

The Networker

Volume 2 Number 2

Free to SA children's services



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network sa

Our Vision

A strong and viable children's services sector that enhances the lives of children, families and communities

Our Mission

Our mission is to make a significant contribution to the well-being of children, families and communities through supporting excellence and equity in children's services.

We develop, interpret and disseminate information that strengthens the capacity of children's services to deliver quality programs.

We support the operators of children's services to make informed and sound decisions about the governance, management and administration of their organisations, with a focus on personal, social and fiscal responsibility.

We uphold the Indigenous cultures of Australia, seeking to support the inclusion of Aboriginal children in all children's services and to deepen community understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal family and community values.

We are committed to the provision of services that foster community spirit and help to create a humane and productive society.

RICE in the bush



Several weeks ago I was privileged to attend a meeting of the RICE Management Committee in Port Augusta to carry out an orientation session for the new committee. I've been to a lot of meetings over a lot of years, but this one blew me away.

RICE (Remote & Isolated Children's Exercise Inc.) is a community managed organisation established in 1976 and still going strong today. RICE aims to overcome some of the difficulties encountered by children disadvantaged by isolation in remote areas of South Australia. Based in Port Augusta, RICE services 6 zones –

- Flinders Ranges
- Area along Birdsville & Strezlecki Tracks
- Around and north of Coober Pedy
- Around Glendambo and the Far West of SA
- Gawler Ranges and NW of Port Augusta
- North East along the Barrier Highway

RICE employs a multidisciplinary team to meet the diverse needs of outback families with young children. The team is led by Carol Stableford, formerly of RAHCCC and Toybox CCC in Port Lincoln, and includes a community health nurse, child and family worker, early childhood teacher who provides

(Continued on page 2)

Resource Paper
enclosed

Disk Clean-up (the 3rd in our series re looking
after your computer)

(Continued from page 1)

lessons over the internet via Centra, and toy librarian. RICE staff travel by 4WD to offer services in people's homes, and also provide playgroups in remote locations like Yunta, Iron Knob and Balcanoona. The picture on page 1 shows a playgroup at Blinman Hall.



RICE also sponsors a mobile child care program, Outback Childcare, which provides care in the homes of families living on stations, and crèches and activity days for community events and training and development. Outback Childcare also provides child care for RICE's management committee meetings, so the children are safe and well looked after by carers who they know and trust.

Before I met the committee I had known only that RICE had something to do with supporting children in rural and remote communities. I was overwhelmed by the responses from the committee members when I asked them to describe what RICE means to them. Their answers were quite passionate, with phrases such as:

"RICE is my first point of contact when something goes wrong"

"RICE is my link with the outside world and my contact with peers"

"Through RICE, I have been able to make new friends and establish new contacts"

"Our children are able to have contact with each other through the programs initiated by RICE"

Meetings are generally held over 2 days. The committee has 2 or 3 'face to face' meetings each year in Port Augusta, with the other meetings being held over the computer using Centra.

The committee members were all young women (to me they seemed so very young) and it was apparent that some of them had made quite significant life changes to be where they are now. I spoke with Michelle, who lives with her husband on a station in the Gawler Ranges. They currently have one little boy, Hudson. Michelle talked about her life as a city girl before marriage. I spoke with Sue who has 3 little girls: she and her husband live at Balcanoona (near Arkaroola) where he is a Ranger with SA Parks and Wildlife Service.

I was amazed at how far the committee members had travelled to attend the meeting. Some of them had travelled for up to 6 hours to get there! The vastness of this wonderful country was brought to life by hearing the stories of the committee members. In some instances these people are able to make frequent trips to share with families, catch up with friends or just hit the shops. But a frequent trip probably means a long drive and a flight, or a very long drive – certainly not something that can be undertaken without some planning.

The highlight of my excursion came after the meeting. I was invited to share a meal with the committee and this blew me away. There were up to 20 adults and about an equal number of children ranging in age from 2 months to 6 years. It was only at this point that I fully realised that for these women to attend a committee meeting they bring their children too. They had made 4, 5 or 6 hour journeys with up to three children less than 6 years of age.

