

All About OSHC



Thinking about age-coding and older children in outside school hours care

Dr Bruce Hurst



Rough and Tumble Play in Perspective

Camp Hill OSHC



The sharing of space between OSHC and Schools

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

An 'exceeding' story in supporting children's health and wellbeing
Hermit Park OSHC





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453,066
children using
OSHC



11.6
average weekly
hours spent by
children in OSHC



4,443
services in
Australia



27,491
OSHC educators

About NOSHSA

NOSHSA is a federated alliance with representation across Australia. NOSHSA's State and Territory Associations are the recognised peak body's for OSHC in each of their jurisdictions. Peak bodies are recognised by governments as being able to provide pertinent advice and recommendations on behalf of their members. NOSHSA is recognised as the Australian Peak for OSHC by Education Council. The membership bases in each of NOSHSA's jurisdictions includes both small and large providers.

With you as a member, the lobbying power of NOSHSA increases dramatically. Together, our membership and voice can change policy. This is our combined strength.

How can you make the difference?

Be a part of this Australia wide organization by joining your State/ Territory OSHC Association now.

- Attend meetings and network with colleagues.
- Pass on your views to your Association so your concerns can be heard and acted upon.

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Welcome

The NOSHSA team are very proud to bring you this first edition of our electronic magazine 'All About OSHC'. This magazine has been prepared by OSHC professionals for OSHC professionals, dedicated to advancement and promotion of our important sector.

We are appreciative of the contributions from both Dr Jennifer Cartmel and Dr Bruce Hurst who have shared with us some of the most recent research as well as their insights into the OSHC sector. OSHC research is so important to ensuring a strong and relevant evidence base informs policy and practice for the sector. This magazine intends to contribute to that evidence base through the publishing of high quality, accessible stories from the field.

We are most grateful for the contributions of articles to this edition from some of our leading OSHC services throughout Australia. This edition highlights some amazing practice occurring in the OSHC sector that we are thankful to be able to share.

We welcome ideas for contributions which can be emailed to the editor at admin@qcan.org.au

We hope you enjoy reading this inaugural publication and look forward to bringing you future editions full of helpful ideas and insights from the Australian OSHC sector.

Kylie Brannelly
Chairperson
NOSHSA

An 'exceeding' story in supporting children's health and wellbeing - Hermit Park OSHC

In November 2019, Hermit Park OSHC was awarded an Exceeding rating in all 7 areas of the National Quality Standard resulting in an overall Exceeding rating. Led by long term Coordinator, Georgina Turner, this amazing team have been able to achieve this rating despite having been impacted by natural disaster in January 2019 (earlier in the same year) with the Townsville floods. The school and service were closed for two weeks and many members of the community experienced flooding in their own homes. Some families are yet to return to their homes as they are still being repaired following the damage caused by flood waters.

Driving Hermit Park OSHC's quality practices is the belief that holistic health and wellness incorporates both psychological and physical aspects and is central to belonging, being and becoming. They strive to have knowledge around mental health and wellbeing and to incorporate innovative programs and strategies in relation to all children.

Translating Service Philosophy into Practice

Hermit Park OSHC has a commitment to ensuring that children are able to develop a sense of agency through making and influencing decisions that may affect their world. This is done through children's mat times, surveys, suggestion box, newsletters, the program, community noticeboard, general conversations and 'Gotchas'. The Gotcha box promotes children's positive behaviour and interactions. Green positive cards can be earned by children making the right choices, getting involved in development of the rules and following their very important three rules:

*Be Safe
Be Responsible
Be Respectful*

Gotcha cards are displayed on the wall for children's pride in achievement and can be viewed by other children and families. Educators compliment Gotcha cards by asking open ended questions about children's behaviour in order to



encourage them to reflect on the choices or decisions they are making and the educators carry this out by 'Playing it forward'. With children aged 4-12, they encourage leadership roles by using a buddy system, peer scaffolding, and group activities like #OSHCfit to provide leadership opportunities for older children. Breakfast and afternoon tea enables older children with roles like servers and during homework activities younger children are supported by helpers. These practices are all enhanced by educators ensuring spontaneous moments are extended or flourish from children's ideas or family involvement/input.

