



**AGECS** | The Association of Graduates  
in Early Childhood Studies

# AUDAX

**Audax**

*(Latin) courageous, bold, daring*

**AUDAX 93 – Spring 2016**

Journal of the Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies  
PO Box 12163, Franklin St, Melbourne VIC 3000

## **Council Members 2016**

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Project Administrator: Kay Margetts (Assoc Prof)



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Challenging Children forum organised by AGECS evoked passionate discussion about the concerns of children's extreme behaviours and how Early Childhood Educators can feel helpless to support these children, especially when there are more than one or two in the group. ECEs are experiencing more frequent events of behaviours that are dangerous to the child or others. The participants spoke openly about what is happening and what they have

done to support children. Early Childhood Educators reported that children have kicked/spat/punched/thrown objects at other persons. The presenters of the forums spoke about trauma and how this can affect how a child is able to respond to difficult situations. For some children their response can be a spontaneous reaction and delivered mainly physically than verbally. They discussed how our responses can determine how we can defuse a situation and assist the child to learn skills that will reduce extreme incidents.

Early Childhood environments provide a safe place to play, to develop social skills and self-regulation. Some children come to an Early Childhood setting ill-equipped to deal with sharing and socialising with a room full of other children. They will rely on consistent guidance to understand appropriate responses; this is without judgement or atonement. It is important to stay calm and observing the behaviours objectively; note triggers and have a variety of responses that will support the child.

Early Childhood Educators can work as a team; sharing information about what is happening for children and what strategies they have used. This collaboration will also provide a consistent approach to children and work towards maintaining a cohesive group and support for all children in the group.

The best allies for helping children, who demonstrate extreme behaviours are their families. Having conversations that provide

information about what is happening for children will give the insight to understanding the child's life outside of the Early Childhood environment. Getting the balance of talking about how the child is participating in the program is crucial. Most families are aware of their children's behaviour and can be reluctant to have these discussions. Building strong relationships with families can lead to positive and constructive dialogues; sharing ideas and progress. 'Calmer classrooms' is an excellent resource -

[www.cyp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/publications/orgs\\_resources.htm](http://www.cyp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/publications/orgs_resources.htm)

The presenters of the Challenging Children forums acknowledged the Early Childhood Educators position; working with large numbers of children, not always supported by colleagues/employers to have the time to plan with fellow educators, and gaining understanding and strategies through training.

AGECS have grants available that organisations can apply for staff and/or whole of service training that will improve and increase Early Childhood Educators capacities to develop skills that meet children's needs. Please check the Warrawong grants on our website.

<http://agecs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Warrawong-Foundation-of-AGECS-Grant-Promotional-Flier-2016.pdf>

Please check the AGECS website for further information – [agecs.org.au](http://agecs.org.au)

***Maree Wiggins***

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

**November 12<sup>th</sup> 2016**

AGECS is pleased to present this social and networking event for all members of AGECS and especially our retired and our younger members.

An interactive workshop will be followed by the 2016 Annual General Meeting at 12 noon and complimentary lunch.

The workshop: ***Science Learning with Young Children*** will be interactive and facilitated by Assoc Prof Coral Campbell.

**This workshop will also provide lots of ideas to foster children's science learning including using everyday events and activities**

**Saturday 12 November 2016**

**9.45am to 11.45am**

**Room 3.401, Faculty of Arts and Education (Building IC)**

**Deakin University, Waurin Ponds**



## **Reflecting on**

## **OUR 'PRESENTATION' FORUM FOR THE YEAR: July 2016**

Coburg Town Hall was the venue for our first forum involving presentations by recipients of AGECS Fellowships for Leadership and Change.

The morning consisted of each recipient presenting in a separate area and all of us moving between the areas in groups as well as enjoying a delicious catered break.

Each presentation succeeded in engaging participants so well, that it was difficult to move on. Everyone wanted to stay and hear more.

*Sharrynn Clarke* captured the audience with her view on Nature Deficit Disorder and informed us of the innovative programs she is involved in with Educators.

*Kerry Kneebone* reminded us that children can successfully take risks in the outdoors and the Nature Nurture Project that started with MCH Nurses.

*Josette Nunn* reminded us that our Environment is the first teacher and children need to feel the ground under their feet. She spoke of her work with children experiencing trauma and vulnerability.

# The AGECS Fellowship Programme:

*The AGECS Fellowship Programme for Leadership and Change was launched at the AGM in 2014. The Fellowship Programme is open to AGECS members.*

In the AUDAX Autumn edition, Kerry N Kneebone's article was published. In her article, she posed the question of "what can we learn from Dunblane Nature Kindergarten?"

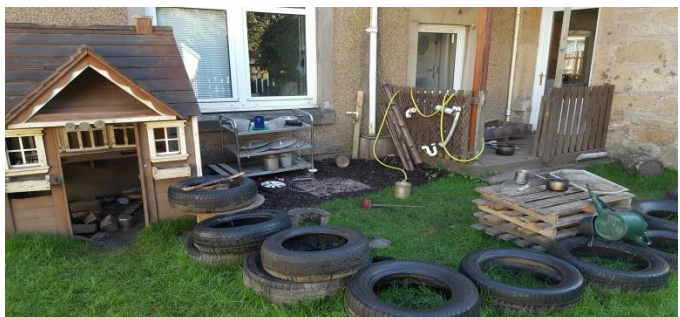
*The Editor went to Dunblane in Scotland in September and took other photos to illustrate Kerry's words.*



## What can we learn from Dunblane Nature Kindergarten?



We need to create environments that are calm, relaxed and unrushed.



