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GOWRIE AUSTRALIA PUBLICATION • SPRING 2009 • ISSUE 36



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- Family Day Care's Journey
- Family Day Care Perspectives
- FDC National Conference
- Management of a Potential Critical Incident
- A Middle Years Framework for Out of School Hours Care



Reflections is a quarterly publication by Gowrie Australia for staff and families in Children's Services.

PUBLISHER

TTR Print Management Pty Ltd on behalf of Gowrie Australia

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reflections



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ISSN 144-5387. Issue 36, Spring 2009

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Welcome to the Spring edition of *Reflections*. While the National Early Childhood Reform Agenda spans all service types (ie. long day care, kindergarten and preschool; family day care; school aged care), there is a perception that there has been an over focus on centre-based services and children prior to school entry. In this edition, we respond to these concerns, and look at some reforms and responses in family day care and outside school hours care.

Providing important context for this discussion, President of Family Day Care Australia, Kym Groth, reflects on the history of family day care in Australia and looks forward, with optimism and enthusiasm, to proposed reforms and professional developments within this sector.

We follow Kym's overview with a montage of 'grass roots' perspectives on family day care, including commentary from both carers and parents. Regardless of your current connections in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), I encourage you to take time to read these articles. The carer perspectives reflect a high level of professionalism, practice wisdom and commitment to working with children within the context of family. While clearly situated in family day care, the parent's offer important and helpful insight into their expectations of quality in ECEC. These articles reveal parents who are knowledgeable about key quality determinants in ECEC, and recognise and value the educational contribution made by their carer to their child's early learning and transition to school. It is particularly worth reflecting on the value that these families place on their relationship with their carer (often enduring), communication with their carer, and, as one parent notes, "the relaxed family-focused environment".

To wrap up, Jenny Mountney shares some highlights from this year's National Family Day Care Conference in beautiful Hobart. Be sure to make time to read the 'Romanian story' – as told at the conference.

Shifting focus, as we move to a new 'protect' phase to manage the spread of H1N1 Influenza in Australia, Annette Barwick from Gowrie Tasmania reflects on Swine Flu 'mania' in child care, and shares some valuable and very practical learnings from her recent dealing of a suspected case of swine flu in a centre. Annette highlights the critical importance of informed and documented policy and procedures, effective collaboration and good communication in successfully managing critical incidents in ECEC.

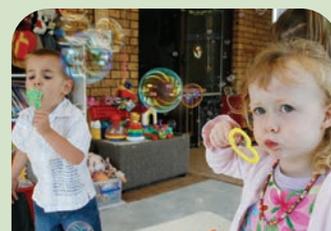
While the original intent of the National Early Years Learning Framework was to span all ECEC services, there has been some recent dialogue about the need for and benefits of a different approach in school aged care. Kylie Brannelly and Robyn Monro Miller put forward a thought provoking argument for a Middle Years Framework for OSHC, and welcome reader's views on the pros and cons of this approach.

Once again, a jam packed edition! With the National Reform Agenda in full swing and progressing quickly, it's easy to find ourselves looking only at the elements that relate to our own area of work. While understandable, I believe that we are doing ourselves a collective disservice if we maintain such a narrow and self-interested focus. While recognising and celebrating some distinct differences between service types, there are in fact greater similarities. The original overarching intent of the reform agenda was to ensure quality and equity across different services and real choice for children and families. This can only be realised if we maintain interest in the broader agenda and work to ensure that we move forward as a sector – with no one left behind. There is also power in unity. We should be lobbying together for a public awareness campaign to strengthen community understanding and appreciation of the significant contribution our services and sector makes to the development, education and wellbeing of Australian children and families – not to mention the Australian economy. United we (should) stand!

Dr Susan Irvine
CEO, The Gowrie (QLD) Inc

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The Long and Winding Road

Family Day Care's Journey

Author:
Kym Groth

President, Family Day Care Australia
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From a small cottage industry in the mid-70's to a formal, Australian Government approved child care service, operating nationally with over 12,000 carers through 307 schemes - family day care has come a long way!

Over those 35 years Early Childhood Education and Care has become a priority for families and government alike. As the economic landscape changed, so too has the social fabric of society, with two parent working families now the norm, rather than the exception.

Families are paying more for child care than ever before and, as a result, their expectations continue to grow. There is more emphasis on early education and brain development from birth to three years and the spotlight is firmly focused on qualifications, ratios of adults to children and group size – the three influencing factors in the 'iron triangle' of quality child care.

Early Childhood academics regularly highlight the significance of attachment, as well as the experiences and environment offered to young children, in relation to the impact this will have on the child's potential outcomes later in life. Former Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care, Maxine McKew, recently said at the Family Day Care Australia National Conference in May, *'The child care profession has a critically important role in the development of the next generation of Australians.'*

The COAG agenda is moving swiftly with a focus on improving overall quality – through qualifications, standards, the regulatory framework and how learning is delivered in the early years. It's an exciting and challenging time for the entire child care sector.

Family day care has particular challenges relevant to its model. For a long time the service has had a low profile, more recently competing with the myriad of centre-based services which have higher visibility in most local communities. In 2006 the national peak body, Family Day Care Australia, launched a national logo and brand for family day care – commonly known as 'the red star house'. Three years later, over 70% of family day care schemes across Australia are actively using the national logo in their signage, collateral and media advertising. Slowly but surely, family day care is carving itself an identity – a 'brand' if you like – that is synonymous with quality care, play-based learning, consistent professional care and small group, home-like environments.