Critical Reflection Driving Exceeding Quality

Critical reflection changed and informed the program and practice dramatically in 2019 in relation to how the staff at Hermit Park OSHC extend on children's learning. The introduction of Loose Parts down on the OSHC land (lost from the floods) had opened their eyes to a different way children can learn. Such things as weapon play (sticks, nerf gun tag, toy guns etc) dog therapy, risky play, didgeridoo and clap sticks have all been implemented and embedded in 2019 to create innovative ways children can learn through leisure and play. As a team they discussed the current theories and approaches that relate back to their philosophy and how these influences

guide their practice. After robust debate, discussion and input on such topics such as gun play, knives, dogs, risk taking, educators reflected back to their childhood and gave different perspectives and stories.

Further critical reflection was facilitated on the belief of the Bindal and Walgurkaba people around girls at their service playing the didgeridoo and offered educators opportunity to cultivate deep respect and knowledge of the broader community in educational practice. As a good critical reflection tool they have used the head, heart and hands technique which is in the professional discussion folder.

All educators have a deep understanding of practices to address children's needs for rest and relaxation. Professional development focusing on mindfulness techniques and strategies delivered by Breath Australia and James Cook University (JCU) on children's brain development has added to the richness of practice. The mindfulness and relaxation techniques have been embedded into daily practice. The service also offers children with anxiety the option of using the Zen garden to focus their thoughts or as "downtime space" to practice their breathing.

Promoting Wellbeing in Partnership with Children

A common practice is their "take 5" strategy. At Hermit Park OSHC the educators pride themselves on being highly attuned to the children's needs respecting cultures and backgrounds. They have embedded healthy eating, physical activity and effective hygiene practices daily by role modelling, intentional teaching, mat time, general discussions and programmed/spontaneous experiences activities.

#OSHCfit is embedded into their program on a weekly basis and has become a huge success within the service. The team created #OSHCfit alongside the children to incorporate the development of healthy lifestyles that balance sound nutrition, physical activity, and psychological wellbeing. This program features activities like: mindfulness, active games incorporating nutrition, rock balancing, Personal Training (PT) sessions, sports, and yoga. Their educational leader goes above and beyond the call of duty to deliver an educational program that concisely aligns with their service philosophy and the principles and practices of MTOP.



The needs of children are met with diligence and professionalism. Educators respond confidently and calmly to manage health and medical needs to the highest standards on a daily basis. Some children attending the service have significant needs, with lowered immune system responses as a result of cancer treatments, diabetes, seizures, and disorders like ADHD.

Demonstrating Exceeding Practice

Hermit Park educators were able to address each of the exceeding themes in their Quality Improvement Plan with meticulous attention to detail. For each of the standards, their plan describes how they meaningfully engage with families and/or communities, have embedded practice and use critical reflection.

The exceeding rating was an extraordinary achievement and a fantastic way to end 2019 given the natural disaster they had faced earlier that year.



Thinking about age-coding and older children in outside school hours care

Dr Bruce Hurst



Given that they only account for about one third of the children who attend OSHC in Australia, we seem to spend a disproportionate amount of time talking and writing about older children (10 to 12 years). Those conversations often revolve around the search for a solution of how to work best with an age group who have a difficult reputation. I'm not convinced that older children are especially challenging, nor that a universal 'answer' for this, or any, age group exists. Older children, like everybody else, are incredibly diverse and arrive at OSHC with different histories and backgrounds. Perhaps the best we can do is think about things that 'might' be important for this age group and explore their implications for programming.

One idea that educators 'might' find useful is age-coding. Broadly speaking, 'age-coding' refers to the idea that objects have characteristics that

mark them as being better suited to one age group rather than other. For example, if you were to go into a toy store, even without labelling you would likely know which toys were intended for toddlers, for 5 to 8 year-olds or 9 to 12 year-olds. Toddlers' toys tend to be simpler, have bright colours, larger parts and look more robust. Other forms of age-coding are more obvious such as the classification ratings on movies and video games. These are cultural signals that we are able to read and understand. Children also understand age-coding.

