A provocation to reflection and action

Be the difference for children and families was the inspiring theme for ECA’s 2018 National Conference, held in Sydney in September … And what an exhortation and provocation to reflection and action this conference turned out to be! If you were unable to attend the conference, this edition of Every Child shares articles from some of the presenters, including a wrap-up from ECA’s CEO, Samantha Page, along with the usual range of articles to provoke your thinking and practice.

We heard from so many speakers, including early childhood colleagues from Australia and international guest speakers such as Dr Stuart Shanker, who has written for us in this edition.

Dr Shanker reminds us of the paramount importance of early childhood educators and their understanding of mindful self-regulation as he discusses the challenges, for young children, of internalising anxiety behaviours. This focus on positive mental health is shared by the Be You initiative, the new iteration of the former KidsMatter Early Childhood program. We hear from Bubup Wilam, an Aboriginal self-determined organisation that decided to create positive outcomes for young children based on ensuring the children developed strong and proud Aboriginal identities. Two early childhood educators in teaching and leading roles, Odette Binns and Kerryn Jones, talk about the shared responsibility of building relationships and culturally safe practice. We also feature an interview with Geraldine Atkinson, who has devoted her extensive career to achieving excellent outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Hearing of her significant contribution will be an inspiration for all childhood professionals.

A key focus of the conference was the commitment to reconciliation. As you may have already noticed, this commitment is shared by ECA’s Publications Advisory Committee and is reflected in the intentional inclusion of articles, in each edition of Every Child, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, or written in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We hear from Bubup Wilam, an Aboriginal self-determined organisation that decided to create positive outcomes for young children based on ensuring the children developed strong and proud Aboriginal identities. Two early childhood educators in teaching and leading roles, Odette Binns and Kerryn Jones, talk about the shared responsibility of building relationships and culturally safe practice. We also feature an interview with Geraldine Atkinson, who has devoted her extensive career to achieving excellent outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Hearing of her significant contribution will be an inspiration for all childhood professionals.

As a profession, we continue to reflect on leadership and ethics. The conference also included a panel on ethical leadership.

Interviewed by Samantha Page, much thought-provoking discussion ensued about carefully discerning the interests of those we serve, and considering the impact of engaging ethically. Panel member, Anthony Semann, follows this topic through with his article, ‘Learning to unlead’. The panel reminded us that ECA’s Code of Ethics is the foundational way of defining ourselves as a profession. I would urge you to read and reflect on the Code of Ethics and perhaps work through ECA’s Ethics in Action guide with your group of colleagues.

I trust you will enjoy this edition of Every Child.

As an early childhood educator recently told me, professional reading is ‘a spark, a way to inspire and to challenge’ and, according to another educator, it is ‘integral to being a professional’.

Jackie Brien
Every Child Co-Editor

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