



OMEPA AUSTRALIA

World organisation for Early Childhood Education

Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Pré-scolaire
World Organisation for Early Childhood Education
Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar

National Newsletter

January 2008

INSIDE THIS ISSUE :

SA chapter report 2

News from Victoria 3

Sowing The
Seeds of Peace 3

WA chapter report 4

Coming Events 5

Inside Story 5

Inside Story 6

PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS

It is an honour to be writing this brief message as President of OMEP Australia; President is not a position I envisaged holding although I have been a member of OMEP for 9 years.

Although I am a continuing staff member in the Early Childhood Department of the School of Education at University of South Australia I have spent the predominant part of the past 4 years outside of Australia; 1 year in Papua New Guinea working in an AusAID funded support project for elementary education and the most recent 3 years with the Nusa Tenggara Timor Primary Education Partnership in the Eastern Indonesian island of Flores.

My work in Flores focused around professional development for teachers in classes 1, 2 and 3. In particular there was emphasis on child centred, activity based teaching and learning and ways teachers could work with the newly introduced

competency and outcomes based curriculum. Approximately 80% of current teachers in

classes 1, 2 and 3 have no teaching qualification or training; I found them extremely keen to embrace new ideas and trial them in classrooms even though there were limited or no teaching resources available in schools. Due to the poor economic situation in the area many children suffer poor health and nutrition which of course often impacts on their school attendance and performance. Seeing these children was a daily reminder to me of the vulnerability of young children in all societies and the need for organisations such as OMEP to make every effort so that young children develop to realise their maximum potential

I would like to thank Sue Lancaster for her tireless work as interim President and wish her every success for future endeavours; I am sure she will now have time to pursue many deferred ventures as she previously gave priority to OMEP matters. Western Australia Director Tina Elsegood has resigned and I thank her for the steadfast contribution she made during her time as a Director. Tina's vacated position has been filled by Dawn

Butterworth who I am sure will work loyally for the Board.

Thanks also to other Board and secretariat members who organised and packed materials relating to the move of the OMEP Australia secretariat to South Australia. This is an exciting time especially for South Australians as it is the first time the secretariat has been in South Australia.

I am confident progress is being made with further minor amendments to the draft of the new constitution and subsequently members will be invited to vote on the document.

Whilst this work has been ongoing at the National level I am sure State Chapters have been full of activity with their own interests, fundraising events and projects; no doubt we are all, in our individual ways, working for the goals of OMEP and the welfare of the world's children.

I trust we will move on united.

Trevor Feder

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CHAPTER REPORT



A Goat for the Children of the world project.

“leading us to reflect again on the meaning of ‘It takes a Village to Educate a Child’



Children at Netherby Kindergarten playing as goats.

Members and friends were wonderfully supportive of a fundraising film night in August. ‘Amazing Grace’ told the story of the long and dedicated struggle of William Wilberforce and his friend William Pitt, the younger, toward the abolition of the slave trade – a salutary tale when we consider the forms of slavery still existing in today’s world and sadly, especially, the trade in children and the vulnerable young.

The chapter continues to be represented on the Children’s Week Committee and several members attended various events including:

The **de Lissa Oration** at which Anne Glover A.O. presented a picture of education in Flores, Indonesia, and other village communities, leading us to reflect again on the meaning of ‘It takes a Village to Educate a Child’ and inviting more thinking on what seems appropriate in our own communities, especially indigenous communities.

Safety Day at Tyndale Christian School, where children celebrated and shared safety information with songs, puppets and displays.

The **World Teachers Day** celebration at North Adelaide Primary School combining a recognition of the invaluable contribution of teachers with recognition of exceptional contribution of children, notably: special guides from Berri Special School, the Year 9 drama class from Gawler High School who wrote and performed a play for 5000 junior primary children across the Barossa Valley, ‘Detective K Saves the Day’ through promoting the rules for good health and non-sedentary lifestyle, and Harrison Warrick who while still at Netherby Kindergarten helped initiate the Centre’s saving of clothes and toys for children, after Harrison had shared in the Netherby contribution to working for the children of Aceh.

OMEP members **Professor Wendy Schiller A.M.** and **Jeff Meiners**, together with **Cate Fowler** and **Julie Orchard** from Windmill Performing

Arts won a Children’s Week Award for their longitudinal research which demonstrated conclusively that arts education for children has positive outcomes across the curriculum. Members who attended the National Children’s Week council meetings in Adelaide last March, would have heard Julie Orchard speaking on the wonderful developmentally appropriate productions which Windmill is bringing to children from pre-school age upward.

In celebration of Universal Children’s Day the Chapter invited teachers and carers of children to age 8 to participate in ‘A Goat for the Children of the World’ project, encouraging children to find imaginative ways to raise money for goats for children in Africa, India and South-East Asia, through Oxfam. A goat given to a family can bring nourishment and income – the first female kid born is passed to another family and so the gift grows and grows! Children and their friends from across South Australia have raised funds for a herd of 144 goats. Amazing!!

