



## Our values

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

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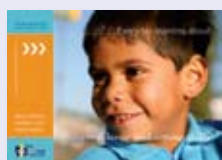
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## Annual Report 2006–2007



### NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This annual report of the work of **Early Childhood Australia (ECA)**—nationally and through state

and territory branches—shows a vibrant organisation which is broad and energetic in the scope of its work, courageous in its engagement with issues affecting children, and clever in its capacity to develop and use its resources and ongoing work to achieve multiple goals.

It has been a year in which we have benefited greatly from the work of the previous National Executive and current Board of Directors, from the contributions of Branches and active members around the country, and from the fine work of staff in our national office.

Important projects have come to fruition, our publications program and web activities have gone from strength to strength, and our thinking and understanding have been challenged.

*We are also taking positions on matters of broad concern to society, such as the rights of Aboriginal children and families, and environmental sustainability/global warming.* Advocacy has continued to permeate the work of the organisation and has grown accordingly.

More than ever before we are seeing ECA membership as a support for our capacity to do our work—an 'advocacy dividend'.

*We will continue to encourage people to join ECA, not only for the benefits this can bring to them, but as a practical way of supporting our work.*

In reflecting on the year and thinking about the work ECA has done and what is ahead, I realise that we continue to be frustrated and challenged by a number of important issues which are hard for us to face and resolve. These issues include:

#### **Evidence indicators compared with current practice and standards**

We can't keep making the claim for quality when services are operating outside what

the evidence says is necessary to deliver quality outcomes for children. All theories have some explanatory power in relation to how children grow and learn, but our practice must come to reflect the evidence of successful approaches, programs and models.

#### **Qualifications, teams, leadership**

Different qualifications equip people with different skills and prepare them for different roles and responsibilities; teams are made richer by a mix of people with different qualifications; and the evidence indicates that staff with specialised early childhood teaching degrees are essential to effective leadership in children's programs.

#### **Early education outcomes**

The separation of 'care' and 'education' is broadly embedded in current practice, including in funding, vocational education, regulations and many service models. This is historical and not based on research evidence. Early education outcomes can be systematically achieved in long day care centres provided there is early childhood leadership.

In order to be confident that we are advocating for the best outcomes for children we need to find ways to identify and confront issues like this fully and directly, from a base of principle rather than local interest or established practice. In doing this we need to be informed by broadly based and comprehensive information, to be sharp and questioning of our own thinking, and to be brave and respectful of others in our explorations.

I look forward to ECA providing many forums for this continuing work over the coming year.

*Margaret Young*

**Margaret Young**  
ECA National President





## A strong and credible voice for young children

### The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

This year the revised Code of Ethics has been launched by Branches in a number of states and territories, and by the end of 2007 it will have been launched locally by all ECA Branches. Copies of the Code of Ethics have been sent to all children's services, and a special focus has been given to ensuring that TAFE and university students doing early childhood courses also receive copies.

### Submissions, consultations, committees

Making submissions; taking part in consultations and delegations; contributing to and participating in reviews, forums, committees, reference groups and taskforces are an indispensable part of our advocacy work. In the discussions and negotiations that take place around these activities, gains can be made for young children.

This year Early Childhood Australia commented regularly in the media on a range of matters. ECA responded to the proposal to integrate the childcare accreditation systems and the Community Services Training Package Review. ECA had many meetings with ministers and other Government and Opposition members of parliament, as well as with departmental officials. ECA Branches argued that teachers in before-school settings should be eligible to be registered as teachers. ECA met with the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, his advisors and members of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. There have been delegations and discussions with the Opposition Spokesperson on Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and her advisors. ECA has worked with the Department of Science, Education and Training; the Department of Health and Ageing; and the Defence Community Organisation.

ECA participated in a range of forums and conferences including: the SNAICC Workshop on Aboriginal Childrearing Practices, the Family Wellbeing conference, the consultation on the Social and Community Impacts of Pandemic Influenza, and the Readaloud conference. ECA also took part in an Agenda Setting seminar at Charles Sturt University, Teaching Australia seminars on teaching standards, a meeting of the College of Deans, and attended a national think tank on early childhood science, as well as facilitating the national consultations regarding the implementation of the Child Care Management System.