So we have a brand and increasing visibility, but is family day care itself suffering an identity crisis? What is family day care and what is absolutely not part of this child care model?

Many within the sector see family day care as quality child care delivered from a family home by trained carers who are monitored, resourced and supported by professional staff in central coordination units. Those looking at family day care from the outside see a well regarded service whose lines are beginning to blur by the services and care environments we are currently offering. For example, is family day care still family day care if it is delivered from somewhere other than a family home? Is a well thought out space without an authentic connection to the family home still family day care, or is it simply a variation of a purpose-built child care setting? Is the essence of family day care lost if it does not occur wholly within the family home? And, more importantly, does this really matter if the children are experiencing high quality care?

Over the years the family day care model has diversified, filled gaps in service delivery and availability in regions where no other child care service has dared to go. This diversification is seen as one of the areas where lines are blurred, yet we have a government asking all child care services to consider unique solutions in this ever changing challenge to meet local community needs. Innovation is not something new to family day care, creating unique solutions might be the only way to enable the gap to close for children most at risk. Is this the time to be creative, build the vision and delivery model for a future family day care education and care program?

These are just some of the questions that have been asked at the national level – of ourselves and of experts in the broader early childhood education and care field. As family day care tackles these burning questions and seeks to consider what the future might entail one thing is apparent: perceptions are our reality and they must be acknowledged and addressed.

In early 2008 Family Day Care Australia brought together carer and staff representatives from the family day care community across Australia. These fourteen people – known internally as 'the SAM' (an acronym for State Associations National Meeting) have been working together to unite the community, explore our place within the care and education arena and work for the common good to ensure the maintenance and expansion of family day care as a viable and valuable child care choice for families and a professional career option for our child care workers.

Like other peak bodies, Family Day Care Australia has had challenges meeting the needs of all stakeholders when the delivery model of family day care varies from state to state under different legislative frameworks. For example, there are states operating with a ratio of 1:4 adults to children under the age of five years, and others with a ratio of 1:5. Some regulations allow the fifth child only if the carer is qualified; others allow a fifth child if one of the group attends an external pre-school program. A small group set against the backdrop of a family home is very different to a small group set against the backdrop of a service with 30, 60 or 90 other children in the same space – and these differences need to be acknowledged and explored to ascertain relevance in today's early childhood arena.





Qualifications are another area where external perceptions perhaps mask the facts. According to a national survey undertaken by FDCA last November, within a sample of 10,524 carers 59% either held a tertiary qualification or were currently studying. Certificate III in Children's Services was most widely cited, but 33% of that number held Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas or Degrees. Similarly, of 1,615 coordination unit staff surveyed, 79% hold tertiary qualifications or are currently studying. COAG proposes that every family day care carer should hold a minimum Certificate III in Children's Services and every coordinator who has face to face contact with carers and children hold a Diploma of Children's Services. Family Day Care Australia has taken a position of leadership to encourage all carers to achieve Certificate III by 2011.

We are keen to stress that the move towards greater professionalism does not mean the loss of the 'family' from family day care. In fact, retention of the fundamental unique values and qualities family day care has always prided itself on, such as 'family focused' and a 'home-based child care environment', are vital components to the future of family day care.

However, moving to a more professional delivery of child care where we utilise and promote our values within this unique learning environment – 'the home' – is essential. As indicated by Maxine McKew in her presentation, we are determined to professionalise and lift the status of the talented people who choose to work in family day care.

The Quality Reform Agenda has been hailed as the beginning of a new era in the early years for all Australian children today and in the future regardless of child care service. To date the family day care community has participated in three locations piloting the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Educator's Guide. The information and learnings from these pilots has fed into the development of the newly released *Belonging, Being and Becoming* EYLF. Family Day Care Australia continues to engage in all consultation, both by invitation directly with government and in community consultation. These are extremely exciting times. As the national peak for the family day care program we aim to lead our members into the future, stand tall and meet whatever challenge head on, with a view of putting children at the centre of our practice and our future.

FAMILY DAY CARE... PERSPECTIVES

A carer reflects on a very rewarding career

Cheryl Ingram - Camden, NSW

The future of family day care is exciting in many respects. Ever increasing, needs based, professional development has seen family day care move to a respected profession offering supported, small business opportunities for carers, and loving, home-based child care opportunities for families.

Along with regular first aid training, carers now have the opportunity to be a certified Childcare Worker by completing a Certificate II and/or III at TAFE, or through distance education. Carers have the opportunity to attend courses in areas such as Autism, Aspergers and Behaviour Management, or workshops in Fine Motor and Gross Motor Development.

Family day care maintains the benefits of home-based care. This unique feature sets us apart in the child care world. Children are cared for in my home, a family environment. My own two children, now both adults, have grown up with many of the children I have cared for. Our family has grown up and connected with many others through the family day care experience. Such connections and friendships are the true rewards of this profession.

I have always supported, and been supported, by fellow carers. We develop play dates and back up care networks. As a work force, carers can have input into developing and determining regulations, scheme policies and even fee structuring. Carers are effectively small business managers of a very rewarding career.

