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Inclusion—everyone’s business

This edition, with its broad focus on inclusion, comes at a time when families with children with disabilities, service providers and others are all trying to navigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We all trust that it will mean children and families can access the services they need and that these services are where children are, and they are affordable. Helen Oakey, the Policy, Research and Advocacy Manager at Early Childhood Australia (ECA) discusses the practicalities of using ECA’s policy statement on inclusion in care and education settings. Our guest statement has been written by Marlene Fox who was the chair of the sub-committee responsible for developing this statement. Marlene brings a long history to her work for ECA and around inclusion.

Carmel Richardson’s wise words come at a time when many educators have just been stimulated, challenged and tasked with doing more around the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, their cultures and community links at the third ECA Reconciliation Symposium. Carmel reminds us that inclusive practices are everybody’s responsibility, whether we have these children in our services or not. No focus on inclusion would be proper if we did not bring in a conversation on children’s rights as Loretta Davis reminds us. When services are truly inclusive young children have the opportunity to become active citizens both within the service and beyond. The latest edition of The anti-bias approach in early childhood, edited by Red Ruby Scarlet, will be a useful resource for all educators. The current political landscape both in Australia and on the world stage sees an urgency for educators to understand and support children around the big ideas of inclusion, diversity and difference. Included too is an article by Pat Jewell, referencing Article 12 of the UN Convention—The child’s right to be heard.

A sense of belonging is what we want with all our children in our care and education settings. Jackie Brien asks us to think about our attitudes and beliefs and what ‘relationships in action might look like when we truly partner with families’. Trisha Dean asks us to consider the differing needs and perspectives of families, and challenges our thinking in other ways to ensure all children have opportunities to participate and belong.

Community partnerships, mutual respect and understanding are all part of the ‘inclusion package’ and this edition showcases the work of the Franklin Early Childhood School and its culturally and linguistically diverse community. In addition, Amanda Cincotta shares ‘a practical tale of inclusion’ in an outside school hours setting. This edition has something for everyone. It has practical information, solutions and research, including updates on the National Quality Framework, an article to make you think and rethink how you use photographs in your documentation, and one service’s excitement and success in introducing another language under the ELLA (Early Learning Languages Australia) program. SNAICC—National Voice for our Children tells us about the first animated kids show to feature Indigenous Australians that aims to support the transition to school of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

I would like to thank the South Australian Branch of ECA for their tribute to the late Andrea McGuffog. I had the privilege of working with Andrea as a member of the National Executive and valued her insights, commitment and strength. RIP Andrea.

I trust you find this edition stimulating and supportive in your work with young children and families.

Judy Radich
Co-Editor