

## Thank you for the visit Dentist Jess!



Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup>  
May



Monthly Newsletter. Vol. 17

Hello Families,

We hope you all enjoyed a relaxing weekend!

Between Anna, our families, the team, and myself we represent such diverse political views. I was so pleased to hear our politically aware team members chatting constructively and passionately about their beliefs last week.

Nevertheless, one thing we are all united on is the betterment of the Early Childhood Education and Care sector in Australia. In our Code of Ethics we are all obliged to *"advocate for [my] profession and the provision of quality education and care."*

We would encourage you all to involve yourselves in as much advocacy as possible on behalf of the sector. For some families this might involve participating in petitions or communication with local members, for others it might simply be following some advocacy groups on social media.

If you would like to be aware of the policy goals of the sector we would love for you to support some of the following campaigns on your choice of social media...

- Early Learning - Everyone Benefits
- Big Steps
- Smart Start
- The Parenthood

Thank you! It is only with support from both families and the workforce that we can ensure Australia's ECEC sector pace with global funding trends, innovation, neuroscience and pedagogy.

## Administrative News...

Please ensure your children aren't bringing in toys from home.

Don't forget jumpers and jackets as the weather cools!

Date Night RSVPs are due Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June. Get in quick! We are able to support a maximum of 30 children at date night.

## Important Dates

Public Holiday  
Centre Closed

10<sup>th</sup>  
June

Date Night

13<sup>th</sup>  
June

## From the Directors

Welcome to the team Simer! Simer has previously worked with Narges and Chloe and has joined us 5 days/week as an extra set of hands. For the time being she is helping in the Preschool 1 room with Tamara who has returned from annual leave. Simer holds her Diploma and is considering further tertiary study. She also has two young boys of her own. Welcome Simer!

To help with consistency over the course of the day (and to minimize that commute from the central coast!) our lovely 2IC Natasha is now working 4 long days, and enjoying a Wednesday off. We hope that the M1 treats you well the other 4 days/week you make the trip!

Anna will be enjoying some annual leave in early June. Please be patient with me as I navigate her domains such as accounts and CCS enquiries. I'm very pleased to hear she will still just be a phone call away if I need! 😊

## Professional Development

We are very pleased to share that we are systematically sending all of our wonderful staff to some high quality professional development in the coming months. This will give our educators the opportunity to network with others in the sector, explore new philosophies and enrich their professional skills.

In the months of June and July we have:

Miss Tamara registered to attend 'Guiding Children's Behavior in Practice'...

*This large group forum provides the opportunity for participants to examine the social and physical environment as promoting positive behaviour in children. The forum aims to support Early Childhood Educators understanding of child development, provide key strategies to establishing positive social and physical environments and to address the behaviour of children which educators find challenging and that impact on individual and group social development. Facilitated small group activities will support opportunities for collaborative shared discussion throughout the day.*

Miss Natasha is attending a workshop that will build on her leadership skills and understanding of...

- Daily operations and management
- Creating high functioning teams (recruitment, simplified rostering and team building)
- Establishing strong relationships with families and communities
- The value of planning and time management
- Effective leadership and communication techniques.

Miss Narges attending a workshop centred around the delivery of STEM activities for preschool aged children...

*This hands-on day will explore each of the content areas in STEM, looking at how we can facilitate deep learning for 3-5 year old's. The session will explore the pillars of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and then focus on STEM processes for learning. Come prepared for some hands-on fun as you become a play-based STEM expert!*

Additionally, our educators are attending specialised full day first aid training sessions to ensure that everyone on our team is up-to-date with the newest guidelines for care for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

## We're all in this together!

During this time of debate around the funding of the Early Childhood Education and Care sector, we hope that the families at My Story truly feel as if we are in this together. Below is some writing of mine from before My Story that may provide a little insight into how the roles of 'mum' and 'educator' can interplay.