Family day care, with continued support and sponsorship, is progressing towards being one of the premier child care opportunities for our young families. The future for family day care looks bright from where I sit. I embrace the progression towards the National Quality Standards and the Early Years Learning Framework. This reflects the high value of the role of, and the ultimate need for, child care in our society. The role I play is important and this fact needs to be recognised and acknowledged by all stakeholders in our community.

After twenty-two years of experience, I maintain my enthusiasm for my career. I value all the love and support I have given families and their children over the years. Our future is hopeful and bright, just like the children we care for.

A carer enjoys connections that can last a lifetime

Tonny Jessamine, Perth family day carer

Interviewed by Amanda Hunt

"Tonny Jessamine, my daughter's family day carer, is the reason I am where I am today – her care for my child (and me) was what got me through university, the death of my father, an awful divorce and my appointment at 30 years of age as Chief Executive Officer of a not-for-profit organisation. Many times I would pick up my daughter late in the evening, exhausted after a full day's work, and be met at the door with a loaf of warm, freshly baked bread and a, just as warm, hug. She was the 'family' in family day care." Amanda Hunt

Tonny has been a family day care provider since 1981. Throughout this time she has seen the introduction of many changes that have impacted on family day care. Some of these caused a level of angst amongst carers, for example, the introduction of state regulations and the GST, Quality Assurance changes and the abolition of boundaries and fee deregulation - all put high demands on the sector.

Tonny believes that a common misconception about family day care is that it is unregulated and run by people who are unqualified. In fact, regulations governing family day care are the same as for similar services while Tonny, like many other FDC carers, has spent years in professional development gaining her Diploma in Children's Services.

In addition, Tonny has also been a Validator for Quality Assurance, a founding member of the Community Vision Scheme Policy Group, an active member of Family Based Workers of WA and the Family Day Care Association, a founding member of the City of Wanneroo FDC Carer's Group, and has taken a leading role in organising the 30th Anniversary celebrations of Family Day Care in Western Australia.

What appeals to Tonny most about family day care is the opportunity to care for children. Tonny has enjoyed being able to teach children life skills, equality and respect. She provides a secure and non-threatening environment and supports children to learn through play which extends on their interests and natural abilities. She feels that consistency of care boundaries help children know their place in the world.

According to Tonny, the most important thing about home-based early education and care is the child having a relationship with predominantly one person. "This forms a bond that can last the child's lifetime and gives them someone outside their actual family that they (the child) know they can rely on."

She enjoys actively supporting and assisting parents in the day to day care of their children and feels that there is also a very strong bond with parents of children who have spent their childhood with one carer.

Tonny has been proud to help many children to grow into wonderful adults. She believes that the caring doesn't end when they leave, but that her home is their home or even a safe haven throughout their lives. This attitude has led to many satisfying relationships over the years as she has watched the development of children as they mature.

A carer describes the unique qualities of FDC

Barbara Wilkinson - Brisbane family day carer

Having worked for eight years as a Family Day Care Co-ordinator and admiring the work of hardworking, committed care providers, I was looking for a work/life change. My own children had grown up, I was looking for a more hands-on role with children and I wanted to reconnect with my local community. I liked the idea of running my own business from home so I decided to set up a home-based child care service.

Family day care is unique in providing care in a family setting. Within my family home children have a playroom which is also used for sleep time. We have more fully shaded outdoor space than you would believe, as well as a large garden. The children have ample room to run and outdoor play is very popular.

I believe that children need open-ended resources, and time and space to play and learn. They must also be supported by a warm, professional carer so that they learn and develop to their full potential. Planning is based on the interests, needs and skills of the children, is very flexible and follows the lead of the children. On any one day I care for four children ranging from 18 months to 4½ years old. This allows for one-on-one learning and individualised planning. Open-ended resources like playdough, sand, water, paint and dress ups promote creative, pretend play and cater for different developmental levels.

At music time I typically plan finger plays and action songs for the younger children moving through to favourites for the four year olds, currently 'Freeze', 'Limbo' and 'Simon Says'. Whilst the younger children may not last the full session, they listen to the songs and watch the older children. I borrow books from the local library, selecting specific books that will catch the imagination of the children, stimulate their play, and develop concepts such as colour and number. Children take favourite story books home to share with family members. Above all it is important that activities and experiences are fun.

Home days are interspersed with outings to the scheme playgroup, the park, the wildlife centre or the pet shop and to other carers' homes. When we meet with another carer the children interact with a larger group of children, allowing the carers to extend the children's experiences.

I believe that the close relationships in family day care are unique. My four year olds have been with me three years. We are a family, we know each other well. Over the years they have learnt to share, to accommodate each other's needs and manage conflict. These children also go to kindy. They are self assured and confident and the skills that they have learnt in both environments ensure that they will be able to better manage life at school. Where they were once the younger children in the group, they are now the older children with two year olds to watch out for and nurture.

With only four children there is plenty of time to talk with parents. In the mornings we discuss matters such as food and sleep and also about what has been happening in the children's lives and what excites them at the moment. I email parents at lunch time with photos and information about their child's day, and we expand on this at pick up time. Parents seek my advice, and I also encourage parents to share knowledge with me.

