2013 marks the 75th anniversary of Early Childhood Australia (ECA). ECA’s longevity and achievements in advocating for the interests of young children is a testament to the dedication and tenacity of our members and supporters.

To acknowledge and celebrate this significant milestone, ECA commissioned Dr Frances Press and Dr Sandie Wong to write a history publication that was launched in Brisbane on 3 October during our National Council meeting. We are indebted to sponsors that made this project possible, including: Charles Sturt University, C&K, Community Child Care NSW, Curtin University, Deakin University, the Department of Education WA, ECA Tasmania Branch, the Federal Government Department of Education, Gowrie Australia, KU Children’s Services, McArthur Early Childhood Education, SDN Children’s Services, University of Newcastle and University of Southern Queensland.

We are also very grateful to the Advisory Group that oversaw the project—Margaret Young, Pam Linke, Elizabeth Mellor, Carol Burgess and Lyn Bower as well as all those who contributed stories and photographs. The history publication charts the changing context of education and care for young children and traces the way in which early childhood advocates, through ECA and our predecessors, have shaped and responded to the social and political changes affecting children and families.

From 1938 until today, countless members have generously given untold voluntary hours to support ECA’s mission—at both the national and branch level—attending meetings, developing resources, organising events, discussing, writing, consulting and advocating.

Concern for the wellbeing of young children and the provision of high-quality early years education permeates ECA’s 75 year history.
While the history focuses on ECA nationally, a great deal of ECA’s work occurs through the state branches. These branches have tackled issues specific to their jurisdiction, as well as fostering discussion, inspiration and alliance building to address issues facing early childhood professionals nationally. Throughout the years branches have conducted research, organised seminars and forums, and piloted strategies to support better experiences for children in early childhood education and care. They have been catalysts for developments with national applicability, such as the ECA Code of Ethics; the piloting of childcare accreditation processes; and action for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation.

ECA has always advocated for strong standards in children’s services. It has sought to positively influence early childhood policy and practice through the propagation of information, the development of policy statements, conducting research and delivering training. In recent years, the organisation has played a key role in generating support for the Early Childhood Quality Reform Agenda, and enabling its implementation within early childhood programs through the provision of professional resources and training.

Over the years, ECA has also developed a suite of publications and online resources. In more recent years, ECA has cultivated a strong digital presence, and extended its reach with WebWatch, a free fortnightly e-newsletter. In addition, Early Childhood Australia’s national conferences have become a feature of the Australian early childhood landscape. To have held 28 national conferences since 1938 is no small accomplishment!

ECA has been confronted with many challenges throughout its history. Its financial position has often been in doubt, and ECA has endured many disruptive debates about its purpose and what strategies to adopt to support young children.

But, throughout its history, ECA has proved itself resilient and adaptable. Although the structure, membership and activities have changed over time, ECA has maintained its primary commitment to the rights and interests of young children: being ‘a voice for children’.

Our gratitude goes to all those who have been involved and made this publication possible.

Copies of the ECA history publication can be purchased from ECA, or downloaded as an e-book at a nominal cost. For more information please see: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/75years or contact ECA on 02 6242 1800.

ECA WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE ...

Aunty Denise Proud on her achievement in becoming an Honorary Senior Fellow of the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Ms Proud is a dedicated member of ECA’s Reconciliation Advisory Group (RAG), an educator, community services worker and artist who is recognised nationally and internationally for helping Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through her academic and professional roles.

On behalf of ECA, we would like to celebrate Ms Proud’s accomplishment and acknowledge her hard work. ECA wishes her all the best for the future.
As it’s my first chance to communicate since being appointed Assistant Minister for Education, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful contribution you make in early childhood education.

When you consider almost every young child in Australia will likely attend some form of childcare or early learning centre before they start school, this sector is more critical than ever in the life of young Australian families. As I stated many times in the lead up to the recent election, the Federal Coalition wants to deliver a more flexible childcare system which is capable of responding to the changing dynamic and individual needs of parents.

As Minister exclusively responsible for childcare and early childhood education, I pledge to work collaboratively to help improve access to early childhood education and care, so that families can have more choice when it comes to the decisions they take about the care of their youngsters. Among our first priorities, is the commencement of a broad-ranging Productivity Commission Inquiry into how our childcare system can be made more flexible, affordable and accessible. In doing so, we’ll continue to recognise the important role played by services in providing quality early childhood learning.

