



OMEP AUSTRALIA

World organisation for Early Childhood Education

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

National Newsletter

June 2009

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PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS

TREVOR FEDER

The 2007/8 financial year is nearing a close and what mayhem there has been with the global financial crisis dominating news and conversations around the world. As much as media reporting describes how Australia is in a stronger financial position than many other countries, I feel sure many OMEP members will know of families and especially young children who are feeling a heavy impact from this financial crisis.

The Victorian Chapter is keeping us informed on matters relating to those who have suffered in the bushfires and we keenly await further information about how OMEP might best assist in the renewal and supply of resources for the education, care and development of children in the affected areas. Whilst initial impact is easy to see, the ongoing impact of such adversity is more covert and difficult with which to deal.

Where members are part of a Chapter I know that interesting projects and events have occurred and are ongoing, but I am not aware of activities which may have been undertaken by isolated members. I encourage those isolated members who have no chapter through which to send their news to National Newsletter, to contribute as individuals so that members can be informed of events and share news from all over Australia; as we all know OMEP is a national organisation encompassing the working Chapters and individual members.

It was the recommendation of our Auditor that in a small widespread, volunteer organisation such as ours, Chapters should have a degree of autonomy with their financial affairs. To this end, identified Chapter funds currently held by the National body are in the process of being returned to Chapters; this should assist with expediency for management of projects and other events.

As you are aware, work with a new constitution has been in progress for some years. We hope that at the AGM in October the need for a new constitution will finally be resolved and OMEP can proceed with other significant matters. It has been brought to the attention of the secretariat that members who did not attend the Annual General Meeting of OMEP Australia in October 2008 did not receive a copy of the Annual Report. This is available on the web site www.omepaustralia.com.au. If you would like a copy of the full report or the financial report, please contact the national secretary, Marilyn Webb on 08 8379 7640 or mtwebb@optusnet.com.au

The 2009 World Assembly and conference will be held in Lagos Nigeria, 3 – 7 August. It is important that Australia has a representative attend this event. The OMEP Australia World Council Fund can subsidise our delegate's expenses with a small grant. Please contact OMEP by emailing www.omepaustralia.com.au if you are interested in representing Australia. Sincere thanks also to everyone who has contributed to the World Council Fund in the last year. I encourage members and Chapters to continue to support this fund so that delegates attending on behalf of OMEP Australia have greater access to financial support.

OMEP values its members and sincerely hopes that you will maintain your membership so that we are widely represented in Australia as part of the International organisation. Thanks to everyone for support over the 2007/8 OMEP financial year.

Trevor Feder

WORKING FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

NEWS FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The South Australian Chapter along with developing local projects, giving members opportunities to meet with friends and colleagues and supporting national initiatives, aims to offer three to four professional interest events in the course of each calendar year.

The first event for 2009

is a combined fundraising Asian Banquet plus address, to be held at The Burnside Food and Wine Noodle Bistro, Shop 5, 476 Portrush Road, Linden Park, at 7.00 p.m. on Monday 29th June.

Guest Speaker Jane Hargreaves, Project Officer in the Department of Education and Children's Services, will talk about her work in the **"Learning Together Program"** and the new initiatives within the program which improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and their families. Jane was first involved in this program when director of the Christie Downs Kindergarten in the South of Adelaide.

It is now operating in several sites in South Australia. More about this in the next newsletter! In the mean time, if you happen to be in Adelaide on 29th June, we would be delighted to have you join us!

Involving International Students in the Work of OMEPA

It was suggested by a member at the OMEPA National AGM in October last, that chapters could make known the work of OMEPA by inviting international students studying in Australia to share in OMEPA activities. The students would then take back to their home countries an awareness of OMEPA and its' concerns. The chapter sent many special invitations to the last end of year gathering, but no international student accepted, or rather one did at first and then declined! This particular event was held at a private address and this perhaps may not have been the best first choice. Members teaching in Uni SA know that the international students work very long hours and often must manage extremely tight budgets for meals and accommodation. It is planned, in the near future, to offer a small, informal, on campus event with meal provided, which may be of interest to the international students.

