

**EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA  
WA BRANCH  
AGM October 2011**

**President's Report**

**Dear ECA WA Branch Members, Colleagues and Friends**

My President's Report provides a brief overview of our work as a Branch over the last 12 months and showcases our achievements across National and State levels. A strong focus of our work has evolved through our sub-committee working groups chaired by our committee and supported by our members and I would like to thank you all for your leadership and dedication. I believe the inclusion of branch members in our working groups has added to the richness and experience that currently exists within our committee. I hope you will join with us once again over the following 12 months to showcase our branch during the ECA National Conference which we will be hosting in Perth on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2012.

**Our work within the last 12 months**

Over the past year our work as a Branch has intensified and our presence become more visible in numerous forums, consultations, roundtable discussions, ECA National Council Meetings and ECA Leadership Forums. The National Reform agenda and consultative processes have in fact provided us with new opportunities through which we have voiced our opinions and concerns and advocated strongly to embed early childhood in ways in which we know will positively impact on children and their families while retaining our strong professional identity across 0-8 year settings. The work of our branch I believe has in fact strengthened and evolved through new initiatives and its connections with ECA national and through our ECWA Working Parties.

**Our work with our National Organisation**

Our state based work with our ECA national organisation strengthens and connects as new initiatives are put in place to best meet the needs of each state.

*ECA Leadership forum*

One such initiative has been the first ECA Leadership Forum attended by Branch Presidents and National Board Members. In July 2011, I represented our Branch in Canberra to consider opportunities and reflect on challenges. I believe this opportunity has been invaluable and provided a forum through which we have developed shared visions, discussed matters of importance and given voice to our state members.

*Teleconferences*

A second initiative has seen the introduction of a teleconference with each State President and Director one week prior to National Board meetings to discuss any state matters and to better understand the needs of our branch. This has presented a private audience and a means of being heard at a state level. This initiative has been in addition to a teleconference which occurs one week after National Board meetings to discuss Board outcomes with Branch Presidents.

*ECA Strategic Directions (2012-2014)*

Our state based work remains visible through our feedback to ECA national and our review of the current ECA strategic directions for 2008-2011. Furthermore, we provided feedback on the development of a new set of ECA Strategic Directions (2012 to 2014) in preparation for the ECA National Board Meetings I attended in October 2011.

#### *Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program*

A national program of 65 EYLF Professional Learning Workshops have been held in rural, regional and metropolitan areas in Australia. As a branch we have been involved in the rollout of the Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program (EYLF PLP) in a voluntary capacity.

#### *State of the Sector Report: Our Future on the Line*

ECAWA provided Branch feedback to ECA National on the *State of the Sector Report: Our Future on the Line*. This is considered an important document in enabling us to advocate on behalf of young children and our profession.

#### *ECA National Council Meetings (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2011)*

During the recent National Council Meetings I attended with our National Director, Stephanie Jackiewicz and two committee members, Sue Fielding and Susan Teather. We saw this as an invaluable experience which allowed us to showcase our work and give voice to any issues we faced as a state branch. It also provided a forum through which we could share our ideas with other branches and territories.

The two day National Council Meetings were in fact intense and covered a diverse range of areas pertinent to our work. Of particular interest was a presentation by Rachel Hunter, Chair of ACECQA which provided opportunities to ask questions on topics considered important and which included but were not limited to: ACECQA priorities; teacher accreditation; what constitutes early childhood qualification, ratings and so on. A presentation by Professor Collette Tayler on NQS Assessor Training was also of immense interest and value as we heard about quality in terms of structure and process; the need for reliability and validity; the consistent use of tools by all assessors and the importance of infrastructure. Once again, questions were allowed and Collette's responses provided insight into factors which impact on quality assessor training and how these can be implemented in ways which best suit our needs.

Discussions which were agenda items included: the loss of play in the early years of school; development of an ECA Reconciliation Action Plan (National and Branch responsibility); early childhood degree qualifications along with other topics. An important aspect of National Council Meetings is the presentation of Branch reports. As President I presented our ECAWA Branch report showcasing our achievements and strengths.

#### **Our work within Western Australia**

Over the past 12 months we have been visible in WA through our participation in numerous forums, consultations, roundtable discussions and feedback.