Age coding is an expression of developmental discourse. In poststructural theory, *discourse* refers to the dominant ideas or 'truths' that circulate a culture. Discourses don't have to be true, just broadly accepted (MacNaughton, 2005). Developmental discourse, includes the ideas that

children are more innocent, less capable, developed and sophisticated than adults (Cannella, 2008). Implicit in the developmental discourse that circulates Australian culture is that it is better to be older. As children age, they get progressive access to social institutions like more mature media, driving, voting and independence. As we get older, we get more of the 'good stuff'.

It is therefore unsurprising that many of the older children I have researched with over the last 10 years desired to be seen as older. They often expressed this through their relationship with age-coded activities. Children would physically and socially distance themselves from activities they considered younger. I have worked with older children who refused to play with basketballs that were too small, would only draw or colour with fine-tipped markers, and move to the other side of the room if G-rated films were showing. Sometimes age-coding wasn't obvious and was imposed by the older children. I once worked with a group of older girls who labelled 'craft' activities led by adults as 'little kids' activities, instead preferring to draw independently on their own (Hurst, 2017). You can see in these examples how age-coding governed whether older children engaged with materials or experiences.

Being older and more capable is important to many older children's identities and age coding can play an important role in how they think others see them. Understanding how older children in your service respond to age-coding might assist with finding activities that they enjoy. Each child's engagement with age-coding will differ and for some children it may not be important at all. Try to listen to children individually so that you can understand more deeply whether age-coding is important to them and the ways it influences their engagement with your program. Finally, I do wonder if OSHC itself is sometimes coded as 'younger' but that is a topic for another time.

Dr Bruce Hurst

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Rough & Tumble Play in Perspective

Camp Hill OSHC



In many school aged care environments the acknowledgement of rough and tumble play as a legitimate and valuable play type is an idea met with very mixed feelings. These feelings often range from outright disdain or lack and willingness to manage the perception of this play type, to a whole hearted “that’s how I grew up” approach. Either way, from a critically reflective perspective all of these approaches are a little short sighted and worth challenging in order to gain a deeper understanding and respect for this evolutionarily significant style of play.

Like any activity or style of play that comes with assumed or obvious risks, best practice in our industry requires us to do a risk assessment. A good way to ensure objective critical reflection occurs is to document this process using a ‘risk

benefit’ approach. This approach challenges practitioners to remove bias, assumptions and predispositions and encourages very healthy discussions with staff. The obvious risks associated with rough and tumble play are often thought to be (Dwyer, P & Gorrie, A. 2019):

- Risk of physical injury
- A negative perception of behaviour
- Encouraging rough or violent behaviour/ mindsets

If we managed the perception of this play style from a risk only approach the above concerns would be enough to knee jerk a quick fix to the perceptions and prevent the play occurring. These perceptions will be challenged however if we take the time to research and reflect on the potential benefits such as:

- **Bonding & empathy:** In rough and tumble behaviour, the brain releases the chemical oxytocin which ironically assists in forming bonds (Jarvis, P. 2007). This naturally manifests most commonly in play between fathers and sons, and then peers. In a world where OSHC is increasingly becoming part of the village that raises children, we are asked to reflect on our obligation to meet this need. Does removing this play in response to physical risk alone remove the very learning experience required to manage physical risk?
- **Social Competency:** Rough and tumble play is a valuable tool for young mammals to learn to deal with ambiguous social scenarios later in their life cycle (Pellis, M & Pellis, V. 2010). Blunt and direct learning through this play is exactly what some children need as an entry level to the complex process of picking up more subtle cues later on.
- **Impulse control:** Rough and tumble play throughout all mammals is an evolutionary tool which guides young mammals to understand, and thus control their impulses (Bokony, P & Patrick, T. 2009). In practical terms, to control an impulse we first need context of a limit. We must consider whether limiting this play style therefore may actually increase the negative behavioural outcomes that educators are trying to prevent as children have less opportunity to rehearse self control through their play.
- **Increased intelligence:** During rough and tumble play neurons are firing, particularly in the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for things like logic, learning and memory (Borchard, T. 2018). Consider the



potential social and emotional ramifications therefore of knee jerking to a perceived physical risk, at the expense of complex social and emotional benefits.