Set up a philosophy to support children's play using benefit verses risk to guide our decision making. It is important to empower children to know their own capabilities and for them to then be responsible to make safety decisions under the guidance of educators. Genuinely engage children in making choices. It is essential that adults are to share decision making with children, and trust that children are competent decision makers.



Provide opportunities for children and educators to connect with their community. Regularly visit local reserves and parks to experience nature in the wider community.

*The photo below is of the suits the children put on when the weather is inclement. They go out in all weather, except when compromising safety.*



***Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Fellowship recipient.***

## **Reciprocity and Authenticity in Connecting Children and Animals**

By Sharrynn Clarke

### **The Provocation**

In Melbourne, new innovations have been introduced in response to the importance of re-connecting children with nature, based upon the pedagogies of the NatureSkola in Scandinavian countries, the UK and New Zealand. Initiatives such as *Bush Kinders* and *Beach Kinders* where children are taken out to natural surroundings to explore and experience their learning with their educators have emerged in many sessional preschools and some long day care centres in metropolitan areas. This innovation is starting to take shape in other settings with many variations, such as creating bush tucker gardens in schools, to incorporating wide-open natural spaces within the school setting itself. It addresses a rising concern that “opportunities for play outdoors, particularly in nature, are missing from the daily lives of young children in western countries” (Elliott & Chancellor, 2014). This lack of opportunity has seen alternate methods of preferred play that may impact upon the health and wellbeing of children. This includes engagement with more screen-based sedentary behaviour, unhealthy eating habits and poor sleeping patterns contributing to increased levels in childhood obesity (Leech, McNaughton, & Timperio, 2015). In addition to health risks, there are also implications that children are becoming risk-averse and urbanised which is also typically endorsed through rigidity in regulatory standards and media scaremongering, and as Louv (2010) states “effectively scaring children straight out of the woods and fields” (loc. 176). Furthermore, we also see a society in fear of litigation and therefore impact a literal cushioning effect for children in fear of legal consequences resulting from accidental injury. As a result, we see a growing number of children and adults staying inside and learning 2-dimensionally rather than being immersed in real world environments. This is exacerbated by the increase in screen time in educational settings where programs such as ‘bring-your-own-device’ are implemented in the primary sector and ‘ipad programs’ implemented in early childhood centres with an anticipated improvement in literacy and numeracy skills (Northrop & Killeen, 2013).



"Schools are spending billions on technology "even as they cut budgets and lay off teachers, with little proof that this approach is improving basic learning" (Richtel 2011 as cited in Louv 2012). One questions, in what way does this support children's holistic learning, physical and mental wellbeing?

Richard Louv, well known author and founder of the term *nature-deficit disorder* challenges the increasing use of technology in schools and homes that contribute to the sedentary behaviour children are now experiencing as *normal*. Whilst he claims that the term is in no way a scientific or clinical term, he believes that it may have an interesting correlation to other conditions that do. Nature deficit-disorder, as described by Louv may imply that there possibly is a connection between behavioural conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and lack of access to natural outdoor spaces where one can engage in physical activity (Louv, 2010). He discusses that the natural disposition of physically active human behaviour that connects with the outdoors is challenged where education systems and workplaces require us to 'work and learn' indoors, going against our innate grain and instinctive urges to be outside and active. To further illustrate this, Louv refers to the work of psychologists Stephen and Rachel Kaplan (partner team) who spent much time studying two types of attention; directed attention (often at the instruction or transmission of information by another) and fascination (where we involuntary pay attention to something that interests us or catches our eye). They found in their studies that "too much directed attention leads to what they called *directed-attention fatigue* marked by impulsive behaviour, agitation, irritation, and inability to concentrate" (Louv, 2010, loc. 1678).

Louv suggests that children should get off their screens, out of their houses and explore nature which fulfils a reciprocal natural relationship being that the more time children spend in nature; the more likely they learn to value it. "More recent research has suggested time spent in more natural environments (whether it's a park, a wilderness, or a nature-based classroom or play space) stimulates the senses, improves the ability to learn, and helps students connect the dots of the world" (Louv, 2012, p. 8). Elliott and Chancellor (2014) also suggest that children have "increased confidence, motivation and concentration, increased social, physical and language skills, deeper conceptual understandings and respect for the natural environment" (p. 46). Further to this, it is also understood that spending more time connecting with nature increases children's physical health as well as social and emotional skills, not to mention improvement in academic outcomes for

future life (Elliott & Chancellor, 2014; Louv, 2011). Wells and Evans (as cited in Warden, 2010) claim that “nature buffers the impact of life’s stresses on children and helps them deal with adversity. The greater the amount of nature exposure, the greater the benefits” (loc. 334). To complement this, “Ming” Kuo (2013) further agrees that engagement with nature in *any form* or *any dose* improves health, decreases levels of obesity and diabetes, and enhances cognitive functioning and longevity of life.

