

**ANNUAL REPORT 2006/7**

# **OMEP Australia**

**Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire**



*OMEP is an international, non-government organisation, founded in 1948 to benefit children 0—8 years throughout the world.*

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## President's Report—Sue Harper



This Annual Report of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), describes the activities for the year ending 30 June 2007.

A highlight of the year was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of OMEP Australia held at Di Palmas restaurant in Abbotsford. Approximately 40 members and guests enjoyed a gourmet luncheon in a convivial atmosphere with the restaurant staff joining in the celebratory spirit. Guest speaker Julian Pocock, Chief Executive Officer of the Secretariat of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), spoke about historical and current issues for indigenous children and young people and the work his organisation does in supporting these communities.

Following these celebrations to mark the golden anniversary of OMEP Australia the year 2007 has seen the publication of *Sowing Seeds of Peace: Australia and the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education* by Joan Waters. The emphasis of this book is on the development of OMEP in Australia as well as Australian participation in the region and in World Council meetings. The title comes from Madeleine Goutard, OMEP President 1981-1986 who wrote, "Devoting itself to the education of children whose personality is being shaped, OMEP's task is to sow the seeds so that a harvest of peace will be possible." The title chosen by Joan for this book reflects Madeleine's words and the cover – hands nurturing a seedling are a graphic illustration of these sentiments. OMEP Australia thanks Joan for her commitment to this task.

In 2006 the Annual Report described the frustration for the Directors and for the membership as we all grappled with the many vexing issues raised during the review of the Constitution. Unfortunately these issues continue to absorb the major part of the Directors thinking, action and time. Throughout the reporting period the Directors have had ongoing meetings and advice from Freehills in an effort to resolve differences of opinion and enable final agreement on the way forward. At the end of the reporting period (30 June 2007), agreement had not been reached.



OMEP Australia thanks Freehills for their availability, interest and willingness to persevere in an attempt to achieve satisfactory results for OMEP. Freehills have provided OMEP with ongoing and in depth, expert advice over an extended period of time, well beyond their capacity to do so on a pro bono basis. It is with regret that we announce that Freehills are no longer able to give us pro bono advice. Many of us will miss the positive, cheerful and professional relationships which have been built up over several years and our most sincere thanks is extended to the legal team who worked with us so closely.

The World Assembly was held in Tromso, Norway in August 2006. OMEP Australia was not represented at this forum however warm congratulations are extended to Doreen Launder, from New Zealand who was elected Regional Vice President for the Asia Pacific Region of OMEP.

## The President's Report.....continued

The conference theme, *The Great Little Researcher* attracted many papers of interest and as with all OMEP Congress events, social activities and visits to places of interest for those interested in early childhood offered opportunities to indulge in the Norwegian culture, network with friends and colleagues and experience new perspectives and ideas

Reports presented at the Assembly included:

- ◇ The Birth to 3 years Survey
- ◇ Alliances formed with the World Forum
- ◇ The International Study of Play
- ◇ The Research Forum hosted by New Zealand.

In October, an OMEP Asia Pacific regional meeting took place in Seoul, Korea during the conference of the Korean Society for Early Childhood Education. The OMEP World President Selma Simonstein attended the Conference which was sponsored by the Korean Government. The theme of the conference, *Transcending Modernity in Early Education and Care* was developed by Gunilla Dahlberg from the Swedish Institute of Education, Daniel Walsh from the Illinois (USA) University and Hae-Ryung Yeu from Yeungnam University in Korea.

The National Newsletter was produced four times during the year. Special thanks to Carlene Bolden, Sue Lancaster and Pat Cooper who produced Newsletters during the year. I know that members appreciate the opportunity to hear of the activities of OMEP across Australia. The Newsletter provides a vehicle for sharing information and is the link that reminds us all that OMEP Australia is a national organisation. The OMEP international e-news has been the source of some articles while others have been generated from the content of the OMEP International Journal. Many hours have been committed to ensure that each edition of the Newsletter makes interesting reading.

The Secretariat has met six times and the Directors have met by teleconference 9 times, each for durations of one to one and a half hours. In October a two day face-to-face meeting was held in Melbourne, making a total of 10 meetings for the year.