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. ECA's capacity to contribute to the plethora of committees is dependent on the commitment and generosity of our members. Nationally ECA has spoken out for children on the Child Care Management System Reference Group, the Australian Council of Children and Parenting, the National Advisory Group for Child Care Accreditation System, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, and Standards Australia CS-5. ECA was a member of the World Forum Planning Committee, the Raising Children Network Steering Committee, Centre for Community Child Health Policy Brief Reference Group, the Board of Childcare and Children's Health, the Board of the Australian College of Educators, and ECA's CEO is a member of the Australian Families and Children Council. ECA was also a member of the COAG Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative Early Childhood Early Intervention Roundtables.

## Environment and sustainability

The issues of the environment and sustainability—in relation to their effect on young children's everyday experience and the world they will inherit—have been a priority for ECA. The ECA Global Warming e-Group produced two statements on environment and sustainability published in *ECA Voice* in 2007.

### Indigenous young children, their families and communities

As she took office in 2006, ECA's National President Margaret Young said that one of her priorities was to see ECA focus more explicitly on the needs of Indigenous young children and their families. This has seen the President and the CEO acknowledge country in all events where they have a leadership role and, as has been reported elsewhere, there has been an increased focus on these children in ECA publications, *ECA Voice* and *ECA WebWatch*. SNAICC and ECA have collaborated on two important projects which have been described elsewhere. The Victoria, NT and WA Branches have also focused attention on these children and their families.

### Supporting quality practice—supporting the early childhood profession

This is a key part of ECA's advocacy work. The research is increasingly clear that early childhood leadership, including knowledge and expertise in how young children grow and learn, is fundamental to the quality of what happens on the ground for young children. Crucially, what is also important is those professional conversations where teachers and other early childhood professionals link their observations of children with what they are trying to achieve, so that their work with children is focused and intentional. ECA sees supporting the early childhood profession as a strategic priority.

### ECA Biennial Conference 2008

Planning for the ECA Biennial Conference *Children: A nation's capital* to be held in Canberra in 2008, ECA's 70th birthday, is well in hand. Conference themes are advocacy and leadership, environment and sustainability, emotional wellbeing and theory to practice. International keynote speakers are yet to be finalised but each will be asked to present at least one workshop as well as their keynote address. The program will be enriched with workshops around the themes being presented by well-known Australian experts in each of the focus areas.

### Speaking out for the early childhood profession at conferences

This year ECA spoke at the Australian Parents Council national executive meeting, a Teaching Australia seminar on teaching standards, a meeting of the National Council of the LHMU, the Childcare Associations Australia Quality Seminar, the HESTA annual conference, the annual conference of the Australian Council of State School Organisations, the KU Children's Services annual directors' meeting, the Readaloud conference and the Marymead/ARACY conference. The message, in most cases, was the same: the delivery of high-quality early childhood experiences and outcomes for young children in early childhood services and the early years of school depends on high staff-child ratios, lower



group-size, early childhood leadership in the form of people with four-year specialised early childhood education degrees, and early childhood qualifications for all those working with young children, ongoing everyday professional support for reflective practice, a career structure and appropriate wages and conditions.

[www.EarlyChildhoodAustralia.org.au](http://www.EarlyChildhoodAustralia.org.au)

Early Childhood Australia's website goes from strength to strength. The site is a rich source of support for early childhood professionals and others with a role in children's growth and learning. The commitment to quality-assure the information provided on the website reflects ECA commitment to quality in its publications program more generally.