Goats for the Children of the World

In the last newsletter, reference was made to the difference having a goat could make to the life of an impoverished family, but the extract from an Oxfam leaflet somehow escaped publication. Please see a similar picture, this time of two boys in Malawi. They are in the care of an uncle, having lost their parents to AIDS. As with the recipients of goats in Sri Lanka, the revolving goat program provides the boys with nutritious milk and potential income. See below.



Clean Water for the Children of Cambodia

See previous page for another picture from Oxfam, this time of community members around a well constructed in Southern Africa.

The well supplies safe, clean water to 2250 people. The 38 wells provided to Cambodia through the chapter's 2008 project are similar

Projects for 2009

It is a delight to report that the musical instruments so generously provided by Marie Reynolds, are in part already in use at the Hampstead Play Centre and in part in transit to Victoria (See article from the Advertiser 12th June 09 about the Hampstead Play Centre, page 8)

A keyboard has been reserved for the use of an abused family living in a safe house. It will be very much used and appreciated. Another gift to the chapter of several books with songs and music, has been delivered with the keyboard.

The Pheasant Creek Play Group in the fire affected King Lake area, is up and running. Steiner teacher and host, Sue, has sent pictures, below. In Steiner tradition, mothers and children are enjoying water, home made bread and muffins. Play Group leader Mary Anne, also a Steiner teacher is running in the grass with Dominic. Sue says Mary Anne is like a grown up Pippi Longstocking!

Merilyn Webb—Director SA



NEW SOUTH WALES NEWS

Diane Duvall is on well deserved extended leave.
The secretariat wish her good fortune in her travels

NEWS FROM VICTORIA

The year has got off to an encouraging beginning with an interesting calendar of events which has been carefully planned by the Victorian committee.

A visit to the new Children's Centre operated by Gowrie Victoria was most interesting and provided much scope for discussion and reflection. See article on page 7. The centre is situated within the new Docklands development complex, in the heart of Melbourne and on the bay. About 25 members enjoyed drinks and savories while listening to Gilda Howard, CEO, who talked about the history of the establishment of the centre and the thinking behind its design. Many challenges had to be overcome with the centre being on the first floor of a city building, particularly relating to the playground design and development. Following this discussion Gilda took the group for a tour through the centre describing the philosophy relating to each of the rooms and outdoor environments - it was hard to believe we were on the first floor when entering the outdoor play space, an area with many nooks and crannies which will be a child's delight as it matures over the next few years. It will be wonderful for children who are living in the high rise apartments in the area, and notable were the number of dad's coming to collect their children on their way home from work.

By the time you will have received this Newsletter the second planned event for OMEP Victorian Chapter members and friends for the year will have taken place. On Tuesday 19 May an evening celebrating the life and influence of Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown will take place. Dr. Scantlebury Brown graduated as a medical practitioner in 1914 and took up residency at the Royal Children's Hospital where, by 1916 she was a Senior Resident. She was the first Director of Victoria's Maternal, Preschool and Infant Welfare Services. A trust was established after her death and thousands of pounds were donated to commemorate her life. An Annual Scholarship is awarded to help women pursue post-graduate study in an area which contributes to the health and well being of the Victorian community. Since 2004 in addition to supporting the Annual Scholarship a memorial lecture has been introduced.

Since the establishment of the scholarship a number of kindergarten teachers have been awarded this prestigious scholarship and OMEP is proud to count a number of these women in its membership. An evening in May with soup and crusty bread has been planned where a number of Dr. Scantlebury Brown scholars will speak about the influence of the award on their careers. As well Heather Sheard who is completing a PhD on the life of Dr. Scantlebury Brown will talk about her research, and Joan Waters, who has completed a book on all the successful scholars and the history of the scholarship, will share her historical research with those attending this evening.

On a practical note and in response to the needs of Victorian's who suffered on Black Saturday an early evening session will take place also in May, where members will participate in a Steiner Doll making and Knitting Workshop. We are expecting some mother and daughter combinations to participate in this evening along with their friends. We have also had some very generous responses for our call for equipment for kindergartens destroyed in the fires which we are currently distributing to the temporary kindergarten site at Flowerdale where the kindergarten was completely destroyed.

At its meeting in June the Committee will make a decision about which projects the Victorian Chapter can support financially and having made that decision will move quickly to ensure that support gets to where it is needed. We urge you to get in touch with us by email to the Secretary Pat Jewell on patj@bigpond.net.au or by post to PO Box 1194 Surrey Hills North VIC 3127 with any ideas for projects that you think might benefit from our support.