### ***Why this is relevant to me?***

It was this very fascination of the study of ‘attention’, connection between nature and health and concepts of reciprocity that led me to investigate further and discover ways to bring nature back into play, or play back into nature for very young children. But there was one caution that arose in my exploration of this concept; a memory from a workshop I attended in 2013 with Tracey Young. Tracey described that connection with nature was more than just planting vegetable gardens and having a chicken coop, but having real connections with animals in an authentic and reciprocal manner where we understand and respect that animals deserve a beautiful life too. From this I challenged my understanding of many of the practices in early childhood (including my own) that had become increasingly popular to support children’s apparent relationship to nature, such as beautifully landscaped gardens, stick insects in enclosures, chickens and rabbits squished up in hutches and coops and not to mention the copious amounts of travelling zoos and ‘hatching kits’ that now circulate the centres and schools. The unethical treatment of these animals disturbed me as I watched a squealing pig being thrown back into a cage, the mouth of a baby crocodile being taped together and listening to a zoo expert explaining how we need snakes to get rid of ‘all those nasty mice;’ all in the name of children’s entertainment and connection to nature. Coupling this with the notion of ‘frolicking purposelessly in the forest’ to connect with nature through play (without curriculum intent), I wondered what was really happening back where it all began; in the Scandinavian countries. *And so I went to Sweden.*

### ***My Encounters in Sweden***

Gothenburg and Hunneburg provided some answers for me as I engaged with educators in förskole (preschool) and naturskole (nature school) where children’s learning existed within the indoors and the outdoors come ‘rain or shine’ (i ur och skur). My first encounter was understanding the Swedish cultural connection to the importance of *being in the outdoors* and found that families considered it strange if educators did not take their children

outdoors every day for several hours. There was a strong sentiment of 'no excuse' that was embedded in culture and services therefore included the provision of appropriate clothing and supports for children to move in and out of learning environments. There were some preschools that did not have an attached open space, yet this did not prevent the cultural practice and therefore the preschool was granted permission to utilise a local parkland for many hours of the day as their permanent outdoor space; perhaps a regulatory challenge for Australian landscapes. One of the preschools I visited backed onto woods which were a regular destination for children and opportunity for them to explore nature which was more than just 'frolicking around' but included a strong engagement with the ecology and geology of the land, flora and fauna as well as the cultural folklore. This was where my interest grew and I began to ask further questions and plan some ideas in how to transform ideologies in relation to reciprocity and authenticity in connection with nature. My visit to Hunneberg NaturSkola reaffirmed that this type of learning and connection could be possible as children and youth visited the setting and explored the very life within the woods in its natural way of being. After nervously driving on the opposite side of the car, on the opposite side of the ride, up the mountain hoping I really didn't encounter a bear too closely, I discovered the true beauty of the Swedish woods. This included meeting an elk, observing mossor (moss) and laven (lichen), understanding trees, waterways and multitude of birdlife and how each aspect of nature was dependent upon the other. It wasn't just about playing with sticks, but understanding how animals move and use nature to create their own habitats – how they also use sticks. Concepts of death were discussed without hesitance as we came across bones of an elk and hypothesised how such an animal would die in the woods being that in the specific location it was at the head of the food chain due to its size and strength...or was it? This very encounter moved me to question the manner in which we are connecting with nature, what life are we giving our animal counterparts that we use to 'connect with nature' and



*Rolling down hills in spring, summer, autumn and in winter this becomes a hill for tobogganing down on snow.*

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how is curriculum and ethical practice incorporated into this experience?  
There **was so much more to learn and know.**



*Exploring life in the woods*



*Exploring death in the woods*



*Understanding the ecology of life through mossor and laven.*



*Understanding the changing Landscapes of the mountains over time (Induced by natural and artificial events).*

### ***My Return to Home...and what I was about to do next!***

The learnings from my Swedish encounter drew me into deep thought about some of the experiences provided in early childhood settings, particularly inner-city multi-level settings where access to such landscapes were limited and in some circumstances not possible due to local risk-aversion attitudes and excursion reluctance. I also wanted to challenge the practice of purchasing animals for children to look after as services may see this as a

means to 'meet the NQS' or address sustainability. This notion was now fully challenged in my mind and so purchasing animals was not an option for delivering this experience.

Fortunately, an open-minded service owner was ready to get on board with some budding ideas I had to build a 'nature-attached service.' The concept of *nature-attachment* links both to Louv's concepts of nature-deficit and attachment theory; where children develop a sense of connection and mutual reliability through the care and attention that is paid reciprocally between the two. The aim for the service was to embed this ideology of nature-attachment to both indoor and outdoor environments with aims to improve children's understanding and connection to nature and the environment, develop a strong appreciation for the environment, including a robust ecological understanding and how humans impact upon measures of sustainability. More specifically it aimed to utilise a naturally re-created learning environment where children's natural curiosity was stimulated (fascination), thinking skills including executive functioning were supported, and psychosocial development and ethical practices were facilitated. The building was designed to also demonstrate high-level sustainability measures to reduce the carbon footprint and incorporate natural energy and water collection and consumption.

The planned learning environment would incorporate and embed purely natural environments promoting ecological systems that would live inside and outside and promote natural growth of living things, and naturally attract living things. Educators and children would develop resourcefulness in supporting the natural environment to thrive through observation, care and nurturing, whilst reaping benefits from the natural production of anti-oxidants. Therefore, the leadership team for this service would be highly skilled in horticulture, animal care, early childhood education and natural sciences to support the development of the philosophy and professional practice that would enact a *Nature-Attached Curriculum*. The setting would only use enclosures for animals for their protection overnight, however during the day they would co-exist with children in an authentic and reciprocal relationship.

