

### Message from the Board

Dear Gowrie Families,

Welcome to the first edition of the Children’s Services Newsletter for 2016. The Board have held their first meeting for what will be a busy year for all involved in LGT. Of course the completion of the Integrated Centre for Children and Families in South Hobart will be important milestone. The opening will reflect the next step in the rich history of the organisation, but also allow LGT to address the current waitlist issues for education and care in the Hobart area. We also need to prepare for the new financial assistance package that the government will be introducing (should it be passed by the Senate) and ensure that the organisation is able to deliver the same quality of service on which LGT prides itself. While the Board and the Senior Management Team are working hard to achieve these outcomes, the day to day service delivery at the services, schools and in the community continues. I was fortunate enough to visit the Acton Centre recently and am always amazed and heartened by the dedication of the educators that we are fortunate enough to have working with LGT.

While I was there some of the activities I witnessed included singing of nursery rhymes in the 3 plus room, painting on the tables outside in the 2-3 year room, drawing and musical instrument play in the 1-2 year room, with the baby room educators engaging with the children while afternoon tea was being taken. These are all great experiences and are designed to engage with and educate the children just as parents would be doing in their own home.

As a society we are sometimes constrained in the way we think about education. The examples I have provided above and the way in which parents engage with children off all ages is in fact education. However the common thought in our community is that ‘education’ starts when a child arrives for the first day of Kindergarten or Prep which can place a distorted emphasis on those first years of formal schooling. The Board have discussed this issue many times over the last 24 months with one common theme; education in the early years of a child’s life needs to be recognised by the government, society as a whole and also parents.

The Board have therefore committed to furthering the emphasis on education within the early years of a child’s life. This is not just limited to when a child is with LGT, but to ensure as a community we realise that education starts long before schooling. We would like to see government recognise this and not see child care as simply a care facility while parents are working. With the correct approach from government the early years can be recognised as the building block for a life long journey through education.

Over the coming years we will be looking to engage with all levels of government and the wider community to reinforce this message and ensure that as a society we do not place age limits on when a child starts their education.

I thank you for your time and look forward to seeing families and staff through ongoing visits throughout the LGT sites in 2016.

**Chris McGuire**  
Chair – Board of Directors



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## Message from the Chief Executive Officer

As has been the case now for years, the education and care sector continues to face ongoing change. The Australian Government Jobs for Families Child Care Package (2015) Bill now rests with Senate endorsement. A Senate Hearing was conducted in Canberra earlier this month following a significant number of submissions from peak advocacy groups and individuals.

With talks of an early election or even double dissolution the outcome of the proposed Bill remains uncertain. From a sector view, the increase in investment in early childhood education and care is welcomed along with the single payment subsidy paid directly to providers replacing the current Child Care Benefit (paid to providers) and Child Care Rebate (paid directly to families).

Despite the aim of a less complex system, the proposed three tiered activity test does not appear to achieve this. Furthermore, the activity test has limitations on the amount of subsidised education and care, with some within the sector believing the proposed hours to be insufficient to provide children with access to early learning and development opportunities.

At a local level, the release of the outcomes of the Review of the Education Act has received mixed reviews. The Minister for Education has announced a raft of proposed changes to legislation including the reduction of school starting age. From 2020 children aged 4½ will attend the compulsory first year of school – Prep. This is a reduction of the current starting age by 6 months. The flow on effect is that the Kindergarten starting age reduces from 4 years to 3 ½ years. Whilst it is acknowledged that Kindergarten is a non compulsory year 98% of Tasmanian children attend.

The peak early childhood advocacy group, Early Childhood Australia (Tasmanian Branch) does not support the reduction in the Kindergarten starting age. This view is based on international and national evidence based research that indicates that starting earlier does not automatically equate to improved outcomes for children. In fact, in many countries that have reduced the starting age reported that this has been detrimental to children's learning, health and well being – increased mental health issues, lack of resilience and confidence. As a consequence countries such as USA and UK have reverted to a later starting age.

Our experience over 75 years in the provision of early childhood education and care, indicates that very young children benefit from being in an environment with children of similar age, without too many transitions, where their routines for sleep/rest are supported, educators and teachers have specialist qualifications in early childhood, and importantly a play based curriculum as opposed to a structured program.