In 2006–07 new segments were added to the Supporting Best Practice (SBP) web directory: one on early childhood literacy and an expanded section on English-language learners. Downloads from Supporting Best Practice are in excess of 100,000. The e-list for *ECA WebWatch*, the fortnightly e-newsletter, continues to grow. The fact that page downloads peak on the day *ECA WebWatch* is sent out, and the unsolicited testimonials about SBP and *ECA WebWatch*, indicate that the new website is meeting a real need in the early childhood sector. It is also heartening to note the number of organisations that forward *ECA WebWatch* to their own e-list. Importantly *ECA WebWatch* has been a valuable vehicle for keeping the early childhood sector informed about what is happening in early childhood more generally. The early childhood news section and the e-calendar are also key online resources for the sector.

The website has an e-commerce facility which is increasingly being used by early childhood professionals in Australia and in other countries to source quality-assured early childhood resources. Plans for the future development of the site include a greater emphasis on the 'resource theme' section of the site. This year two resource themes were added: one on infant and toddler sleep and one dealing with the environment and sustainability. For many weeks the link to ECA sustainability was been number one in Google for search terms such 'early childhood + sustainability'. ECA's ongoing work on search engine optimisation, which is necessary to ensure that the site rates highly in search engines such as Google, is an important means by which people who are not aware of ECA can find us.

### Seminars, conferences, panels, forums, elections and newsletters—an opportunity to speak out for children in ECA Branches

Many seminars and forums have been held or jointly sponsored by all ECA Branches. [These seminars provide the opportunity to focus on current issues, reflect on what is happening in early childhood programs, and to talk and network with colleagues.](#) The issues addressed were diverse.

### ECA 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's early childhood expertise. As such, it is one of the organisation's most powerful advocacy tools and has been 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 information in the Supporting Best Practice section of the website is also quality assured.

### Advocating through publications

This year ECA again set out to increase the reach of its publications and provide a stronger growth platform within the publications program. ECA underwrites its income by onselling the publications of other publishers. The value-add that ECA provides is that all such publications have to meet the ECA quality criteria. This is an important advocacy initiative. For the first time, ECA book sales were over \$1 million.

The *Everyday Learning Series* has increased its subscription levels, with many families receiving copies from the services their children attend. ECA has entered into partnership with Australian Scholarships Group which will result in 50,000 copies of one edition of this publication being given to families. The future of the *Everyday Learning Series* is now assured.

The partnership with the Australian Primary Principals Association to publish a book for parents about their child's first year at school was an outstanding success. In 2006–07 over 450 schools gave 13,500 parents copies of the book as a gift. The offer will again be made to schools for the 2008 school year. This is an outstanding advocacy initiative.

The internationalisation of *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* (AJEC) continues, with Committee members from Singapore and New Zealand, and regular international contributions.

#### Titles in the *Everyday Learning Series* were:

- *Everyday learning about fussy eaters* by Robyn Leeson
- *Everyday learning about children's behaviour* by Pam Linke
- *Everyday learning about sleep* by Pam Linke
- *Everyday learning about managing angry feelings* by Diane Louise Szarkowicz

#### The new *Research in Practice Series* titles were:

- *Dreaming Stories: A springboard for learning* by Jenni Connor
- *Discovering letters and sounds* by Christine Topfer
- *Capturing the moment: Using digital photography in early childhood settings* by Kim Walters
- *Diversity and difference: Lighting the spirit of identity* by Aunty Kerry Mundine and Miriam Guigni

#### Special Titles included:

- *Your child's first year at school: A book for parents* by Jenni Connor and Pam Linke
- *Young children: Thinking about the scientific world* edited by Marilyn Fler
- A reprint of *Travelling teens: A parents' guide to family relocation* by Pam Linke
- A new edition of *Parenting at home and away* by Pam Linke

ECA has been publishing its flagship magazine *Every Child* for more than 12 years and subscriptions have grown steadily in that period. This year there were four themed editions:

- *Trauma, stress and emotional issues*
- *Inclusion and support*

- Sustainability
- Challenging practice and challenging practices

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:

- Alison Elliot (Editor, *Every Child* magazine)
- Marilyn Fler (Editor, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* until December 2006)
- Margaret Sims (Acting Editor, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* from January 2007)
- Carmel Richardson
- Jenni Connor
- Judy Radich.