Alas, this was not to happen during the project timeline, due to many protests from the local community which has currently halted the building of this service.



## *And so my direction changed....*

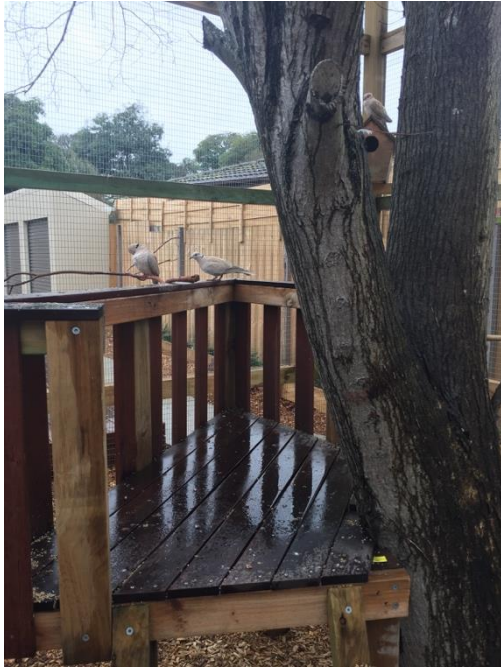
### **Children's Animal Rescue Initiative & Nature Group (CARING)**

A new adventure emerged taking with it the learnings from Sweden and the understanding that perhaps we are not ready for my original big ideas of child-animal immersion. Taking the ideology of nature-attachment but also ethical practices in housing animals within early childhood settings, I set about to create a new way of incorporating this authentic relationship. The aim was to bring a beautiful life to both children and animals in a manner that improved children's sense of empathy, resilience and learning. This project stayed within the original owner of the *halted* early learning centre, but instead combined with the ideas of the service Director, Andrea and one of her team leaders, Leigh, involved designing natural landscapes and enclosures for animals who could not be released to the wild due to injury, illness or neglect. This meant that no animal purchases were to be made that would inadvertently promote breeding and farming for capitalist gain, but instead children would become animal 'rescuers' and 'carers' and as a daily commitment would tend to them under the guidance and advisements of expert knowledge from animal care professionals. The first group of animals rescued were a family of 5 ring-necked doves who had lived in a small cage their whole life, were not able to neither fly well nor fend for themselves. These birds were 'relinquished' to an official rescue centre awaiting their future.



*Aviary, built large enough to house birds close to their natural state with the incorporation of an existing well established tree.*

Eagerly the centre built a substantial aviary enclosing an existing established tree where the birds could return to a more natural state of living. Children were also able to enter the aviary and sit on the purpose built balcony attached to the tree and talk to the birds. Over several weeks, with support and diligence from the educator, the children (aged 2 years) and birds made a remarkable connection; they built a nest together. From there the toddlers and birds lived together in harmony building reciprocal trust as the baby bird



finally hatched and experienced care from both its natural parents and the children. Now, as new children enrol at the centre, they too experience the joy of living with the birds, and importantly are actively taught how to care for animals and have pets as part of their lives in an ethical manner. This includes the teaching of a two-year-old who naturally wanted to kick and shoo the bird away, to carefully step around the resting places of the baby birds to deliver food to their containers, or the transformation of a young

child naturally scared of the flapping of birds to observe wonderment in this skill as they sit up next to them on the balcony. The next stage for this service is to rescue battered chickens and malnourished rabbits where educators and children will confront the poor state of health of these animals, and be instrumental in returning them to health as best they can whilst simultaneously developing an ethical mindset towards how we live with animals in the future.

### ***This is just the beginning of a long journey....***

This journey has not concluded; in fact, it is only just beginning as we have now established the first steps of our volunteer organisation *Children's Animal Rescue Initiative & Nature Group (CARING)* and have engaged another service to begin their work in animal rescue early next year. We also anticipate the inclusion of at least one primary school and one secondary school next year to begin their journey of rescuing animals set to be destroyed and provide them with a beautiful life in authenticity and reciprocity with humans; the real connection to nature. Our aim is to track the development of empathy and observe any shifts in aggressive or negative behaviours in children and students as they engage in the program, under the work of a researcher. There is much work yet to be done.

***It is with deepest gratitude to AGECS for providing this opportunity to me that has been a life-changing experience. I will continue the journey and work towards bringing this unique and nurturing experience to many more services and the welfare of animals. Thank you also to Birgitta and her team at Hunneberg for sharing such rich pedagogy and experience and the preschools in Gothenburg for allowing me time to breathe in the moment.***

## **Sharryn Clarke**

*For any services who would like to be a part of our CARING program please contact Sharryn Clarke on 0425796970. No fees apply to join.*



Children's Animal Rescue  
Initiative & Nature Group

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## ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

- **Total surprise!**



Kay Margetts and Wendy Grenfell

Two members run into each other in the streets of Belfast, September 2016. Both members visited Early Learning Centres separately.

- **Celebrating 40 years since Graduation in Dec 1976.**



8 very happy Early Childhood Graduates embarked on a road trip to Inverloch for a weekend to celebrate and reminisce about life as a student in the 70's.

Trivia questions flowed as each person recalled different memories and facts.

