

## ***From the President's Desk***

Here we are at the beginning of another exciting year for IFDCO and hopefully for ourselves and the work that we are all involved in. We are hoping that you are all giving a lot of thought to the IFDCO/FDC Australia Conference being held 18 to 21 July 2012 here in Brisbane.

Planning has been in full swing for a few months now and we are doing as much as we can to make this a successful conference that everyone will enjoy and learn from. If you go to the web site [www.cdesign.com.au](http://www.cdesign.com.au) you will see where we are at with the planning and who we have secured as Keynotes and guest presenters. We have more to do with the workshops yet and the social events but will have everything arranged and finalised within the next few months. It is an exciting project to be involved in. Fortunately we have a very capable team and a great deal of experience in the mix. Family Day Care Australia have an excellent reputation as Conference hosts, they have done it all so many times before.

The theme of the Conference is; "Children - The Heart of The Dream". Streams within the theme are: Celebrate Children, Challenge our Practice and Connect With Others, all relevant to Family Child Care and our international connections.

If you look at the Registration Costs you will see that one of the incentives for attending is the group booking of seven delegates booking full registration with the seventh one being free. What this means in reality is that the cost of the seventh registration is discounted amongst the previous six thereby making a saving of over one

hundred dollars per person. As well as this, if you are a financial member of IFDCO a further \$50 will be deducted from the registration fee. This surely has to be an incentive that will attract delegates. Your task is to find another six people to register thus saving you all a great discount.

The location and venue for the conference is very attractive, the Brisbane Convention Centre is central to the city, many accommodation options and right on the Southbank of the Brisbane River. The weather in Brisbane in July can be as the brochures and Tourism Queensland state, "beautiful one day, perfect the next". For people coming from colder climates, you will think that our winters are unbelievably warm. We don't have too much to complain about (but we still do once the temperature drops below 20 degrees). There is a lot to see in Queensland but it is such a vast state that you may not get to see too much of it. We will be offering day trips to see some of the more local Australian icons and sights that will interest most people, whale watching etc. as well as some home visits to some of our Educators and some of the indigenous children's facilities and other Children's Services. These are things that will be different from your own countries and hopefully will be of interest to you.

Currently in Australia, we are engaging in a system that every Child Care Service type is required to offer, which meets a Care and Education National standard. As from 01.Jan 2012, a range of new initiatives which have been legislated by the Australian Government came into force. These are the new National Quality Framework, the new National Standards, new

National Law and new National Regulations. As I mentioned in an earlier newsletter, the new system allows for a consistent standard of Care and Education for every child wherever they live in Australia. One of the advantages for children and their families is that all service types will be operating at a similar level even though we know that the Family Day Care sector has areas that need some "fine tuning" to meet all of the Government requirements. One of these areas is the requirement for a fifteen hours a week pre Prep (the year before they start formal schooling) session for children provided by a four year trained Early Childhood teacher. This is an area that we will find a little challenging in Family Day Care. We believe that those fifteen hours are well and truly catered for by the experiences and activities that the children are already being offered whilst they are in care. Currently and for some time, our Educators have needed to provide a daily program of play /learning experiences based on the interests of the children in their care. Parents need to sight and sign these programs. I am sure that eventually we will all be able to work with the new system, we have gone through many changes over the years and managed to adapt to them all. We all believe that a collaborative approach is the most beneficial.

One of the many tasks we need to undertake as a service is to compile a Quality Improvement Plan. This needs to show all of the Seven Quality Areas that we will be working to improve over time, how we propose to achieve these changes, what outcomes or goals we are aiming for and what time line have we been given to accomplish the changes.

The Seven Quality Areas are:

- Educational Program and Practice
- Children's Health & Safety
- Physical Environment
- Staffing Arrangements
- Relationships with Children
- Collaborative Partnerships with Parents
- Leadership & Service Management

As you might imagine, this task will be a very time consuming one but needs to be completed by April of this year !!!!!!!

I think we will need to go away to a Resort for a month to work on it. Our consolation is that we are not the only ones that need to be completing one. Every Child Care Service in Australia is required to submit their own Quality Improvement Plan. The Plans relate to our own Services so we can't even copy anyone else's.!!!

I might sound a little light hearted about the workload we have before us but I know that we will get it done by the "due date" and then we will be able to get on with the many other tasks associated with the Government changes. And the other great thing is that in my service, we have a team of committed staff who will help make it all happen. Our Educators also have to submit their own Quality Improvement Plan which fortunately is not as comprehensive as ours, and we can help them with it.

So you can see that we don't have much time to be sitting around idle, there is always plenty to keep us busy.

I will end this Australian part of the newsletter and add the other items that have come to us from other countries. Many thanks for these contributions it is always interesting to hear what is happening elsewhere in the world of Family Child Care.

*Grace McDonald*

*President*

*International Family Day Care Organisation*



## ***News From Ireland***

### ***Childminding Ireland's Achievement for Childminders!***

Childminding Ireland continues to be responsive to the needs of Childminders in proposed government policies and schemes and has gained the recognition for the importance of Childminding in the bigger childcare picture. The important outcomes listed below have been achieved by representation to various government departments over the years - Finance, Health & Children and Local Government and especially more recently to the Office of the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs.

### ***Exemption from Change of Use Planning requirements:***

allows Childminding services to be undertaken in the family home without application for change of use permission required for other types of home based businesses

### ***Childminding Initiative:***

providing information, training and networking opportunities for Childminders, through the CCCs and CMAOs. Capital grants for Childminding were also a feature of the initiative.

### ***Childminders Tax Relief:***

allowing Childminders minding up to three children to earn up to €15,000 tax free annually.