### 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 2006–07 approximately 200,000 copies of *ECA WebWatch* were sent to people who have subscribed to this service.

These e-newsletters carried comment and information about many issues, including: the Government intervention in NT Indigenous communities, teaching children, the rights of Australia's Indigenous children, racism and prejudice, diversity and difference, sustainability and the environment, leadership in early childhood, play and learning, investing in quality children's services, comparing research on best practices, and concerns about the current state of child care in Australia.

Early childhood news on the ECA website continues to provide information about news and other significant events affecting early childhood; and the events calendar was described recently as the most comprehensive early childhood conference calendar available.

### Celebrating those who work with children

This year Pam Linke, a long-term and very active member of Early Childhood Australia and a passionate advocate for young children, was awarded the Sonya Bemporad Award for significant contributions to the advancement of social and public policies that contribute to the mental health and overall benefit of infants, toddlers and families, by the World Association for Infant Mental Health. Many other ECA members received state/territory and local recognition of their contributions to improving the lives of young children. Awards acknowledge personal contributions but, as Pam Linke says, they are also 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. A number of Branches administer awards for others and present their own awards.

### 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. The value of NCSF in building consensus on some fundamental questions continues to be important. A number of Branches are part of or convene similar groups.

#### Strategic and collaborative alliances support the achievement of ECA's vision

ECA has extended its advocacy endeavours through a strengthened focus on building mutually beneficial alliances with other organisations. The importance of relationships to ECA's advocacy work is apparent in other parts of this report where ECA participation in conferences, forums and on committees and boards to support the work of other organisations is detailed. These are important relationships as they open up new audiences for ECA's messages about children and their needs.

Many ECA alliances are ongoing, such as the relationship with the Secretariat for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care (SNAICC). This year ECA has worked closely with SNAICC on two projects: the research and publication of a *Research in Practice Series* title *Dreaming Stories: A springboard for learning* by Jenni Connor and a project funded under the Council of Australian Governments' early childhood mental health initiative dealing with early intervention. Evolving relationships are those with the Australian Scholarships Group, the High/Scope Institute in the United States and, more recently, Teaching Australia.

Other ongoing partnerships include those with the Gowries in Tasmania and Sydney which this year saw them participate in a project looking at the implications of the High/Scope methodology for Australian childcare services, the Defence Community Organisation which works with ECA to provide resources to Defence force families, and the Australian Primary Principals Association to produce and market *Your child's first year at school: A book for parents*. The relationship with Thomson Education Direct has resulted in 1600 students receiving ECA student membership, as well as the *Everyday Learning Series*. This links future members of our profession into the advocacy work of ECA and begins the process of inducting them into the early childhood profession. HESTA, the superannuation fund, continues to work with ECA to ensure that *ECA Voice* is distributed regularly to all children's services, and the National Association of Community Based Children's Services promotes the *Everyday Learning Series*.

Organisations with whom ECA has continuing alliances include the Australian College of Educators, NIFTeY, the National Childcare Accreditation Council, Community Child Health in Victoria, Good Beginnings, Pademelon Press, McArthur Management Services, the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Monash and Melbourne universities, the Curriculum Corporation, NSW Country Children's Services and the children's services national peak organisations.

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## HESTA looks after your super when you're working—soon we can look after it when you retire.

HESTA is releasing some great new initiatives for members heading into retirement.

On 1 July 2007 significant changes to super took effect, including:

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- receiving your super tax-free from age 60 when paid from a taxed source, like HESTA.

So, instead of withdrawing your money from your super when you retire and putting it into a bank account (or locking it away in a term deposit), you can continue to enjoy your HESTA membership by:

### 1. leaving your money in HESTA Super Fund

This way you can stay with the fund you know and trust, continue to have access to HESTA's low fees and investment options, and access your money when you need it (subject to conditions).

### 2. transferring your super to the HESTA Retirement Income Stream (RIS) (available soon)

This will let you receive a regular income stream from your super with the added bonus of no tax payable on the investment earnings.