RICE provides accommodation for the nights that they are in Port Augusta and the consensus is that cabins in the caravan park offer the greatest convenience for the children. So after a day of meeting, they share a meal and then have to take children back to settle them for the evening and be ready for the second day of meeting tomorrow.

These trips enable them to catch up with some essential shopping which was put into context by the following quote.

"I went off to do a "big shop" – I filled the first trolley and considered that I had parked it safely but by the time I had returned with the second trolley and ready to go through the checkout, the zealous staff had returned the contents of my first trolley to the shelves! So much for trying to get things done in a hurry"

I often hear people say that 15 or 20 kilometres is too far to travel to attend a training session or to network with others. From my time sharing and meeting this extraordinary group of parents, I can only decide that if something means something to you, you'll strive to make it happen. Maybe there is a lesson here for those of us who plan training or networking sessions – i.e. sessions must be relevant, meet a real need and be well promoted so that people understand what is being offered.

Thank you for the wonderful experience.

Kay Thomas

OSHC Projects Coordinator, Network SA

Laws which discriminate

A total of 58 Federal laws discriminate against same-sex couples, compared to heterosexual couples, according to a report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission tabled in Federal Parliament on 22 June 2007.

The report, entitled 'Same Sex: Same Entitlements', claims that these Acts all breach the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by failing to provide equal protection, equal entitlements and freedom from discrimination.

Many of these laws affect employment-related entitlements.

For example, the WorkChoices legislation includes compassionate leave - an entitlement to up to two days' paid compassionate leave for each occasion a member of the employee's immediate family or household has a personal illness or injury that poses a **serious threat** to his or her life, or **dies**.

The legislation defines the following as members of an employee's immediate family:

- a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, or sibling of the employee
- a child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of a spouse of the employee

Included in the definition of 'spouse' are a former spouse, a de facto spouse, or a former de facto spouse. Same sex couples cannot be legally married in Australia, so you might assume that they would be included in the definition of 'de facto' spouse'.

They are not. 'De facto spouse' is defined as a person of the opposite sex to the employee who lives with the employee as the employee's husband or wife on a genuine domestic basis although not legally married to the employee.

This discriminates against same sex couples. They may have been together for many years, but if one partner is critically ill or dies the other is not automatically entitled to a day or two of paid compassionate leave. I cannot imagine how that might feel.

Employers do not have to wait for the Government to act on this report before reviewing their own policies regarding compassionate leave, carer's leave and parental leave entitlements to ensure that as far as possible they are providing equal conditions of employment for all their staff.

Maureen McGuire
Editor
The Networker

Free relationship education resources -

Keys to Living Together

On 15 May 2007 the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs launched a new suite of relationship education resources, Keys to Living Together.

Currently there are three kits in the Keys to Living Together series, each consisting of a DVD and mini magazine.

Keys to Living Together - Taking the first step.

This resource is for couples who are making a significant commitment to each other such as marriage, or moving in together.

Keys to Living Together - Instant Families.

This resource is for couples with children from previous relationships who are creating a new family together.

Keys to Living Together - Then we were three.

This resource is for couples who have had or are having their first child.

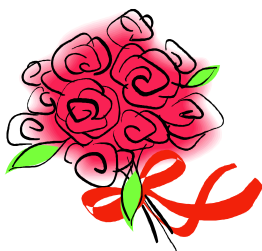
To order your free copies call 1800 050 009 or email keys@facsia.gov.au.

Adelaide Thinkers in Residence Public Lecture

Denis Jaffe: The Future of Family Business in South Australia Monday 20th August 2007
6.00pm for 6.15pm - 7.15pm at Adelaide Town Hall.

Entrance free but bookings essential.

Book online at www.hawkecentre.unisa.edu.au or on 8302 0215



Accolades, Bouquets and Sincere Thanks

Back in 2004 at both the National and South Australian level there were a number of passionate child care professionals who were becoming more and more concerned that the roles staff were being asked or expected to undertake with children in terms of medication management, health specific disorders and complex and invasive care practices was giving rise to increased risk to children, staff and services.

Discussion with the commonwealth, state and child care insurers all pointed to one thing - no one would take responsibility for the issues being raised! Yet there was a clear need for training, credentialing access for child care staff, sound policies, safe procedures and practices.