Sue Harper
Victorian Chapter President

NEWS FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

General Business

* The twelve members of the executive of OMEP WA continue to conduct their business over supper at the Butterworth home on the third Tuesday of each month.

* An application to the ATO for tax exemption has resulted in income tax exemption, GST concessions and FBT rebate from June 2, 2008 for WA.

* A unanimous decision was made at our last meeting to invite Mr Simon Butterworth (Manager of WA Operations, ALCOA) to be patron of OMEP (WA) in recognition of the generous and ready support of our activities by ALCOA.

* The Annual General Meeting of OMEP WA has been planned for Monday, August 10th at 7pm at the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club. The guest speaker is Janni Goss, presenting a well-being kit developed especially for carers of young children and featuring laughter and relaxation. Once more we are indebted to the PFSYC for the use of their wonderful facilities free of charge.

Sundowner

On Tuesday April 28th, members met at the Butterworth home to watch the sun go down over the Swan River and to enjoy camaraderie over cocktails and supper. A beautiful crocheted Afghan rug, made and generously donated by Secretary, Lesley Cangemi, was raffled and resulted in raising \$300.

Theatre Outing

On Sunday, May 3rd, a group of OMEP WA members greatly enjoyed the play 'Sleuth' at the Harbour Theatre in Fremantle. Taking Devonshire tea in the sunny courtyard at interval was equally pleasant.

Refugee Welcoming Kits

Ann Taylor continues to package kits for us to welcome refugee children to WA. Each kit comprises a bag or back pack containing a welcoming letter and 9 items consisting of toothbrush and toothpaste, socks and underpants, picture book, coloured pens or pencils or paint box, drawing paper, activity or sticker book and toy. Recently, a quantity of toys was donated to us from a Fremantle pharmacy. Volunteers at PMH distribute the kits for us to children attending the Refugee Clinic.

Uthando Project

Dawn will be representing OMEP WA at a three day workshop (July 1-3) to make dolls that suit a child's culture for use in expressive play. In addition, CEO Rachel Rozentals-Thresher and psychologist Sibongile Mhkiye from the Rob Smetheshan Bereavement Services (RobS) for Children in South Africa will lead workshops in the use of the dolls with children suffering stress, grief and loss. South Africa has the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world and 25% of South African males admit to raping women – some before the age of 10years. Coming just before NAIDOC Week, this workshop has relevance to those working with our indigenous children who have suffered abuse, or who grieve loss of culture or country or mother tongue or isolation. It is hoped that this experience and networking will lead to support for a similar indigenous project in WA.

Dr Dawn Butterworth (President, OMEP WA)

**OMEP WORLD CONGRESS AND WORD ASSEMBLY IN LAGOS, NIGERIA
3RD—7TH OF AUGUST 2009
THEME: LEARNING TO LISTEN, LISTENING TO LEARN**

Sub-Themes for Workshops and Seminars:

1. Strategies for Communicating and interacting with young children
2. "Hear Me Out" Supporting Children at Resolving Conflicts in the early years
3. Communication, Language and Literacy: Children learning more than Words
4. Integrating listening throughout the curriculum
5. Encouragement versus Praise
6. Communicating with Parents
7. Helping Adults Support Children's Listening
8. Young children developing language for life: You can make a difference
9. Teaching children to listen to one another
10. Assessing Children's Listening

OMEP SINGAPORE

Thursday 13th August to Saturday 15th August 2009

Asia Pacific Region Annual Assembly and Conference

"Education for Sustainability"

Programme

13/8/09 Annual Assembly

14/08/09 School visits, registration, opening ceremony

15/8/09 2009 Asia Pacific Conference

OMEP SWEDEN

26TH World Congress, 11-13 August 2010

Goteborg, Sweden

CHILDREN Citizens in a Challenged World:

Different Childhoods

Education for Sustainable Development

Gender Equity and Equal Rights

www.omep2010.org

Early Childhood Australia National Conference

29 September- 2 October 2010

Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia

'Garla Bauondi': Fuelling the Fire

www.eacaconference.com.au

Three major themes:

The Arts

Professional Leadership

Inspiring Environments

These will be developed through the following strands:

Advocacy, curriculum, assessment, reflective learning, equity and inclusivity, play, coherence, sustainability.