To take advantage of this offer you don't need to do anything until just before you wish to withdraw some (or all) of your super. Freecall 1800 813 327 and we'll send you a form to complete and return. We can then set you up for faster access to your super when you need it.

### 3. boosting your super—or subsidising your income—leading up to your retirement with the HESTA Working Income Stream (WIS).

- You can use the HESTA WIS as a transition-to-retirement vehicle if you have reached preservation age (age 55 for people born before 1 July 1960).
- You can transfer part or all of your super account balance to the WIS and draw an income stream from it, while at the same time boosting your super balance with extra contributions to your HESTA super account. This may suit you if you want to maximise your super or reduce your working hours while maintaining your income level.

The WIS will pay you a regular non-commutable income stream (subject to maximum payment criteria).

- The HESTA WIS for balances of more than \$10,000 will be available shortly.

To take advantage of the RIS or the WIS when they are released, you will need to obtain a HESTA Income Stream Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) at [www.hesta.com.au](http://www.hesta.com.au) or freecall 1800 813 327.

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## DID YOU GET YOUR CALL FOR PAPERS?

Call for Papers have now been released for the 2008 ECA Conference.

If you missed your copy, freecall 1800 356 900 or visit [www.econference.com.au](http://www.econference.com.au)

Deadline for applications: 31 January 2008

Put  
it in  
your  
diary!



ECA Conference

Children: A nation's capital—'Investing in our children'

3-6 October 2008

National Convention Centre, Canberra

## Organisational management and growth

### Governance

During 2006–07 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 Board exercises its stewardship of the organisation's mission. The policies define the organisational culture, values, operating principles and parameters within which the Board expects ECA's operations to be managed.

### Investment in ECA membership pays a unique dividend—advocacy for young children

ECA membership continues to grow and is diverse, with members from every part of the early childhood profession. 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. This year student membership has grown substantially and this is a cause for celebration. These early contacts with fledgling members of the early childhood profession are important in ensuring that ECA continues to flourish in the future.

Branches engage with students in a variety of ways—through on-campus ECA student groups, payment of ECA student membership for students who are active participants in a branch, mentoring and supporting active student members to take on leadership roles, sponsoring of student awards at TAFEs and universities, payment of conference registration fees for students, and putting ECA information in student packs and talking to them about ECA.

Regional groups in New England, in central and far-west NSW, the Riverina, Albury and Wodonga, the north-coast of NSW and the Peninsula, Gold Coast and north 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.

## National and Branch offices

In all its activities ECA depends upon the people who make things work in its offices. Among them we have a great diversity of skill, energy, creativity and commitment. We acknowledge with great appreciation the contribution of the staff of Branches and all in the national office who day by day work to enact the ECA vision.

The Chief Executive Officer, Pam Cahir, continues to inspire and challenge us with her energy, creative intelligence and insight; and the Board thanks her for her leadership and work for the governance of the organisation, for young children and for the future of ECA.

### 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 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 Board of Directors.



### The members of the ECA Board of Directors are:

- Margaret Young – National President
- Ros Cornish – Deputy National President, Tasmania
- Christy Ward – South Australia
- Chris Legg – New South Wales
- Elizabeth Stamopoulos – Western Australia
- Renata Harris – Northern Territory
- Catharine Hydon – Victoria
- Margaret Brannock – Queensland
- Kaye van Nieuwkuyk – Tasmania
- Vanessa Whelan – ACT
- Judy Kynaston – National Treasurer
- Pam Linke – Chair of the Publications Committee (non-voting)

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

### Thank you to:

- The Brotherhood of St Laurence in Victoria
- The Lady Gowrie Child Centre of Tasmania
- Children, Youth and Women's Health Service in South Australia
- Country Children's Services Association New South Wales
- The Canberra Institute of Technology
- School of Education, Edith Cowan University
- KU Children's Services in New South Wales
- The Department of Family and Community Services in the Northern Territory

and, in particular,

- The Board and staff of the Lady Gowrie Child Centre Sydney for their support of ECA's National President, Margaret Young.

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