations and agencies with an interest in young children.](#) Some of these are formalised through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and others are built through working together. ECA has ongoing MOUs with education.au and Child Care Information Exchange and in 2006 ECA established a formal MOU with Thomson Education Direct, an international training organisation. As a result of this MOU, Thomson students will now receive subscriptions to the ECA *Everyday Learning Series*, be joined as student members of ECA half-way through their studies and receive *ECA WebWatch*. [This is an important initiative and it links future members of our profession into the advocacy work of ECA and begins the process of inducting them into the early childhood profession.](#)

This year ECA also entered into partnerships with the Secretariat for National Aboriginal Islander Child Care to produce a *Research in Practice* title about bringing Dreamtime stories into mainstream services, the National Association of Community Based Children's Services to promote the *Everyday Learning Series*, HESTA superannuation fund to distribute *ECA Voice* regularly to all children's services, and the Australian Primary Principals Association to write, promote and distribute *Your child's first year at school: A book for parents*.

Organisations with whom ECA has continuing alliances include the Australian College of Educators, the Defence Community Organisation within the Department of Defence, NIFTeY, the National Childcare Accreditation Council, Community Child Health in Victoria, Good Beginnings, Pademelon Press, Child and Youth Health in SA, Modern Teaching Aids, McArthur Management Services, the Australian Scholarships Group, the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Monash and Melbourne universities, the Curriculum Corporation, and the children's services national peak organisations.



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Organisational management and growth

Governance

During 2005–06, work continued on the formalisation and documentation of ECA's approach to governance through a set of governance policies. These policies provide the framework within which the National Executive exercises its stewardship of the organisation's mission. They define the organisational culture, values, operating principles and parameters within which the National Executive expects ECA's operations to be managed. This work has culminated this year with the drafting of a new constitution which was passed at a Special General Meeting of the Association in August 2006. This year too the ECA Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, negotiated with staff and which embodies a strong commitment to work and family balance, was certified by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. These documents will be available on the ECA website.

Membership

ECA membership continues to grow and is diverse, with members from every part of the early childhood profession. The evidence of ECA's visibility and public advocacy for young children provided in this report is the motivation and impetus for people to join ECA. All parts of the ECA organisation are active in promoting membership and an important focus of that work is promoting ECA to students and younger members of the profession. These early contacts with the fledgling members of the early childhood profession are important in ensuring that ECA continues to flourish into the future.

Branches engage with students in a variety of ways and this year saw the first ECA student group established on a university campus at Griffith University. The payment of ECA student membership for students who are active participants in a branch, the sponsoring of student awards at TAFEs and universities, the payment of conference registration fees for students at ECA and other early childhood conferences, and putting ECA information in student packs and talking to them about ECA are other ways in which ECA branches support early childhood students.

Regional groups in New England, in central and far west NSW, the Riverina, the north coast of NSW and the Peninsula group in Queensland continue to flourish. Interest has been expressed in the formation of two more regional groups in Queensland and Western Australia. These groups are an important way to enable people beyond the capital cities to be active members of ECA.

Some branches have formed special interest groups to allow people with a particular interest to focus their advocacy. All branches publish newsletters which are distributed to members. These are an important source of information about local and state issues. Investment in ECA membership pays a unique dividend—advocacy for young children.



The national office

Staff in the national office work in partnership with the national organisation to achieve the goals of the organisation. They work with dedication, energy and flair. The National Executive in particular appreciates their commitment and effort. The Chief Executive Officer, Pam Cahir, continues to provide thoughtful, creative and dedicated leadership and to work in a strong partnership with the National Executive to promote the best interests of young children.

ECA members

All ECA members play a significant role in the organisation's work for children. Some take on particular leadership roles in the ECA state/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
- Margaret Young – National Treasurer
- Pam Linke – Chair of the Publications Committee (non-voting)
- Margaret Brannock – Queensland
- Renata Harris – Northern Territory
- Catharine Hydon – Victoria
- Judy Kynaston – New South Wales
- Andrea McGuffog – South Australia
- Elizabeth Stamopoulos – Western Australia
- Vanessa Whelan – ACT

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's, Youth and Women's Health Service, SA
- Country Children's Services Association of NSW
- The Department of Education and Children's Services, SA
- The Canberra Institute of Technology
- Edith Cowan University, WA
- The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Victoria
- The Department of Family and Community Services, NT

and, in particular,

- The Cooloon Children's Centre Management Committee and staff for their support of ECA's National President, Judy Radich.

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