#### *DEEWR Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005*

My attendance at Roundtable discussions on the DEEWR Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005 provided us with opportunity to consider our input in this Review which we saw as important because of its impact on the lives of children with disabilities, their families and our work as educators. It also provided opportunities to recognise the strengths of the Standards while also making reference to: the exclusion of child-care providers within these standards, the need for a seamless process of intervention, staff training, case study examples and the challenges parents and other professionals face when navigating through the system.

#### *Draft Regulations for the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care.*

A second opportunity emerged when we were invited to attend consultation forums to consider the draft Regulations for the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education

and Care. The focus was on the provision of kindergarten in WA and we raised issues we believed were important because of their possible impact on our work, including the process for the selection of assessors.

*Feasibility Study into the Provision of Kindergarten (preschool) in Childcare Settings.*

An invitation by the Government of WA, Department of Education to provide feedback on a *Feasibility Study into the Provision of Kindergarten (preschool) in Childcare Settings* provided opportunity for advocacy. We considered this study important because it explored the merits of delivering kindergarten in childcare settings. Furthermore, the final report would provide information for consideration by the WA Minister for Education. Therefore, the findings we believe would have a definite impact on our work in this state.

*Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)*

We were invited to attend a forum held by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in which they introduced the Professional Learning Flagship Program: Leading Curriculum Change. The focus was on Australian teachers leading curriculum change through flexible on-line interactive learning which connects them to a national community and supports their learning. At the forum we raised the need to fully represent the sector by making reference to the EYLF as well as the Australian Curriculum. From the feedback we received it became apparent that we needed to progress this further and raise our concerns in writing. Within the last month the ECWA branch has written a letter to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) about the importance of including the EYLF in curriculum documentation within its Professional Learning Flagship Program: Leading Curriculum Change. Recently, we received a response by AITSL acknowledging our perspective.

*Building the Education Revolution Program*

The ECWA branch has written a letter to Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA in relation to the installation of play equipment in early childhood facilities. A response was received outlining constraints in terms of budget and timelines as well as the need to conform to the Building Code of Australia and Department of Education duty of care requirements, which have impacted on scope of works for early childhood play areas. She mentioned there had been input from early childhood learning experts and that vegetation that was deemed suitable has been retained and in some cases landscaping and such things as sand pits had been installed. Dr Constable mentioned the Department provides grants for play equipment to new primary schools for schools to utilize as they see fit. She explained, the standard design of early childhood learning areas includes both natural and manufactured elements. Dr Constable mentioned she will forward ECWA's offer to consult to the Department's Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning (OECDL).

*Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)*

The ECWA branch was provided with an allotted timeslot to speak to Karen Curtis who is the new CEO of ACECQA. This was invaluable in presenting our perspectives about national and state matters in relation to their role and acted as a sound platform through which we could direct our questions to Rachel Hunter, Chair of ACECQA during National Council Meetings.

*Commissioner for Children and Young People WA*

The Branch was invited by the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA to attend a briefing session and a short presentation by Dr Margy Whalley and Professor Stuart Shanker who were keynote presenters at the WAECEC Conference in Perth.

#### *WAECEC Conference (June 2011)*

ECAWA committee members manned a display stand which generated interest and provided an avenue through which we could respond to participant's questions and advertise the ECA national conference to be held in Perth in 2012.

#### *Participation in a Master's research study*

I was invited as President of ECAWA Branch to be interviewed as part of a research study linked to current reforms. This is another pathway through which we have been able to share our knowledge and advocate for what we know is best for children and the early childhood profession.

#### **Our work within our WA Branch Working Parties**

The WA Branch has moved to establish working parties in order to sustain our leadership and advocacy work; to connect with our members; advocate and have a voice in the state and nationally; grow our membership; provide effective governance; respond to state and national issues in a timely manner and assist in delivering a successful conference. Each sub-committee has a chair on the committee and is made up of members.

#### *Connections Working Party*

This Working Party is responsible for the development of the Newsletter, Web Site and for ongoing communication with its members. To date, in 2011 the Connections Working Party has:

- Published 3 issues of the WA Branch Newsletter.
- Updated the ECAWA Branch Web Site.
- Circulated surveys to members prior to each Branch Newsletter and given members a voice through our newsletter. Its intent is to provide a form of communication where ECA members and friends can share their work, thoughts and ideas.