Currently, working parents in my service use both kindy and family day care. These children are in care five days a week, therefore I keep the programme challenging but also relaxed. Highlights are our outings, board games, cooking and face painting. The children are now face painting each other, the next stop will be painting me! They will definitely be ready for school!!

A parent describes the quality of early learning in a family day care environment

Kristy Ramirez, Brisbane

A Brisbane based family day care scheme provided care initially for my infant son, and is now caring for my 15 month old daughter. Due to life's dynamics, including my own changing requirements, I have had the opportunity to utilise multiple family day care providers. From my experience, while each carer has brought her own personal style, the aspects of care for my children (which I consider the most fundamental and important) have been consistently provided.

These aspects include the provision of care in an environment which is loving, safe, fun, understanding and an educationally stimulating early learning experience. In my experience, the early learning aspects in a family day care environment are significant and stimulating. I believe that the consistent presence of a single carer allows the child to feel comfortable and confident from the beginning of each day and to more fully enjoy the educational experiences available.

It is important to me that my children are in an early learning environment where learning is provided at an individual level. This includes both their developmental stage (often age dependent) and personal preferences. As my current family day care provider has come to know my child on a very personal level, she is fully aware of my child's personal preferences and her developmental needs.

A further advantage of family day care is that resources can be selected by the carer in consideration of each child's preferences and needs. This combination of the carer's knowledge and the physical resources result in what I regard as a tailor made early learning environment. For example, my three year old son's current reason for being is purely Thomas the Tank Engine. So one morning he was super excited to go to family day care to play with a new toy - a fantastic wooden train. However, it was actually a 3D puzzle! My 15 month old daughter's zest for life and interactive nature is unquestionably expanded in family day care. I was so impressed when, at quite a young age, she was able to join in the actions of 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' which she had learnt from attending a music program with family day care.

I consider reading a variety of stories to be an important, fundamental, and enjoyable early learning experience. This value is also important to my family day care provider, and is complemented by visits to the local library to enjoy the story time sessions. I am unsure how she does it, but impressively, the stories in her home are consistently numerous and ever changing.

The nature of the family day care environment means that my children enjoy having stories read to them which are selected specifically for them and read to them one on one. Absolutely fantastic! However, children can also enjoy having stories read to them in a group environment. I particularly value and enjoy knowing about my children's experiences at family day care. My family day care provider communicates details of her program clearly and consistently to parents in a newsletter. This allows aspects of the program to be discussed at home, which complements the explorations at family day care.

Although I have only touched on some aspects of the early learning experiences available within family day care, I believe the advantages of early childhood development and learning within this child care context are unique and form a strong base from which children can develop.

Parents reflect back on the value of family day care for their family

Elizabeth and Robert McRuvie, Brisbane

As a first time parent there is nothing scarier than releasing your child to the world, under the care of someone else. Even with family, the anxiety still remains that something may go wrong and you're not right there to fix it. So imagine entrusting your child to a virtual stranger.

We know we have to do it, for the best development of our child, but the actual act of letting them go - can often be too much to imagine. Writing this article has given us the opportunity to reflect back on choosing family day care, our son's time in care and how this has impacted on all three of us..

Our son attended his first day of care with a Brisbane family day care program in 2008 at 18 months old, only after our carer came highly recommended by family friends.

As part of the family day care program our carer sends daily emails/updates with photos. So, what a relief on that first day, when an email came through at lunch to say "yes" he had eaten, slept, played and generally had a fabulous time, all with photos to prove it! We still arrived about 20 minutes early to pick him up, just in case there was a traffic problem in the 3 minute drive from our home to the carer.

What we found was our son engrossed in play with the other children and refusing to come home. We knew all of our fears and guilt was unwarranted when he immediately asked when he could go back. Fast forward to July 2009 and our son is flourishing in family day care.

So why did we choose family day care? The environment was the number one factor. Carers host the children in their own homes. For us, this meant our son was cared for in a relaxed, family focused environment, rather than an institution or facility. You know that the environment is always going to be safe and clean, because this is someone's home, not just a workplace. You can see this in the children's behaviour, for them this is like going to a favourite friend's place to play for the day.

The carer was a big factor in choosing family day care. Our carer genuinely cares for our son, as though he was one of her own family and knows him almost as well as we do. Her wealth of experience, training and knowledge has also been invaluable for us as new parents to tap into. There have been numerous occasions where she has been a first point of call, when we have a new issue or concern.

Our son has a planned, individual developmental program. This program changes continuously as his development changes. Our carer designs play and activities that are aimed at meeting his developmental milestones. When he meets one of the milestones, then the play or activity is quickly increased to challenge him to meet the next. If, for some reason, he slips backward (as children do, from time to time), then she readjusts back until he is ready to move forward again.

The carer also aims to match ages and developmental stages so that the children enjoy playing together. Our son's two days are split into one day with older children and one day with children his own age. It has been interesting to see his development increase exponentially when he has been around the older children and his social development improve from being around children his own age. It is this type of individual attention that confirms for us our choice of family day care.

Finally, when writing this article, the papers published the announcement of a Federal Government report into early child care. The result of that report was to aim for a carer to child ratio of 1:4 for children under 2, 1:5 for children aged 2-3 and 1:11 for children over 3. To do this the government will have to spend approximately \$2 billion dollars. Since he has started care, our son has never had more than a 1:4 ratio and it is often 1:3.