Ultimately the end decision using any risk management/risk benefit approach needs to be one where an OSHC team comes to together and is comfortable with. It is important however, as the learning framework and National Quality Standard demands, to challenge our perceptions through critical reflection lest we actually deny the children so many important developmental opportunities.

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Perspectives on Behaviour

Saurubh Malviya

How do we know what is real? Is it something which is visible and thus available to interpret? If yes, then what about phenomenon which do not manifest in observable actions? This argument that



reality is the same for all of us is challenged by several cognitivist theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bandura to name a few. As per the constructivist philosophical paradigm, 'reality' is constructed by the learner him or herself. Hence, it is vital to learn about the realities residing within children's minds in conjunction with their visibly observable behaviours.

From my observations in more than 70 services across Australia, I have noticed that children's intentions are often judged by educators from their observable behaviours, instead of being based on the internal cognition taking place in children's brains. This is not because the educators are dismissive of these phenomena, but rather unaware of the theoretical perspectives which allows us to dive deep into children's cognition. In this article, I share with you one such example where the presence of knowledge about the internal state of mind of one child opened up previously untapped communication channels between the child and the educators at this service.

At a recent visit to an OSHC service, I was informed of a child, in year 1, who has been exhibiting aggressive behaviours such as pushing and hitting other children. I wanted to talk to this boy so whilst I was there observing the service, I patiently waited for the right opportunity to arise. A few minutes passed by and I observed the boy approach one of the educators, who was busy serving afternoon tea to other children. The boy asked for something and then walked towards the adventure playground appearing saddened. The adventure play ground was one of the 'out of bounds' places for the children during afternoon tea time. I thought that this was a good opportunity to learn from the child about his internal cognition, given that the observable actions suggested breaking rules by sitting in an out of bounds area. I walked slowly towards this child, preparing for what I might learn about him.

I sat a few meters away from the child, such that we could hear each other and far enough that he didn't feel confronted by my presence. I described the events as I saw them and sought his affirmation. I said, "I see children sitting in the undercover area and you are here". He nodded his head in agreement, still disheartened. I continued, "tell me about this". I had deliberately not asked him any questions or used words such as "but" and "should", because I wanted to describe the event and not confront him for his action. For him to verbalise his internal state of mind, he had to feel supported. He replied to me, "When I sit with the other children, it hurts my ears as they are too loud." I nodded my head, confirming a sense of understanding. He added, "when it hurts my ears, I hurt others. I don't want to hurt others, so I am sitting away from them."

The child was practising 'self-regulation'. As per his reality, he was doing the right thing by positioning himself away from the other children. Meanwhile, his noticeable behaviours were perceived as 'mis-behaviour' since he was sitting in the 'wrong place' away from educators and children. Given the conflict in these two realities and the authority being in command of educators, this child will either get in trouble for

sitting at the adventure playground or for hitting other children when he is made to sit among them. He may never win.

Article 12 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, indicates that children have the right to voice their opinions in matters which concern them. But this could be challenging if we make decisions based on visible and observable behaviours without seeking to understand them. The children voices need to be heard by adults with a mindset willing to explore other ways of thinking about behaviour and not through questioning their internal state of mind. This new perspective determined the next steps and I recommended, among several others, a 'quiet zone' during the afternoon tea time for children, thereby avoiding conflict in light of this new information.

At We Belong Education, one of the pleasures of working with educators and children is to bring perspectives which can influence positive relationships among educators and children. The workshops delivered by We Belong Education are designed to empower educators in their role and build their capacities in creating and sustaining a high-quality care environment.





