



Child times

Volume 1 Issue 9 December 2010



New era as Child Early Learning Centre Lockridge opens

Child Australia is proud to announce the beginning of a new era for our organisation following the acquisition of a childcare centre in Lockridge, Western Australia. We are committed to creating a play-based learning environment where children can explore, discover, experiment and create their own learning pathways. We will work in partnerships with families, early childhood service providers and the local community to support the physical, mental and social wellbeing of every child attending the centre.

Our not for profit childcare centre offers high quality early education and Long Day Care for children aged six weeks to 5 years.

We look forward to officially launching Child Early Learning Centre Lockridge in the new year.



Early Learning Centre Lockridge

now
available

Professional Development Calendars January to June 2011

PSCWA and PSCNT are pleased to advise that the 2011 January-June Professional Development Calendars are now available on our websites: www.pscwa.org.au and www.pscnt.org.au and have been posted out to all member services.



For the first half of 2011, we have sourced facilitators from far and wide to provide up-to-date Professional Development for Early Childhood Professionals.

Professional Development is an ongoing process that provides systematic learning, improvement and broadening of skills and knowledge to achieve best outcomes for children and families.

The PSCWA and PSCNT teams thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to this process and hope to see you at many of the PD sessions planned for the new year!



Draft National Quality Framework

Around 200 education and care services across the nation are currently being assessed as part of the next phase of developing the new National Quality Standard assessment and ratings process. This phase is due for completion in early 2011.

A range of preschools, Long Day Care, Family Day Care and Out of School Hours Care services from across Australia volunteered to participate.

Copies of the supporting documentation being used in this phase of developing the assessment process are available at www.deewr.gov.au.

These documents are being used in the Phase 2 Assessment Visits currently being conducted by a NCAC Validator and a State/Territory Licensing Officer. The documents will be reviewed based on the results and feedback from the assessment visits. It is anticipated that final versions of the documents will be available in mid-2011.

If you would like to comment on the above draft assessment and rating documentation, email ececquality@deewr.gov.au or call the National Quality Hotline on 1800 181 088.



WOCS Toolkit

Child Australia and the Wheatbelt Organisation for Children's Services (WOCS) worked in partnership on the 'Wheatbelt Regional Childcare Support' project from 2009 to 2010.

The second stage of the project was the development of the Wheatbelt Early Childhood Planning Tool Kit. The toolkit aims to encourage communities and existing child care services to take a proactive approach to meet the current and future early childcare needs of a community. It was developed as a "process to follow", with templates provided for use throughout the planning process. Information regarding the models of childcare, funding associated with the different models, operating requirements, management structures suited to each model, strengths and weaknesses of each model and potential funding sources are also included.

The toolkit is available to download from the Child Australia and WOCS websites.

Quality Assurance – what should you do now?

PSC has received many calls on the Helpline from services asking what they should do with their accreditation at the moment.

PSC has been advised of the following:

If your service is due to be accredited between now and 1 January 2011, prepare as usual. You will be accredited under the current QA system.

If your service is currently accredited and due for accreditation after 1 January 2011, you will not be required to submit a Self Study report to the NCAC. You will next be rated against the National Quality Standard (NQS) under the National Quality Framework (NQF) at some stage from 2012 onwards.

From 1 April 2011, Not Accredited services will no longer be required to submit a Self Study report to NCAC. These services will also next submit under the NQF at some stage from 2012 onwards. It is envisaged that it could take up to three years for all services to be assessed under NQF.

PSCs nationally will be delivering NQF sessions across Australia to assist services and educators to understand and reflect on what the new system means. Keep your eye on the PSCWA and PSCNT websites for more information about relevant professional development sessions planned for early next year.

'My Time, Our Place' Framework for School Age Care

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, together with State and Territory departments, presented information forums throughout Australia in November to consult on the *My Time: Our Place Framework for School Age Care*.

These forums were supported by the National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHSA). The purpose of the *My Time: Our Place Framework for School Age Care* consultation sessions was to provide the sector with an opportunity to offer comments and feedback on the draft Framework for School Age Care. It was also an opportunity to ask the sector targeted questions which will ensure DEEWR has appropriate feedback to use when re-drafting the document.

If you would like to provide feedback on this document, please visit www.deewr.gov.au.



Child Australia is proud to announce the commencement of a two-year HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters) East Geraldton program.

From January 2011, families living in Rangeway, Utakarra and Karloo with pre-school aged children (around 4 years old) will be invited to join the parenting and early childhood enrichment program which empowers parents and carers to be their child's first teacher.

Children join HIPPY in the year before they start formal schooling (usually around four years old). The program

builds the confidence and skills of parents and carers to create a positive learning environment to prepare their child for school, including understanding more about child development and the way children learn.

HIPPY East Geraldton is funded by DEEWR through the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters and will be coordinated by Child Australia's Central Inclusion Support Agency with Rangeway Primary School, which has provided principal support. More information from Belinda Pool on 9270 6620 or belindap@childaustralia.org.au.



NCAC Quality Trends Report

Every six months the NCAC collate a report all of their findings during a 6 month period to form a "State Based Quality Trends Report". This includes Family Day Care, Outside School Hours Care and Long Day Care and provides an overview of findings based on Service Types and Quality Areas. For Service or State-specific findings refer to www.ncac.gov.au.

The following Principles statistically were concerns for a high percentage of WA based Early Childhood Settings who were not accredited during the period of 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2010:

- 5.3 Staff ensure that potentially dangerous products, plants and objects are inaccessible to children.
- 6.2 Staff implement effective and current food safety and hygiene practices.
- 6.5 Staff support each child's needs for rest, sleep and comfort.

Let's look at Principle 5.3:

Children love to explore their environments using all of their senses. This means that they will possibly touch, smell, feel and taste anything they come into contact with. As educators, we have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of all children. It is vital that potentially harmful contact with dangerous products is not possible.

According to NCAC, the definition of a dangerous product is "any chemical, substance or material that can cause potential harm, injury or illness to persons or damage to the service's environment". Principle 5.3 is all about ensuring potentially dangerous products are inaccessible to children.

Hints to ensure that services meet the Indicators of Principle 5.3 include:

- Ensure that if you use any type of sprays that children are not located within a close proximity. Sprays from fine mists and the chemicals they contain can be inhaled and cause damage to the lungs.
- All cleaning products should be correctly labelled with the name of chemical and contents. Ask your distributor for labels for bottles or create them yourselves. Make sure these labels are checked regularly to ensure that they are still readable.
- Many staff accidentally leave chemicals within the reach of children. Staff need to monitor each other closely and remind each other of the procedure for storage of potentially dangerous products.
- Nappy bins need to be securely covered and emptied regularly so the contents are not accessible to children.
- The service needs to have knowledge of all the plants within their gardens and ensure that they are not poisonous. Kidsafe has

information regarding poisonous plants and if you are not sure of the names of the plants within your gardens, take some clippings to your nearest nursery to see if they are able to identify the plants.