Would we recommend family day care? We would say that if you can have the same experience we have, then you would be mad not to.

EXPLORE, EXCITE, EDUCATE

The 2009 Family Day Care Australia National Conference

Author:

Jenny Mountney

Home Based Care Manager

Mersey Leven Child Care Services

The 6th Family Day Care Australia National Conference certainly explored, excited and educated over 600 participants during late May in Hobart, Tasmania. Set against the remarkable backdrop of the Derwent River, conference delegates were challenged to look at the whole child – not only their cognitive and physical development – but to look further and understand the critical importance of a child's social and emotional development.

The following statements were recurrent themes:

"We write on the hearts and souls of children everyday"

Dr Pam Schiller

"Nurturing our kids' hearts and souls as well as their minds and their bodies is educating the whole child"

Maggie Dent

Maggie Dent explored what was happening for our children, what our lifestyles and world was doing to our children. What has changed in the past generation? The pressure to buy 'stuff', more affluence, social alienation, less home time, less human interaction, more virtual worlds...' to name a few.

In his foreword to "Parenting with Spirit" (2004), Steve Biddulph stated, *"We want our children to grow up happy, healthy, strong and kind. But that isn't what the world wants. The world wants them greedy, insecure, selfish, shallow and vain – to eat junk food, and buy those clothes, watch this TV show, crave that magazine. Never knowing peace or feeling satisfaction. So, almost from the minute you first cradle your baby in your arms, you are at war."*

What has disappeared? Lullabies, rocking, gentle touch and games, being 'present' not just in the room, human conversation with human people, games in the car, quiet times without TV, DVDs and gadgets with batteries that make a noise!

Dr Schiller further explored this theme in her keynote address *What you Teach me – Birth to Five*, where she said, "From a child's perspective every significant relationship is a potential source of love and learning, comfort and stimulation. From a neuroscientist's perspective, every significant relationship has the potential to shape a young child's future."

Dr. Schiller urged us to consider our care environments to ensure that they are physically and emotionally safe for children. Threats and emotions inhibit the cognitive process, strong emotions – either negative or positive – can shut down learning. Likewise, rooms that over stimulate young minds can also inhibit cognitive functioning as children do not make thoughtful choices when given more than three options. Dr Schiller advised that we need to "be more thoughtful when choosing décor, limit the amount of environment print and to give the eyes a place to rest".

In both her presentations Dr. Schiller outlined the optimum times for the wiring of the brain for specific learning domains. This served to reinforce the critical role we have as carers, to understand the impact we have and the responsibility we hold for a child's development as a whole.

In his high energy session, Adam Spencer inspired delegates with his passion for science. Science is ordinary, everyday – children can start from a very early age. Adam said that children are never too young to learn the basics of caring for the world. Recycling, separating cardboard and the cans; composting and worm farms; conserving water and understanding the body are all ways science is part of everyday life! Again, it is the interactions with children, talking about the 'what ifs' and 'whys' that builds up the curiosity and wonder. To highlight this



Conference committee at the welcome function



L to R Anne Stonehouse and Jennifer Sumsion



Conference Co-Convenor Jenny Mountney talking to the media



Anne Stonehouse presenting on the Early Years Learning Framework

he introduced the delegates to the *Goey, Chewy, Rumble, Plop Book* (2007) where children are taken on the journey from mouth to toilet, exploring the digestive system!

Anne Stonehouse explored the connection between the Early Years Learning Framework cornerstones of *Belonging, Being and Becoming* and family day care. Professor Jennifer Sumsion further outlined the guiding principles of the draft framework. Both speakers challenged us to explore the new framework and its application to family day care.

The former Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care, Maxine

McKew, offered the government's commitment to family day care, confirming its important place in Australia's education mix. She inspired delegates with the government's vision for wanting children to start school as happy, confident learners and confirmed the effectiveness of investing in a child's early years. She stated that the government would continue to consult and give full weight to family day care views as the early childhood reforms are implemented. It was heartening to hear her say that participating in the healthy growth of a child is an honourable profession and that the government's reforms will give child care workers the respect they deserve for the work that they do.

Over 50 workshops ensured that delegates had an opportunity to gather knowledge from a wide range of choices to suit their particular areas of interest. Many of the session outlines can be found on the Family Day Care Australia website at www.fdca.com.au.

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This story was told by Dr Pam Schiller at the Family Day Care Conference. It's a very special story that touched many people at the conference and is certain to resonate with every adult who has ever held a child.

"A Romanian Story"

Romania, in the middle of the last century, was an impoverished country where families could not afford to have children because they were too poor to keep food on the table.

The Czar of Romania at that time was concerned that without a population, one day there would be no more Romania. He decided he would pay a stipend to each woman within child bearing age for each child that she had. He requested that these women have five children.

The women of Romania were thrilled because now they could have the children they always wanted. They immediately began having children.

Everything went great for a while but then one day the Czar was overthrown and a new leader took his place. The new Czar didn't want to spend the money in his treasury on the stipends so he stopped them.

Families were unable to feed their children so it became necessary to send them to orphanages. Most orphanages did not take older children so it was the infants and toddlers that were sent. The structure of the orphanages in Romania is the same - a central tower with four wings, three stories high and room for forty children on each wing. To each wing there was assigned a single caretaker.