I came to Early Childhood Education and Care sector after having my own child. My naïve and idealistic thought process went something like this – *I'm not bad at looking after kids...this will be easy... it's a sector full of women with children...they'll understand!* But as the winter sun disappears, I now find myself anxiously counting children and calculating ratios so that I can maybe leave at 5:30, even though my shift ended at 5.00. I'm hoping I might be able to pick up my own child from her service before it closes. I watch each parent arrive, hug their child, pack up bags and head off for the night. On nights when I can't legally leave due to the time parents are picking up their children, I make desperate calls to my husband or friends so that my own child isn't left waiting at the front door at 6.00 p.m. - with, of course, an invoice for late pickup. It's at times like these that I really appreciate the gap many women feel between "idealistic thought processes" and the reality we face as working mums.

It's a gap I feel acutely as an early childhood educator. One of the things I find hardest to do is reassure women that I understand how they feel. It is really regrettable when either party – mother or educator – feels that they are not in this complex business of nurturing children and coping with modern life together. How many times have I read into the anguished faces of mothers dropping their kids off simple but pressing emotional questions like;

*...Do they love me enough? Do I spend enough time with them? Why do they cry when I drop them off? Why don't they cry when I drop them off? Why are they cuddling their teacher so tight? Hang on, did they just call her mummy?!...*

It's hard when a gulf opens up between educators and mothers who feel guilty about 'leaving their children behind' to be cared for and nurtured by another. Everyone knows this guilt is unreasonable but it is also understandable. It seems to me a stronger relationship between parents and educators is only possible when it is recognised that the full cultural reality of parent identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century involves women establishing a viable connection between the world of work and the world of motherhood. I understand the feelings – because I have them myself – but I also recognise the reality. As an educator, I am no less subject to the pangs of guilt that mothers feel in these circumstances, but I also feel proud that I can help women like myself fulfill a set of complex, ultimately rewarding aspirations. If it takes a village to raise a child, I'm part of that village. I console myself with that thought when I am missing my own child at 6.00 o'clock on a cold evening as the sun goes down. And I have faith enough in the partnership between parents and myself to feel they too can appreciate what I'm doing with (and for) them.

The irony doesn't escape me. I work in a sector that bourgeoned in the 1970s because it became increasingly necessary to support women who wanted to be part of the workforce. So it's 2017 and I want to be part of the workforce too but the very sector that has historically supported women who want control over their economic destiny barely pays me enough to make it a viable option. Advances in neuroscience have now clearly shown us that quality early education in the first five years of life is critically linked to future success. Regardless of the need for 'child-minding', such an experience is the right of children everywhere – that is, of course, if you believe in equality of opportunity. However, there are some of us who still view this as 'women's work' and, as such, the remuneration should be either minimal or non-existent. When you take a look at male-dominated sectors that require similar levels of qualification, the workers are paid on average about 30% more than a childcare educator. I'm literally earning less as an educator working under professional frameworks than I would as a cleaner of my centre. And so it's ironically almost 'not worth it' for me to be a working mum because of the cost of putting my own child into care!

Senator Pauline Hanson, however, doesn't see a problem, as she so eloquently pointed out in Jan 2017 when ECEC funding came to the fore politically. She raised four children without pay or any fancy certificate! All I can say, Pauline, with the best will in the world, is that the children I'm responsible for aren't mine. I don't have the discretion of putting off their learning or going easy on their care if I'm feeling frazzled or in need of a break as I sometimes do with my own kids. I am expected to teach to outcomes that people believe might just help Australia keep pace with the rest of the world. And, although I am fond of the children in my care, I don't love them in a way that I assume you love your children. No doubt your dauntless parental commitment carried you through the tough times. No doubt it enabled you to do it all to the exacting national standards you seem to find so unnecessary. And no doubt it sustained you when you realised there was to be no material compensation for your efforts. But damn it, Pauline, this is my job. I don't do it for the love of it even if I love many aspects of it. I do it to make repayments on my ridiculous Sydney mortgage. It's just insulting to say to women working in the caring industries that, because they are professionally committed to the welfare – as opposed to the competitive demise – of others, they should earn less.