- MSD data sheets are required for every chemical within the service. This includes sunscreens, items the Food Coordinator may purchase as well as your everyday chemicals such as soap, washing powder, bleach etc. Ensure that if you start to use a new chemical that you obtain the new MSD data sheet. Many of them are available online or directly from the manufacturer.
- The service should be using as few chemicals as possible whilst still maintaining hygienic practices.
- Audits of all chemicals need to be done regularly to ensure that they are not out of date and that they are stored appropriately.
- Educators need to ensure that they follow the service's policy for the "Storage of potentially dangerous products".

It is essential to keep the children within our services safe. In order to do this, services need to have comprehensive procedures and ensure that all staff, including relief and students are aware of and follow these procedures. Kidsafe has some fantastic publications and factsheets for further information please refer to www.kidsafe.org.au.

Merry Christmas from the PSCWA team



Customised Professional Development

PSCWA would like to clarify some confusion that has been identified in relation to delivering customised Professional Development to early and middle childhood services.

PSCWA delivers customised PD to all early childhood services, however there has recently been a change in the way customised PD is approved. The procedure is now as follows:

Recommended Process – One-off Customised PD Request

- Step 1: A customised request is received.
- Step 2: A PSCWA Support Officer reviews the PD calendar to see if the requested PD topic is coming up on the PD calendar.
- Step 3: The customised request is either processed or the service is referred to the PD calendar.

Recommended Process – Ongoing Customised PD Request

Once a service has identified their educators' PD needs, PSCWA suggests that the service organise a planning meeting with a PSC Support Officer to create a 6-month tailored PD plan. This longer term approach to planning will ensure educators' PD needs are appropriately met.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact PSCWA Coordinator, Leanne Lee, on the PSC WA Helpline 1800 783 768.

The PSCWA team would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and hope you all have a wonderful, well deserved holiday period.

It has been a busy and productive year! The positive changes that we are encountering as a profession allow us to be innovative and think outside the square. Many more changes are still to come in the New Year – exciting times!

PSCWA has been busy supporting educators with the rollout of the EYLF for early childhood. Kathy and I have travelled extensively throughout WA, delivering 40 EYLF Information Sessions to early childhood educators and primary school teachers. Within 3 months we had 732 registered ECE attend these PD sessions, and since then, PSCWA has organised many more targeted sessions delivered by our many wonderful facilitators on Environments, Curriculum, Communication, Cultural Competence and more... and this all fits within the context of the EYLF.

We have also developed many supporting resources that are available on the PSCWA website that provide an opportunity for educators to start their own journey to reflective practice and ongoing learning.

This year we developed a successful partnership with Department for Communities, the Education Department and YMCA to deliver a series of 6 EYLF Seminars. These sessions were another opportunity for educators to begin the process of reflection and ask themselves "How we are going to start implementing the EYLF?".

Providing these reflective sessions and resources to educators has allowed us to start our journeys, and use the knowledge of the people around us to strengthen our understandings. There is no quick fix or answer on how to implement the EYLF and educators and services that are investing the time with their staff to take the journey together are the ones that will succeed. These dedicated people have unpacked what the EYLF means to their community, cultures, families and children within their services, and the implementation will be true to them.

PSCWA has also celebrated a massive success rate with our Self Study support (offered free to all services six months out from self study). 95% of the services that have accessed our face-to-face support have achieved an accredited status this year. PSCWA work with the strengths within services and advise educators on current trends and locating useful information.

PSCWA is busy planning for the new year with the roll out of NQF sessions throughout WA, resources to continue to support educators in the transition to the NQF, the 2011 Western Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Conference *Windows of Opportunity*, on June 18 and 19, and delivering the Professional Development Calendar.

We look forward to seeing you all next year for the exciting changes that are upon us.

Leanne Lee
PSCWA Coordinator



On the Road with Caroline Fewster



In November, PSCWA had the absolute pleasure of hosting early childhood academic, trainer, author and presenter, Caroline Fewster for her rural and remote 'travelling roadshow'.

Caroline works with children's services throughout Australia in all sectors as an early childhood education consultant and lectures at Bond University in the Bachelor of Children's Services.

Caroline presented the following professional development workshops:

- *Designing And Exploring Possibilities, Creating Early Childhood Environments That Inspire Children's Learning* in Busselton;
- *Infant and Toddler's Environment's Can Look and Feel Amazing* in South Hedland, Esperance in Albany; and
- *Designing Routines in Children's Services* in Kalgoorlie, Mandurah and Margaret River.

These workshops are designed to promote Early Years Learning Framework recommendations and focus on early childhood environments that are rich in play-based learning opportunities. They also teach educators to create possibilities to use materials and resources that promote and inspire children's learning, and provide tips about implementing meaningful routines.

When Caroline travels, she takes with her an array of resources and materials; hence the term 'travelling roadshow'. She believes it is important for participants to 'see' and 'feel' the things she suggests we use to support children's learning.

As a result, when she is travelling, as

well as organising herself, she has to also organise suitcases of equipment – no mean feat! This is just one example of how passionate Caroline is about supporting educators to implement quality programs and environments in children's services. The warm fuzzy feeling you get when engaging with the materials and resources she provides demonstrates the impact they will have with children.

We received excellent feedback from the sessions including:

Following the *Designing Routines in Children's Services* workshop, Claire, a Group Leader at Kalgoorlie Early Learning Centre said:

"Caroline and the workshop she presented were wonderful and brilliant. It was very interactive and I have never had so much fun learning. I have been implementing the strategies Caroline discussed, which are working and are easier to implement than I thought, for example involving children in decision making."

Hayley, Acting Team Leader at Rose Nowers Early Learning Centre, South Hedland, said of the *Infant and Toddler's Environments Can Look and Feel Amazing* workshop:

"Caroline's workshop was very informative and full of ideas. I have already put some into practice."

Mary, Group Leader at Cubby Houses Little Treasures in Esperance added:

"I work with the 2-3 age group and my room is adjacent to the sleep room. To encourage children who are not sleeping to engage in quiet table top play activities, I

have implemented the concept of the 'quiet zone', where a mouse prop is placed on the tables to indicate to the children 'to be quiet as a mouse'. It is working really well."

Bev – Educator; YMCA Family Day Care Scheme in Busselton reflected after the *Designing And Exploring Possibilities, Creating Early Childhood Environments That Inspire Children's Learning* workshop that:

"Caroline presented in a relaxed manner and provided a variety of ideas and examples to support how to implement different resources in practice. Many of the ideas and examples can be adapted into my setting."