The Directors are:

New South Wales	Diane Duvall	8 meetings attended
South Australia	Merilyn Webb	10 meetings attended
Western Australia	Michelle Sullivan (resigned 1 January 2007)	4 meetings attended
	Tina Elsegood (appointed 1 January 2007)	6 meetings attended
ACT	Gillian Styles (resigned 28 June 2007)	2 meetings attended
Victoria	Susan Lancaster	10 meetings attended
	Shayne Collins (appointed 28 June 2007)	
	Susan Harper (resigned 12 June 2007)	7 meetings attended

## The President's Report.....continued

The time commitment for Directors continues to be significant and involves considerable effort if OMEP is to function efficiently. This will not diminish, regardless of the legal framework that OMEP adopts in the future. Work on the Business Plan has not progressed. A Business Plan will guide and inform its operation, without which OMEP runs the risk of becoming irrelevant, out of touch and will have difficulty surviving into the future.

One of the more positive aspects of the work of the Board was the agreement at the face to face meeting in October, on the contents of an Operations Manual, containing fifteen policies to guide the day to day operation of the organisation in areas where the Constitution is silent. Subjects covered include formation of chapters or special interest groups, director's travel and accommodation, investments, financial management, criteria and process for approval of membership, use of the World Congress fund, publications, advertising, partnerships, projects, life membership and web site. These agreed policies, to be used alongside the constitution, are a useful way of ensuring that all decision making is open and transparent - they promise to be a positive way of working into the future.

It was with considerable pleasure that the Board of Directors approved a grant for \$2,000 to SNAICC to support the development of an indigenous cultural information kit. This funding will enable the kit to be distributed to kindergartens more widely, providing culturally appropriate teaching materials for both indigenous and non-indigenous children.

Some other issues discussed by the Directors have included:

- Investment Plan
- Immediate priorities
- Budget
- History of OMEP Australia
- The Constitution and the future of OMEP
- The roles and responsibilities of Directors
- Membership targets
- The web page – [www.omepaustralia.com.au](http://www.omepaustralia.com.au)
- A national focus
- Development of policies
- Delegate to World Congress and Council in Mexico City, Mexico
- Business Plan
- Posters for marketing OMEP

Many states and territories continue to be represented in the membership however it is of some concern that in some states, meetings have not been convened for some years. In other states decisions are made based on the views of one or two people. I am sure that it is the hope of us all, that Chapters will be active with opportunities and encouragement for our rapidly declining membership to become increasingly involved.

The website has been the source of considerable interest from prospective members and a poster has been circulated to the Directors for use in promoting OMEP membership at conferences and events.

## The President's Report.....continued

The Secretariat has enjoyed the privilege of serving OMEP at the highest level over the last six years. Many new friendships have been forged and despite the constant demands and responsibilities, we believe we have been successful. There is an enormous sense of satisfaction in handing over the organisation in a strong financial position, with policies in place and groundwork undertaken which should enable OMEP to flourish in a business environment. Whether we like it or not, OMEP is a business and increasingly will be pressured to meet modern governance standards.

It was with disappointment that I tendered my resignation in May 2007, effective June 2007. OMEP has been a big part of my life as it has for many of us. I was not able to complete tasks that I was committed to finishing and trust that future Directors will take up the role with vigour and gusto. Very special thanks must go to the current Secretariat, Sue Lancaster, Pat Cooper and Sue Bradshaw, who have supported me, but most of all have been advisers and friends.

Members are the organisation and I urge you all to become actively involved in OMEP at every level. The shared passion for children – their care, wellbeing and education is the focus for us all and the glue that binds the membership together. Active participation in our organisation is rewarding and I commend it to you all.

**Sue Harper OAM**

President

[Resigned 12 June 2007]

### Post Script

It is with sadness that we record the death on 11th September 2007, of Cecily Westbrook. A graduate of the Melbourne Kindergarten Training College, Cecily was a founding Director of OMEP Australia, representing Tasmania, when it was incorporated as a Company in 1993. Cecily died after a long illness, courageously borne. She continued her interest in the well-being of children and will be fondly remembered by friends, colleagues and her five children.



Directors of OMEP Australia met at Ross House October 2007

## Chapter Report

## South Australia

Members of committee at 30/06/07: Angela Norris (President), Yvonne Boers, Anne Carrington, Bev Hall, Liz Mitchell and Marilyn Webb

Members who completed their term of office at the 2006 Chapter AGM; Rebecca Harding, Vikki Hopwood and Italia Parletta.