The added concern is that many families require care outside of school hours to enable them to balance their work/study and family responsibilities. The pressure will be on after school care and vacation care programs to have this much younger cohort included in large groups with a vast age range (up to 12 years of age). The adult to child ratio in these recreational programs is 1:15 and there are no qualification requirements under the National Quality Framework. This will be an unintended outcome of lowering the school starting age.

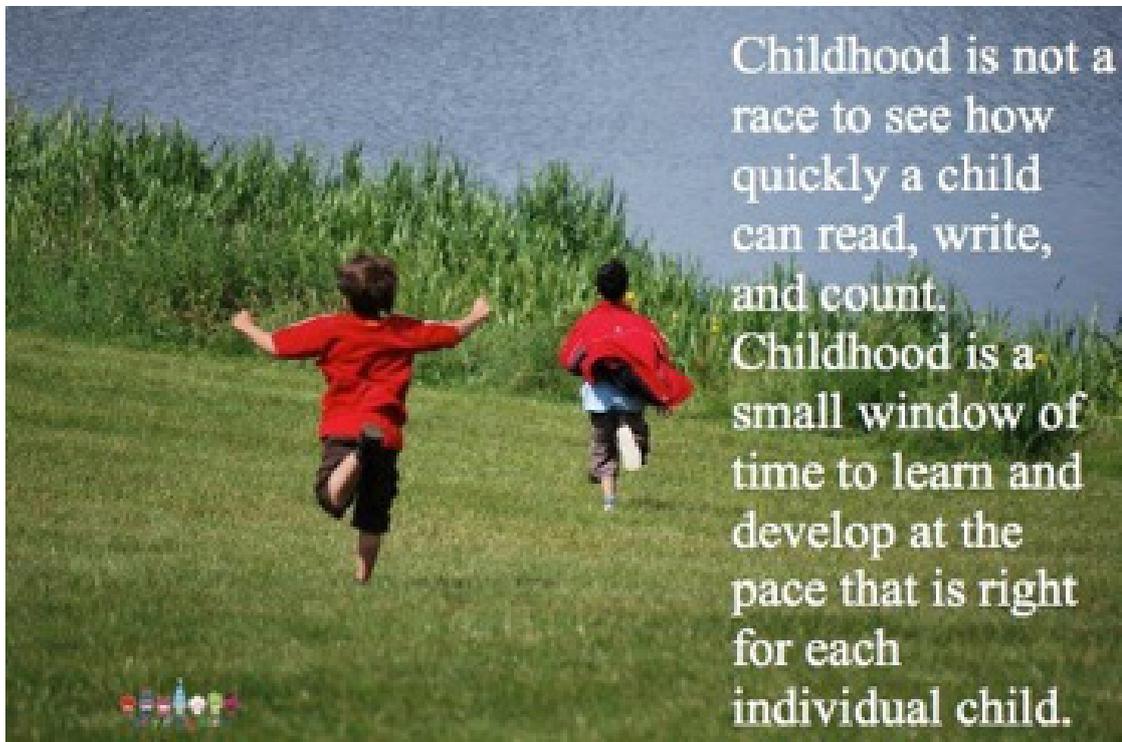
While review and reform is supported, it must always be in the best interests of the child. Evidence based research cannot be ignored as ultimately we want children to be healthy, happy, lifelong learners and positive contributors to our society.

There are many positive proposals in the draft Bill, but as a leading early childhood education and care provider, Lady Gowrie Tasmania cannot support the reduction in school starting age, particularly the Kindergarten age to 3 ½ years.

Families, teachers, educators community members are encouraged to read the draft Bill and provide feedback. Details can be found on the Education Act Review website with submissions closing 5pm 13 May 2016. Alternatively, feedback can be provided at [comments@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:comments@education.tas.gov.au)

Kind regards,

**Ros Cornish**  
Chief Executive Officer



Childhood is not a race to see how quickly a child can read, write, and count. Childhood is a small window of time to learn and develop at the pace that is right for each individual child.

## Update on the New Lady Gowrie Tasmania Integrated Centre for Children and Families

The development is nearing completion with handover from the contractor due on 15th April. Enrolments for the education and care centre are now being completed with this service scheduled to begin operation on 2nd May.