Out of these discussions came a comment from someone who said, "Talk to Deb Kay in DECS. I think you will find she has what you are looking for". So began the sector's relationship with the most amazingly dedicated, passionate and generous 'Deb'.

In her work within DECS Deb had developed the Health Support Planning approach to children with health and complex needs for schools, preschools and she extended this to child care centres. Such was the interest in the whole program that information sessions were run, pilot programs for childcare were developed, Deb spoke at National and State Conferences, forums and meetings to explain and promote the training, resources and health care plans. All the materials have gone through revision and been upgraded to web and IT formats.

Deb's commitment saw the program take into account the research on health issues, legislated obligations and DECS policy to the point where the programs and practices are endorsed by the medical profession and specific agencies. Yet this wasn't enough for Deb. She saw the immense potential of working collaboratively across agencies in SA.

This vision has seen the establishment of the Child Health and Education Support Services (CHESS). This interagency approach has seen the Department for Families and Communities, Independent Schools, Catholic Education, SA Care and Education Forum, the Department of Education and Children's Services and the Aboriginal Health Council of SA sign a Statement of Collaborative Intent.

A tribute to Deb's work was the decision by the Victorian Government to provide the program to schools in Victoria. But Deb hasn't stopped at that either, she has continued to support the childcare sector to push to have the program as a national program.

A truly wonderful 4 years working alongside Deb provided me with the opportunity to get to know her, admire her commitment, dedication and passion for making a difference for children, families and services in South Australia and to learn so much from her great knowledge in this area. Deb has really touched so many people and made such a difference. Almost sounds like a farewell doesn't it? Well in some ways it is as Deb has (after a long time but I won't reveal how long!) decided to leave DECS and move into another area where she can continue to share her expertise in an exciting new position at the Smith Family.

On behalf of the early years sector in SA I would sincerely like to thank Deb for all she has done for us and to also let her know she won't escape us that easily. I hope we can continue to find new ways of working together.

Thanks Deb and all the best for the new position.

Anne Clark



Federal Workplace Changes

Two re-badged workplace agencies – the Workplace Authority and the Workplace Ombudsman – as well as a workplace relations fact sheet were launched by the Federal Government in July. Readers are probably aware of the TV ad campaign starring the new Workplace Authority Director, Barbara Bennett.

The Workplace Ombudsman and the Workplace Authority have been given an extra \$64.1 million and \$319.0 million (including capital of \$18.9 million) respectively to carry out their new functions. As a result, the number of workplace inspectors will increase to almost 400 and several hundred new staff will be engaged at the Workplace Authority to administer the new fairness test.

For more information on the Workplace Authority or Workplace Ombudsman, you can call 1300 363 264 or visit www.workplace.gov.au.

The Workplace Authority is writing to a million workplaces to explain the recent changes to Work Choices and to provide a copy of the Workplace Relations Fact Sheet, which employers must provide to employees or face \$110 penalties.

Employers have until October 20 to give it to existing employees, and must give the sheet to new employees within seven days of starting work.

All services should be adding this document to their staff induction checklists, policies and procedures, noting that a new employee must receive a copy within a week of starting work with them.

You can download the fact sheet from the Workplace Authority website (www.workplaceauthority.gov.au) or call the Workplace Infoline (1300 363 264) to request copies.

FAREWELL TO KATHY WRIGHT AND GLEN CLEMENTS

The staff at Network SA wish to publicly acknowledge the retirement of these two well known DECS / Children's Services Office employees and wish them a long and happy retirement. We will all miss you both and record our sincere appreciation for your years of service.

Glen Clements:

Many of you know Glen as a member of the Licensing Team within DECS. Glen has been in this role for more than 10 years. There are several words that come to mind to describe Glen in his working role – fair, gentle and always helpful. Glen always took the time to research and help you to find the information you needed. Thank you, Glen.

Kathy Wright:

Kathy's profile across all aspects of the child care sector is well known and highly respected. As a person with much knowledge about child care and who would always respond, she will be sadly missed.