Digital Technology in OSHC - Merri Merri OSHC

Outcome 5: Children are Effective Communicators

Children collaborate with others, express ideas and make meaning using a range of media and communication technologies.

Digital technology – the children love it and we do too.

At Merri Creek OSHC we are fortunate enough to have ten iPads available for the children to access for their own learning and entertainment. While the children use the iPads in many ways it is the grade fives and sixes who are the primary beneficiaries of the use of digital technology in OSHC.

The grade five/six children enjoy the privilege of accessing one twenty minute session on the iPad per week. They can use this time as they see fit. Some will choose to play games and compete for

the highest score, while others use this time to research topics for classroom assignments or create their own videos. The privilege comes with responsibilities. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the content of what they are viewing is appropriate and seek advice from the supervising educator before engaging in any new Google searches. The children sign the iPads out and back in, and are aware that content search history can be traced back to specific users. Breaches of the time limit incur a loss of access the following week. The children manage their time and content very well and we have refused access for running over time only once this year.

Our use of digital technology really goes hand in hand with keeping our older children engaged. There are times we may wish to engage the children in considering topical issues in the broader community or issues that may affect them or their peers socially or emotionally.

TED talks and podcasts at the beginning of the afternoon are perfect for this and open conversation and avenues for further investigation.

The inspiration for this came from one child, a few years ago, who enjoyed TED talks about history, philosophy and ethics. Accessing these talks for him was one way of trying to include and connect him with his peers and the educators. We have found embracing this kind of digital technology a great tool for addressing behavior and developing critical thinking.



Two years ago, we managed to purchase five digital SLR cameras and start a photography club. The club runs for one term every year and is open to all OSHC children prep to grade six.

Photography has provided so many opportunities for learning – more than just composition and capturing the moment or our friend’s faces. Learning about how the camera works teaches us about math and physics. We learn how light behaves and the relationship between the shutter (speed, a fraction of time) and the aperture (a fraction of the hole). We also learn perspective and to think critically about what is happening in the frame and what are we *not* seeing that lies outside the frame. We ask the question: are we

seeing the whole picture? And how does this change the story when we consider what is in and what is out of the picture? Another consideration our budding photographers need to make is privacy and consent. They must ask permission before taking a photo of anyone and explain why and how the photo may be used.

A few years ago some of the children decided to start an OSHC magazine which they named *Whispers*. This year we purchased a Mac laptop and the Adobe Creative Cloud software package that has provided the *Whispers* team access to the online tutorials including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. The head photographer/photo editor teaches other children how to use the digital SLRs and directs the type of image required for an article. The photo editor downloads and files the images while the magazine editors put the whole thing together.

Learning opportunities and links to the framework abound when embracing digital technology. It doesn’t have to be the only thing you do but it can be one of the best things you do. Our aim at Merri Creek is to ensure the children are having fun and sneak in some life skills on the way.



The sharing of space between OSHC services and schools

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

The sharing of space between OSHC services and schools involves communal relationships, psychological and intellectual understandings as well as the material properties of the premises (Cartmel, 2007, p. 9).

Space arrangements and OSHC services are complex. There are many layers to peel back to understand the manner in which the space is negotiated and utilised. Delivering OSHC services in venues to meet the needs of both families and children of diverse age ranges requires careful planning. Parents desire a service that is easy to access and cares for their children and children want a choice of activities to keep them engaged. These requirements have a direct relation to the physical location and environment of the service. There is limited research about the physical requirements for school age care services.

There are challenges associated with delivery of OSHC services as the majority are located on host sites such as schools which may have limited space available to be utilised by OSHC services. The physical requirements for space are

contingent on a number of conditions including the program of activities, climate, available venues and mandated requirements (indoor space - 3.25m^2 per child. Internationally, indoor space requirements vary from 2.3m^2 to 3.25m^2 . Olds (2000) states that the minimum space requirement of 3.25m^2 is of unknown origin, but it may be from the fire ordinances in public buildings (p.65). Further, Olds (2000) explains that high densities (more than one child 2.7m^2) produce aggression and while low densities (4.6m^2) can cause low social interaction. Effective use of physical space in OSHC services is contingent on the age and interests of the children. OSHC services need to have facilities that have ease of access to maximise the choices of activities that children can select as part of a quality program.