Bright Stars FDC Conference

Caroline also attended the Bright Stars Family Day Care Scheme Conference in Geraldton on the weekend of 6 and 7 November. The conference, themed *New Beginnings*, focussed on supporting educators, especially helping new carers to the scheme to understand changes to the sector, such as the EYLF. Karen, the Scheme Manager, reports that educators left feeling inspired and motivated. According to Karen, all of them were talking about Caroline's workshops after the event. Karen added that the educators found Caroline's workshops informative with hands-on, practical ideas to assist in implementing the EYLF.

PSCWA has arranged for Caroline to return in 2011 and we strongly encourage you to attend one of her workshops if you get a chance. Check the Professional Development Calendar January to June 2011 for dates.



Participants at the Bright Stars Family Day Care Scheme Conference in Geraldton enjoyed a touch of sunshine during a break from the program.



2010 WA Childcare



Over 150 people attended the Awards Ceremony on 22 October, celebrating another successful year in the industry. Congratulations to all nominees and winners.

The awards recognise the dedication, professionalism and innovation of those working in the early childhood education and care sector and we are pleased to publish the nominees and winner's names and share stories about each winner with you.



Child Australia CEO Dawson Ruhl congratulates the Award winners from left to right: Sandrine Pasfield (Goomalling Gumnuts), Rhonda Kemmers (City of Stirling), Irene Giglia (Marmion Ave Child Care Centre), Janette House (Gnowangerup Family Support Association) and Deb Reuben (OrganiKids).

Childcare Association of WA Innovative Service Award

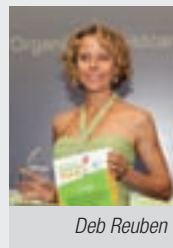
The Innovative Service Award acknowledges the achievement of excellence across all facets of a childcare service.

Nominees: Broome Outside School Hours Care, Broome
Rainbow Childcare Centre, Albany

Winner: OrganiKids Child Care, Bassendean

About the winner:

When OrganiKids opened in Bassendean in 2007, its staff had a vision to eradicate runny noses. With menus that were designed to eliminate food allergies and support children's immune systems, it became the first organic childcare centre in Perth.



Deb Reuben

OrganiKids is committed to providing a childcare service that supports the emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of children. Staff, including owner and naturopath Debi Reuben, began by eliminating common allergens, such as wheat and dairy products, from their menus. Once they had seen an improvement in the children's health and behaviour, they created further menus, including menus to accommodate any children at the centre with allergies. This ensured that children with allergies did not feel excluded and all children were able to eat the same meals.

Philosophies of organic, biodynamic permaculture and low-allergenic eating are promoted at OrganiKids as a healthy, sustainable way of living. Where possible, organic produce, including produce grown on site, is used in the whole food cooking created at the centre.

The children play an active role in growing fresh produce, participating in gardening and harvesting and learning about worm farming, composting, seed sprouting and dehydrating.



OrganiKids

Communicare Individual Leadership Award

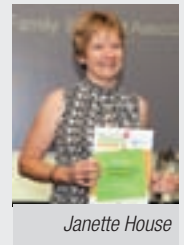
The Individual Leadership Award recognises an individual that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to their role and the children's services sector in WA. Qualities of excellence are measured against their qualifications, the ability to inspire others, the ability to effectively network, the capacity to nurture others and encourage success and a commitment to Professional Development.

Nominees: Nerida Campbell, Bright Start Child Care Centre, Katanning
Christine Vittorio, City of Rockingham Child Care Services

Winner: Janette House, Gnowangerup Family Support Centre

About the winner:

Jan inspires and encourages those around her to excel simply by the quality of her own practices. Jan played a key role in planning and implementing the Smart Start program in the Great Southern Region. The early intervention plan is designed to get literature into homes of families with children aged 0-6.



Janette House

Jan was also instrumental in initiating the Gnowangerup Noongar Playgroup. She worked with the local Noongar community to develop a playgroup which aimed to encourage young Noongar children and their families to feel less reluctant about participating in early childhood activities. Two years on, the playgroup is flourishing.

Jan has an incredible capacity to combine her role as a mother, farmer, childcare educator and Centre Manager with an active community role. She encourages staff to complete additional studies to improve their knowledge and the quality of care they provide by implementing a "study day" once week, allowing staff to complete their course requirements and access resources and support.



Janette House meets the Governor General.

Family Day Care WA Peer Nominated Early Childhood Educator Award

Professionals in the ECEC sector nominate peers that they believe have demonstrated outstanding commitment to their role and who have made a major contribution to the children's services sector in WA.

Nominees: Barbara Johnston, Broome Day Care
Treehouse Child Care Centre,
Donnybrook

Winner: Rhonda Kemmers, City of Stirling, OSHC

About the winner:

Rhonda has worked with the City of Stirling for 30 years and is currently its Children's Services Coordinator. Rhonda coordinates nine Outside School Hours Care Services, four Vacation Care Programs and one On the Bus Program.



Rhonda Kemmers

Rhonda played a key role in the implementation of the On the Bus Vacation Care Program 25 years ago. The program is still running and is now a licensed and accredited program. The On the Bus program was created for children aged 11 to 15 years and provides educational and challenging activities to promote responsibility and life skills. Rhonda also ran the 'Free Events in the Park' program for six years. During this time, Rhonda organised and coordinated six programs per year liaising with many community groups who supported the program.



Rhonda Kemmers, City of Stirling, OSHC.

Irene Giglia, Marmion Ave Child Care Centre.



Child Australia Nutrition Excellence Award

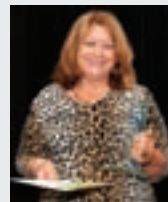
The Nutrition Excellence Award acknowledges the complexity of ensuring that children receive at least 50 per cent of their daily nutritional requirements while still appealing to their sensitive and fussy palates. All this within planning and preparing meals within rigorous quality standards and procedures.

Nominees: Sharon Hender, Leederville Early Childhood Centre
Rebecca Knox, The Salvation Army Balga Childcare Centre

Winner: Irene Giglia, Marmion Ave Child Care Centre

About the winner:

Irene is the Food Coordinator at Marmion Avenue Child Care Centre and holds both FoodSafe and Eat-Right Start Right certificates and is currently studying for her Cookery and Hospitality certificate. She has worked at the service for 15 years and is still always seeking opportunities to inspire and educate children, families and educators about healthy eating.



Irene Giglia

Irene's style is based on home cooking with an Italian influence and she provides for each child's recommended nutritional requirements as outlined by the Western Australian Health Department guidelines. Irene incorporates food ideas from the families through the parent suggestion book and encourages parents to stay for a meal with their children.

