



# The Elder Street Herald

## Understanding Parent-Professional Partnerships—looking at both sides of the view

Creating and maintaining real partnerships between parents and professionals working in children's services requires attention and commitment at many levels. However, the heart of partnerships is the daily interaction and communication. Establishing and maintaining partnerships between carers and parents can be complicated and challenging but to create a lasting positive impact on a child's life, such a partnership is one of the important parts of our job.

Partnerships in children's services need to include from both, parents and staff:

- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Empathy
- "both ways" communication
- Common goals
- Teamwork—absence of rivalry/competition
- Value and recognition of the strengths of the partner
- Shared decision making

Partnerships is respect in action. There are many ways that respect and partnership are manifest in daily practice in children's services. Where there is partnership there is:

**Talking with parents regularly**—partnership on the run is the name of the game, the time we have to forge part-

nerships is very limited, but one we aim to do our best at under the circumstances.

**Talking about things that are on parents' minds - Eg 1: why does my child behave well at the centre and sometimes differently at home?** We all are more likely to be on our best behaviour with people other than those we are most close with, the ones we know will love us no matter what our behaviour is like.

**Eg 2: Talking about parents having trouble separating from their child even when the child doesn't.** This is a sign of a well adjusted, secure child—feel proud, but know that staff empathise and understand.

**Eg 3: Talking about who is responsible for the child when the parent is present in the service.** This is a common moment of discomfort or tension in children's services, when the child is "playing up", the parent is thinking the professional should do something, and the professional is wondering why the parent isn't taking action. Staff are always willing to help, however we never want to intrude if unwanted, or undermine parent's authority. We need parents to understand that we are not judging if we try to defuse an incident with a child, we are simply using techniques within our environment that the children

respond to. In this instance parents need to either accept or decline the help on offer by communicating with us. We won't mind either way.

The list of examples is endless, the message though is that communication is the key. Small tensions can grow if they are not acknowledged and usually best resolved by getting them out in the open.

Children's services are trying to achieve something very complex; a balance between demonstrating competence so that parents feel confident to leave their child and giving the parents the message that they are needed more than anyone by their child and that they are the true expert on their child.

As professionals we need to operate with confidence. We should be willing to negotiate but at the same time be clear about our roles & rights, confident to persevere in the face of obstacles, and be open to others' perspectives. We need to be committed to finding good solutions when there are differences. As a professional we know that there are very few absolutes in child rearing except that each child should ...cont pg2



Partnership is respect in action

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### Special points of interest:

- Welcome to little Zoe in the Possum room and her mum Helen.
- Congratulations to Shelly & Kate who have recently began studying their Diploma in Children's Services.
- Did you know—that cockroaches favourite food is the glue on envelopes ?!?

## Understanding Parent-Professional partnerships continued...

be treated in ways that let the child know that he or she is loved and made to feel valued.

We as professionals understand and support parents rights to:

**Have a focus on their child:** This is not only accepted but seen as desirable. It is after all a parent's job to be a passionate advocate for their child.

**Ask questions, make requests and give constructive criticism:** Professionals may not always be able to meet every request, but our message is that it is always okay to ask. If the answer is no, this should be conveyed respectfully. We will always welcome respectful feedback.

**Be treated as individuals, just as we do with children:** some parents will want more than others, some will share

more information than others, some will be more confident than others, some will be busier than others and some will be more critical than others. Just as there is no generic child, there is no generic parent. We understand that sometimes the most difficult of parents to form partnerships are often those who need them the most and it is the essence of our professionalism to work with those parents.

We ask for our wonderful families of Elder Street to support our continued work towards partnership by being open, realistic, trusting, patient, supportive and most importantly of all

Speak to us first if there are problems concerns or questions regarding your child.

A cornerstone of high quality in children's services is when there is absolute clarity that the most valuable thing an early childhood professional can do for a child is to strengthen the parent-child bond and have a strong and trusting two way partnership with parents.



The beginnings of a new partnership for little Zoe and mum Helen

Source: This article has been adapted from *Exploring the nature of parent-professional partnerships, Partnerships for Children— Parents and Community Together*—A. Stonehouse.

## Child Development Port folios - thanks for your input

We are slowly receiving feedback from parents who have been browsing through their child's port folio. We have even had 2 families return the "Family Holiday" page to add to their child's port folio. They were so lovely to read and look at the photos included.

We have recently worked together in

A date will soon be set for our Port Folio evening - keep your eye out for a flyer on this event

room teams to devise some fresh new room goals. These will be added to each child's folder along with some more information about child development and our programming along with

the teachers work on the children's photographic observations and planning. Have a look and tell what you think.

## Where are all the toys going?

We are experiencing some what of an epidemic with our Preschool children and thought it may be a good idea to share it with our families as a group. Now, no need to panic, the children are all still as beautiful, inquisitive and gorgeous as ever, but, some are also deciding that they like a certain toy or piece of mobilo, etc so much that it needs to go home with them for a while. You may think, well its only one little piece of lego, or one little plastic cupcake, however if this is multiplied by 35 then you can imagine how much stuff is missing. At one stage out of a

set of 6 plastic muffins, we only had 2, then when asked if anyone knew where the rest were at a Monday morning group time, they appeared again out of a very honest little persons school bag.