While the new Government is supportive of the National Quality Framework, we will also be looking at ways of reducing some of its resulting red tape and improving its implementation but without compromising the standard of care. As I did regularly when Shadow Minister for Childcare, I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the months ahead to discuss the issues and produce the type of early childhood care so important to you but also the families who use our services.

The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Assistant Minister for Education

ECA’s Best of Sustainability: Research, theory and practice by Elliott, Edwards, Davis and Cutter-Mackenzie collates a range of key articles focusing on sustainability from past editions of the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood and Every Child. Sustainable service operation and promoting children’s responsibility and care for the environment are now part of the National Quality Standards and more importantly, all early childhood services must engage with sustainability in this time of increasing global environmental concerns.

The publication documents the best of research, theory and practice to date and questions where has early childhood education for sustainability come from and more importantly, where is it going? There are multiple possibilities for educators, researchers, policy-makers and managers to take action in early childhood settings for an environmentally sustainable future.


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For more information on the investment choices available through HESTA, request a Member investment choice presentation at your workplace, visit hesta.com.au for a copy of our Investment Choices guide or free call 1800 813 327 to arrange a consultation with a HESTA Superannuation Adviser.

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www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
What impact does a remote location have on an early childhood program? We spoke to early childhood teacher Lorinda Jago to find out.

For Lorinda, there's nothing too difficult about running the kindergarten in the small town of Babinda (pop. 1167), 60 kilometres south of Cairns. But that's because she was born and bred there. For any other educator, running an early childhood service in the wettest town in Australia might be more of a headache.

'I've been living here all my life, so I don't really think about the weather,' Lorinda says. 'And playing in the rain doesn't really seem to faze the children.' Outdoor play is a major part of the program at the Babinda Kindergarten. The town recorded annual rainfall of 4302 millimetres—that's 4.3 metres—in 2012. ‘The children all bring spare changes of clothes, and the parents really don’t mind because they understand that it’s Babinda and it’s just raining all the time,’ Lorinda explains. The only time she modifies the program is if ‘it’s pouring down with rain’, when she leaves the gross motor circuit equipment in the shed.

The children’s interests are a big factor in planning and programming at the kindergarten, including local landmarks, native animals, birds and insects. The program also includes participation in broader events in the close-knit community, like the annual harvest festival parade. In its first assessment under the National Quality Framework, the Babinda Kindergarten was rated as ‘Exceeding the National Quality Standard.

The only professional challenge associated with working in Babinda is ‘being a little bit disconnected from other kindergartens,’ Lorinda says. But the benefits of living and teaching in her home town far outweigh the challenges: ‘I’ve lived in Babinda my whole life, so everybody knows who I am and I know who everybody else is’.

Amanda Walsh
Project Writer—National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program team (ECA)

For more stories, please visit: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqslp/resources/case-studies

Walking in the Harvest Festival Parade, 9 June 2013.
In the last edition of Voice, we conducted a postcard survey to gain your thoughts and opinions on the new layout, topics and articles. We received overwhelmingly positive responses and some great constructive feedback too.

You told us that what you like most about Voice is being kept informed on current information and topics, the layout, calendar of events and political updates.

77 per cent of readers rated Voice eight or more out of 10, with 24 per cent rating it ten out of ten.

Some respondents indicated that they thought the last election edition was too political—As Voice is ECA's advocacy newsletter, we aim to keep readers informed of the national debate and political landscape, but we will keep this shorter in future editions.

In this edition we have responded to some of your great feedback—such as including Indigenous perspectives (see page 7), focus on rural and remote services (see page 4), more upcoming events and conferences (see back page), articles relating to National Quality Standards (see the article on Recognised Prior Learning on page 6).

In future editions we will also endeavour to include your feedback on having more articles on preschools, kindergartens and family day care, children's health, playgroups and rural and remote settings.

One of the primary goals of the ECA Voice survey was to determine any possible changes to the current format of the newsletter. A significant proportion of the survey audience (87 per cent) indicated there is nothing they want changed to the newsletter. Only very few respondents wanted changes, such as making the publication longer, more articles from educators, more practical ideas and tips and less political articles.

You can read Voice for free online as a pdf or flipbook and you can email it to your colleagues at: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/voice_newsletter/voice_archive.html.