She liaises with the parents of a newly enrolled child with food allergies or cultural requirements to discuss how she can cater for them. Linda enjoys chatting with the children while preparing their meals and allows them to cook with her when appropriate.

As Marmion Avenue Child Care Centre has families from many cultures, it recently incorporated an educational program promoting awareness of different countries and cultures. As a part of this initiative, Irene requested recipes from families to include in a "15 weeks Around the World, Culture and Food Fest".

Yorganup Professional Development Award

The Professional Development Award recognises an individual who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to planning and participating in PD and disseminating learning to others.

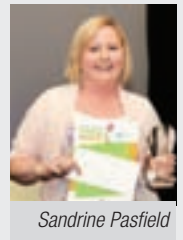
Nominee: Angela De wahl, Yaandina Child Care Centre, Yaandina
Buggles Child Care Centres

Winner: Goomalling Gumnuts, Goomalling

About the winner:

Goomalling Gumnuts is an inspiration to services striving to meet accreditation standards. This service has undergone a wonderful journey from opening as an Occasional Care service in 2004 followed by a Long Day Care service in 2007/2008. This was achieved by a number of committed volunteers who saw the need for childcare in their area. The service went through accreditation for the first time in September 2009, receiving a not accredited decision. It chose to take the decision as a positive and the team worked to change this outcome, becoming accredited in August 2010*. Staff at Goomalling Gumnuts demonstrate extraordinary commitment to attend Professional Development, at times travelling up to 180km after working a full day at the service. Its educators are always eager to participate in PD sessions and make the most of networking opportunities that arise during these occasions. Educators have completed their Advance Diploma, Diploma or Certificate 3 in Children's Services or are striving towards it.

**Read more about Goomalling Gumnuts' journey to accreditation on pg 15.*



Sandrine Pasfield



Staff from Goomalling Gumnuts.

Nature Deficit Disorder in Early Childhood

“Nature-deficit disorder is not an official diagnosis but a way of viewing the problem, and describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses. The disorder can be detected in individuals, families, and communities.” – Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*

Nature Deficit Disorder is a term that refers to a child being unconnected with nature. While Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* is not the first person to address concern over the minimal amount of time that youths spend outdoors, he is the first person to assign a term that describes the problem.

Most children and youth today have little direct experience in the outdoors as a part of their daily lives. While there are always exceptions, for the most part, children today are rarely engaged in unstructured and imaginative play of their choosing in rich and diverse nature-based settings. A growing body of research suggests that this disconnection, this nature-deficit disorder, may be associated with an epidemic of childhood obesity, childhood diabetes, behaviour disorders, depression and a diminished sense of place and community.

Heightened health problems, higher stress, higher aggression, reduced cognitive and creative capacities, lower school achievement, blighted sense of efficacy, and diminished productivity are among the possible associated negative impacts. All children need leisurely, un-scripted, genuinely playful, and exploratory hours in their own backyards, neighbourhoods, and in varied natural environments for their optimal development (*Children and Nature – A report on the movement to reconnect children to the natural world*, 2009).

One of the most basic ways to increase children’s healthy, peaceful, positive development is to provide them with the opportunity for a direct connection with the natural environment in the outdoors. Alone, parents cannot heal the broken bond between children and nature. But each guardian, parent, or other family member can lead the way at home, and within the institutions to which they belong.

Educators, city planners, youth nature-program leaders, environmentalists – all of these people will determine the direction of the third frontier, and guide it either toward the end of natural experience, or toward its rebirth in new forms. Understandably, people may resist the idea of adding any to-dos to their long list of chores. So here is another way of viewing the challenge: nature as antidote. Stress reduction, greater physical health, a deeper sense of spirit, more creativity, a sense of play, even a safer life – these are the rewards that await you when you invite more nature into children’s lives. (an extract from *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv, 2009).

The Child Australia Resource Centre has many wonderful resources relating to getting back into nature.

***Last Child in the Woods – Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv**

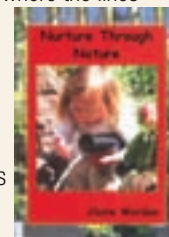
Camping in the garden, riding bikes through the woods, climbing trees, collecting bugs and butterflies, picking wildflowers, running through piles of autumn leaves, cooking over a campfire and telling ghost stories under the stars... Somewhere, the pleasures of a free-range childhood have been lost. And with the indoor habits of today’s children come other problems – attention deficit disorder, isolation and childhood depression.



This book shows how our children have become increasingly alienated and distanced from nature, why this matters and how we can make a difference. *Last Child in the Woods*, which has inspired the influential international movement Leave No Child Aside, has not only drawn attention to the issue and provoked debate, it also offers practical advice on how to help children to enjoy the natural world (starting in our parks and gardens, homes and schools). This book is a clarion call, brilliantly written, compelling and irresistibly persuasive – a book that will change minds and lives.

***Nurture through, Nature* by Claire Warden**

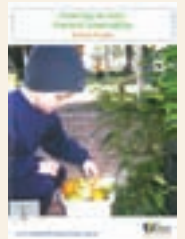
Imagine a world where the lines are harsh and unyielding, the textures are consistent and variation is unheard of. Does it inspire you? Now, imagine a place where the carpet changes every day and the ceiling is a myriad of different colours. There is light, shadow and movement. Feelings and movement completely surround you – sometimes breezy,



sometimes cold, other times warm. Unexpected wonders fly by – sometimes full of colour and sometimes full of noise and movement. If we really want children to thrive, we need to let their connection to nature nurture them. Claire Warden is an educational consultant based in Perthshire, Scotland. Her approach to learning and the methods that she promotes are innovative and refreshing. The blend of sensorial, kinaesthetic and collaborative experiences place children very firmly at the centre of the learning process.

***Greening Services: practical sustainability*, by Early Childhood Australia**

The children we are educating and caring for will be the policymakers and leaders of the future and what we teach them now about the environment will directly influence the long-term health of the planet. Author Rachael Kinsella is an early childhood teacher with many years experience assisting staff and directors in making education for sustainable development central to their services, planning and practice. This book provides practical advice for educators and carers as well as activities that involve families and inspire children.



There is mounting evidence that connecting children to the natural world through early education programs enhances and enriches learning, and is essential for healthy development – we owe it to our children, our planet and ourselves to work towards a sustainable future.

For further information on membership or resources available from the Child Australia Resource Centre, phone Biserka on 9270 6628 or email library@childaustralia.org.au.

Small Friends Playschool

My early childhood journey began in the UK 36 years ago. I trained as an N.N.E.B and worked in Nursery Schools. During this time I found I had a real passion for education and working with children and so later went on to university to become an early childhood teacher. Then I met my husband and put my studies on hold to work overseas. I continued to work with children, teaching in international schools and opening my own kindergarten in Saudi Arabia. From Saudi I worked in Mauritius and Holland before finally settling in Australia.