*What is Mooroolbeek Hall used for now?*

*Who taught dance, music, woodwork and pedagogy?*

*Names of streets in Kew and Abbotsford where IECD was situated?*

*Who was the retiring principal at the graduation ceremony?*

Each question triggered memories, and left some wondering if they were really there because they couldn't remember. Laughter and more laughter as situations and scenarios were recalled from an 18 -21 year old's perspective. Lots of chat about school practicums, Child care practicums and sessional kindergartens.

There were some stories that made them sad, when practices of the 70's were not all aligned with 'best practice' that we promote and enjoy today.

They remembered the many different places of work and the many assistants who made their days a pleasure, and Families who volunteered on committees and supported them unconditionally.

This group have continued believing that the Early Years are the most important while each has moved in different roles, such as PSFO's, Early Intervention, Schools, Music, Long Day Care, Cluster management, 3 year old groups and 4 year old groups. All have been mothers and some are now grandmothers, still using the practices that are embedded in them of the Joy of a child's journey in learning.



One habit of a kindergarten teacher that has not left this group, is the continuation of collecting natural materials and seeing things in shops that 'Would be great in a kindergarten'.



This was a weekend of memories reinforcing relationships in a group that begun in a College of teenagers with dreams and aspirations of being a part of many, many children's education and care.

*Cheryl, Diane, Judy, Kate, Lyn, Sally, Sue and Wendy. (IECD Class of '74 – '76.)*



- Celebrating 56 years since Graduation in Dec 1960.



Here we are in 1958. In most cases fresh out of school. Little did we know that the relationships we formed would sustain and nourish us for over 50 years. Above all it gave us a fulfilling and worthwhile profession.

Our Early Childhood lecturers and tutors were extraordinary, having spent many years in the field through the challenging times of the Depression and the Second World War. We were taught to be frugal and to improvise using basic materials; e.g. We all had to make a toy out of wood which was quite a challenge for young women who had never touched a saw or a hammer. We made up books of poetry and elaborate picture collections to use as Teaching Aides.



The courses offered to us were amazing with top class teachers such as Stephen Murray Smith and Ian Turner for English, June Epstein for music, Francis Derham at that stage the authority on Children's art. The art collections of a kindergarten child during our third year are kept as a record of Children's Art in the National Gallery of Australia. We also had Hanni Exener for creative dance and movement, Margaret Edwards for Psychology and Mrs Date for sculpture.

There was a lot of Practical teaching e.g. in the Third Year spending every day in the Kindergarten as well as attending College lectures. This was very good of the Directors, many working in under privileged areas and having to provide long extended programmes and co-operate with outside groups such as the Ladies Benevolent Society in feeding the children breakfast.

At this time there were two Holiday Homes, one at Forest Hill and one at Warranwood to give children a holiday of a week or more, either because of financial circumstances or family trauma.



In December 1960, all dressed in long white gowns and long white gloves, we were finally awarded our Diplomas in a Ceremony at Wilson Hall, at the University of Melbourne – joined by the Principal of KTC, Heather Lyon.



Our first jobs were either in struggling inner city areas or in struggling to-be-established outer areas. Following this, careers went in many different directions - some teaching overseas or in Indigenous communities. Others following passions in art and other creative activities.

Over the past 56 years we have remained in contact. We have had many and varied reunions: a Thelma and Louise trip around Tasmania to three 'girls' places in Burnie, Cressy, Hobart and Freycinet; and trips to Queensland and the ACT, but mostly we meet in Melbourne; we look forward to our meeting in Melbourne in October this year where there will be much happiness but also sadness in remembering friends no longer with us.



Barb Joyce  
Helen Philips

# Notes from the Field of Parenting in the Early Years.....

- **Exchange EveryDay.**

## **Are you Trauma-Informed?**

October 13, 2016

Do not wait for ideal circumstances, nor the best opportunities; they will never come.-Janet Erskine Stuart

"Brain research reveals that a strong supportive relationship can provide our brains with important protection from the effects of toxic stress. We also know that positive, trusting relationships have a stronger influence on resilience the earlier in life these are experienced."

This insight is from Ileen Henderson, author of *An Informed Approach for Teaching Children Who are Living with Poverty* from the Beginnings Professional Development Workshop, [Impact of Poverty](#).

### **How can we help children?**

"It is important to remember that research clearly shows strong, responsive and supportive adult relationships are the strongest predictors for mitigating the impact of chronic and toxic stress on children. Being aware of the messages we are sending through our tone of voice and body language will assist (children) in building a sense of personal safety through consistent and predictable interactions."

### **How can we help families?**

"Use a holistic perspective and see a child as part of a family, recognizing that a parent is also an individual. Include parents in activities if possible. A (parent) may never have had the ability to play and experience a normal childhood herself, so she may enjoy activities that are geared for her children."



## **The Positive Parenting Telephone Service:**

### **Support for grandparents caring for grandchildren, fathers and rural families**

Parenting has the biggest impact on how well children do in life, but contrary to popular belief, people are not born knowing how to be good parents. Parenting is a set of skills that are learnt 'on the job' and, they can always be improved.

Gateway Health is trialling a parenting support program delivered via telephone or online specifically for grandparents, fathers and rural families from across Victoria who sometimes find it difficult to attend parent support services in person.

The Positive Parenting Telephone Service (PPTS) makes it easy to access a proven parenting support program delivered by qualified parent support workers from your home at a time that suits you – daytime, evenings and weekends.