The facility is certainly considered state of the art with spaces for children designed to support optimum opportunity for learning and development and respectful of children's needs of being in a family grouping but also having separate spaces to engage in small groups. The three outdoor environments have been developed taking into consideration the need for an indoor/outdoor program. One large 'outdoor' play space has a covered roof area to enable children to experience the sand, mud, water and play equipment in all weather conditions. Meals and snacks for children will be provided from the commercial kitchen. Recruitment of staff is under way with experienced and qualified

professionals sought who share the values of the organisation and indeed to passion and commitment to work with young children in what evidence based research indicate is the most crucial period of development – those years prior to school.

The adult spaces have been designed with a team approach with open work stations along with informal break out areas. The open communal kitchen and sitting area is inviting and relaxing with a view to encourage the local community to access services and for families and friends to visit. Two training/meeting rooms accommodate larger groups plus two consulting rooms provide private areas for confidential and individual meetings.

All at Gowrie are excited about the development and look forward to welcoming staff, families and the broader community to the new Davey Street facility.



## Facts About Lady Gowrie Tasmania You May Not Know

First service established at Battery Point in 1939 by the Federal Government as a best practice and demonstration model for practising teachers.

- Is proudly a community based non profit organisation
- In 2016 operates:
  - 14 long day care services (soon to be 15 with new Integrated Centre in South Hobart)
  - 19 outside school hours care programs (soon to be 20 with a new program at Warrane Primary School)
  - 2 preschool programs
  - 1 family day care scheme
  - 4 government funded support programs (Inclusion support, Professional Support, Indigenous Support and Family Support Service)
- Employs over 350 staff
- Governed by a voluntary Board of Directors
- Volunteers at visiting sessions between children and inmates at Risdon Prison
- Delivers accredited qualifications training – Certificate 111, Diploma, Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management through Gowrie Training Centre
- Advocates on behalf of children and families and those who work with them
- Is committed to the position statement of "Children First"

## No Jab No Pay

The Commonwealth Government will end the conscientious objector exemption on children's vaccination for access to taxpayer funded Child Care Benefits, the Child Care Rebate and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement from 1 January 2016.

Parents who vaccinate their children should have confidence that they can take their children to child care without the fear that their children will be at risk of contracting a serious or potentially life-threatening illness because of the conscientious objections of others.

From 1 January 2016, 'conscientious objection' will be removed as an exemption category for child care payments (Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate) and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement.

Immunisation requirements for the payment of FTB Part A end-of-year supplement will also be extended to include children of all ages. Currently, vaccination status is only checked at ages 1, 2 and 5 years.

Existing exemptions on medical or religious grounds will continue, however a religious objection will only be available where the person is affiliated with a religious group where the governing body has a formally registered objection approved by the Government.

This means that vaccine objectors will not be able to access these government payments.

The new policy will tighten up the rules and reinforce the importance of immunisation and protecting public health, especially for children.

The vast majority of FTB families meet the current immunisation requirement at relevant age points (around 97 per cent).

However more than 39,000 children aged under seven are not vaccinated because their parents are vaccine objectors. This is an increase of more than 24,000 children over 10 years.

The Government is extremely concerned at the risk this poses to other young children and the broader community.

The choice made by families not to immunise their children is not supported by public policy or medical research nor should such action be supported by taxpayers in the form of child care payments.

For more information on child care assistance and family payments, visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

## Pedestrian Safety

Children need assistance dealing with the traffic environment until at least the age of 10 as they are not equipped physically or developmentally to make the crucial decisions to keep them safe. Like learning to drive a car, children need practise and experience to walk in the traffic environment.

Alongside the benefits of learning road safety, it is great chance to spend time with your family and good exercise!!

Children are vulnerable road users. Anywhere where there is a potential for moving vehicles is a potentially dangerous traffic situation for children. This includes residential areas, car-parks, at traffic lights, along footpaths, pedestrian and other crossings, driveways, quiet streets, and busy streets.

Although children may think they can handle crossing a road by themselves, remember that children:

- are easily distracted and focus on only one aspect of what is happening
- are smaller and harder for drivers to see
- are less predictable than other pedestrians
- cannot accurately judge the speed and distance of moving vehicles
- cannot accurately predict the direction sounds are coming from
- are unable to cope with sudden changes in traffic conditions
- do not understand abstract ideas - such as road safety
- are unable to identify safe places to cross the road
- tend to act inconsistently in and around traffic

Many children below the age of 10 years do not have the capability or judgment to handle many pedestrian situations. Children need to be accompanied and closely supervised by a parent or adult carer to keep them safer.