Large open indoor spaces need to be divided by flexible room dividers to create smaller more intimate spaces where children are able to play in small groups. Easy transition between locations used on school sites is also linked to quality practice. Tanic, Nikolic, Stankovickondie, Zivkovic, Mitkovic and Kekovic (2015) recommend that the physical environment for school age children needs to be organised to ensure a smooth transition between activities. They state that the space, structure, size and mobility, and flexibility of the space should allow for the realisation of pedagogical process. The layout of space in OSHC services influences the opportunities for children to engage in play and meaningful leisure.

The School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) (Harms et al, 2016) is designed to assess group-care. Effective use of physical space in OSHC services is contingent on the age and interests of the children. OSHC services with a larger range of choices of spaces for activities achieved a higher score using the School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS), signifying a higher quality program. Using the SACERS to audit the use of the space in the case sites was an invaluable tool to assess safety and quality impacts that the

environment, particularly the physical environment, has on service delivery.

Rethinking the use of physical space, innovative OSHC builds and collaborative arrangements between OSHC and host schools (Cleveland et al., 2018; Scottish Government, 2017; WERA ERA Extended Education -Switzerland, 2018) can make significant differences to the physical arrangements for OSHC services. OSHC services must be recognised as a permanent service rather than hosted in a temporary venue (Cartmel, 2007). It will signify the legitimacy of OSHC services and greater acceptance of the importance of OSHC services to the development of school age children.

Children's learning and development in OSHC requires is a partnership between home, school and outside school hours care. The space in which this learning and development occurs needs thoughtful deliberations to ensure Australian OSHC can meet the outcomes for children.

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

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Retaining Qualified Educators – A Complex Issue?

Mandy Richardson

NOSHSA is currently advocating to introduce national qualifications for educators in OSHC services. At the moment each state applies qualifications specific to its state, which has resulted in great diversity throughout the country. An introduction of any national OSHC qualifications would necessitate a long lead-in time for OSHC services in some jurisdictions, as their current requirements are minimal, or there are no required qualifications at all.

There is much to consider when looking at qualifications for OSHC educators as the sector is challenged by many complicating factors such as the high turnover of educators, short and broken shifts, fluctuating numbers, minimal hours to offer and lack of a true career pathway.

In South Australia (SA) qualifications for OSHC educators were first introduced in 1998, in line with the 'National OSHC Standards' developed around this time. (It was optional at this time for states to take the National Standards on board.) Currently in SA a minimum of one educator per every 30 children is expected to have a relevant qualification and there is no qualification requirement for the rest of the educators. Of course, what this means in reality, we have discovered, is that services need approximately 60 to 80 per cent of their staff team to be qualified so that you can easily cover staff absences such as annual leave and sickness, and still maintain the legal ratio. In SA the minimum qualification is a Diploma in Education or Care, but many educators have higher qualifications, such as an Education degree.

Third and fourth year education students, who are *actively working towards* their degree, are also considered qualified in an OSHC service. When this was introduced many years ago, it certainly addressed the lack of qualified educators' issue, but it has exacerbated the high staff turnover

issue. These educators are constantly moving on every few years to get a full time job teaching, so services need to implement good staff training and induction systems and constantly be forward planning to maintain a stable staff team.

Strategies from SA Services

Recently we asked some services in SA how they manage these issues and discovered a range of strategies being implemented to address staff turnover and shortages.

At Lockleys North, Maria employs the following strategies to minimize high staff turnover:

- Maintaining a variety of qualified and unqualified educators.
- Employing educators who have a passion for children and OSHC.
- Providing extra hours to regular staff to make the hours and position more sustainable long term. This also boosts the quality of the service, as educators spend more time on educational programs, preparing food and preparing activities.
- Providing excellent communication and a welcoming, learning work environment.