NEWS FROM INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT ASIA PACIFIC REGION

Doreen Launder, International Vice President for the Asia Pacific Region writes:

"Dear National Presidents, OMEP members, colleagues and friends,

.....I send my blessings to you all as together we confront a crisis in world economies and uncertain futures. In such times the need to respond to the well-being of our communities, especially families, children and particularly the disadvantaged, is ever more pressing. Remembering OMEP'S focus in 1948 following a different catastrophe, I wish you all strength and courage in your work for children and families in each of your countries."

Early this year Doreen had requested reports on 2008 activities from National Presidents in our region together with fact sheets on provision of early childhood services. In responding to these requests our National President, Trevor Feder consulted widely in compiling the fact sheets and chapter reports were most helpful in giving an Australia wide perspective on activities during the 2008 calendar year.

Doreen has not as yet received many fact sheets, but in reading the annual reports she has the impression that the Region's 15 National Committees uphold the vision of **children's rights to education**, and **growing recognition of children's rights within education**. "Rights within education bring matters such as children's heritage language, culture and respect for parents' and children's knowledge as shared learning into focus."

NEWS FROM INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT— ASIA PACIFIC REGION (Continued)

Doreen has grouped together aspects of the various reports, to give a general picture of activities across the region. Overall she is hopeful that concern for sustainable development can be enhanced. The recent meeting of the International Executive in Greece, led to a decision to move away from 5 working groups, to focus on:

research projects, development projects and birth to three years, each of these to have a component of education for sustainability.

The international vice president strongly urges as many members as possible to attend the assemblies in Nigeria and Singapore, and next year's congress in Sweden. See page 6 Articles for the international journal would also be appreciated.

Asia Pacific E News #38 is available by email on request to your chapter president or the national secretariat.

Visit to Victoria Harbour Children's Centre, Docklands Melbourne

On Monday 30th March, I joined others from the Victorian Chapter for a tour of the new Gowrie Victoria venture in Docklands.

Gilda Howard, CEO, gave us a brief history about how Gowrie Victoria was awarded the contract to operate this new venture within the Docklands precinct. It is a venture with Lend Lease, City of Melbourne, and Vic Urban. Gowrie was very excited to be involved from the beginning including spending considerable hours with the architects to ensure the resultant building would be what is best for children.

The building is on the first floor above Safeway and when fully operational will cater for 125 children plus.

From the way Gilda spoke, some things about the building were easy and some other things that were principles of best practice had to be fought for. One such principle concerned sandpits. The builders did not believe several sand pits were necessary as it would be very difficult to get the sand up to the first floor. Being a very flexible early childhood person, Gilda suggested the cranes being used on the building site would be able to lift the necessary amounts of sand into the several sandpits in the outside play space.

Top ups in the future will have to come up via the lift!!

The building is basically a "U" shape with all playrooms opening out into the outdoor play spaces.

It has been designed to meet sustainability standards with several water tanks being incorporated into the walls of the building but in a very aesthetic way.

Thus the children can have access to water for play experiences.

The outside play space has sand pits; stone pathways; drought proof plantings; a veggie garden; a herb garden; small hills to run up and down; quiet play spaces; digging patch; dry creek bed; ponds for water and shade trees as well. All this up on the first floor. Neighbouring wall spaces on nearby buildings blend with the colour scheme of the play space and reduces glare for those outside. Along one wall, there are windows so the children can look down on the traffic below.

The playrooms for the older children have a shared art/drama/music whatever you need space between them which most of us thought to be quite innovative.

There is a fabulous dining room with ready access to the kitchen. The children can choose to come to the dining room for meals or eat outside or eat in their own room.