Since there was no way for one person to care effectively for forty babies there was a rule that severely limited caretaker interaction with children. Caretakers were told to prop bottles, change diapers only when necessary and limit both verbal interaction and physical contact. This rule applied to everyone - caretakers, orphanage administrators, and custodians. No interaction creates failure to thrive. The children become lethargic and therefore "are no trouble."

There was a US researcher whose research focus was the effects of early deprivation on the structure and capacity of the developing brain. The Romanian orphans became subjects of his research when they were adopted and

brought to the US. He followed their lives through childhood and into adulthood. What he found was disturbing. Most of these children had a tough time overcoming the impact of early deprivation. They struggled in school. As adults, they were socially impaired - they had a difficult time working with colleagues and a difficult time with intimate relationships. They were often loners. They were often not goal oriented. Basically they struggled to be functioning members of society. Many times they ended up in local prisons or in juvenile homes. However, occasionally he would find a subject who seemed to have fared better - they were able to function well as members of society. He concluded that these individuals must have been the more attractive children or more persistent children who despite the rules were able to solicit enough attention to forge critical neurological wiring in their early development.

With the advancements of technology in the 1980s the researcher was able to enlarge his research project to include PET scans and functional MRIs. He hired research assistants to help collect and organize the data. One day when one of the assistants was filing away scans and follow-up studies she noticed that all the scans and follow-up studies that showed a more positive outcome came from subjects who had come from the same orphanage - same floor - same wing.

With this information, the researcher now realized that his initial conclusions had been wrong. There had to be more to the story. He traveled to Romania to unlock the mystery. What he found was that in this orphanage, on this floor, on this wing, there was a custodian who every night when she finished her work, she hung up her broom and rocked every child on that wing. When he found the woman, she fell on her knees in tears and said, "I never thought I did enough."

When asked what she had done, she said, "I picked them up. I told them they were beautiful. I rocked them. I sang them a song. I kissed them good night and tucked them into bed. Then I picked up another child and did the same."

This is a story for everyone who ever loved a child. This is the story of every teacher, every parent and every caregiver. This is your story and my story. We write on the souls of every child we touch. They may not remember our faces but the evidence of our kindness is written on their souls.

Management of a Potential Critical Incident H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)

Author:

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During the month of May, like many other early childhood professionals, Lady Gowrie Tasmania staff were receiving regular updates from the Health Department in relation to the spread of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu). There were a number of thoughts of how the pandemic would affect services and how this could be managed to ensure children's and staff's continued health and safety. Unfortunately, it wasn't long before our thoughts became a reality! You always think it happens to someone else - but in this instance it was one of our services at the forefront.

The service was advised by a family that they had just been quarantined as they had flu-like symptoms and had just returned from Canada. They were waiting for test results as swine flu was suspected. Their young infant (8 months) had attended care the week prior to the quarantine being implemented. At this time, there was limited information as to the potential seriousness of Human Swine Flu. Victoria was just beginning to have confirmed cases and this event was one of the first suspected cases in Tasmania.

A representative from Public and Environmental Health contacted the service and relayed the message that results would not be available until midday the following day. As part of the process, the Department of Health provided vital information to the organisation which supported the drafting of a letter to all families at the service advising them of the suspected case and the timeframe for test results. The letter also provided the dedicated website and phone contact details for families to seek further information. During this time information and reminders continued to be disseminated to families and early childhood practitioners in relation to effective hygiene practices and how to minimise cross infection.

Within a very short time period - less than a day, the media became involved, with outlets nationally reporting a suspected case of Human Swine Flu at a North Tasmanian Child Care Service. This was widely reported both through television and newspaper alerts. The very next day the organisation was confronted with a front page newspaper story that a family had been quarantined and that the quarantined child had attended a child care service the week before.

It was important for the situation to be taken seriously but also for a calm and considered approach to be adopted to avoid any potential 'panic'. All families arriving throughout the day were spoken to individually by key personnel within the organisation. One family decided not to attend the service until results were finalised. As you can understand, families were concerned for their children as this was at a time when the seriousness of Human Swine Flu was not clear. A number of calls to families were made to reassure them that the service was taking





ongoing direction from the Department of Health and continuing to follow a high standard of hygiene practices.

At midday the service received a notification from the Public and Environmental Health contact that the test results were negative. The diagnosis was a normal cold/flu virus. Families and early childhood practitioners were immediately advised of this result.

The service could have viewed this incident as a negative and asked 'Why us?', but instead a proactive and positive approach was adopted. Organisation policies and procedures supported the manager in the decision making process throughout the critical incident and the support provided by the broader organisation supported her calm and informed approach. Early childhood practitioners were congratulated on their professional manner, including maintaining confidentiality and privacy in relation to the family involved.

Although you never wish to be in this position, it was reassuring to know that organisational policies, procedures and processes in place supported the effectiveness of how the incident was managed. Services need to be vigilant and not become complacent about 'it will never happen to us', because it can! It is important to remain calm and considered in one's approach and seek professional help from the myriad of support services available. It was also reassuring that the organisation policies and procedures supported the actions of all involved throughout the process. Although the seriousness of the Human Swine Flu has been downgraded, it still remains a potential threat to services in relation to sickness of early childhood practitioners and children, and to our ability to continue to provide a vital service to families.

