



October, 2018

OMEP Australia News

OMEP WORLD ASSEMBLY AND CONGRESS EDITION

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC JUNE 25-29 2018

OMEP NSW

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More details on the Secretariat
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In June, a number of OMEP Australia members attended the World Assembly and Conference in the beautiful city of Prague, in the Czech Republic. The conference marked the **70th anniversary** of OMEP conferences – and was fittingly held in the same city as the inaugural conference in 1948. Attendees at the World Assembly were lucky enough to attend a Lecture and entertainment (a wonderful orchestra and choir – they certainly know how to ‘do’ music and art in the Czech Republic!) in the very room in which the founders of OMEP held their first meeting - the Karolinum, at The Charles University, one of the Czech Republic’s oldest universities – an institution dating back to 1348!

Professor Frances Press represented OMEP Australia at the World Assembly, voting on important issues such as an Action for Migrant Children, and the election of a New Vice President for the African Region. Presentations and reports from the session will be made available to OMEP Australia Members as soon as we receive them from OMEP International.



Dr Sandie Wong (National Secretary), **Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis** (NSW President), **Joan Waters** (Victoria), **Jennifer Jackson** (Victoria) and **Lesley-anne Ey** (South Australia), attended the World Assembly as Observers. Vivi, Joan and Lesley-anne, were each recipients of the OMEP Australia **Rosamunde Combes** Travel Award. It was wonderful to see the warmth with which Vivi and Joan – both long-term members of OMEP Australia and past Presidents - were welcomed and honoured by their international colleagues. The fire and passion for early childhood and the rights of children burns brightly within each of them.

The papers presented at the conference were wide ranging and from diverse national contexts. Keynote presentations by **Audrey Curtis** (who remembered her mother attending the inaugural conference), and **Kathy Sylva** were particularly moving. Conference presentations by Fran, Sandie, Lesley-anne and Jennifer were well-received. Lesley-anne presented on a project funded by OMEP. There were also a few other Australians presenting papers, which gave Australia a real presence at the Conference.

As a member of the Asia-Pacific Region, **OMEP Australia** has a particular responsibility to work collaboratively with other OMEP countries in our region, to foster mutual understanding, but also widen our views on ECEC provision. Contributing to this collaborative work, Fran presented with other **Asia-Pacific OMEP** Presidents on the provision of ECEC for **children under three**, in our region. It was fascinating to hear about the often similar, but

WANT TO ATTEND?

The 71st World Assembly and Conference will be held in **Panama**. Details will be circulated to members as soon as they are available.

sometimes unique, challenges that each country faces in providing care and education for their youngest citizens.

Additional ways we identified that OMEP Australia might contribute to increasing the connections between member countries in our region, included co-authoring papers and student and scholarly exchanges.



Throughout the Assembly and Conference, delegates were reminded of the very close and long-term relationships and synergies between OMEP, **UNICEF**, **UNESCO** and **Save the Children**. We were also encouraged to support and circulate information about **OMEP International 'projects'**, including:

o Sustainable Development Goals:

http://www.worldomep.org/index.php?hCode=ACTION_04_01_01

o WASH from the Start:

http://www.worldomep.org/index.php?hCode=ACTION_04_03_01

o Play and resilience project:

http://www.worldomep.org/index.php?hCode=ACTION_04_02_01

o Celebration of Special Days:

- Play Day - 28th May
- International Day of Peace - 21st September
- World Teachers' Day - 5th October
- Global Hand Washing Day - 15th October
- Children's Day - 20th November

WANT TO ATTEND?

Members may be interested to know that the next Asia-Pacific conference will be held in **Kyoto, Japan**, from September 5 – 7th 2019. The Call for Papers can be found at this link:
<http://www.gakkai.ac/omepjpn/aprconference2019/aprinfo/>

WORDS FROM THE WORLD PRESIDENT

On behalf of OMEP World Executive Committee, I would like to extend my most sincere thanks for your participation in the 2018 OMEP World Assembly and Conference. This year, over 600 early childhood researchers, practitioners, policymakers, advocates, and future teachers from around the world joined us in Prague.

I would especially like to thank the conference committee led by Milada, the chair of the organizing committee, and Dana, the president of OMEP Czech Republic, as well as all of the supporting agencies, businesses, and organizations in Prague. The conference could not have been so successful without the committee and the board. Thank you once again

More photos?

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1LTmxv2cD8gkc6GUM1-HjITy2G9VEyOXs>



The Foundation and the Future

There were questions, laughter, excitement in the air. The pleasure was infectious! Cheerful sounds filled the hall as Executive members, National Presidents, delegates and observers found their places in the Hotel Olympik, Prague.