I decided not to enter the school system, due to the restrictive nature of the classroom setting. Instead, I felt my creativity would be put to full use by setting up Small Friends Playschool. At Small Friends we offer part-time and full-time sessions and offer a free-flow programme where the children can explore the outside as easily as the inside.

There are learning centres mirroring the adult world including building sites, woodwork, real paint brushes, water for plants, tool kits and a room set up as a mini house. Staple learning centres such as play dough and collage are available to the children every day and they are encouraged to come up with the ideas

and change the learning areas. The children and staff work as a team, with plenty of quiet areas for the children to go to when they need solitary play.

Children need to feel, smell, dig, observe changes and describe what they see but how can they do this in a sterile plastic environment? Plants and animals bring everything to life and the children are encouraged to use nature in their play and work. They learn to nurture and be aware of their own strength whilst caring for the animals and each other.

George the rabbit (at Singleton Small Friends Playschool) joins the children while they play and helps to settle the new children as they often bring food in for him. The children can dig for worms and collect insects from the gardens. Adding rocks and pebbles to the learning centres gives a real dimension to play.

Don't be afraid of Health and Safety regulations. Meeting the requirements and providing the children with a safe environment doesn't mean the centre needs to be bland and sterile. Use your imagination. Get down to the children's level to see what they see and let the children take risks and problem solve whilst setting boundaries. A consistent routine makes them feel secure and have a sense of belonging but remember to be flexible to each child's needs and the feeling of the day.

My ideas have come from life experiences – listening, observing and recognising how I want to be treated and mirroring it for a child. Parenting is the hardest job but with our help and understanding we can support children in many creative ways. When parents see our outside learning areas they often make changes to their own gardens.

Throw away the palm trees and concrete kerbing and let your imagination run wild. Remember, a warm creative environment isn't only fantastic for the children but is a more pleasing work environment for adults too!

Jane Field Owner/Director Small Friends Playschool



EYLF Professional Learning Program

Early childhood professionals now have the opportunity to participate in a new EYLF Professional Learning Program (PLP) that will help to better understand and implement the EYLF.

With funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Early Childhood Australia has designed the EYLF Professional Learning Program (EYLF PLP).

The EYLF PLP has five different parts:

- EYLF Professional Learning Workshops in urban and regional locations across Australia – scheduled for 2011.
- An EYLF online forum where people can talk about the EYLF and early childhood education and care.

- Regular e-newsletters about practitioners' experiences as they engage with the EYLF.
- Online EYLF PLP Master Class video learning presentations.
- A series of online vignettes (short 30-second films), which capture effective practice in relation to the EYLF and provide stimulus for staff discussion.

For more information about, or to access any of these EYLF PLP resources, visit <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/eylfp/>

Have you visited the PSCWA website lately?

Our EYLF factsheets page contains lots of useful links for educators, including recently added Theorist factsheets from Anthony Semann of Semann and Slattery on the role of theory in Early Years Education.

According to Anthony, when reference is made to “quality” in early childhood education, it is highly likely that researchers and authors are referring to a range of process and structural elements.

Process elements refer to elements such as interactions, relationships and curriculum. Structural elements refer to elements such as ratios, group sizes and qualifications of educators. Combined both process and structural elements are important in ensuring that quality becomes a reality within early childhood programs.

In addition to structural and process elements, the thinking behind how we do what we do is important to delivering quality. The release of the Early Years Learning Framework has provided an unique opportunity for early childhood educators to reflect on the decisions they make when it comes to providing educational programs to young children. The theories that inform our practices are important for a number of reasons. Firstly, theories guide educators in their decision-making processes. Secondly, theories provide a framework which guides our practices, identifying those practices and ideas that are important to us as educators.

Within early childhood education there are a range of theories that have informed both policy and practice. Some of these theories have existed for long periods of time and others have only recently entered early childhood education.

It is highly likely that early childhood educators draw from a range of theories to inform their practices. Although it may be tempting to claim inspiration from solely one theory, it is very likely that the different components on practice may be inspired by differing theories.

These factsheets provide readers with an introduction to a range of theories as well as a link between theory and practice:

- Positive Psychology WA
- Socio-Cultural Theory WA
- Post Structural Theory WA
- Developmental and Maturational Theory WA

To access additional PSCWA EYLF factsheets, visit www.pscwa.org.au.



Outside School Hours Care Professional Development and Networking Day

As a follow on from the OSHC Conference held in August, PSCWA organised a professional development and networking day on Saturday 20 November for educators working in middle childhood settings. This was planned in response to positive feedback from the conference and requests for ongoing learning.

Participants had the opportunity to attend workshops facilitated by Heather Barnes and a collaborative networking session facilitated by Robyn Monro Miller (National Outside School Hours Association), Lyn Whiteside and Penny Sandover (Department for Communities).

Older Boys, What Makes Them Tick and *Is there a Place for DS and Computers*, delivered by Heather Barnes, were very well received with participants gaining insight into understanding and implementing positive strategies around these topics and how they relate to the new School Aged Care Framework.

The networking session allowed participants to explore and “unpack” the School Aged Care Framework, ‘My Time, Our Place’ and to discuss how it “fits” in relation to the National Quality Framework. Educators indicated that the session gave them a better understanding of the document and a good starting point to reflect on their practices and philosophy at a service level.

It was a fantastic day with plenty of sharing and interaction from a great group of people who are very engaged in the changes occurring in their sector.

We strongly encourage and recommend that OSHC educators and those working in middle childhood start to engage now in seeking information and knowledge about the National Quality Framework and ‘My Time, Our Place’. There is also still time for educators to comment on the framework via the DEEWR consultations, and more information about this can be found on the website below. Twelve months will fly by and before you know it, it will be January 2012 and the changes will need to be seen in practice.

But don't despair! There is plenty of help to assist services in this transition and all are happy to help.

For further information please visit Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: www.deewr.gov.au; Professional Support Coordinator WA: www.pscwa.org.au; Department For Communities: www.communities.wa.gov.au; National Out of School Hours Association: www.netoosh.org.au

2010 NT Outside School Hours Care Conference

An inspiring welcome to country and a keynote on passionate leadership by Robyn Monro Miller from NCAC were some of the highlights of the Northern Territory Outside of School Hours Care Conference in late October.

BISS contributed two items to the one-day forum. Both presentations were collaborative projects between BISS and other service providers. The item presented by RRACSSU and BISS introduced inclusive games played in rural and remote communities across Australia and by their international counterparts. Ideas for games were collected by Rick Fleming during his work for RRACSSU with OSHC services in Central Australia.