As a consequence, the Professional Support Co-ordinator in Tasmania responded by arranging for an experienced facilitator to provide a "Be Prepared" professional learning session for Directors, Managers and Co-ordinators to strategise and gain factual information to support the development of policies and procedures in the event of a reduced workforce or service closure. Representatives from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Tasmanian Department of Education – Child Care Unit (licensing authority) were invited as active participants in this session.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

- The value and importance of having current policies and procedures in place – they underpinned and supported practice at the service.
- The value of collaboration with external health professionals – the provision of expert information and support to the service and stakeholders was invaluable.
- The importance of communication with all stakeholders – open, honest and ongoing during the incident and beyond supported ongoing positive relationships with families and practitioners.
- The importance of providing a consistent message to all stakeholders – alleviated the fear factor with clear, concise information disseminated using a range of methodologies.

A MIDDLE YEARS FRAMEWORK FOR OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE



Authors:

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Executive Officer

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With an estimated 175,000 children using Out of School Hours Care services (OSHC) each week in Australia there is increasing acceptance and promotion within the Out of School Hours (OSHC) sector for a framework to be developed which supports the experiences of school age children who attend OSHC services in Australia. Such a framework would endeavour to provide a means of articulating the value of play and the importance of collaboration with children as a fundamental principle for school age care. This framework would provide a structure from which services can develop programs for children that promote and build resilience.

The Early Years Learning Framework serves to connect the value of play to learning in services for children under 5. Though in its early stages, this framework will promote professional practice for the early childhood and care sector. However, it has been acknowledged by the sector and government that this framework will not be suitable for achieving a like outcome for OSHC.

With the development of an Early Years Learning Framework it is timely to commence discussion and debate around current practice in OSHC services throughout Australia and gauge support for the development of a Middle Years Framework for OSHC.

A framework that must essentially:

- Acknowledge and enhance the delivery of appropriate programs for school age children.
- Be innovative, flexible and responsive.
- Include children's opinions and levels of participation.
- Reflect the individual needs, interests and choices of children within their own services and communities.
- Extend children's experiences through the provision of new and diverse activities and opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in safe risk taking and experience challenge.
- Utilise information technology effectively.
- Provide a language to support effective dialogue among stakeholders.
- Build relationships within the community and with school leaders.
- Support existing systemic structures such as QA and Regulation.
- Enhance outcomes for school age children in care services through the building of resilience.

A fundamental right

A framework for middle childhood services should aim to uphold the principles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The United Nations General Assembly in 1989 unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC). Australia ratified CROC in 1991, followed, within six years, by every other nation in Oceania.

There are two pertinent Articles in the Convention that should be embedded in a Middle Years Framework in Out of School Hours services:

- *Article 31* of the Convention promotes every child's right to participate in play-based, recreational experiences.
- *Article 12* of the Convention promotes every child's right to be consulted and listened to in matters affecting the child.

By following these guidelines, OSHC services can ensure children have ample opportunities to collaborate together on projects, have input into their programs and are consulted with regard to day to day routines that impact on them.

While there appears to be open articulation and wide spread acceptance of children's rights, there is a significant gap in the suitability of policy and frameworks which appropriately support service providers to promote these rights, particularly for school age children.

The importance of the middle years

There is a tendency to view the time a child spends in an Out of School Hours service as less significant to their time spent in an educational care or formal school setting. However, there is significant research to indicate that this would be a critical error in judgment in terms of facilitating the development of healthy children.

Erik Erikson identified the wider social contexts that children move into, in their middle years, as having the potential to strongly influence their development. He described children's participation and competence in these new social roles as laying the groundwork by which children acquire social status. If not mastered, Erikson predicted that children would develop a "sense of inferiority" resulting in anxiety, withdrawal and depression (Erikson, 1968).

Furthermore, children develop a more abstract sense of competency and self-concept during middle childhood. This sense of self becomes more complex and elaborate, far less focused on external characteristics and more and more on internal qualities.

The middle childhood years (5 -12) signifies a key transition in children's lives, it is marked by their entry to school and increasing involvement in other activities away from parental supervision. At this point in their lives, children spend less time with their family and come increasingly under the influence of other adults and their peers. A child may spend up to 50 hours a week in an OSHC service during school holiday periods and 30 hours during term time. This increased individual freedom impacts on children's self concept as they navigate, on their own, in different social contexts and experience success or failure in a more public arena. The way children respond and adjust to these new complex social institutions has a long-term impact on their wellbeing and mental health.

Eckersley (2008) states that, contrary to the official view that the health of children and youth in Australia is improving, there is a growing body of evidence that their well being is declining.



The absence of a framework for OSHC that supports the development of children’s competence has implications for the mental health of our community. School age children need real life experiences which support not only the short term provision of quality care services, but the long term implications with a sustainable quality of a well balanced life.

A positive influence on healthy child development

A Middle Years Framework for OSHC should build on the current existing understandings around the critical factors for the development and promotion of resilience in children.

These include:

- Developing children’s’ capacity and access to play.
- Providing opportunities for safe social activity and play with peers while offering a balance of more organised activities.
- Offering children access to social contacts outside the immediate family.
- Promoting the development of positive, affirming relationships with adults outside the family structure that focus on strength and reward autonomy.
- Creating opportunities for children to develop and improve their communication skills.