October and November have been the months for dinners. The celebration of 100 years of Early Childhood Teacher Education in South Australia – the last event in a year of celebratory events – and the UN Day celebration at which the new Lieutenant Governor Mr Hieu Van Le, once a Vietnamese boat person and the first person of Vietnamese origin to be appointed to a vice-regal position in Australia, gave profound insights into the need for multi-cultural respect. At the chapter annual meeting and dinner Angela Falkenberg, principal of Hampstead Primary School shared with humour, the daily life of Hampstead and the response to the play centre initiated for the children. Hampstead has the highest indigenous enrolment of any school in Adelaide.

Merilyn Webb

NEWS FROM VICTORIA

The Annual General meeting of the Victorian Chapter was held Friday 26th October at Lady Gowrie in Carlton. The meeting was quite short with a steering committee elected to continue co ordinating the Chapter projects and events.

There was time for catching up and networking before and after the formal meeting. Some ideas for the future were part of the discussion and the steering committee will be in contact with members to keep them informed. The basketball project in Robinvale is continuing with a second group of children. The chapter thanks Julie Prenc, a Senior Constable with Victoria Police, for her contribution to the project and are hoping to have her in Melbourne early next year to meet and talk through issues facing children and their parents in remote areas.

The next hand over of care bags will be in March 2008. Ways of helping will be distributed to all members in January but in the mean time, keep collecting necessary articles for the bags.

The exciting venture for 2008 will be a memorial dinner celebrating the work of two outstanding leaders of early childhood education. There will be a chance for members to be involved through a sub committee. Contact Shayne for further details phone 9874 8320.

To celebrate Christmas and the six years of the Secretariat in Victoria, there will be a luncheon at the café in the Fitzroy gardens, Saturday 15th December from 12.30pm. RSVP to Shayne if you are able to come. Interstate members in Melbourne during that time would be very welcome to join us. Full details via email – meriella@netlink.com.au.

The Victorian Chapter extends warmest Christmas greetings to all members throughout Australia and wishes South Australia well as they take on the unenviable task of maintaining the National Secretariat for the next three years.

Shayne Collins.

"The next hand over of care bags will be in March 2008. Ways of helping will be distributed to all members in January "

Book Launch: *Sowing The Seeds of Peace* by Joan Waters

Gillian Bedington:

Joan has written this book with great skill unravelling the history of OMEP in Australia from many sources, and presenting it logically and in such a readable form. As you read this book you will be struck by the scope of OMEP's vision right from its inception, and the undoubtable success in creating an International Organisation like no other. From the small initial group of eight countries, which included Australia, it now comprises 65 nations from all parts of the globe

From Joan's response:

I also hope that when you read the book you will be struck by three things.

First, the vision of founders. We can only marvel at the establishing of an organisation at such a time with so few resources. No government funding, no commercial sponsorship. Their resources were strong wills and determination not to be constrained by a rigid set of rules. They planned an organisation that would include members of all nations, all political systems, and all creeds, that would bind together all those with a concern for children and their rights.

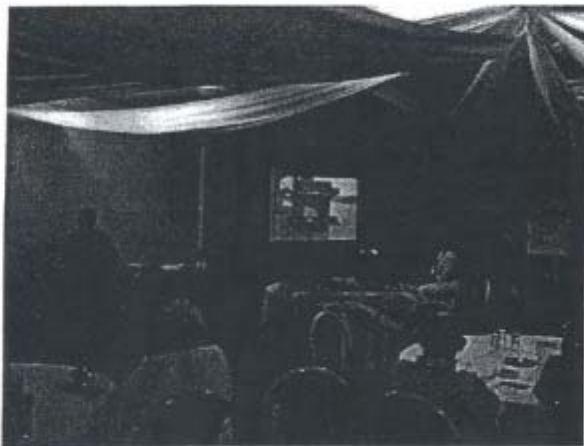
Second, the continuity of OMEP's resolutely-held aims for the total well-being of children demonstrated in the titles of its conferences, seminars and assemblies and the work of its members.

Third, the length of service of many of the members - and the diversity of roles played by many of them, using their skills to keep the organisation changing, developing and flourishing.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CHAPTER REPORT

On Tuesday 13th November, the WA Chapter held a barbecue on the lawns of the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club on the banks of the beautiful Swan River. Afterwards, we adjourned to the upstairs ballroom where we held our Annual General Meeting. All reports were presented and accepted, although the irony of the treasurer presenting her audited annual statement, now in the absence of a WA bank account, did not escape incredulous comment! As in the past, an executive consisting of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and 6 Committee Members was elected for the forthcoming year.