The kind of public commentary that advocates for low-rent, cut-price, rack-'em-and-stack-'em childcare is not only short-sighted at the national economic level but also offensive to women working in this sector. As redolent as it is of the sort of "child-minding" we witnessed in Romanian orphanages during the Balkan conflicts of the past, this sort of "nose-wiping" child care has been seriously suggested as the bottom-line option in a model of Australian "choice" in which some families can elect for more prestigious services ...if they can afford it. Can we really risk perpetuating intergenerational poverty and disadvantage by running a two-tier system of early learning and child-care like this? Does such a cynical system of "choice" really offer any sort of choice at all for the majority of cash-strapped Australian families? Such heartless political agitation that cares nothing for the interests of children or the women who work with them; that prioritises cheap votes over social responsibility is just infuriating.

In January of this year, it made me very mad indeed.



My fifteen – I'm doing my best to draw it out! – minutes of fame all began on a quiet Wednesday night. I came home from work exhausted. I did the usual stuff – made dinner, bathed my daughter, read to her, put her to bed, put some washing on and finally slumped down in front of the TV. Unfortunately, my husband beat me to the remote control and so, according to the unwritten household rule that “whoever -turns -the -TV-on-gets-to-pick-the-show ”, I was condemned to yet another Big Bash League match. As a decidedly unsporty, frazzled person of the non-bloke persuasion, the prospect of several hours' inscrutable competition between teams from Brisbane and Perth left me unenthused to say the least.

So, I opened my laptop. I had some vague recollection of colleagues at work chatting about a Senator who'd made comments on the Early Childhood Education and Care sector. Comments to the effect it was all a matter of “wiping noses”, preventing kids from “killing each other” and keeping paedophiles from the door. I did some Googling. My husband watched in amusement as my face reddened and the outbursts became less and less child-friendly. I watched clips, read comments and generally updated myself on what purported to be the prevailing popular opinion about my career. As usual, it seemed to make no difference that those expressing this opinion had no expertise or insight whatsoever into ECEC.

Not without a *fight*, I thought. Where did this man get off trivialising the importance of my job and the sector as a whole! How could a supposedly intelligent, enlightened representative of the people wallow in such spectacular ignorance? How could he expect the Australian voting public to join him in the process? I wondered if the end of the world had actually finally happened. Maybe the apocalyptic, post-truth, “alternative fact” la-la land we have all been fearing had come to pass. Maybe a person's celebrity or their lucky election in a questionable upper house voting procedure really did entitle them to disregard the wisdom of experts, the knowledge of people who had dedicated their professional lives to an issue as crucial as early childhood education. While this man was busy concocting the sort of populist drivel he believed might get him re-elected, had he not seen the clear example of progressive countries now reaping the rewards of free or appropriately subsidised early childhood education?

So I wrote. I guess my intense anger and disdain sort of “exploded” onto the screen. As usual, I was pretty naive about the way the social media might react with my personal outrage. I didn't even have a Twitter account until recently when this media storm blew up! So I posted an open letter onto my own Facebook page. I wasn't confident of getting much by way of a meaningful response from the Senator but, to be honest, my words were intended to be more like a homage to my fellow educators. Provocation of the good Senator was not really the primary objective. I suppose it was also a bit cathartic...

Dear Senator Leyonhjelm,

Three weeks ago I stopped everything and spent an entire day of my personal, unpaid time creating documents to be used in court for a family in the middle of a child custody hearing.

...The next day I went to work and wiped a lot of noses.

Two weeks ago I identified behaviours that indicated possible child sexual abuse. I talked to the child, I talked to parents, I consulted research and theory, I completed Mandatory Reporting requirements, I cried - a lot...  
...And I managed to stop the children killing each other.

This week I held a baby as he experienced febrile convulsions. I cooled him, reassured him, called an ambulance, called the mother, comforted the hysterical mother, evacuated the other children, kept airways open. I provided first aid that could have prevented brain damage or death. I spent 4 hours filling out legal documentation, paperwork, reflections, and analysis.  
...And I wiped some noses.

On Monday I completed a set of observations, learning summaries and analyses that culminated in a recommendation that a child be assessed for learning delay. I sat there sweating and feeling nauseated while waiting for the parents to arrive for a meeting to discuss this. I was yelled at, screamed at, accused of being an insensitive, unprofessional bitch, and then they cried, and then I hugged them, and then I talked them through all the support and strategy I was going to offer to help them and their child.  
...And, to my knowledge, I managed to let zero paedophiles into my service.