Conversations between BISS and RRACSSU Central on the relevance of cultural competency in Aboriginal communities led to the development of a booklet called *The Games We Play* which was launched at the conference. The booklet demonstrates not only that games played in Aboriginal communities are not so different from those in other parts of the world, but that they are inclusive, low cost, adaptable and great fun for children and adults alike. The booklet is now available online at the GoodRun Solutions website and in hard copy from the various PSC supported Resource Centres in WA and the NT.

During the second BISS presentation, Amanda from Manunda OSHC shared her service's journey from tokenism to inherently inclusive practice. This ongoing journey began with a consultancy visit by BISS earlier in the year and includes truly inspiring changes in the contribution of children to curriculum content, a positive experience during accreditation and participating in a research project to explore the subject of diversity further.

BISS workshops and presentations aim to provide a venue to explore and challenge deep and meaningful issues such as fear, racism, isolation

and adult emotional baggage. During this conference, Gudrun included a component in her presentation that endeavoured to raise awareness of racism, its impact on the OSHC environment and the perceived taboo of skin colour. This item drew a variety of responses from participants with some expressing distress at the topic being part of a conference presentation. BISS would like to invite those that feel the need to explore this topic a bit further in the context of educators facilitating intentional learning opportunities and responding to incidents of bias and racism to contact us.

Gudrun Benjamin
Manager BISS NT



The booklet of games played in Aboriginal communities.



Gudrun Benjamin from BISS and Amanda for Manunda OSHC celebrate the stages of a journey.

New Office for Child Australia Northern Territory

Effective from 10 January 2011, Child Australia staff will be moving from the current office in Winnellie to Unit 1, 13 Bishop Street, Woolner. Please note that PD sessions advertised in the January to June 2011 Professional Development Calendar with Early Childhood Australia as the venue will be held at the new Child Australia office in Woolner.

We look forward to seeing you at our new premises soon.

Terms and Conditions when booking PD

Educators booking Professional Development in 2011 are reminded to be mindful of the terms and conditions of the registration process.

To register for a professional development workshop or event, you must complete a Professional Development Registration Form. This can be found at the back of the Professional Development Calendar or can be downloaded from our website, www.pscnt.org.au.

All Professional Development Registration Forms and payment must be received 14 days prior to the scheduled date of the workshop or seminar. Bookings may be accepted within 14 days of the workshop, however full payment must be made at the time of booking.

If you are unable to attend a calendar workshop, you can send someone else from your centre in your place.

If you wish to cancel a professional development session completely, you have to advise us in writing (email, fax or mail), 7 working days in advance and we will refund your payment or reschedule the session, less \$10 to cover the administrative costs.

If you cancel less than 7 working days before the scheduled PD, or forget to attend, we cannot give you a refund.

Jayne Hokanson
Manager, Northern Territory

2010 NT Childcare

The 2010 Northern Territory Awards were an outstanding success. Over 100 people attended the Awards Ceremony at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Darwin. Lynne Walker MLA, Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Training, was guest speaker on the night. The awards recognise the dedication, professionalism and innovation of those working in the early childhood education and care sector. Congratulations to all nominees and winners.



2010 winners: Bernadette Morris, Principal of Holy Spirit Community of Learners and Director of the Early Learning Centre, Joanne Moller (also from Holy Spirit Community of Learners), Kylie Berry from Little Joey's Early Learning Centre, Katherine, and Julie Becker from Parap Family Centre, Darwin.



Child Australia Innovative Service Award

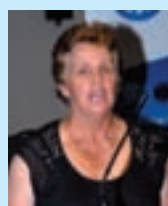
The Innovative Service Award acknowledges the achievement of excellence across all facets of a childcare service.

Nominees: Manunda Terrace Primary School, Darwin
Sacred Heart Out of School Hours Care, Darwin

Winner: Holy Spirit Community Learners, Darwin

About the winner:

Holy Spirit Community of Learners has a strong commitment to ongoing professional development. The educators believe that this allows them to experience and explore new ideas and concepts, and provides opportunities to develop skills to share with others, in turn benefiting the whole service. Professional development for educators is planned collaboratively during staff appraisals to ensure that the needs of the service and educators are met.



Joanne Moller

The service is also currently committed to two projects – Strong Foundations and Kidsmatter, which both provide professional development to all staff. The service's commitment to ongoing professional learning is highlighted by the high level of educator qualifications. Educators also engage in training such as Mandatory Reporting, Fire Awareness and First Aid training.

The Strong Foundations project run by Catholic Education and Charles Darwin University focuses on Literacy and Numeracy in the early years. Holy Spirit's participation indicates its commitment to excellence in quality outcomes for children and the implementation of innovative programs involving community, stakeholders and families.

Educators working at Holy Spirit Community of Learners are made to feel happy and valued. Each educator has areas of responsibility and is encouraged to contribute to the program. The staff at Holy Spirit Community of Learners are inspirational. They demonstrate resourcefulness and energy in everything they do and are always thinking of ways to enrich the lives of all involved with the service.

Child Australia Individual Leadership Award

The Individual Leadership Award recognises an individual that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to their role and the children's services sector in WA. Qualities of excellence are measured against their qualifications, the ability to inspire others, the ability to effectively network, the capacity to nurture others and encourage success and a commitment to Professional Development.

Nominees: Jennifer Hanlon, Mission Australia Early Learning Service, Darwin
Rachel Jones, Mission Australia Early Learning Service, Darwin
Brenna Schroeder, Nakara Out of School Hours Care, Darwin
Emma Pope, Katherine East Child Care Centre Inc, Katherine
Narieta Tinaikulabu, Braitling Neighbourhood Centre, Alice Springs

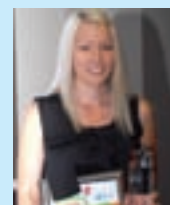
Winner: Kylie Berry, Little Joey's Early Learning Centre, Katherine

About the winner:

Kylie inspires fellow educators to achieve professional goals by supporting and encouraging learning on a number of levels. As well as encouraging her staff to engage in professional development, which she regularly organises for her team, she has also supported a number of educators to complete the Certificate III and Diploma. She and her staff are dedicated to several projects within the Katherine region, including Kidsmatter.

Her commitment to the Strong Foundations project has ensured that it is one of the most successful projects run by the 12 Catholic Education services.

Kylie demonstrates care and compassion for both children, families, and fellow colleagues in her interactions with children in need of emotional support, and with educators requiring educational support. She is committed to her own professional learning and is enrolled in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching to commence in 2011.



Kylie Berry

Department of Education & Training Peer Nominated Early Childhood Educator Award

Professionals in the ECEC sector nominate peers that they believe have demonstrated outstanding commitment to their role and who have made a major contribution to the children's services sector in the Northern Territory.