Director Mathew, at Magill OSHC, faces many challenges due to the high prevalence of university students applying for work and the issues involved with that. He has a 160 place service and tries to offer extra administrative and programming hours to educators, in addition to the service's shift times, but many educators move on when they don't get enough hours, or graduate from university. It is also a nightmare when they all have teaching placements at the same time, and it's nearly just as difficult trying to fit them all on the roster when they have maximum availability. At the end of last year he lost five qualified educators. He says a relief pool of educators specific for OSHC would help – especially if they had knowledge and an interest in OSHC.

Our Lady of Hope Greenwith Campus OSHC also has a large 150 place service and experiences similar issues with regular turnover of staff and the rostering challenges associated with study commitments.

Assistant Director Mim said the service is tackling this issue by trying to employ a greater number of core staff who are not students and employing a range of educators who are at different year levels in their degrees eg a mix of first year, second years, third years and fourth years. While they have a permanent director, two assistant directors and a cook, last year they added to this by employing two diploma qualified educators in a permanent capacity for 25 hours minimum per week. This has helped stabilize the core staff team and enable capacity building, mentoring and a greater ownership and commitment to the service.

Jan at Settlers Farm OSHC has also overcome this issue somewhat by supporting many unqualified educators to obtain a Diploma in School Age Care. They have offered three of these Diploma graduates full time work in the service and others have gone on to become directors in other services. They also offer many of their educators the opportunity to gain more hours by doing a range of non-contact hours such as crèche for the school, facilitating Student Representative Committee (SRC), programming, WHS rep, making marketing videos and other administrative duties.

Pooraka OSHC is a smaller service, but its director Sandra says she has also had similar success in the past offering traineeships to educators to undertake the Diploma. Committing to the expense of a Diploma is much easier when the service is receiving monetary incentives which can

be put towards the cost of the course.

Anne from St Raphael's OSHC employs teaching students but also employs Education Support Officers (ESOs) who work in the school during the day. She gets frustrated that the experienced and mature ESOs have a qualification which is recognised during the school day, yet not recognised during OSHC. These educators work with the same children and do a lot of similar work in OSHC as they do at school – particularly in regards to children with additional needs.

Rachel from St Brigids in Evanston starts her recruiting and forward planning very early on, as she regularly pitches the concept of working in OSHC to students at the neighbouring high school. Every year they pitch to a group of interested students and encourage them to gain the necessary clearances and certificates needed to work in OSHC. She says they still lose them as teachers at the end of their degrees, but they are able to help train the newer staff as they move through the years. She says some of these also get extra hours in the school working as classroom support which is an added bonus for the educator, school and OSHC service.

Although SA has had a requirement for qualified OSHC educators for over twenty years, there are still many issues – mainly due to the complexities of operating an OSHC service and the inability to offer many full time positions (particularly in smaller services). We do hope that some of these issues are explored when contemplating national qualifications for OSHC. It is a great opportunity to provide a sector-specific solution by looking at the range of complex issues involved.

Mandy Richardson
OSHCsa Chairperson





Action Research in Australian School Age Care Services - WERA-IRN Extended Education Conference

In 2019, the Queensland Children's Activities Network (QCAN) team had the chance to present at the WERA-IRN Extended Education conference in Sweden. This provided a wonderful opportunity to share the amazing Action Research projects that have been undertaken by the OSHC sector taking an active role in contributing to the evidence base as action researchers. This action research initiative included partnerships with local universities.

Action research is a valuable tool for building workforce capacity. Action research projects have become a very effective way for educators and school age care services to interweave practice and theory. Action research may not have some of the features of conventional social research however it has social value in its capacity to meet the demands of emerging fields of research that are grounded 'in real world contexts in front of knowledgeable stakeholders' (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p 18) such as school age care services.

QCAN's research questions sought to explore the impact that involvement in the action research process has on educator practice and furthermore the development of the workforce. Each of the participants had their own research questions linked to the intentions of their project.