Parents and caregivers have a key role in educating their children about road safety. Children learn about road safety largely by experience. Parents and adult carers have opportunities in day-to-day routines to discuss road safety with children on the way to the newsagent, local shop or going to school. Whenever crossing roads, it is an idea to talk about when and why it is safe to cross the road with your children so they can gain a good understanding of road safety issues.

Extract kidsafe NSW – pedestrian safety

[www.kidsafensw.org](http://www.kidsafensw.org)



## Children's Brainy Breakfast Ideas

A healthy, nutritious breakfast that provides your children with adequate energy is a great way to start the day. The best breakfasts should include fruit or vegetables, a dairy product (or alternative) and a wholegrain bread, cereal or grain product. Some may think that preparing and eating a healthy breakfast is time consuming, but this is not necessarily the case.

Why not try some of the following suggestions – you can even mix and match according to your children's tastes and preferences:

- Raisin bread or fruit loaf, either plain or topped with ricotta cheese, and chopped strawberries or banana
- Wholegrain cereal with milk and chopped fruit such as banana or berries, or pureed fruit
- Hot porridge with milk, chopped banana or berries
- Yoghurt topped with a muesli style cereal and chopped or pureed fruit
- Baked beans with wholegrain toast and a small glass of diluted fruit juice
- Scrambled or poached eggs with toast and a glass of milk
- Wholegrain muffins with a slice of cheese and tomato and a piece of fruit
- Toasted bagels with avocado and a glass of milk
- Wholegrain toast with a thin spread of jam or honey plus sliced banana and a small tub of yoghurt
- Fruit smoothies – simply blend milk, yoghurt, soft fruit and a sprinkle of wheatgerm or psyllium
- For an on-the-go breakfast, take a piece of fruit, a cheese stick and a few low fat crackers

What a way to start the day!



## Harmony Day

Harmony Day was celebrated at many Lady Gowrie Services in March, services celebrated in many different way including morning teas, children's activities and family BBQ's. Harmony Day is about celebrating Australia's cultural diversity. It's about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone.



Children and families from LGT University North celebrating Harmony Day

# Keeping sibling peace at home

How do you respond when kids fight and argue? Do you make a plea for peace, order the combatants to their bedrooms or find out who caused the infraction?

It's almost impossible to stay out of kids' fights as they're usually noisy, and invariably at least one child will come to you to intervene.

Sibling fighting is so common these days that it seems to be the first commandment of childhood: Thou shalt fight and argue with your brother and sister until your parents can't stand it any longer.

Parenting ideas research suggests sibling fighting is a concern in three out of every 4 families with more than one child.

It helps to have a realistic attitude to children's disputes. Kids are learners when it comes to resolving conflict so physical means, name-calling and bickering are commonly their preferred tools.

Conflict itself is not harmful, but the way disagreements are resolved is the big issue for parents.

There are two broad approaches you can take when kids fight – get involved or stay out of it. You need to be lead by their age and maturity, and ability to sort things out themselves, as well as the nature of the problem itself. Some issues such as seating rights on the family couch are not worth fighting over so wise parents will stay right out of this issue.

If you decide to remain neutral then bear it, beat it or boot them out when they fight is your best policy. That means put up with the fight if you can, go into another room or send kids outside if they are fighting.

This approach works when sibling fighting is for the purpose of involving parents, which it often is. It gets you out of the picture.

Parents are as predictable as washing machine cycles always responding to kids' cries for help so kids soon work out they have a great way to keep mum or dad busy with them. If this is the case, then break the pattern by refusing to become involved. "You guys can work this out for yourself" is the idea.

There are times when you just can't ignore a fight and your assistance is needed to resolve the dispute. If this is the case, let them know you'll help them work out a solution to their problem but avoid taking sides, which they invariably want.

Use kids' conflict as a teachable moment where you can coach them to resolve their relationship issues in more socially acceptable ways, than hitting, yelling and sulking. Here's some ideas when they fight:

1. Focus on emotions first. Get kids to calm down before you talk with them. This may mean they sit on their own or go outside and let off steam physically. Validate their emotions. 'You seem pretty worked up about this.' 'Yep, I can see you're mad at your sister.'
2. Focus on the problem, not the fight. Ignore the 'she hit me first' type arguments kids often put forward. Drill down

onto the issue at hand. If it's a dispute over TV-watching then focus on better ways of sharing the TV rather than focusing on the fight.