### ***Quality Awareness Programme, (QAP):***

training and networking opportunity for Childminders designed specifically for childcare offered in a family home based setting.

### ***Childminding Development Grant:***

provides up to €1,000 for Childminders meeting certain criteria to enable quality improvement or the purchase of start up items.

### ***Síolta Co-ordinator:***

providing direct support to ECCE Scheme Childminders and those wishing to engage with Síolta/Aistear.

### ***Participation in the Free Pre-school year:***

Childminders meeting certain criteria to provide this service to parents

### ***Standardised Inspection Tool for Childminding settings:***

guiding the inspection process appropriately to ensure the Family Home is acknowledged as a viable and appropriate setting for quality childcare

### ***Participation in CETS:***

enabling Childminders providing ECCE to avail of CETS payments and lobbying for other Childminders meeting certain minimum criteria to be included.

### ***Garda vetting:***

enabling all Childminders wishing to do so, access to the vetting service.

## ***Childminding Ireland - the Professional Association for Registered Childminders!***



## ***News From Scotland***

### ***£3 million boost to enhance play facilities***

Free play opportunities for children across Scotland are set to be increased following a £3million investment from the Scottish Government.

Children's Minister, Aileen Campbell, announced the additional funding today during a visit to Thornlie Primary in Wishaw, where the MSP met with parents and children.

Ms Campbell said: "Play is central to how children learn and a basic part of their overall quality of life.

"As a Government we recognise it's crucial to develop quality play spaces for our children as part of their positive, wider development."

The £3million boost will see the expansion of a selected number of 'Play Ranger' models, which provide children with community-based play opportunities, and the 'Grounds for Learning' initiative to improve school playgrounds.

"This funding will help build upon some of the great work already underway to enhance play opportunities for our children and help make Scotland the best place for children to grow up."

The cash investment, managed by Inspiring Scotland and Grounds for Learning, will run over the next four years, improving our play spaces as well as supporting and developing staff across Scotland's play sector.

Andrew Muirhead, Chief Executive of Inspiring Scotland said: "We are delighted this new investment will enable us to continue working with a selected number of existing Play Rangers models with the ability to grow and expand in some of the communities of greatest need in Scotland, proving more opportunities for children to develop through free play.

"Through this new investment, Inspiring Scotland will also look at ways of continuing to support the wider play sector."

Grounds For Learning's Programme Manager, Alastair Seaman said:

"We know children's opportunities to play outdoors in natural spaces are shrinking so we're thrilled the Scottish Government has recognised the strategic importance of school playgrounds and play times in giving children the play experiences vital for an active, healthy and happy childhood."

### ***Decision to re-grade services that fail to submit an annual return***

The Care Inspectorate has decided that, where a service does not submit an annual return by the final submission date of 20 February 2012, without a satisfactory explanation having been agreed beforehand with their inspector, one of the Quality Statements for the Quality of Management and Leadership Theme will be re-graded to unsatisfactory (1) (for childminders this will be Quality Statement 3.9). This will cause the Quality Theme to be re-graded overall as unsatisfactory.

An email has been sent by the Care inspectorate to all service providers advising of the above and to remind you must submit an annual return by 20 February 2012.

Scottish Childminding Association will discuss this issue with the Care Inspectorate in the very near future. The Association feels the short notice of this new action is unfair on service providers and we will try to negotiate a fairer timescale for implementation with the Care Inspectorate.

### ***Free childcare for vulnerable two's***

£4.5million has been set aside to enhance childcare for the early years.

Early learning and childcare opportunities for vulnerable two year olds will be expanded following a yearly investment of £1.5million over the next three years from the Scottish Government.

The new Children's Minister, Aileen Campbell MSP, visited Fort Children and Families Centre in Leith this morning to announce that the additional funds will go deliver free early learning and childcare provision from April 2012.

During the visit, Ms Campbell met with parents, childminders, young children and staff from the Edinburgh-based child and family centre.

She said: "As a Government, we are committed to increasing quality early learning and childcare opportunities as part of our wider drive to improve future life chances for all Scotland's children by giving them the best start in life.

"While this commitment focuses on two year olds who are looked after, we will continue to work with our partners in the Early Years Task Force to identify how we should best support children and families in the future."

Maggie Simpson, SCMA Chief Executive, will meet with the Government to discuss how childminders can provide this care for vulnerable two-year-old children.



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## ***News from NY***

The Alliance for Quality Education and its partners will sponsor an Advocacy Day in Albany, NY on February 28, 2012. The coalition is urging colleagues across the state to meet with NYS legislators to reinforce the message that investments in high quality early learning programs reap significant returns preparing children to succeed in school and in life.

The Family Child Care Association of New York State (FCCANYS) will hold their 21st Annual Family Child Care Conference on April 27 & 28,

2012 at the Villa Roma Resort & Conference Center in Callicoon, NY (in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains).

Highlights of the conference will include:

Friday Keynote: John Archambault from California, Children's Author (Chicka Chicka Boom Boom & Boom Chicka Rock);

Friday Eve Musical Entertainment - Beth & Scott, Award winning singer/songwriters;

Saturday Keynote - Jeff Johnson from Iowa, Author (Finding your Smile Again, Babies in the Rain, and many more)

Saturday Closing Session - Rusty Keeler, Playscape Designer & Author (Natural Playscapes)

As well as 30+ other workshop presenters to complete a fun filled, educational conference.

Visit [www.fccanys.org](http://www.fccanys.org) for more details.

The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Annual Conference will be held at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis in Atlanta, Georgia on July 26-28, 2012 for more details visit [www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org)