"How are you?" "It's so good to see you again!" "How's your OMEP committee going?" "I've been so looking forward to this year!" "What are you working on now?"

In one role or another, I have attended 10 Assemblies, each a stimulating and enjoyable experience. But this one was special, the 70th anniversary of the first meeting in Prague in 1948.

As usual, there was the 2-day business of the Assembly. Roll call, regional reports and meetings, financial issues, and the 2019 work plan to attend to, then the 3 days of conference - keynote speeches, group discussions, individual presentations and poster sessions. But this time in Prague it seemed each day included added times of surprise and delight. Now at home I reflect on these special times from Assembly and Conference.

Participants from 76 countries were welcomed to the Assembly by World OMEP President Dr Eunhye Park, and charmed by the Osminka folk band, a group of musicians performing traditional songs and dances. Dr Park spoke of the founding of OMEP and said, "We look to the past for inspiration as we look to the next 70 years of commitment to the rights, wellbeing, health and education of the world's children". President OMEP Czech Republic Dr Dana Moravcova welcomed us too, and reminded us that now on the one hand, there are countries at war, countries in which children live in poverty, suffer malnutrition, do not receive education, and whose rights are not respected. On the other hand, there are countries in which children live in prosperity, receive education and their rights are respected, yet in neither case are the conditions for a child's development wholly optimal. We see that children suffer both from shortage and excess.

So we began the business, conscious of responsibility and opportunity.

On Monday afternoon the 70th meeting celebration was held in the Karolinum, the original building of Charles University, built in 1348. In the Great Hall we sat

**REPORT ON OMEP WORLD
CONGRESS FROM JOAN WATERS**

facing a tapestry from the 14th century and a bronze statue of King Charles and listened to a hugely enjoyable program of music and song from the Piccolo Coro and Piccolo string orchestra. The University's Rector Professor Tomas Zima reminded us of the long tradition of preschool pedagogy in the Czech Republic which reaches back to the 17th century when Comenius introduced a new view of the child and laid the foundations for the science of preschool education. I thought about the way my own views of childhood have changed over the years since I attended my first OMEP meeting!

Visits to kindergartens were a popular event on Wednesday morning. Talking with friends later I heard of the variety of centres visited - International, Montessori and English Language Immersion were mentioned. I went to a public kindergarten (Materna Skola). My notes are brief: Children aged 3-6, hours 7.30-5.30, some go home after lunch, eat lunch with knife and fork, those staying have an hour's nap after changing into pyjamas, home time as preferred, spacious playground with fixed equipment, small fees for 1st and 2nd years, free for 3rd and 4th, inviting spaces in attractive rooms, weekly field trips on tram or walking in hi-vis vests, national curriculum, no emphasis on literacy or numeracy skills, monthly introduction to Czech's rich theatre culture, learn how to behave as a collective. A reminder to me about different perceptions of what's valued in early education.

So to the Conference opening in the Hotel Clarion. In her keynote address former OMEP World President Audrey Curtis praised the small group of women who, concerned about the thousands of children orphaned or destitute in Europe after the World War II, worked for two years to arrange the first world conference of OMEP. She spoke of the organisation's growth from the original 17 members to today's 78, the effective projects undertaken by national committees in OMEP's five regions and the continuing challenge of keeping OMEP relevant to the education needs of the 21st century. The Welcome Reception that followed was a joyous event attended by nearly 1000 conference participants and friends of OMEP. There is nothing like face-to-face conversation!

Next morning, a presentation by Dr Ondrej Kascak and Dr Branislav Pupala addressed the conference theme of Conditions of Early Childhood Education Today: A Foundation for a Sustainable Future. They discussed the realities and polarities of sustainable futures -both for children as individuals and society as a whole. The question arises "Should early childhood be a time to shape children as future citizens according to an agreed set of standards, the child as 'human capital', or a time to be more concerned about present health, emotional development and well-being?"

For the next two days we were faced with a great array of elective presentations

covering every possible area of interest; choice was difficult. I decided to listen to papers on unfamiliar topics – Transgender Awareness in preschool children; Building Resilience inside the War Zone: Teachers of Syria; and Speaking about Philosophical Concepts in Early Childhood were three of the best I heard. Fortunately, transcripts of the 800 or so papers are available, with authors addresses on the website www.konference2018.omep.cz For a break I went to the excellent exhibition of artefacts and material on 70 years of OMEP prepared by the Komensky Pedagogical Museum.