- Offering a context for clear behavioural strategies to be implemented and developed.
- Creating opportunities for the children to receive unconditional praise and affirmation for effort.

Out of School Hours services have an important role to play in children’s lives and therefore in children’s development. We are, in the words of Sven Silburn (2009) at a *critical leverage point*, “Current approaches to prevention aim to identify the critical ‘leverage’ points in human development and to create opportunities in the environments most proximal to children. This includes policies and initiatives to build the capacity of communities and services to ensure that families and schools are properly supported in their shared task of child rearing.”

The development of a Middle Years Framework for Out of School Hours services would be one such initiative that, properly constructed, would have a positive influence on the development of children and the embedding of a culture of resilience within the community.

Currently, “OSHC services have been referred to as the *Cinderella* of the care services because they attract the least amount of funding and have the poorest work conditions” (Gammage, 2003; Cartmel, 2007).



With this thought in mind, we advocate that OSHC services should challenge the idea that we are the 'Cinderella' of the care services and begin work on a Middle Years Framework that is developed in consultation with government, by the sector, and for the sector.

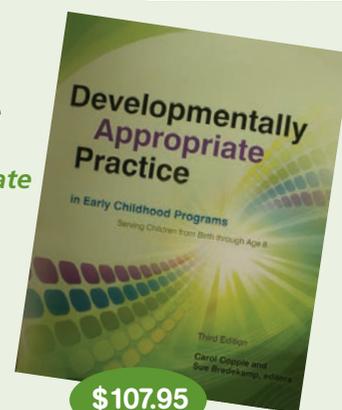
Kylie and Robyn are canvassing feedback on their proposal for a Middle Years Framework for OSHC. If you have any comments or questions please direct them to Robyn Monro Miller, Chair of the National Out of Schools Hours Services Association, at: robyn@netoosh.org.au

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Anne Houghton
Gowrie Victoria Resource

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs: Serving Children from Birth through Age 8. 3rd edition, Copple, C and Bredekamp, S editors, NAEYC, 2009.



With the launch of the Early Years Learning Framework in Australia, this book has particular relevance in how it may provoke, support and challenge Australian early years educators to reflect on curriculum and practice. This third edition has been revised to align with the latest research on development, learning, and teaching effectiveness. It also includes a CD of additional resource material. In this, you will find video examples from real early childhood classrooms highlighting significant elements of developmentally appropriate practice in action.

The book begins with the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) position statement, its purpose being to promote excellence in early childhood education by providing a framework for best practice. NAEYC's position statement is committed to 'excellence and equity in educating children and our core understanding of how children learn and develop. At the same time, new knowledge gained over the last decade has deepened that understanding, allowing us to refine our ideas about how to promote every child's optimal development and learning.' (pxii)

It is important that early years educators consider applying new knowledge to critical issues faced within their work. 'Fortunately, a continually expanding early childhood knowledge base enables the field to refine, redirect, or confirm understandings of best practice. The whole of the present position statement reflects fresh evidence of recent years and the perspectives and priorities emerging from these findings.' (p6)

The book offers practical examples connecting current research to practice and will support staff working with children from birth through to eight years of age. The chapters are set out as "The Infant and Toddler Years," "The Preschool Years," "The Kindergarten Year" and "The Primary Grades." A comprehensive range of topics include child development, planning a curriculum, teaching to enhance learning and development, routines, transitions and assessment. This is a valuable book that will help you make connections to practice through gaining knowledge of current research.

Available through Gowrie Victoria Resource Centre & Online Bookshop - www.gowrievictoria.org.au/bookshop

National and International CONFERENCE UPDATE



Summer 2008



Autumn 2009



Winter 2009

3rd Australasian Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Conference

*Engage empower enact:
Sustainability and the early years*

22-24 October 2009
Darebin Arts and Entertainment
Centre, Melbourne
E: eeec@alphalink.com.au

NAEYC Annual Conference and Expo 2009

*Your Community. Your Opportunity.
Your Conference.*

18-21 November 2009
Washington DC
E: conference@naeyc.org
www.annualconference.naeyc.org/

Playgroup Australia Inaugural National Conference The Power of PLAY

5-7 November 2009
Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast, Qld
T: 03 5977 0244
E: info@corporatecommunique.com.au
www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/conference

The Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood's 9th Annual International Conference

*Honouring the Child Honouring Equity
9: Children's rights in research, policy
and practice.*

19-21 November 2009
The University of Melbourne, Parkville
E: education-ceiec-conference@unimelb.edu.au
www.education.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec

8th ISPCAN Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (incorporating the 12th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect)

*Child Abuse and Neglect: Looking
Through the Lens of Prevention*

16-18 November 2009
Perth Convention Exhibition Centre
T: 07 3848 2100
E: apccan2009@expertevents.com.au
www.apccan2009.org.au/

2nd Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Research Conference

3-4 December 2009
Rydges Carlton, Melbourne
T: Ren Adams - 03 9214 7888
E: isac09@aifs.gov.au
www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/

Gowrie Australia

Promoting and supporting quality
services for all children.

Our Mission

A national collaborative approach to
better practices which benefit children,
families and the children's services sector.