Kathy joined the team at the Children's Services Office in the early 90's and she came to that position as an experienced child care practitioner and always understood the "issues". For several years she worked as part of a joint state and commonwealth implementation team that was responsible for community consultation and establishment of new child care and OSHC services. Around the mid 90's Kathy moved to Licensing & Standards and has been part of many new strategies over the years. Most recently we have known Kathy in her capacity of investigating complaints in childcare and OSHC a task that must have caused her much anxiety at times.

There have been times when we have seen a relentless terrier like aspect in her character. There may have been time when some of us have questioned Kathy's intervention, but her motivation has always been as an advocate for children and their well being. Thank you Kathy for the work you have undertaken over a period of long service to South Australia's children.

Kay Thomas



Right from the Start Conference Gawler July 2007



Two points of view - from those with years of experience in children's services, and an enthusiastic newcomer to the sector - this conference was a great success!

From the organising committee...

The Right from the Start Conference was a joint initiative of DECS Barossa District, TAFE SA Gawler, and the Gawler & Barossa Health Services.

The Conference was held on the 19th & 20th July across two Gawler venues, the Gawler Arms Hotel & TAFE SA Gawler.

The Right from the Start Conference brought together professionals working in the field of early childhood across education, care & health. The conference attracted participants from across the state from as far away as the Eyre Peninsula, the Riverland & South East regions. Interest exceeded initial expectations with more than 200 participants registering over the two days.

Keynote presenters explored early brain development, attachment theory & emotional learning. They included Professor Philip Gammage (DECS SA), Professor Frank Oberklaid (Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne), and Mandy Seyfang, a family therapist and occupational therapist and Patricia O'Rourke, a child psychologist and infant mental health specialist both from the Women's & Children's Hospital, Adelaide.

The conference program incorporated a range of concurrent workshops presented by early childhood practitioners i.e. teachers, carers and health professionals, showcasing innovative and effective practice.

Early Childhood is a key priority for the Government. The overwhelming response to the Right From The Start Conference is indicative that professionals recognise the importance of early childhood and are committed to working together to support improved outcomes for our children.

"Children are precious, and communities have a shared responsibility to ensure children are supported Right from the Start".

Janet Pedlar and Debbie Grose

A participant's perspective...

It was refreshing to see so many agencies involved with early childhood seated together and working towards one goal. Professionals from within health, education and child care listened together to keynote speakers on neuroscience and early brain development, attachment theory and emotional learning.

Others presented their new ideas and effective practices and opened the floor for comment, enabling those attending to share experiences and knowledge which demonstrated that they play such a pivotal role in getting it "right from the start" for our children.

The theme song brought tears to many eyes whereas the seriousness of the topic was softened with stories of light-hearted moments that children can bring.

The conference strongly reinforced that a united approach from all professional sectors is needed to achieve a better outcome for all.

Delegates and presenters all mingled and mashed with enthusiasm, optimism and hopefulness for the future. Our laughter was warm and our determination unfaltering. The question now posed is how to make it all work. Is it too hard, NEVER – someone has to do it and why not us.

Bouquets to the organisers – WOW is an understatement – well planned, well presented and absolutely unquestionably enjoyed by all.

If they do it all again I would recommend everyone who missed out this time to go. Even if you don't think you will learn anything new, you will be energised as you mix with dedicated and wonderful people.

Gail Gullickson
Management Consultant
Network SA



In February this year, a Melbourne parent founded Kids Free 2B Kids to lobby against what she and other parents saw as the increasing sexualisation of children in the media, advertising, and clothing industries.

Kids free 2b Kids have formed a partnership with Young Media Australia Both these organisations are not-for-profit associations concerned that children are being exposed to inappropriate sexualized imagery "in a bid to sell products and make profit".

Issues include:

- How children are portrayed in advertising - i.e. what they wear, how they are posed
- The images children are exposed to in their environment - i.e. billboards, magazines, internet, TV
- The toys, dolls, and gadgets children play with
- Exposure to adult sexual images that a child is not developmentally ready to absorb

They believe that children should be able to develop at their own pace, without undue pressure and influence from mass media marketing and advertising.

They say that parents don't necessarily want to wrap their kids up in cotton wool, but most do want to provide an environment in which children can develop to their full potential: that means maturing physically, psychologically and sexually at age appropriate stages.