A highlight for the South Australian Chapter has been its ongoing representation on the Children's Week Committee. OMEP member Shahrzad Ferdowsi was nominated for a Children's Week award, in her recognition of her 20 years of service to children in child care and an advocate for the rights of all children to live in freedom regardless of their religion, culture or beliefs.

Other highlights of Children's Week in which OMEP had an interest was the annual play award to Hampstead Primary School whose staff, recognising the deficit in group play experience of some of the school's younger children, had developed a play centre within the school. The award provided \$200 toward purchase of equipment and the chapter was pleased to give an additional \$1000. Several members attended events, including the launch of Children's Week by Dr Fraser Mustard, the awards as above, Safety Day, the de Lissa Oration from Catherine Hydon, the Education Minister's awards for children and the celebration of World Teachers Day. Participating in the planning for *Our Children the Future* Conference has again been part of the chapter activities.

The chapter invited schools and children's centres to assist in fundraising for backpacks to carry library books for the Anangu Pitjantjatjara children at Mimili School and was delighted to receive a donation of \$500 from the Order of Australia Association toward the project. The chapter later provided \$2000 to Mimili to help bring groups of children to Adelaide, to discover something of the world beyond the desert. There is an ongoing clothes collection especially of jumpers for the cool desert nights.

With the assistance of the Children's Week co-ordinator and the Adelaide Kiwanis, the chapter organised a Children's Week exhibition in the Education Centre Gallery, of children's work relating to the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. The work exhibited highlighted both life in the desert and ways of keeping the rest of the earth from becoming desert.

Two home based general meetings allowed members to share a meal, make a donation to funds, discuss ongoing issues and to hear from Alanna Murphy of a teaching life in an Aboriginal school in the APY lands.

In June a comprehensive report on the spending of \$5000 in microcredit funds raised by schools, children's centres and the chapter toward rebuilding of children's services in Aceh, was received from Ian Gillespie. While volunteering as a lecturer in English in a final year teacher education course. Ian engaged three of his students for the project. From an initial list of 70 kindergartens, 17 which had received no post-tsunami aid were selected, 7 for outdoor and 10 for indoor equipment. The team assessed need in consultation with local staff, budgeted, purchased and delivered materials, sometimes with a hand over ceremony. Special thanks are due to Ian and to contact people Karen Gillespie and Anne Glover, for this wonderfully far reaching outcome of the micro-credit project.

Marilyn Webb—Director

## Chapter Report

## Victoria

Although the majority of members of OMEP Australia are Victorian, the energy required to motivate and consolidate this membership has been a challenge again this year. However, despite expressions of despair from committee members in Melbourne, there has been a great deal achieved and I would like to remind the committee of their many achievements and congratulate all members for this effort.

The committee transferred almost \$12,000 to OMEP Australia for investing in the OMEP Australia Goldman Sachs JBWere investment account, on the advice of the auditor. These funds will be made available to the chapter as requested and approved by the Board of OMEP Australia, to support new and ongoing projects within Victoria. I am sure Victoria will continue to seek opportunity to add to this resource in many ways.

Educational and networking events and fund raising functions have included:

- ◇ The Greenacres Golf Club Card Day where members and friends again gathered to participate in a selection of indoor games.
- ◇ Visits to the Tapestry Workshop and the Johnson Collection.
- ◇ An evening presentation to hear about kindergarten integration programs, one bridging the gap between kindergarten and school the other integrating children with a hearing impairment within a community kindergarten.
- ◇ Planning to continue the Care Bag Project, successfully launched in 2005.
- ◇ A Christmas afternoon tea at the home of Sue Harper where Sue and her grandson William, Jenny Hume and Sue Lancaster decorated Christmas tables, adding to the Christmas atmosphere.
- ◇ Following the success of the Christmas function an Easter happening, again at the home of Sue Harper, took place with Easter tables the theme for this occasion.

All of these events provide members with an opportunity to come together, to network and discuss the current issues in early childhood education. It also provides an opportunity to raise funds with a committed group of people setting up a 'selling table' with a variety of goods for sale.