PPTS will help parents and carers develop the skills to:

- build better relationships with your children
- encourage the behaviours you want to see from your children
- teach children to think before they act and to keep busy without constant adult attention
- teach your children new skills, to solve problems for themselves
- to know when to ask for help set family rules that are realistic and followed.

Parents and carers will be supported by weekly telephone calls over 6 to 10 weeks. You can also participate in PPTS online - with or without telephone support. The program is currently free to all grandparents caring for grandchildren, fathers and rural families from across Victoria.

Victorian schools and early childhood services are encouraged to share information about this program with families in their community.

For more information, see:

- Positive Parenting Telephone Service

Susan McDonald  
Executive Director  
Early Years and Primary Reform



Education  
and Training

- **Body Play and Movement**

### **The National Institute of Play**

Learning about self movement structures an individual's knowledge of the world – it is a way of knowing, and we actually, through movement and play, think in motion. For example the play-driven movement of leaping upward is a lesson about gravity as well as one's body. And it lights up the brain and fosters learning. Innovation, flexibility, adaptability, resilience, have their roots in movement. The play driven pleasures associated with exploratory body movements, rhythmic early speech (moving vocal cords), locomotor and rotational activity – are done for their own sake; pleasurable, and intrinsically playful. They sculpt the brain, and ready the player for the unexpected and unusual.



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## Entertainment for Educators.....

**At the  
movies**



### **Miss Peregrine's School for Peculiar Children.**

When his beloved grandfather leaves Jake clues to a mystery that spans different worlds and times, he finds a magical place known as Miss Peregrine's School for Peculiar Children. But the mystery and danger deepen as he gets to know the residents and learns about their special powers - and their terrifying enemies. Ultimately, Jake discovers that only his own special peculiarity can save his new friends

**Rated for Mature Audiences only**

**Directed by Tim Burton.**





## A United Kingdom

Based on the inspirational true-life romance between Botswanan King Seretse Khama (David Oyelowo) and his British wife, Ruth Williams Khama (Rosamund Pike), **A United Kingdom** is a British period piece set in the 1940s, following an interracial union in the face of fierce opposition from their families and the British government, the tribal elders of Botswana and the apartheid government of South Africa.



**Rated for Mature Audiences only**

**Directed by** Amma Asante

### Books



### Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children

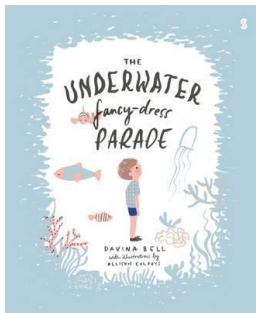
is the debut novel by American author Ransom Riggs. It is a story of a boy who, following a family tragedy follows clues that take him to an abandoned orphanage on a Welsh island. An obscure fantasy story of children with extraordinary gifts living together. **Adult Reading only.**



## Early Childhood Book of the Year 2016 By Anna Walker.

Bill is having a bad day. Mr Huff is following him around and making everything seem difficult. Bill tries to get rid of him, but Mr Huff just gets bigger and bigger! Then they both stop, and a surprising thing happens.

## Book of the Year Award Winner (Crichton Award for New Illustrators) 2016 by Davina Bell, Allison Colpoys



### The UNDERWATER fancy-dress PARADE.

The day before the underwater fancy-dress parade, Alfie got that feeling... Sometimes it's hard to be brave. Sometimes you get that feeling. Sometimes you're just not ready... until, one day, you are.

## Phone Apps



**Smiling Mind** is a not-for-profit organisation that works to make mindfulness meditation accessible to all. Our vision is to see mindfulness meditation on the Australian National Curriculum by 2020.

Partners with 'Berry Street' and 'Beyond Blue' organisations.

## ***What's on around us.....?***

**November 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Johnston Street Fiesta** in Fitzroy features a fun and interactive program for the family that reflects the traditions, art and culture of Spain, Latin America and other Spanish-speaking countries. This two-day festival attracts thousands of visitors to Johnston Street, Fitzroy every year to experience one of the best street parties in Melbourne.



The celebrations include entertainment on two stages and an amazing array of Spanish and Latin-American cuisine. Dance off those churros at one of the many on-street dance classes, or just enjoy watching Samba from the sidelines.

This exciting and free cultural event is a must for Yarra residents and visitors to Yarra. [www.yarra.vic.gov.au](http://www.yarra.vic.gov.au)

**November 20<sup>th</sup>**



This annual, free family event - featuring **GIANT AND NOVELTY KITES** - will once again colour our Delahey sky.

Great day for Brimbank's culturally and linguistically diverse communities to come together for a fun-filled day, in a safe and supportive environment.

Join the kite demonstrators and fly your own kites - or buy them on site.

Some kites will be distributed free to children under 10 (while stocks last).

There will be some food and entertainment stalls.

Delahey Recreational Reserve

[www.brimbank.vic.gov.au](http://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au)



# GENERAL ARTICLES OF INTEREST

## • **Getting it Right for Every Child**

Written for AUDAX by Catriona McDonald



Scotland is one of the countries which makes up the UK and is the most northerly country of the British Isles, with a population of just over 5 million people. It has always had its own education and legal systems, but since 1999, has also had its own devolved government, situated in

Edinburgh. Scottish Government is responsible for health, education, justice and policing. The current administration is the Scottish National Party (SNP) with Nicola Sturgeon as First Minister. This currently places Scottish policy at odds with English, which was clearly demonstrated earlier this year in the Brexit referendum where Scotland voted unanimously to remain within the EU.