Nominees: Trisnawaty Bunker, Moulden North ABC Learning Centre, Darwin
Perla Polhill, Katherine Regional Family Childcare, Katherine
Kym Ruhan, Katherine Regional Family Childcare, Katherine
Cushula Wilson, Braitling Neighbourhood Centre, Darwin

Winner: Joanne Moller, Holy Spirit Community of Learners, Darwin

About the winner:

Joanne inspires others with her generous spirit, working collaboratively with parents and educators to create inspiring environments for children and adults alike.

Joanne creates a vision and then works alongside peers to see it come to fruition.

She leads by example, demonstrating quality care practices while encouraging others to develop their own knowledge and skills.

Joanne consistently maintains open communication by always making herself available to parents, children and staff and gives everyone she interacts with a sense that they are valued and respected.

Joanne is known for her wonderful sense of humour and infectious smile. She has the ability to colour the lives of the children and adults around her and through hard work and determination, has developed a strong team who share her vision and passion.

Joanne has worked at Holy Spirit Community of Learners since 2008 and demonstrates commitment by not only fulfilling her role, but goes above and beyond the call of duty, committing time to other service initiatives, such as fundraising and out of hours gardening.



Joanne Moller accepts the award from Lynne Walker MLA.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Professional Development Award

The Professional Development Award recognises an individual who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to planning and participating in PD and disseminating learning to others.

Nominees: Peta Rufo, Parap Family Centre, Darwin
Laura Fletcher, Early Care Leanyer, Darwin
Angie Caple Lutheran Child Care Centre, Darwin
Kellie Grigg, Manunda Terrace Primary School OSHC, Darwin

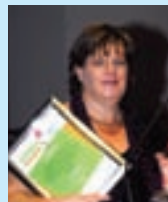
Winner: Julie Becker, Parap Family Centre, Darwin

About the winner:

Julie has worked at Parap Family Centre for 12 months. She holds a Diploma of Teaching and is an absolute asset to the centre. Julie has worked in the Early Childhood field for many years and is passionate about embracing new skills and gaining knowledge to help her provide the highest quality of care for the children at her centre.

Many of the professional development workshops she has attended over the past year have inspired her to do great things. A standout workshop for Julie was Louise Dorrat's Programming for 0-2 year olds. Julie returned to work with lots of new resources and songs and wonderful programming ideas.

Julie has also transformed her room into an aesthetically pleasing, caring, fun-filled learning environment that allows children and families to feel a sense of community and belonging. She has a wonderful ability to share her passion with her team and inspire them to do great things as well.



Julie Becker



Cooling off at Holy Spirit Community of Learners.

Kylie Berry shares a book at Little Joey's Early Learning Centre.



Drawing fun at Parap Family Centre.

Update from BISS

Celebrate the Diversity of End of Year Traditions in Australia

The end of the year is a time that brings with it all sorts of reasons to celebrate religious, cultural and festive traditions. This is an opportunity for educators to explore the many cultural and traditional festivities that make the busy time at the end of the year interesting and educational for both children and educators.

The Early Year Learning Framework (EYLF) encourages educators to make the most of naturally occurring opportunities that arise to reflect an inclusive cultural curriculum. This is the time to create your own traditions and rituals!

Educators can access a wealth of interesting and useful information about the various celebrations that occur around December and January by talking to their team, families and children. This can then lead to the creation of traditions and celebrations that reflect your centre's community.

Every individual, family and community celebrates different events in different ways. Celebrations and traditions evolve – they are never stagnant. The speed of change depends on individuals, the communities they belong to and the environment they live in. This was reiterated to me when I recently returned to my home village in Germany and discovered that several festivities I had grown up with no longer existed. Others had changed and some new festivals and events had been created.

Within one generation, the village community had evolved and so had the way its members celebrate and mark special events. When I shared some memories of what and how we celebrated while I was growing up in the village, I felt like an “elder” because I had retained a “pure” memory of village life 25 years ago. Other villagers had continued their journey as a community. As a result of our interchange, I was able to bemoan the loss of some customs and celebrate the emergence of new ones. Taking the time for this to occur allowed me to re-bond with my home community.

Communities have celebrations around December and January for a wide variety of reasons such including:

Change of season: In Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Yolngu Aboriginal people will observe the last season of their six-season cycle. *Gudjewg*, the wet season, begins in late December.

Change of calendar: Several calendars announce the New Year around December and January such as the Gregorian/Western and Chinese calendars.

Shortest/longest day of the year: Solstice celebrations are ancient and still celebrated in December, particularly in the Northern hemisphere where this time of the year has some of the longest and darkest days.

Religious: Christmas/the birth of Jesus Christ, Ta Chiu is a Taoist festival of peace and renewal, the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah (Chanukah).

To bond/celebrate as a community: One of these is the celebration of Australia Day in January.

Because we can: Modern Australian celebrations include sporting events such as cricket games and yacht races.

The same event may be celebrated on different days in different ways. Christmas celebrations are a good example of this. Scandinavian countries and territories celebrate Christmas “Jul” on 24 December, Protestant and Roman churches hold Christmas on 25 December, the Greek Orthodox Christmas is on 6 and 7 January.

To find out more and explore the richness of celebrations that reflect our diverse community, visit the Christmas Season Celebrations in Australia section at culture.gov.au, explore the resources available at your local library (including those that are part of the PSC network of libraries) and/or contact the team at BISS on 1800 826 413 and we will provide you with further information and links.

Wishing you a fun and educational season of celebrations.

Gudrun and the team at BISS



Breaking down

Widening the network of secure relationships for children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds

Earlier in the year, BISS was invited by the PSC to undertake a project to reduce the barriers children from Aboriginal and Torres Straits backgrounds face when accessing mainstream childcare.

Expected project outcomes include:

- The identification of what indigenous families with young children are looking for in an early care and education setting.
- An assessment of current practice in care and education settings and how it supports collaboration between educators, families and communities.
- The facilitation of community networks to enhance the collaboration between educators, families and communities.
- The identification and sharing of resources including recommendations for, and development of, new resources.

The project started in August and we have now progressed from early research and planning to working with groups of early care professionals in the Armadale (WA) area. Other communities included in this project are from Broome (WA), Darwin Central (NT) and Palmerston/Gray (NT). We roll out the project in Palmerston/Gray in 2011. GoodRun Solutions has teamed up with Yarmintali Consultancy to ensure that this project and its outcomes really reflect the input from indigenous families, communities and professionals on all levels.



n the barriers

Goomalling Gumnuts

Our Journey to Accreditation

Goomalling Gumnuts Inc Childcare Centre is a rural childcare centre in WA licensed for 19 children. It opened in December 2004, offering occasional care to the community of Goomalling and the surrounding districts.