#### *Structures Working Party*

The Structures Working Party is responsible for developing clear governance structures for the ECA WA Branch to work within. The purpose of this is to have a clear set of structures that will assist in the day to day operation of the Branch so as to enhance the governance of ECA WA Branch. To date, in 2011 the Structures Working Party has:

- Developed a set of job descriptions for each of the Office Bearers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and National Director) and the general committee members.
- Prepared a discussion paper on the use of organisational or governmental emails for ECAWA business.

#### *Conference Working Party*

The Conference Working Party meets once a month and reports to the state committee and board. It is committed to assisting in the delivery of a successful national Conference. Currently, it is preparing for our ECA National Conference: *Consulting the Compass - Defining Directions* to be held in Perth on 3rd – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2012. In 2011 the subcommittee has:

- identified Keynote speakers
- written the text for the call for papers content
- identified second tier speakers
- assisted in ideas for social occasions and tours.

### *Membership Working Party*

The Membership Working Party is responsible for welcoming new members to the ECAWA Branch. In 2011 they have:

- developed an orientation pack
- updated the membership email list
- created membership kits and a conference display kit
- started a membership drive
- focused on the establishment of a rural and remote sub-committee

### *Advocacy Working Party*

The Advocacy Working Party is responsible for researching and drafting advocacy correspondence regarding early childhood education and care issues for the ECA WA Branch. In 2011 they have:

- responded to numerous submissions and written advocacy letters, including but not limited to, the Labor Discussion Paper, advocating for Natural Play Spaces in Early Childhood Education, registration of 4 year qualified teachers teaching in child care settings, Teacher for Australia Scheme, AITSL Professional Learning Flagship Program, Building the Education Revolution Program and the Little Green Steps Environmental initiative.
- More notably they are proud of their success regarding the registration teachers in child care centres by Western Australian College of Teaching (WACOT).

### *Events Working Party*

The Events Working Party is responsible for organizing guest speakers and other events for the branch. In 2011 they have:

- Organised venue hire, flyers, registration, gifts, letters of thanks for events
- Provided refreshments
- Organised guest speakers at Branch meetings
  - The Smith Family and YMCA who spoke about their numerous early childhood projects across metropolitan, rural and remote settings.
  - Presentation by Elizabeth Stamopoulos and five Early Childhood Teacher Leaders. This was an overview of a research project *Building Pedagogical Leadership Capacity in AISWA Schools*. (Edith Cowan University and the Association of Independent School of Western Australia). The presenters discussed their research in relation to their work in schools, their vision, action research, anticipated outcomes and school priorities.
  - Kerry Logan presented an overview of the range of services offered by Kidsafe WA, discussed the experience of attending the Cardiff conference and spoke about the latest international trends/influences on playground design and children's opportunities for play.
  - AGM Guest speaker: Geoff Metcalf who holds the position of Acting Executive Director in the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning for the Department of Education in Western Australia. Geoff will be presenting on the extended service model that has been operating at Roseworth Primary School and his numerous experiences and leadership roles across his career.

### **Conclusion**

The Working Parties have proved to be a successful structure for our branch to progress its advocacy work. The intensity of our work this year would not have been possible without the support of each member of our ECAWA Committee.

President: Elizabeth Stamopoulos  
Vice- President: Amanda Hunt  
National Director: Stephanie Jackiewicz  
Secretary: Lennie Barblett  
Treasurer: Jenni Burns  
Committee Members: Sue Fielding  
Marcelle Psaltis-Saratsis  
Margaret Waterton  
Margaret Owens  
Anna Targowska  
Susan Teather

### **Chairs of the ECAWA Working Parties**

The work of the branch has moved along well and is undertaken by a number of sub-committees. This is an initiative to make sure the Branch is prompt in responding to developments and issues in the early childhood field. The sub-committees are made up of both committee members and branch members.

The sub- committee Chairs are:

Conference: Chair: Lennie Barblett  
Advocacy: Chair: Sue Fielding  
Governance & structures: Chair: Stephanie Jackiewicz  
Events: Chair: Margaret Waterton  
Connections: Chair: Elizabeth Stamopoulos  
Membership: Chair: Marcelle Saratsis  
Finance: Chair: Jennie Burns

I will not be re-nominating for President this term but would like to say how privileged I feel to have worked so closely with an exemplary group of Committee Members, in an organisation which achieves such outstanding work, offered voluntarily and with such few resources and support. I would also like to thank our ECAWA branch members, colleagues and friends for their ongoing support throughout the year.

Kind regards

Dr Elizabeth Stamopoulos  
State President  
ECAWA Branch