In 2008, Scottish Government published its first policy document for children and families, The Early Years Framework, with a clearly stated aim to reduce inequalities through investment in Early Years provision. The model was based partly on that of the writings of the economist, James Heckman who stated (2012), *'The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families.'*

Heckman's work, based on an analysis of a longitudinal study of the HighScope Programme in the USA, shows a 7-10% per annum return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced costs in remedial education, health and the criminal justice system. This line of thought was further championed in Scotland by the then Head of Strathclyde Police Violence Reduction Unit, John Carnochan. He, together with the then chief Medical Officer for Scotland, Sir Harry Burns, eloquently promoted the importance of quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), in particular for families from disadvantaged areas.

The fact that this message was being supported by two men in powerful positions within contemporary society had a major impact on the way in which ELC was subsequently viewed by policy makers.



One of the first policy documents to emerge as a result of the Early Years Framework was 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) which involved a more openly collaborative approach between various professional bodies, health, social work, education and the police, in order to support the indicators for each child of being Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included (SHANARRI). Simultaneously, a new school curriculum was also being introduced, Curriculum for Excellence, 3-18, with overarching aims of promoting the four Capacities of Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Effective Contributors and Responsible Citizens. This would permit a clearer focus on allowing the curriculum fit the individual needs and interests of the child, rather than trying to make the child fit into the curriculum.

However, many of Scotland's children live in poverty and it is the stated aim of Scottish Government (2016) to close the poverty-related attainment gap. *The goal is simple - young people from disadvantaged backgrounds should have the same life chances as those who are lucky enough to start out in a better-off family.*

A recent report (2016) by the Government's Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality, Naomi Eisenstadt, found that 22% of Scottish children are living in poverty and that the lack of affordable, good quality, and flexible childcare is a barrier for many parents who might like to work, or to increase the hours that they do work. Scottish Government's response has been to increase the entitlement to provision of free ELC from 475 to 600 hours through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) and plans to further increase this provision to 1140 hours per year for all by 2020. There is also a commitment to having an additional suitably qualified graduate working in ELC provision 'in the most deprived areas', which may require the recruitment of up to 20,000 additional workers.

A more recent and much more controversial development resulting from GIRFEC is Scottish Government's proposed introduction of the Named Person scheme. In many ways, this amounts to formalising structures that were

already in place, but many (middle class) parents have objected to the scheme as an infringement of their human rights. The named person would usually be already known to the child and their parent / care. Their role is to be available to the child and their family when there is an identified need, acting as a single 'way-in' for the family and child to support services, and also to act as a point of contact for other professionals who may have concerns about the child's welfare. The Act covers children from birth to 18. The focus of the scheme is to support early intervention and prevention.



From pre-birth until school start, the lead will be taken by Family Nurse Partnerships through an extended programme of home visits. From the time that the child starts school, the responsibility will transfer to Education staff. However Scottish Government has acknowledged that it will need to make some changes around data protection as ruled by the UK Supreme Court but is still on course to fully introduce the new system from August 2017, a delay of one year, following a period of consultation and 'intense engagement' on proposed amendments.

To conclude, there is no easy way forward for tackling inequality within society and those of us who work in education could be forgiven occasionally if we feel that progress has been particularly slow over the years. However, it is very encouraging to be working in a country where government has a stated aim to have quality and affordable ELC as a flagship policy.

## References

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**The GIRFEC approach**

## • 2015 AEDC Data Collection



The AEDC provides educators across sectors with a common language to understand and discuss what is working well in their community and where families may need support to ensure that their children are on-track during the early years. Evidence from the AEDC can be used to support policy and practice in early childhood education.

In the 2015 data collection, information was collected on 302,003 children in Australia representing 96.7 per cent of children in their first year of full-time school.

The key findings included:

- 22 per cent of children were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains.
- 11.1 per cent of children were developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains.
- 15.5 per cent of girls and 28.5 per cent of boys were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains.
- The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were not considered developmentally vulnerable, 42.1 per cent of Indigenous children were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains.
- 2015 results show that nationally, seventy-eight per cent of children are not considered developmentally vulnerable.

A particularly encouraging outcome of the 2015 AEDC results has been the continuation of a closing of the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children and non-Indigenous children. The AEDC has been a powerful tool for advocating for provision of better and earlier support for children growing up in communities faced with complex challenges. While there is still a significant way to go and it's important that we keep working to ensure all children get the best start, it is promising to see that we are on the right track.

The results also highlight how developmental vulnerability can look quite



different depending on where children live. For example, for children living in the most remote parts of the country, there has been an increase in developmental vulnerability.

AEDC data can support early childhood education services to complete National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1, element 1.1.1 (curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and developmental outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators).

For example when considering areas for improvement, early childhood educators may want to address the community-wide vulnerabilities demonstrated by the AEDC results. Conversely, low levels of vulnerability may be used to illustrate an area of strength.

Collaborative partnerships that are effective in improving outcomes for local children can work towards shifting the AEDC results for their community. This is reflected in standard 6.1 (developing respectful supportive relationships with families), standard 6.2 (supporting families in their parenting role and respecting parents' values and beliefs on child rearing) and standard 6.3 (linking with other organisations and service providers).