The centre originally opened for only two days a week, gradually peaking to four days in October 2008. It run by a dedicated volunteer committee and is supported by professional staff with a great love for their jobs.

In December 2007, we registered with NCAC to participate in QIAS. This was a daunting task! Our first self study report was due in June 2009. Sandrine, our Coordinator, got to work as she was the only person at our centre who had experienced a validation visit before. We all jumped in the deep end and learnt to swim pretty quickly with the help of many NCAC Child Care Advisors, staff from Child Australia and other people we network with.

Before the validation visit, we ensured that we attended as many professional development sessions as possible and then we waited for our validation visit period to be allocated.

September 8 was our validation day. All the staff were nervous but the validator put us at ease. She sat and watched us and in the afternoon she explained the validation report to Sandrine. To our disappointment, a few indicators were marked as unsatisfactory. We challenged the validator's comments about the unsatisfactory markers. We had written things along the lines of: "management will ensure... or staff will ensure...." but were not strong enough in portraying how we "deliver" these things. In November 2009, we were notified that we were not accredited. The staff were devastated but we chose to see it as a positive and vowed to learn from our mistakes.

In December 2009, we applied to the Accreditation Decision Review Committee to review our not accredited status. We sent in a mountain of evidence and had most of the indicators overturned from unsatisfactory to

satisfactory or higher. Unfortunately, we were still not accredited but were happy that the indicators we felt strongly about, and had the evidence for, were overturned. Admittedly, some silly and unfortunate mistakes occurred on the day which could not be overturned, but we learnt for next time! Because we hadn't passed the first visit, we were offered some assistance from PSCWA. They spent just over a day working on areas and providing PD to assist us to change and improve. By taking just a little piece of knowledge about improving our centre and making it work for us, we were ready to complete our next self study report in May 2010.

Our validation day was set for August 19 and we were well prepared. When it was time to review the validation report there were nerves aplenty! Much to our delight, there were no unsatisfactory markers, but mostly good and high indicators.

NCAC recently informed us that we are now accredited! The moderators had agreed with the validator and given us high quality in all quality areas. This was a huge thrill and we are so proud of what we have achieved as a centre in such a short time, amidst committee and staffing changes, personal and family issues.

We turned our situation around by sheer determination to ensure that the children had the best high quality environment to learn and grow in. We have continued to build ourselves professionally and attend professional development sessions when they are available. We are also all furthering our personal studies to ensure we have higher qualifications.

Our journey has been an arduous task but well worth it. We have learnt so many things, not only about the childcare industry, but about ourselves.

Our advice for centres that have not passed accreditation is to keep your chins held high and advocate for what you know is fabulous about your centre. With a bit of hard work, dedication and determination you can achieve awesome things for your educators, children and families!

By Goomalling Gumnuts staff

We have adapted our methods of implementation several times as the project has progressed to ensure we gather the correct information. Understanding what families are looking for when they (with their children) enter into a partnership with educators is about exploring factors that impact on feeling secure, emotionally supported and acknowledging child rearing practices, traditions and language. Avoiding making this another academic exercise has also meant critically looking at our target audience and how we collect and share information.

For example, two workshops were initially planned in the Armadale area – one to collect information from families and community members and one for professionals and support services. We cancelled the workshop for professionals as those working in the community and in early care and education settings had different schedules, making it difficult to get both groups together. However, following the cancellation of that workshop, a number of professionals "gate crashed" the family/community workshop which compromised the idea of creating a "safe" space for families and community members to share their ideas, hopes and aspirations for their children. As a result, we are now focussing on individualised strategies to move the project forward.

For more information about this project, contact Gudrun Benjamin on (08) 9390 1922 or 0415 886 413 or email gudrun@goodrunsolutions.com.au.

Gudrun Benjamin
Goodrun Solutions

What is mental health?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined mental health as: a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community¹.

According to the Australian Children's Mental Health Coalition, 9 per cent of Australian children have long-term mental health problems resulting from disorders such as depression, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactive disorder and autism.

The Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People 2010 inquiry into the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people asked for submissions made by organisations and individuals. The inquiry background paper stated:

Mental health problems can result in behavioural issues, a negative sense of worth and a lack of coping skills. This affects a child or young person's quality of life and emotional wellbeing as well as their capacity to engage in school, community, sports and cultural activities – potentially having consequences into their adult life².

Child Australia voiced the importance of children's and young person's mental health through our submission to the inquiry.

Mental health in the child care environment and working with families – what can be done?

Evidence indicates that helping children build resilience leads to better mental health. If children with mental health difficulties are identified early and their condition managed, they will be less likely to have poor mental health outcomes as adults.

These are some suggestions of what can be done to help improve children's mental health:

- Practice primary care giving. Children's developing brains need relationships with significant carers early in life so they can then go on to develop attachments later in life. Primary care giving enables us to build intimate relationships with

a smaller group of children in our care.

- Support children to develop social and emotional skills.
- Enhance your knowledge of child development and the ability to distinguish between normal childhood development and possible mental health difficulties.
- Develop protocols to assist all staff to identify children who may be experiencing early signs of mental health difficulties and assist them and their families.
- Provide information to parents about normal childhood development and possible mental health difficulties, how to recognise these and where to seek help when necessary. Remember each child which has a mental health illness has unique strengths and needs which may change over time as the child enters different developmental stages.
- Identify agencies that are able to support children with mental health difficulties.
- Enhance your skills and knowledge in mental health first aid to provide help, recovery and comfort to a person developing a mental health problem.

To improve our knowledge, a number of staff from Children's Services and the Inclusion Support Agencies attended the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course in November, supported by PSC WA and facilitated by Youth Focus. One staff member reflected after the two day course: "Now I know what to do".

For more information on this course and other fact and tipsheets for Early Childhood Educators, visit these websites:

www.copmi.net.au; www.kidsmatter.edu.au; www.mhfa.com.au and www.beyondblue.org.au

Maria Turoy **Program Coordinator NMISA**

¹ Ref: World Health Organization. Mental Health: Strengthening Mental Health Promotion. (Fact Sheet No 220) Geneva: WHO; 2007

² www.ccp.wa.gov.au

Child Australia Locations

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Website: www.childaustralia.org.au

PSCNT

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Website: www.pscnt.org.au
Support Line: 1800 138 662

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Central Inclusion Support Agency

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Phone: (08) 9021 3679
Fax: (08) 9091 6211

75 Mitchell St, Geraldton WA 6530
PO Box 2713, Geraldton WA 6530
Phone: (08) 9923 2840
Fax: (08) 9923 0277

Great Southern Inclusion Support Agency

The Link, Shop 10,
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PO Box 517, Albany WA 6331
Phone: (08) 9842 3163

Kimberley Inclusion Support Agency

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South Hedland Office

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South West Inclusion Support Agency

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