3. Get them to see two sides the story. The hardest part in any dispute, whether in a family or an international conflict, is to get those involved to see the other side of the story. Listen to your kids and try to get them to see the situation from the other's viewpoint. "What do you think your brother wants?" It's also useful to get kids to think about their own responses and look for better ways to respond next time. "What were you thinking when you took your sister's toy?" "What would you do next time?"
4. Restore the relationship. Focus on relationships rather than on problems. With young children, in particular, the issue they were fighting about is generally long-forgotten by the time a parent intervenes. An apology, a hug or a joint treat are some ways to help restore relationships with kids.

The measure of a strong family is not so much whether siblings fight, but will they pull together when the chips are down. This is the case in most families. Kids love each other hard, and unfortunately for a parent's peace of mind, they'll fight just as hard too.

Effective parents know that kids generally need to be given opportunities to resolve their own relationships issues themselves. But they also recognise that some sibling disputes offer valuable opportunities to teach kids the skills to resolve conflict without resorting to power or other less savoury means.

Extract from Michael Grose – Parenting Blog

[www.parentingideas.com.au](http://www.parentingideas.com.au)



## Lady Gowrie Educator Forum 2016



Lady Gowrie Tasmania conducted an Educator Forum at the Oatlands District School on 5 March with over 100 educators attending from northern and southern services. After a brief welcome, acknowledgment to country and outline for the day, the presentations commenced.

The first keynote speaker Kellie Wilkie; Olympic physiotherapist, mother and wife, and director of her company Bodysystem. Kellie imparted her experiences of collating all of her roles and building on them in order to find the things she was passionate about. As she developed her business and passions of working with the Australian rowing team, Kellie made some realisations about the importance of women supporting women in their chosen ventures in order for her and others in her networks to not only survive but thrive.

Educators then broke away into smaller workshops. There was a little bit of something for everyone with the following being offered:

- Planning for a quality OSHC program
- Concepts of primary care giving in early childhood settings
- Interactive floor books-Lady Gowrie University North's journey
- Mind mapping
- Documentation
- Environments – creating child friendly learning spaces.

There were opportunities throughout the day for these workshops to be attended by educators which were conducted by the different speakers. After each workshop educators could be overheard having professional conversations, reflecting critically on not only the session but also on their own practices, and unpacking the parts of the workshops that they would bring back to their individual services.

Keynote speaker Ros Lamprill, a well known former TasTAFE teacher, presented a session on supporting children's positive behaviour. She outlined what we do, the understanding of children, the common sense we are expected to have, the reasons "why", and the "how" we can support children and families. Ros outlined the three major influences on children's behaviour and what strategies we as educators might need to consider and implement to support children's positive behaviour. She indicated that children need boundaries and rules plus need to understand consequences to unacceptable behaviours.

Lunchtime gave educators the opportunity to view Lady Gowrie Oatlands Service. This was a highlight for many as the service showcased their ability to utilise the talents of educators and community to provide welcoming play spaces for children. There were many ideas that were photographed by educators from around the state and also provided an opportunity to share their ideas about environments provided for children. The final keynote speakers Margaret Harrison (Manager Children's Services MacDonnell Regional Council in Alice Springs) and our very own LGT Executive Assistant Alison Breheny, delivered a thought provoking reflection of what it is to be inclusive of our nations first people. Although the narratives were based in Northern Australia the talk certainly provided a number of opportunities for professional reflection and personal beliefs to be challenged and developed.

With so many Lady Gowrie Tasmania educators in attendance enthusiasm was high in regards to another educator forum in the future.

**Theresa Blizzard**  
**Manager, Lady Gowrie Campbell Street Education and Care Service**

## Northern Services Contact Numbers / Email

### Long Day Care Services

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#### Norwood

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### Outside School Hours Care Programs

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#### Launceston Preparatory School ASC

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#### Norwood ASC

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### Occasional Care Program

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## Southern Services Contact Numbers / Email

### Long Day Care Centers

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#### Swansea

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### Outside School Hours Care Programs

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#### Bowen Road ASC

#### Glenorchy ASC

#### Goulburn Street ASC

#### Lansdowne Crescent BSC, ASC & VAC

#### Mt Nelson ASC

#### Richmond ASC

#### Rosetta ASC

#### South Hobart ASC

#### Taroona ASC & VAC

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### Family Day Care

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