The meeting also ratified the draft constitution to be submitted with the application for incorporation with minor changes and including the changed principal object of the national draft constitution. The recent autocratic and ambiguous restrictions placed by the national secretariat on the ability of the Chapters to fully meet the objects of OMEP, have highlighted the perceived need of the WA Chapter to ensure that it is formally and legally constituted to operate in its own right, whilst still cooperating and working as an integral part of



OMEP (Aust) in furthering Early Childhood Education throughout the world.

Guest speakers following the meeting consisted of Dr Dawn Butterworth (President) and Mrs Judith Parker (Committee Member) who gave a power point presentation of their recent trip to Papua New Guinea on behalf of the International Council of Women and OMEP (WA). As a result of this visit, OMEP (WA) has donated \$400 to Inara Village, Popondetta for roofing iron to keep the rain out of the village elementary school and \$300 to Beama Village Elementary School, Popondetta to purchase basic school supplies. Just yesterday, word was received from Port Moresby that due to current heavy rains, Beama Village is now under 2 metres of water and villagers have had to move inland until the water recedes. Popondetta itself is fed by a big mountain lake that has flooded so that all communications and transportation to Popondetta have been cut. In addition, many villagers now depend on palm oil plantations for money to buy food in the town. Without access to the township and in the absence of home gardens, they will be forced to ransack the gardens of others. This is the reality of village life in Papua New Guinea and these are just some of our neighbours that we are called upon to help.

On the home front, our refugee welcoming kits continue to be distributed through the Princess Margaret Hospital Clinic and plans are well on the way for the further distribution of 300 school starter kits to needy children commencing Year 1 in 2008. Our final event planned for 2007 is a Popondetta Feast to be held in a poolside garden on December 14 to raise funds for our Popondetta Project. We wish all our colleagues in OMEP (Aust) a very Happy Christmas and Peace and Goodwill in the New Year.

Dr Dawn Butterworth

COMING EVENTS

January 2008

Announcing the first joint Australian and New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Conference

The Australian Research in Early Childhood Education (ARECE) group are organising and hosting the next conference for New Zealand and Australia, to be held at Monash University in Melbourne, Tue Jan 22 to Wed Jan 23 2008 (and possibly a pre-conference symposium on Mon Jan 21). Mark the dates in your diary now.

With airfares to Australia now comparable to the cost of airfares in NZ and the huge intellectual and social benefits to be gained by bringing NZ and Australian early childhood research communities together, it makes sense to alternate annually our conferences between Australia and NZ. The research conference will now be held every 2nd year in NZ and every other year in Melbourne. Thus, Childforum Early Childhood Research Network will not be having our annual conference in December in NZ this year, but we will join with our Australian colleagues in January. Updates, with information on submitting a proposal to present and information on attending the conference at Monash University, will be emailed to you through the Childforum Early Childhood Research Network leading up to the event.

In **January 2009** the Australian-NZ conference will be held in Wellington

May 2008

7th OMEP International Conference will be held 22-24 May 2008 in Hong Kong

<http://www.omepconference.ied.edu.hk>

<http://www.ied.edu.hk/omep/>

DETAILS

Ross House
247-251 Flinders Lane
Melbourne
Victoria 3000
E-mail:
info@omepastralia.com.au



OMEP Australia Ltd
ACN 060 578 092

OMEP Australia is a non profit, non government, community based organisation. Established here in 1969, it is the sole representative in Australia of Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire (OMEP) which means the World Organisation for Pre-school Education.

OMEP was founded in 1948 to benefit children under 8 years of age throughout the world. It is dedicated to the enhancement of all areas of children's well being, growth and development from health, education and welfare perspectives

As an advocate for children, OMEP actively raises awareness of the impact of harmful behaviours on children and their families.

OMEP is represented in over 60 countries and cooperates with other international organisations with similar aims such as UNICEF and UNESCO.

www.omepastralia.com.au

National President
Trevor Feder
Trevor.feder@unisa.edu.au

Directors

South Australia
Merilyn Webb
mtwebb@bigpond.net.au

Western Australia
Dr Dawn Butterworth
(Email Pending)

New South Wales
Diane Duvall
Dianeduvall@yahoo.com

Victoria
Shayne Collins
Meriella@netlink.com.au



More Goats

Materials for OMEP newsletters may be sent to Merilyn Webb or direct to Anne Carrington by email to anne.carrington@unisa.edu.au

OR

By Mail to: Anne Carrington
School of Education
UNISA Magill Campus
St Bernards Road
Magill SA, 5072

Back Pages

This is a space for individual members to contribute information and opinion that might interest OMEP members.