They quote recent international and Australian studies that have highlighted the significant impact that the sexualisation of children in advertising and marketing campaigns is having on children's physical and psychological health. They are committed to children developing to their full potential - without exposure to sexualized imagery before they are developmentally ready to process it.

Kids Free 2B Kids founer, Julie Gale, and her team of volunteers are seeking support in their campaign. You can demonstrate your support by registering your name on the Kids Free 2B Kids Website www.kf2bk.com and/or by donating to the campaign via the same website. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

The money for Kids Free 2B Kids is being managed by their partner, Young Media Australia. All donations should be sent to YMA, which is endorsed as an income exempt charity entity and a deductible gift recipient.

"The AANA, the Advertising Association, understands the concerns that have been expressed. I do have to say though, that we're not quite sure, as yet, to what extent they are community concerns".

Collin Segelov. Chief Executive, Australian Association of National Advertisers

"The standards in the media and advertising are too low and out of touch with the general community."

Bernie Geary. Child Safety Commissioner

"This is clearly a serious issue for children and for parents and it is a real worry. There is a lot of evidence that this could be harming children, and if it is, then we need to act."

Lynne Wannan. Chairwoman Victorian Childrens Council

"Adults must protect very young kids from the notion that sex sells - products and the self. If they do, they'll be given the time and space to create solid foundations and nurture kids imaginations and identities; ones that aren't contingent upon sex, looks or material possessions".

Dr Karen Brooks. Senior Lecturer, Communication & Cultural Studies, University of Sunshine Coast.

network sa

Network SA Resource, Advisory & Management Services Inc. (Network SA) is a non-profit community organisation providing information, support, resources and training to the children's services sector in South Australia.



ARMSU is a specialist unit within Network SA. ARMSU operates SA's Indigenous Professional Support Unit, funded through the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Services provided to the children's services sector by Network SA & ARMSU include:

- Advice and support for Directors, managers, office staff, committee members, operators and other people responsible for effective management of child care and OSHC services
- Training and professional development services
- Specialist advice, support and training for Aboriginal services
- Aboriginal cultural awareness activities for children, and training for staff teams

The Networker is published bi-monthly in August, October, December, February, April and June. Closing dates for each edition are 20th July, 20th September, 20th November, 20th January, 20th March and 20th May. Contributions are welcome. Contact the editor Maureen McGuire.

The Networker is part-funded through the Inclusion and Professional Support Program of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).

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Website: www.networksa.org.au.

The material contained in this publication is of a general nature only and not intended to be advice on any particular matter.

Please share this newsletter with others in your service:

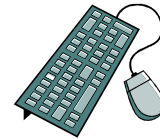
- Director / Assistant Director
- Staff
- Administration
- Committee members
- Principal
- Line Manager
- Owner
- Parents

It's never too late!

If you'd like to learn how to touch type, but can't make the time for lessons, try this. It's a link which takes you to touch typing lessons for kids! It's very good. And not too hard for grown-ups either.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/>

(Yes, there are keyboard skills sites on the net for adults too, but this one is more fun)



DonorTec for non-profits

Community based children's services can access computer software and hardware for very low or discounted fees by registering with DonorTec. DonorTec is an online technology donation and discount portal, linking technology donations and the Australian nonprofit sector. It operates as a partnership between Adelaide-based Community Information Strategies Australia Inc. (CommunitIT Project) and [TechSoup](http://www.techsoup.org), the US-based nonprofit technology capacity building organisation.

Enough of the techno speak! What does it mean?

You can log on to www.donortec.com.au/ and register with the DonorTec program.

Microsoft donations are now available to qualified organisations in Australia through the DonorTec site.

According to its website, the DonorTec program will assist your nonprofit organisation by providing software for a very low administration fee and assisting you to make the most of your purchases and infrastructure. The program provides resources and advice around technology planning, ICT tips & tricks and other technology assistance required by nonprofits.

Hire the best. Pay them fairly. Communicate frequently. Provide challenges and rewards. Believe in them. Get out of their way and they'll knock your socks off.

[Mary Ann Allison](#)