The organisation of the Assembly and Conference was faultless. Simultaneous translations were provided for all the welcome addresses and keynote speakers; rooms allocated and easy to find; meal breaks well-timed and thoughtfully catered for; ever-ready volunteers to solve the myriad of problems arising as hundreds of non-Czech speakers negotiated the new environment.

I attended 3 of the 'extra' social events: a 2-hour walking guided tour, The Roots of Prague's Education in the Old Town; an evening at the Black Light Theatre and a twilight Garden Party at Havel Castle where the food was delicious, the company cordial and the entertainment from the Gaudeamus folk group superb. These events were a great way to spend time with old friends and meet new ones – strengthening our worldwide networks.

Conference closed with a stimulating presentation from Kathy Sylva, Professor of Educational Psychology, Department of Education. University of Oxford, UK. Speaking of fostering foundation skills in ECE, she described two research studies that "make a powerful case for the importance of high quality ECE in narrowing the developmental gap at entry to school for children from different social backgrounds." To paraphrase – free play is not enough, an agreed curriculum is not enough; we must concentrate on a broad range of 'foundational' skills, as we advocate for conditions that will make learning possible. Our children, all children deserve no less. I urge OMEP members to get a copy of this address and discuss it with colleagues.

This was indeed a memorable gathering for me; confirming the aims of those first visionary women who met in 1948 and challenging me to join others to continue the long struggle for the fulfilment of children's rights wherever they live. I am grateful to OMEP Australia for the grant which enabled me to attend.

Joan Waters

NEW REPORT

OMEP Australia will soon be releasing: ***Supporting early childhood educators to address bullying in junior primary classes through the co-creation of anti-bullying interventions and resources: A Proof of Concept Study***

The report was researched and written by Lesley-anne Ey and Barbara Spears, and funded by OMEP Australia.

It has been well-received by reviewers.

Professor Peter K Smith, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Goldsmiths College, University of London

I found this to be an excellent resource, and a very well conducted study. The area is important, tackling the origins of young children's understanding of bullying, and carrying out an intervention study to improve this understanding. The project advances the field, and provides very useful resources and recommendations.

Dr Claire Monks, Reader in Developmental Psychology and Deputy Head for the Department of Psychology, Social Work & Counselling at the University of Greenwich.

This study was well designed and very thorough. I thought that this was an excellent piece of work. This is a very valuable resource to support young children in their understanding of bullying.

Dr Lesley-anne Ey and Dr Barbara Spears would like to thank OMEP Australia for their funding to support us in exploring young children's understanding of bullying and support junior primary educators in developing an anti-bullying program. In this funded research project we interviewed 99 junior primary children aged 5-8 years from South Australian schools (4 experimental schools and 2 control schools). Children

Supporting early
childhood
educators to
address bullying
in junior primary
classes

explained what they thought bullying was and then looked at a series of 27 cartoons depicting bullying (10), aggression-only (12), and pro-social behaviours (5) and decided whether they thought the scenarios were bullying or not bullying and explained why. The data collected from these interviews was shared with the educators who then worked collaboratively with the researchers to develop an anti-bullying program. After one term of the anti-bullying intervention, children were re-interviewed to explore whether their understanding of bullying had increased. Results found that children in the experimental group (those exposed to the program) had an increased understanding of bullying. Dr Lesley-anne Ey also won a travel scholarship from OMEP Australia and received an honourable mention for the research from World OMEP ESD Leadership Committee. As a recipient of the travel grant Dr Lesley-anne Ey attended the OMEP World Assembly and the OMEP Conference in Prague. Dr Ey and Dr Spears presented the research at the 70th World OMEP Conference in Prague, which attracted a respectable number of people and the presentation was received well by the audience. The conference provided a variety of research based and practice based presentations relative to early childhood teaching and development, with many presentations focusing on a sustainable future. Dr Ey and Dr Spears were also able to network and received a lot of interest about the report and the anti-bullying program which was developed for OMEP Australia to share on their website. They have directed those who have asked for these materials to the Australian OMEP website, stating that these materials should be available by the end of the year. This research is cutting edge in the field of early childhood and we were grateful for the support from OMEP to conduct the research and disseminate the findings internationally. We are also intending to write an academic journal article to further disseminate these findings.

Dr Lesley-Anne Ey and Dr Barbara Spears

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Migrant Children's Needs NOW

An urgent call to action in support of children as an Unambiguous Priority in All Global Policy Statement Regarding Migration and Refugees.

Representing members in more than 70 countries around the world, OMEP, the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, calls upon local, national, and global leaders to take immediate and responsible action.

The current situation in the world creates the urgent need for all nations to ensure the human rights of all children, especially the youngest and the most vulnerable, regardless of their migration status. All children must have access to all services and they must not be detained or separated from their families.