We are asking for parents support by having a chat about the importance of leaving the toys at school for all the other children to play with if you happen to notice some odd bits and pieces at home or in the bag. If they sweetly tell you "but the teacher said I could have it!" you can be assured that a little bit of truth stretching is taking

place. We have been talking about this subject with the children lately and are pleased to tell you that we believe

we also have some great potential police men and women in our midst!

Thanks for your support

The Preschool Wallaby Team



Some of our beautiful innocent faces that at times may find it difficult to part with great stuff at home time!

## Good for Kids—Good For Life—Supporting Best practice in Children's Services

It has been quite a while now since we introduced this new program to our centre. The children are eating as well as ever and do not seem to be phased by the exclusion of certain food types (eg, sausages, jam, icecream and other high fat, salt, sugar products we used to use).

Some other things we thought you may not be aware of is that for children over 2 years, follow-



The provision of fresh low sugar, fat and salt food is the aim of GFKGFL

ing the guidelines we now only offer them reduced fat milk, children under 2 still have full fat milk. We offer 3 serves of vegetables within our menu daily and 2 serves of fruit.

We submitted our final updated menu to the dieticians with this program a few months ago and are awaiting their feedback. There has been some negative feedback from parents who attend other

centres and preschools where they pack lunches for their child, who are unhappy that certain foods are not allowed in the services. We feel that the program will be very beneficial long term and believe all children will gain from learning about the importance of eating fresh, healthy food and enjoying lots of running around—which kids do so well. If you would like to know more about this program or chat about our menu, please don't hesitate to call or ask for a menu to take home, they are displayed in the rooms of the centre.

## Our survey says..... BBQ in September!!!!

The votes have been counted and it looks like the most popular option for a social event at Elder Street is to alternate years where we have a Disco in July one year and a BBQ/picnic the next.

As we have already held 3 discos, we are thinking of hosting our first BBQ/Picnic at Blackbutt Reserve in September 2008. We are still planning the details of the event, but are thinking a

few potato sack races, soccer/cricket matches and of course some yummy hamburgers for lunch.

We envisage that families would bring along their own drinks, nibblies, picnic rugs and chairs and we would provide the lunch and games.

Our Discos are always lots of fun and it would be sad to not have one ever again, but a change is as good as a holiday and our aim to bring together as

many families as possible to spend a few hours together chatting and having fun with the children.

We think it will be impossible to not have a great time!!!

**We will post the date for the BBQ/Picnic Day when the weather starts to warm up — keep you posted!!!**

## CCMS— further information

It has been 5 weeks now since the government transitioned our centre from the old Child Care Benefit system to the new Child Care Management System. I would like to thank all the parents who were fantastic at providing me with all the information I needed to make this change. We have had a few families' accounts that have been quite confusing, but overall it seems to be sorting itself out. The main areas that affect families within the centre is:

\* No longer able to calculate fee changes; if you are working out income changes and want to know how this will effect your fees—this must now be done via the FAO 136150 or

[www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au)

\* We no longer receive information that your CCB% has changed or your eligible hours have changed. We will only know by the fact that your fee estimate sent to us by FaCSIA will be different from the previous week which in turn will change your weekly fees. If you know that you have recently changed your details with the FAO or that your income has changed, please let us know so we can see why your fees are different.

\* Our software can no longer round cents down or up. This will explain why you see strange cent amounts showing

on your account balance. We suggest you keep paying your normal amount each week if only varied by a few cents.

\* The system works in arrears, so we only receive confirmed fees the week after. For the week we are in, FaCSIA give us "estimates" for your weekly fees. This estimate then reconciles when I send all the weeks data the next week. The earliest this can be done is 6.01pm on Friday of each week— I do it on the Tuesday of the next week. If you buy or sell a day, your fees won't change until that next week, when the data is sent off and then reconciled.

More CCMS fact info on page 4 .....

## Recipes from Catherine's Kitchen

### Vegetable Bake

This is one of our new dishes that was created to pack in as many veggies in the tastiest way possible. It is loved by the kids and the staff too!

#### Method:

1. Peel and cut potatoes into small bite size bits. Boil until soft, but still firm.
2. Steam or boil veggies listed (you can use as many as you like) until cooked through.
3. Combine all vegetables in a baking tray
4. Make white sauce, by melting margarine, adding flour and cooking off and combining (remove from heat) and slowly add milk until combined. Return to heat and add cheese, stir until thickened.
5. Pour white sauce over vegetables
6. Sprinkle over remaining cheese
7. Cook in moderate oven until cheese has melted

This dish has over 5 serves of veggies and 2 serves of dairy.

