

## Accreditation Update to *Putting Children First*: Keeping services informed



Current *Putting Children First* editorial coordinators, Elizabeth Robinson, Peter McLeod and Angela Owens.

Providing educators with information about the Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) systems and quality practice in child care has been a key feature of NCAC's role since our commencement in 1993. While we have developed a range of publications and resources to do this, our quarterly magazine *Putting Children First* has been a primary focus for communicating with the early and middle childhood fields.

Before *Putting Children First*, NCAC's main publication was the *Accreditation Update* newsletter, the first of which was published in September 1994, and had a circulation of approximately 5,500 (with two copies sent to each service), made up primarily of long day care services. *Accreditation Update* consisted of four pages, and regular features included a message from the NCAC Chair and CEO, Quentin Bryce, a 'questions and answers' page and a 'tips and timesavers' page. NCAC published thirty issues of *Accreditation Update* over seven years, with the final issue distributed to services in December 2001. With the expansion of the CCQA systems to incorporate Family Day Care Quality Assurance and the introduction of the revised Quality Improvement and Accreditation System, *Accreditation Update* was replaced with the *Putting Children First* newsletter, launched in March 2002.

*Putting Children First* built on *Accreditation Update* and, rather than mainly focussing on 'how to do it', as the original publication had done, *Putting Children First* also included articles about aspects of quality practice. Case studies exploring how real services were implementing quality in everyday practice became a regular feature. By June 2003, the CCQA systems again expanded

to include Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance, and *Putting Children First* continued to explore ever-more diverse and topical early and middle childhood care and education issues.

To assist in keeping the magazine's content relevant and of interest to our readers, NCAC developed the *Putting Children First* Reader Survey, the first of which was conducted in 1998. The Survey was subsequently carried out every two to three years, and it sought feedback from our stakeholders about *Putting Children First* as well as other NCAC resources and publications and the NCAC website. The data gained from each Survey was analysed and the feedback used as the first point of reference when planning the future content of *Putting Children First*.

Planning for the magazine has also always involved a strong focus on current events, issues and research in the early and middle childhood sectors. The primary aim was to ensure that *Putting Children First* articles were readable, comprehensive and practical, while at the same time offering our readers well-researched information about current theory and best practice in child care and education.

*Putting Children First* has been produced each quarter by an editorial team responsible for coordinating the development of the publication. Past and present editorial team members include Elizabeth Robinson, Kim Nguyen, Shelley Marie-Sainte, Peter McLeod and Angela Owens.

The ongoing success of the publication has been very much due to the input and feedback received by NCAC from educators, as well as to the many authors, child care services and other professionals who have contributed articles and featured in case studies.

The *Putting Children First* editorial team thanks everyone who has contributed to the magazine. We wish you all the best as you embark on the new phase of assuring quality in Australian early and middle childhood services ■

*Angela Owens and Elizabeth Robinson*