On Wednesday I said goodbye to a family who were moving on from our service. They thanked me for the support, the documentation, the planning, the individual observations, the learning analyses, the patience, the help in times of crisis, the emotional investment and countless episodes of first aid treatments in times of emergency.

...And, I wiped some noses.  
...And changed nappies.  
...And set up experiences.  
...And prepared lunches.  
....And mopped floors.  
...And mediated conflicts.  
...And attended staff meetings.  
...And managed resources.  
...And taught self help skills.  
...And helped children toilet training.  
...And was spewed on by babies.  
...And cleaned up vomit.  
...And raked the garden.  
...And helped multiple babies sleep.  
...And taught pre-literacy skills.  
...And expanded the vocabularies of the children.  
...And introduced the concept of nuclear fission.  
...And explained the fundamentals of DNA.  
...And explained where babies come from.  
...And described the purpose of the dendrites on nerve cells.  
...And I wiped more noses.  
I did this for just over 20 bucks an hour.

Your ignorance regarding the lifelong benefits of early learning (sorry, a “Middle-class perk” (Leyonhjelm Jul 2, 2015)), arrogance, self-righteousness and hypocrisy as a self-proclaimed champion of enlightened government investment would be hilarious if it wasn't so damaging to our future prospects as an intelligent nation, and the aspirations of the working class.

Should you need any advice regarding the REAL responsibilities of a childcare worker – or should you need your nappy changed – I am only too happy to render assistance. Despite your comments, my role is to educate, and nothing would please me more than to educate one of my esteemed parliamentary representatives.

\* \* \*

Climbing the career ladder of early Childhood Education sometimes feels more like treading water. In a yet-to-be-fully-professionalised sector, it's a matter of seizing hold of haphazard opportunities to assume additional responsibility. Ok, I hear you say, you chose this path. So, lean in! Well, I frantically train up, attend networking events, lean in mentally and physically so far that I cringe a bit, and every so often feel guilty that I am leaning myself out of my own family responsibilities. At some point in this ridiculous see-saw scenario, I fall face first into “no-woman's land” and feel despondent, ashamed and unfocused.

At times like these all I can do is remember my own beautiful Mum. She was a stay-at-home mum for about ten years during the time my two siblings and I grew up and went off to ‘big school’. Before my Mum went to work, I was so proud of her. She was always there to drop me off and pick me up from kindergarten. She had hot chocolate waiting for me on a cold afternoon after piano lessons. She cleaned up my room while I was at school. She went shopping during the day and picked up little treats like a new set of pyjamas or some cool hair ties. Every afternoon I could cuddle up to her in front of the TV, or rely on her to mediate the inevitable conflicts between my sister and myself.

However, economic reality obtruded. It soon became apparent that Mum would have to get a job (well, a paid job). I could tell that she didn't want to because of her nervousness as she went to interviews and the sadness in her eyes when she dropped us off at before-school care. But I grew to be proud of my Mum in a whole new way as she added an extra dimension to her personality. She was more exhausted but also more and more beautiful. It wasn't just the nice shirts and lipstick she was wearing but, I believe, the pride she radiated as a result of self-determination and professional achievement. Her little girl picked up on that... as all little kids do. I have taken solace in the history of my mother at every stage of my post-baby life. During maternity leave, during periods of study, during part-time and sometimes full-time employment, I have remembered her story and treasured it. Whatever I'm doing, I hope my little girls are looking up to me now the same way I looked up to my Mum when I was their age.

- 8 Faith in the confidence and competence of women – it's transmissible. It just needs a habit of mutual support and occasional recognition from those who benefit most from what we continue to.

### Happy Mother's Day!

Anna and I hope all the My Story Mums (and those who take on the 'Mum' role) had a fantastic weekend on the 12th. We hope you had the chance to quietly reflect on all you have achieved, and how important you are to so many people.

Thank you to those who could make it to our celebration!