## Ingredients

For a family of 4

5 medium potatoes

2 carrots, peel and diced

Can of corn

Cauliflower — small chunks

Beans — diced

Peas

Broccoli — small chunks

1/2 cup grated cheese

For white sauce:

1 tbs plain flour

1 tbs margarine

1 cup of lite milk

1/2 cup grated cheese

## Reminder about Security at Elder Street

We would like to remind parents about the importance of maintaining security around Elder Street. As much as we love most of our little Elder street, Lambton community, unfortunately there is a group of children aged between 8 and 16 who roam around looking for and causing some trouble.

In the past they have sat on the church steps eating and leaving rubbish, left graffiti and played ring the door bell and run. Recently they have become more cocky and have started ringing the door bell, covering the monitor with their hands and asking for access.

We have called our local police on a number of occasions to advise them of these children and they advise that the children and their families are

known to the police quite well.

We feel quite secure in the fact that we have a sound security system in our doorbell, monitor and glass door, but



**Security at the centre is of utmost importance**

would like to remind parents of a few practices to make us feel even safer. Please remember to:

\* Ring the doorbell again if it sounds crackly. Sometimes the monitor is fuzzy and we can't see who is at the door. This will avoid us letting someone in who is unwanted.

\* If there is someone else waiting in the foyer to be let in and you do not know them from our centre, please make sure they do not come through with you.

\* If you see young kids hanging around that are not with adults, by all means feel free to ask them what they are doing at the centre and if confident send them on their way.

\* Please remember not to leave any valuables in your car at the front of the centre.

THANK YOU

## Update on new equipment from our Equipment Levy 08

The girls have done a great job at spending the last bit of this year's equipment levy and I must say I had a bit of fun adding on lots of other toys and resources that I thought the children could really benefit from.

### Outdoor play:

Train track kit— 6 piece set with wiggly train track, bridge climb and mountain climb, agility ladder, picnic play set and lots more lovely sand pit toys.



Wallaby friends mastering the new climbing equipment

**Indoor play:** Counting cookies, sorting cupcakes, funny buckets, duck family set, musical giraffe and some great new puzzle storage shelves. For our babies some new push along and pop up toys, 6 new bathing dolls, lovely wooden fruit and wooden veggie sets. You may have seen the very popular new wooden birthday cake with candles. More to come soon are animal bean bags, lots of new tea set and pretend bake and play toys, and

some great preschool learning equipment being, a story listening post, that consists of a console to plug into a CD player with 10 headsets. We also purchased 6 CD stories with the books for the children to read along with.

Last of all is the Light panel. This is similar to a box that illuminates x-rays. It is great for projecting different shapes, form and colour and can be used for tracing letters, numbers and different shapes too.

Lots of new learning resources that make playing all that much more fun!!!

## Elder Street Philosophy

Most parents would have noticed in our foyer the 2 bright coloured frames that house our Centre Philosophy. The internal frame around the written philosophy is where parents and staff can write notes or comments in support of this document and the values that underpin our children's service. This practice was introduced in 2006 as an opportunity for parents to have ongoing input and reflection on this important living document. Our whole centre has the opportunity to review and offer input on our philosophy during our Annual Partnership with Parents Questionnaire also.

The frames have been missing for a few days now as we feel it is time to

give them a bit of a re-vamp and provide a clean slate for new comments from some of the families that have joined us since 2006, however as we value all the feedback we will still display previous years' comments.

So it is up to our families now to provide us with your comments, reflections, anecdotes and thoughts.

There is a small explanation below the frames that may help guide you as to what type of things to think about when writing your thoughts on our board. If you have any problems, you may like to have a look at the past comments or speak to staff about the

philosophy if you would like to gain more information about why we have this document and the importance of it within our children's service.

**"Write a comment about how you feel we live and practice our Centre Philosophy each day"**



Madie being cared for by Shona & Chloe



Clever standing girl Gabbi



The Wallabies playing broom hockey

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with Families**

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**CCMS Facts**

- The process of information about your child care benefit now comes follows this process— you give FAO information, they process and send onto FaS-CIA, they process and send on to Elder Street ECHC
- The system is "live", meaning that when we log into our child care software system and ask for data it comes live via the internet. Any information received down the line will immediately change your child care fee balance if details have changed.
- Your fees could also change if your eligible hours are less than the hours you attend the service. You need to make sure you meet the criteria for eligibility for 50hrs worth of child care. Otherwise you will only be entitled to 24hrs care. This effects families whose children attend more than 2 days care per week.
- Families are now entitled to 42 days allowable absences. This means your child can be away from our service for 42 days in a financial year without affecting your CCB status

**If you would like to have your newsletter emailed please complete the following slip and return to the centre:**

My email address is: ...

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!**

**May babies:**

James turned 2  
Phoebe turned 2  
Therese turned 3  
Jack turned 3  
Millie turned 4  
Vaughn turned 4

**June babies:**

Gabrielle turns 1  
Joseph turns 2

Shona turns 3  
Mitchell turns 5

**New Arrivals -  
Congratulations!!!**

*To Rochelle, Lee and Madelyn  
(Wallabies) —  
Congratulations on the long  
awaited arrival of  
lovely Ayla Belle.  
We can't wait to meet her!*



Happy  
Birthday  
James!



Happy  
Birthday  
Vaughn!