A new and exciting project, the Robinvale Mini Ball Project, was launched in Robinvale in term two. The project was conducted over 9 weeks at Robinvale stadium with 22 children enrolled. Children were taught ball skills and the basics of basketball, parents were encouraged to join in the activity so they could help the children at home. Children were given a mini ball of their own to take home and encouraged to practice, which we have been told was taken seriously and with pleasure by the children.

There were many great outcomes of this project, the involvement of indigenous and non-indigenous children and parents participating together, opportunity this project gave to children who had not been successful in a sport before and the engagement and support provided by the wider community as word about the project spread. Shayne Collins, secretary of OMEP Victoria at the time, was the driving force behind this project calling on the support of her local connections, who organised and ran the program. The project will be sponsored again in term three and it is hoped that it will continue on a regular basis, with local community support.

Sue Lancaster—Director

## Chapter Report

## Western Australia

### OMEP Children's Art Exhibition

In October 2006, the WA Chapter showcased the OMEP Children's Art Exhibition in the Indigenous Cultural Room of the innovative Kooronkurl Katitjin building on the Mt Lawley Campus of Edith Cowan University. The exhibition was accompanied by special children's art activities at the weekend.

### Children's Week Celebration

In conjunction with AWCH, we provided children's hospital play and art activities for the closing celebration of Children's Week in beautiful Hyde Park.

### Desert Project

Beanies and environmental materials were donated to 8 Aboriginal schools located in the Gibson Desert of WA in celebration of International Year of Deserts.

### Healthy Living Project

In order to promote healthy eating and regular exercise to combat childhood obesity, OMEP WA served on the judging panel and donated the pre-primary section prize of the Healthy Living Project mounted by NCW WA.

### AGM and Christmas Party

A very successful AGM and Christmas party was held in the ballroom of the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club. All executive positions were filled and proceeds of the evening's raffle were donated to the guest speaker – Lesley Hewett of Cambodia Awareness for the orphanage that she operates for street girls in Cambodia.

### School Starter Kits and Refugee Welcoming Kits

300 school starter kits were distributed to needy children commencing Year 1 of primary school for the start of the 2007 school year. A further 50 refugee welcoming kits have been handed out to needy refugee families attending Princess Margaret Hospital Clinic, along with clothing and household items.

### Sundowner and River Cruise

A most enjoyable Sundowner was held in the beautiful poolside garden of our Secretary and Director, Tina Elsegood in February, 2007 and we were pleased to send \$300 to Sister Dorothy in Paitan, Sabah to assist with the establishment of preschool education in remote villages. In addition, soft toys and children's clothing were donated to a children's audiology clinic in Surabaya, Indonesia. Further camaraderie was enjoyed during a luncheon cruise on Wolverine.

### Committee Meetings

The executive committee has met monthly and spent considerable time discussing the draft constitution. Concern over the current direction of OMEP (Aust) has resulted in a drop in WA membership. In particular, WA has found the increasing level of autocratic leadership very inhibiting and they have as a consequence decided to pursue incorporation of the WA Chapter.

Dawn Butterworth – President

Tina Elsegood - Director

## Chapter Report

## New South Wales

Unfortunately during this reporting period the New South Wales Chapter has not been able to rally members to meet as group.

However, Diane Duvall continues to distribute Joan Waters, "A New Challenge: Helping in Early Childhood Settings," as part of training sessions provided by Lady Gowrie Child Centre again this year.

## Chapter Report

## ACT

In the March 2007 OMEP Newsletter Gillian Styles wrote about the national indigenous program to support the remote indigenous community of Titjikala in the Northern Territory. We congratulate the small body of members and friends who collected warm clothing for babies, children and women to be sent to the Women's Centre for distribution. Baby clothes are given directly to families for their new babies, other items are sold at a nominal cost and the income generated is used to benefit the community.

This small team harnessed the goodwill of other sectors in the ACT community, particularly children from after school care groups and preschool centres who made cards and wrote letters to the children in the territory. It is hoped that the centres will keep these links flowing providing ongoing dialogue across the two communities.

## OMEP Life Members

- ◇ **Gillian Beddington**
- ◇ **Rosamonde Combes**
- ◇ **Mary Folkl**
- ◇ **Joan Waters**



**Gillian & Rosamonde at the Anniversary luncheon**

## Membership Report—July 2006 to June 2007

The figures in the table below show clearly the trend over the past three years of a decrease in our total membership . However 2006/7 represents a major drop in membership from 234 to 175. These decreases were in both individual and organisational members across all states except for Northern Territory which increased by one individual member who had transferred from Victoria.