Action research is a hands on way of building research competency. It involves being both a participant and an observer. Action research is a cyclic process whereby educators plan, implement, observe and reflect on their practice to inform future actions. Educators practice becomes visible to them as they engage in this process and increase their self-awareness.

It also requires teams to come together, collaborate and share their thinking thus providing opportunities for feedback and critical reflection. Action Research allows for feasible longitudinal research to be conducted as it utilises data being captured as part of existing duties, “your work, not more work”. A critical moment with the increasing self-awareness is when practices begin to change.

The knowledge and competence of educators who participate in Action Research has increased while simultaneously contributing to the evidence base about the sector. It is an approach that educators value as it empowers them to consider their own practice, circumstances and environments and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to examine potential for change.

The partnerships between the educators who participate in Action Research strengthens their professional collegiality. Sharing these partnerships and the overall research with the sector inspired an exponential growth of Action Research participation from 2017 to 2018. Further the partnerships between educators and academics has mutual benefits for both groups in solidifying the relationship between research, practice and in promoting overall importance of the field of extended education and outside school hours care.

The poster presentations of these projects are freely available to view via www.qcan.org.au/resources

QCAN look forward to participating in the 3rd WERA-IRN Extended Education conference to be held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 2020 and further sharing the work of our skilful educators.



New South Wales (and Australian Capital Territory)

NSW & ACT OOSH Conference 2020

Early August - more details on our website coming soon

Sydney - Exciting new venue to be confirmed

Enquire or register at networkofcommunityactivities.org.au

Northern Territory

OSHC Educator Symposium - Darwin

Saturday 25th July

Hilton, 32 Mitchell Street, Darwin

Enquire or register at www.noshsa.org.au

Queensland

OSHC Educator Symposium - Brisbane

Saturday 14th March

Royal on the Park

OSHC Educator Symposium - Townsville

Saturday 30th May

Madison Plaza

2020 QCAN Annual State Conference

Friday 28th & Saturday 29th August

Novotel Surfers Paradise

Enquire or register at www.qcan.org.au

South Australia

OSHC Action Research Symposium - Adelaide

Friday 30th October

Venue TBA

Enquire or register at www.oshcsa.org.au

Victoria

OSHC Conference—Melbourne

Weds 14th & Thurs 15th October

Venue—TBC

Enquire or register at reception@ccinc.org.au



QCAN LEARNING POINT

Interactive, accessible and relevant learning

qcan.kineoportal.com.au

Queensland Children's Activities Network (QCAN) online training platform 'Learning Point' is now available for all members to use. Learning Point enables users to engage in quality online learning experiences, including self-paced learning modules and webinars. Certificates are issued upon completion of your training which can be used as a record of your professional development.

Contact QCAN today to register on 1300 781 749 or email admin@qcan.org.au



The screenshot shows the QCAN Learning Point website. At the top left is the QCAN logo (Queensland Children's Activities Network) and the text 'Learning Point'. Below this is a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'HELP & SUPPORT', and 'STORE'. A dark blue banner contains the text 'Interactive, accessible and relevant learning'. The main content area features a large image of a woman with glasses lying on a lawn, reading a book and using a laptop. To the right of the image is a 'Training Login' section with fields for 'Username' and 'Password', a 'Forgot your password?' link, and a 'Login' button. Below the login section is a 'Welcome' message: 'Welcome to the Queensland Children's Activities Network online learning management system for school age care providers and educators. We aim to provide our online users with an exceptional learning experience with sessions that are interactive, accessible and relevant.' On the far right, there is a vertical list of links: 'HELP DESK', 'FAQ', 'SOFTWARE DOWNLOADS', 'SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS', and 'USING A COURSE'.

New courses
COMING SOON





The National Outside School Hours Services Alliance (NOSHSA) is a network of all Australian State and Territory Out of School Hours Services (OSHC) Associations. These organisations promote provision of Out of School Hours Services and act as a united voice to advocate both to Government and the community for excellence in service provision.

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