American economist and Nobel prize winner James Heckman argues that once children fall behind in their learning, they are likely to remain behind. Gaps in children's performance levels open up early, and stay mostly constant after eight years of age. Beyond eight years, school environments can only play a small role in reducing these differences.

Investing in the early years can reduce expenditure on special education, criminal justice and welfare, and can increase national productivity by improving the skills of the workforce, reducing disadvantage and strengthening the global competitiveness of the economy.



# THE VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS AWARDS

## The 2016 Early Childhood Teacher of the Year was awarded to:-

**Meagan Hull** of Bentons Square Kindergarten in Mornington

Known for her commitment to early education and her life-changing work with children with additional learning needs, Megan received the honour at the 2016 Victorian Early Years Awards at the National Gallery of Victoria. She is also a Pedagogical Leader for Community Kinders Plus and provides teaching advice across the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula region. Previously Meagan was Chairperson for the Peninsula and Chelsea Kindergarten Teachers Association and is still an active member on the Committee.

At Bentons Square Kindergarten Meagan leads a team of 15 teachers and educators. Educators in two of the four year old groups work in partnership with Biala Peninsula, a local early intervention agency, to provide an inclusive program for children with a range of additional needs.

The program has operated successfully for more than four years. Meagan provides support to the families of children with additional needs by attending meetings as an advocate, liaising with and coordinating early intervention staff working in the kindergarten setting, along with providing mentoring support for the teaching staff at the centre.

### Other awards granted were:

- **Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning Award:** East Sunshine Kindergarten Early Childhood Access and Participation Project (ECAP), East Sunshine Kindergarten, with the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture
- **Supporting Parents to Build Their Capacity And Confidence Award:** Family Early Learning Partnership (FELP), Hume City Council and partner agencies
- **Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships Award:** A Collaborative Response to Family Violence in the East, Eastern Community Legal Centre and partner agencies

- **Promoting Children's Health and Wellbeing Award:** A holistic approach to improving community health outcomes at Jindi Kindergarten, Goodstart Early Learning and partner agencies
- **Minister's Award: Coaching Koorie Kids** – Early Years Health Promotion, Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and partner agencies.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/>



## Early Childhood Teacher Registration

All Victorian early childhood teachers are required to be registered with the **Victorian Institute of Teaching**

The new requirement was introduced to recognise early childhood teachers as professional educators.

Teachers are now required to build their capacity to teach learners with disability. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 provides a definition of learners with a disability.

Every learner has a right to the knowledge and skills that will help shape productive and positive lives, regardless of their physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics.

**PD activities** designed for early childhood teachers are provided by the Victorian government. Many of these are freely available.

<p><a href="#"><u>Disability Standards for Education eLearning This is an external link</u></a></p>	<p>Interactive, scenario-based eLearning modules about the Disability Standards for Education including an early childhood module. They are free for early childhood teachers working in a funded kindergarten and each module takes about 2 hours to complete. The website has information about getting a registration key – ECTs and CRT ECTs can access the registration key by contacting the appropriate Victorian authority.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Early ABLES Online Professional Learning This is an external link</u></a></p>	<p><b>Free</b> online professional learning portal on using the ABLES assessment tools to personalise learning for students who have a disability.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA)This is an external link</u></a></p>	<p>Provides professional development programs in partnership with the Department focused on improving the quality of early childhood intervention.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Austism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Learning ModulesThis is an external link</u></a></p>	<p>Three free modules, developed in partnership with Noah's Ark Inc., will support early years educators to increase their understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their knowledge of inclusive practices for this group of learners. The modules take about 4 hours to complete</p>

## Obituaries

**Judith Falla** (nee Holmes). Graduated in 1948.

**Nancy Robertson** aged 96 years.

**Margaret Griffith** passed away September 2016.



### **Rosamonde Catherine Combes**

16 June 1917 to 29 September 2016

Rosamonde attended MKTC from 1939 – 1941

Following an illustrious career including studying in London with a scholarship, Rosamonde was appointed Senior Lecturer in Child Development and Early Childhood Education at the Melbourne Kindergarten Training College, retiring in 1982. She represented Australia at OMEP Conferences in Vienna, and later, as a Regional Vice-President, in Helsinki and Geneva

**Rest in Peace**

## 2016 /2017 AUDAX

We are providing AUDAX as an electronic Journal to our members.

For those members who have supplied an email address to us, AUDAX will be sent to that address in 2016/2017.

**If you prefer to receive a hard copy instead, you will need to email us at [admin@agecs.org.au](mailto:admin@agecs.org.au)**

*For all other members, you will still receive your hard copy through the postal service.*

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## The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies

is a membership-based, not-for-profit organisation providing professional development and networking opportunities for their members.

**AGECS** members work, or have worked, in the field of Early Childhood education and care and /or they have significantly contributed to the field in other ways.

The Association has a 70 year history of philanthropic work, which continues through its establishment of the Foundation of Graduates of Early Childhood Studies.



### History of the Association

The history of the Association goes back to 1922 when the principal of the Melbourne Kindergarten Training College, Kew, Miss Mary Gutteridge encouraged the students to form the Past Students Association (PSA). Its aim was “to

*bring together graduates for the purpose of fellowship, to maintain links with, and to contribute to, the College and to explore ways of establishing a home where deprived children enrolled in the Free Kindergartens could spend a holiday and have their health restored.”*