It was hoped that our web site might attract new members. Information packages were sent to a number of people who made enquires however only two new members were gained from this source. It would appear people were looking to sign up for a free online membership.

This year all members received a complimentary copy of the *Grandfather Stories*, new members received a 'gold' badge and membership certificates were again provided for organisational members.

There is challenge for OMEP Australia as there is a real concern membership figures for our next financial year could be even lower. It would be good to see the membership widened to include other professionals concerned with the education, health and welfare of young children as was the original aim of OMEP.

State	2004/5	2005/6		2006/7			
	Members	Members	Individual	Organisations	Members	Individual	Organisations
ACT	7	3	3		3	3	
NSW	26	20	10	10	13	7	6
N.T.	2	3	1	2	4	2	2
QLD	19	13	7	6	10	7	3
S.A.	34	29	27	2	25	23	2
VIC	127	123	100	23	91	75	16
W.A.	31	43	38	5	29	25	4
TOTALS	246	234	186	48	175	142	33

Pat Cooper

Membership Secretary

### Secretariat

**PRESIDENT**

Sue Harper

**SECRETARY**

Sue Lancaster/Sue Bradshaw

**TREASURER**

Sue Lancaster

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

Pat Cooper

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**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Carlene Bolden/Pat Cooper

## Financial Report 2006/07

Please find attached to the Annual Report a full audited copy of the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2006. Ms Michelle Westhorpe Certified Practicing Accountant, Registered Tax Agent and Registered Company Auditor of Selby Westhorpe & Partners Pty Ltd of 1012 Doncaster Road, East Doncaster Victoria prepared these Statements.

Members will note that accounts have been consolidated to include the bequest and state chapter funds, accounting for the total profit/loss recorded of \$70,420. However when operating expenses against income for OMEP Australia and state chapters for the 2006/07 financial year are considered separately from the bequest each entity records a loss, for some chapters this was considerable.

During the 2006/07 financial year, the profits from the World Congress held in Melbourne and the proceeds of the generous bequest of Ms Nancy Bastow were invested with Goldman Sachs JBWere. The final payment is yet to be received. The terms of the Will of Ms Bastow require that the proceeds from the bequest acknowledge the memory of her friend Beth Stubbs. We are most fortunate to have received this legacy and as the capital base increases, OMEP Australia will have the opportunity to develop projects nationally to support the wellbeing, development and education of our future adults. It is the responsibility of OMEP Australia to ensure the use of the proceeds from this bequest reflects the lifework of both these visionary women. We have also been reminded by our auditor that OMEP Australia must provide future budgets that stand alone and should not rely on reserves and investments to support the operation of the organisation.

In 2006, new Audit Standards introduced in 2006 has meant that an audit must involve a full and comprehensive appraisal of the company operations and management and include a risk assessment. During the year, all accounts were consolidated into one account under the management of OMEP Australia to comply with good practice required by law, to be accountable and minimise risks to the company. Consistent with the requirements of auditing procedure Michelle Westhorpe has informed Directors and members of OMEP Australia of her observations arising from the audit. These observations should be addressed by the incoming Board of Directors.

With the transfer of the Presidency and Executive of OMEP Australia from Victoria to South Australia following this Annual General meeting, the Board of Directors at the request of South Australia agreed that an auditor from that state be nominated as the company auditor for the next 12 months. The South Australian Chapter Committee has nominated Mr Nicholas Matsis CPA of NRM Johnson, Certified Practicing Accountants, 43 Edward Street Norwood, for members approve at this Annual General Meeting, to provide this service for 2007/08.

OMEP Australia owes a great debt of gratitude to Ms Michelle Westhorpe, Certified Accountant and Auditor over the past 6 years. Michelle has put a great deal of effort into establishing processes that will comply with future requirements. The ongoing advice she has provided the President, Directors and Secretariat in establishing financial policies and good practice has always been professional, consistent and steadfast. On behalf of the President, the Secretariat and the Board of OMEP Australia I would like to thank Michelle most sincerely for keeping us on track, helping us to remain steadfast in developing processes and above all for her interest in OMEP as an organisation.

Sue Lancaster—Treasurer