There are two very long corridors that just invite children to "run" or hop or skip

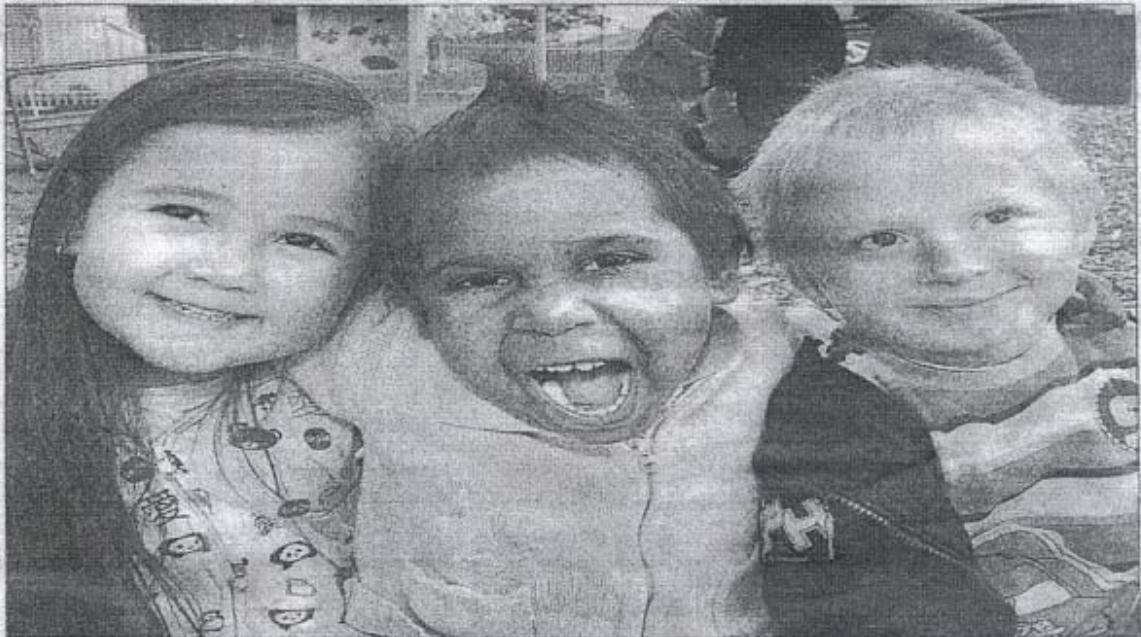
Staff have not been forgotten with lots of storage and shared office spaces between playrooms as well as a separate staffroom in which to relax.

As well, there is a state of the art-technology room for seminars or community meetings.

I believe the Centre is an exciting place for children and the treatment of the outdoor play space with its severe limitations is a great example on how to provide natural play materials and spaces that will engage children in worthwhile play without resorting to "plastic and artificial grass".

If you are in Melbourne, include a visit to the Centre. You will not be disappointed.

Shayne Collins.
Victoria



HAPPY DAYS: Hampstead Preschool students Charlene, Abu and MJ.

Picture: SARAH REED

All smiles as kindy stays open

LAUREN NOVAK

MORE northern suburbs parents will have access to childcare after a state government decision to continue a preschool service at Greenacres.

Early Childhood Development Minister Jay Weatherill announced this week that the Hampstead Preschool would continue to op-

erate following a successful one-year trial.

During that time enrolments at the preschool, in the grounds of Hampstead Primary School, jumped from 14 children to 28.

Hampstead Primary School principal Angela Falkenberg said the centre operated on Wednesdays and Thursdays but that

might increase if demand continued to rise. "Once more people become aware of it, there will probably be more interest," she said.

Mr Weatherill said about half the four-year-olds in the area had been attending preschool before the trial. "With about a quarter of families without a car, getting to

early childhood services outside of the immediate area was difficult for many families," he said.

Beryl Scroop said her niece Abu, 4, loved going to the preschool.

"They're learning a lot, their confidence is growing and they're making lots of friends," she said of Abu and her classmates.

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The kindergarten mentioned above has grown from the Hampstead School's Play Centre, an initiative of the teachers in the school, who found that there were children in the area who were coming to the school with no previous organised group experience. These children included a group from the Warlbiri community in the NT, who had come to live with a community member in Adelaide. OMEP first gave support to the Play Centre in 2007. The work of the teachers was recognised later that year with the presentation of a Children's Week Play Award

Please Note

Both the State Chapter reports and individual contributions to the Back Pages section of the Newsletter reflect the diversity of events and concerns across Australia. It is recognised that the views these represent are not necessarily shared by all OMEP members; they are included in the spirit of mutual respect

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