Developments in centre/school and home partnerships

Three recent incidents focused my attention on this area. A conference workshop in July where JP teachers from a school near Hobart showed that understanding parents' busy lives helped them to turn around an unsuccessful attempt to introduce take home maths packs. The second was a realisation that many of my student teachers viewed home centre/school relations as a one way trip with teachers in the driving seat. The third was observing parents motivating their young children, involving them in the loop of shopping, waiting for trains, buses or the car that was to pick them up. In each situation these parents modelled behaviour and suitable activities to occupy waiting times. I admired their detailed knowledge of their child's personality and interests and easy ability to use it flexibly.

Changes of emphasis in educational theories from instruction to construction have recognised that children construct many of their ideas from social interactions and that these occur everywhere, at home, in the community as well as in the early childhood centre or school. It is interesting therefore to find some research that gives parents and family a voice as skilful contributors to children's development and learning. Broader definitions of early literacy and numeracy reach back into the early months of children's lives as the beginning of thinking and learning stimulate language and other means of communicating ideas about experiences. Greater interest is being shown in the rich learning that occurs as children interact with their family members and other caregivers in everyday routines and experiences.

Two small projects are noteworthy in their respect for the successful interactive skills revealed in every day family transactions. Margetta and Murphy's (2006) University of Melbourne study looked at children's activities at home and who they interacted with there. Flear and Robbins' (2005) Monash project gave disposable cameras to parents to photograph their 4 year old children engaged in everyday activities at home and in the community. Both studies showed how family members and other caregivers actively supported young children in their activities, monitoring the amount of support needed. Parents knew how to motivate their children, scaffolding endeavours, praising achievements, entering into their interests and answering their questions.

The Margetta and Murphy enquiry into what children did at home and who they did it with included 96 children aged between 60 -77 months from 10 preschool and childcare groups in Melbourne. Parents completed an end of school year questionnaire that was part of a larger study.

Family members regularly spending time each week with children

People	Number of children	Activities
Mother	94	53
Father	80	46
Grandparents	41	36
Others*	22	29

* included aunts, uncles, nannies, babysitters, council carers and family friends.

Collectively mothers listed 58 different activities adults and children shared. These came within four main categories:

play/informal	routine/care	outings/classes/lessons	housekeeping
---------------	--------------	-------------------------	--------------

Mothers and fathers were both involved in all activities with grand parents and others consistently less. Most frequently shared play activities included reading, toys,

talking/interacting and outdoor play with electronic, music/dance and art/craft as shared by moderate numbers with dramatic play, puzzles and academic (numbers and letters) at the bottom of the list.

Routine and care activities were clustered in four areas: feeding/eating, bedtime, bathing and dressing with fathers and mothers almost evenly matched. Grandparents were involved in eating activities to a much lesser degree and almost not at all in other routines.

The most popular shared outings/lessons activity was shopping in which mothers were most involved. Other popular outings included leisure outings and bike rides /walks. Lessons which could include music or physical activities like dance or swimming were evenly shared by both parents and might involve taking a child to and from the activity. A similar result was shown for travelling to /from school and visiting showing that children of this age are accompanied by an adult for out of home activities.

Sharing in housekeeping activities results showed that cooking and gardening were the most frequent and were shared with all categories of adults. Housework and animal keeping were mainly shared with parents while the very low counts of working on the car (3 fathers) and carpentry (1 grandparent) were more specialised.

This research dealt only with regular shared activities but children are also participant observers on a casual basis with tradesmen, and community workers. As these children are accompanied by an adult on out of home journeys there is ample opportunity to communicate about what they see. If casual interactions with neighbours are included this further enlarges the sphere of potential interaction between adults and children. The context of an individual child's social interactions are quite complex.

The Fler and Robbins (2005) study (52 families using 4 preschools and 1 child care centre) documented the everyday experiences of their children in photographs taken at home and in the community. This provided a rich resource for analysis of incidental learning and shared learning when 16 sets of parents met to share the albums they had compiled using the photographs. The only criteria for these pictures was that children would be engaged in an activity. This formed an accepting starting point for analysis as differences were a reflection of individuality rather than indicators of ability levels. Relationships with learning areas emerged as staff and parents studied the photographs. Some examples were digitised accompanied by parent captions for use in a professional development power point presentation. Discussion revealed the wide basis for literacy and numeracy that was available in these children's homes. This included puzzles, drawing, reading the newspaper and TV guide together, going to the library for books, videos, computer games and CDs, reading and telling stories to others including teddies and dolls, memory games, board and card games, singing and recognising signs in the community(road signs and Macdonalds).

References

- Fler, M.& Robbins, J. , 2005, *There is much more to this Literacy and numeracy than you realise: family enactments of Literacy and Numeracy vs Educators construction of learning in home contexts*. *Journal of Australian Research in Early Childhood Education*, vol12, (1) 23-42
- Margetta,K. & Murphy, C. 2006, *What do children do when they are at home and who do they do it with?* *Journal of Australian Research in Early Childhood Education*, vol13, (2) 55-74