Thank you to those who participated in the survey and congratulations to the winners of the prize packs. A. Roach from QLD and M. Webb-Wagg from ACT.

The recent launch of a new program in Victoria aimed at identifying gifted and talented children in the years before school sparked a great debate on our Facebook page.

Voice 1: Working in early childhood, we recognise the importance of individualising our approach to meet each child’s developmental level across all areas.

Voice 2: Gifted and talented preschoolers?!?! Next it will be gifted and talented newborns or embryos!

Voice 3: This is an area of passion for me as I firmly believe gifted and talented children are the most ignored special needs group… I’m thrilled this group will be having their needs heard and supported. Yay!

Voice 4: I think gifted-ness needs to be renamed urgently due to misconceptions! Both teachers and parents misunderstand the term!

Join the conversation at facebook.com/earlychildhoodaustralia
As you are undoubtedly aware, from 1 January 2014 the National Quality Standard (NQS) requires that anyone who wishes to be recognised as an early childhood educator must have completed or be actively working towards the minimum Certificate III in Children’s Services.

For people who have been working in the sector for many years but don’t have formal qualifications this may seem daunting, others may not see the value in becoming qualified.

In response to this and to promote awareness, the National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program (NQS PLP) team at Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has developed a Talking about practice video on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process that showcases educators who have successfully completed their qualifications through RPL.

The videos feature real educators discussing their experiences and describing how their perceptions changed as they undertook the process.

The video is freely available to anyone and you can watch them through the following link: http://wp.me/P2wNWe-Zk.

You can also visit: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/ to view the supporting document which details how educators can take advantage of RPL, plus many more videos.

**Allergen-free ‘Clifford’ bars**

Allergen-free Clifford bars are a nice alternative to traditional granola bars—super easy, cheaper and no baking, saves time! Popular with the kids, Clifford bars are a healthy alternative to a biscuit or other sugary snack because of the added nutritional elements of dried fruit and whole grains.

**Ingredients**
- 1 cup puffed rice
- 1 cup oats
- 3 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 1/2 cup chopped dried mango
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 tbsp raw sugar
- 1/3 cup sunflower seed butter
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 tsp dried ginger

**Method**
Mix together the grains and fruit in a large bowl. In a small saucepan, bring the honey and sugar to a boil. Remove from the heat, and stir in the sunflower seed butter, vanilla and ginger. Pour over dry ingredients and stir until well combined. Press into a mini-muffin tin, or into a square pan. Refrigerate.

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes  
**Cooking time:** 0 minutes

Recipe reproduced from blogger Anne Simpson. For more healthy recipes, ideas and tips to keep your family happy and healthy, please visit: http://authenticsimplicity.net

For more information on cooking with kids, please look to our Everyday Learning Series title: *Kids in the kitchen*, by Luke Touhill. This book provides guidance when cooking with children, individually and in groups, easy to make recipes, cooking safety and much more.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

One of the guiding principles of the National Quality Framework is that ‘Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued’. We asked Aboriginal early childhood teacher Adam Duncan, from the Wiradjuri Preschool and Child Care Centre, for his insights.

How can non-Indigenous educators teach children about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures?

I think a big part of it is actually engaging with the culture, as adults. The idea that we can get a book, or we can have someone come in and tell us how to do it—without having any personal connection or understanding of the culture—is a very shallow way of approaching it.

How should early childhood services go about building partnerships with Indigenous communities?

It’s so varied—you’ve got so many communities and such a variety of feelings and pre-existing relationships between communities. I think perseverance and going through proper avenues are important. It’s about building a sense of good faith, especially as educators. We’re still talking about potentially engaging with a generation that was let down by the education system.

What role can the early childhood sector play in the Reconciliation process?

As idealistic as this may sound, I think we shape the thoughts and attitudes of the children that we work with, in such a way that the intellectual side of Reconciliation is going to solve itself. If we can foster in the children a curiosity and, to some level, an understanding of the elements that I’m saying teachers need to be exploring, if we can get that spark, the kids will hopefully follow that throughout their educational career.

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Early Childhood Australia will advocate to ensure quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children from birth to eight years.

Our values are: the rights of children; leadership; excellence; respect; courage; honesty; openness; collaboration; diversity; justice and social inclusion of children.

For more information, please head to our website: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/early_childhood_news/conferences-and-events.html