



Advocating nationally for the right of Australia's children to access quality, not for profit, community owned children's services

ACCS IN ACTION!

Special Edition in Honour of

Lynne Wannan

August 2019

Vale Lynne Wannan, AM, 1951 – 2019

Champion of social justice



Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

This is a special edition of ACCS In Action to honour the contribution of Lynne Wannan who was National Convenor for 12 of the 37 years of ACCS/NACBCS, from 1996 to 2008.

This edition includes tributes from early childhood colleagues across Australia who knew Lynne and worked with her. It also includes a detailed tribute from colleagues in her philanthropic and consulting work which documents her personal life and her contribution across diverse sectors including vocational and higher education, educational toys and palliative care.

I had the great pleasure of working with Lynne very closely as convenor and deputy convenor of the then NACBCS. She led NACBCS during challenging and turbulent times in the children's services sector. During this time the first large corporate publicly listed company emerged as a player - ABC Early Learning; long day care centres had just lost operational funding and this was having a detrimental effect on services trying to seek savings without passing on the full cost of this loss to families through increased fees; there was dramatic growth in the number of children's services particularly in the private sector as supply did not keep up with demand; and the National Children's Services Forum (NCSF) commenced meeting bringing together national children's services peaks with a view to share information and take a collaborative approach to advocacy and lobbying.

Lynne was a passionate advocate for children and their right to access high quality not-for-profit children's services; this was just part of her DNA and she never let an opportunity pass to put this to whoever she was speaking with calmly or in a more forthright way if that was required. At NCSF meetings this could create some interesting and fierce conversations and debates around the table as the burgeoning for-profit sector was represented initially by two separate associations; one of whom was moderate and willing to engage in conversations while not always agreeing on the content, and the other I can only describe as taking more extreme views that included no or limited regulatory frameworks and no need for quality control through accreditation.

It is a tribute to Lynne's advocacy style that at the end of her time around the NCSF table the fierceness of the conversations had diminished and while the not-for-profit and for-profit groups were not necessarily on the same page on all

things there was certainly a much stronger respect and willingness to listen to diverse points of view; and Lynne had contributed to this significant change.

Lynne achieved many things in her time advocating for children but one of the things that stands out to me was her fierce advocacy around her concerns about the sustainability of ABC Learning, and the mismatch around the need to generate profit to shareholders while investing in good quality care for children. Lynne was asked to do a talking tour of Canada when Eddy Groves was planning an expansion of the ABC services into that country. There was great concern by a variety of not-for-profit groups and unions in Canada about the negative impact this expansion could have on the children's services. Lynne did a month-long tour talking every day to different groups in many different provinces about her issues and concerns about the publicly listed for-profit children's services model and the negative impact this was having on children attending these services. Lynne was so successful on this tour she managed to convince governments that the proposed ABC Early Learning invasion would not be a good thing for Canadian children. It did not happen.

It was a great privilege working with Lynne, seeing her get that glint in her eye when she was on to something that would get traction with a politician. She was so skilful and eloquent in articulating why not-for-profit children's services were good for children, families and their community. How they worked towards engaging children and families experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability, welcoming these children into these services to help them get the very best start they could get in life long education. How they fulfilled social justice principles. How they build social capital.

I bumped into Lynne earlier this year when we both attended a National Press Club launch of the Launch into Learning campaign. We hadn't seen each other for some years and it was wonderful catching up with her. At this point Lynne had given up much of the voluntary work she was involved in; however she had not given up her role on the board of Goodstart Early Learning which ironically was a not-for-profit organisation that took over many of the ABC Early Learning centres. It was wonderful to see the glint in her eye and know that the fire was still in her belly for children having the right to access high quality not-for-profit children's services.

Trudy Wyse, Marion Webster, OAM, and Terry Bracks, AM, founding chair, Western Chances

The Age and Sydney Morning Herald July 24, 2019

Activist, advocate, champion of social justice, community builder, policymaker, mother, wife, sister, and friend, Lynne Wannan died on June 13. Lynne's life was a rich and meaningful one, with consistent themes of social justice and the status of women running through it.

Her father, Allan, a systems analyst, and mother, Betty, an early years educator who successfully completed her doctorate, *A History of Early Childhood Services in Victoria*, at the age of 81, headed a tightly knit family. Her three sisters, Elizabeth, Sue and Pearl, and brother, Michael, moved house and schools often, which helped to hone Lynne's social skills and ability to make and keep friends, a quality that stayed with her throughout her life.

On leaving school Lynne trained as a secondary teacher but, after a short time at Colac High School, realised that this career was not for her. With her sharp policy brain, acute political savvy and fierce commitment to social justice, community organising and women's rights, Lynne became a recognised expert and advocate across a wide range of policy areas.

She became a nationally recognised expert and advocate for early childhood services in Australia and a major influence on progressive children's services policy at commonwealth and state levels.

She was committed to accessible, affordable, community controlled child care services and saw and spoke out about the dangers of privatising childcare and providing subsidies to the commercial sector long before others.

She chaired Community Child Care Victoria, the Victorian Children's Council and the National Association of Community Based Children's Services and served on a range of other government and non-government children's service advisory bodies. More recently, Lynne was an inaugural director of Goodstart Early Learning, which purchased the failed ABC childcare business and is now a highly successful social enterprise, with more than 600 early learning centres.

Her influence in the early childhood sector was not limited to Australia. In 2005, Lynne was invited to tour Canada. She addressed the National Press Club, met provincial and national governments and gave numerous public lectures warning of the hidden costs and corrosive effects of opening up

children's services to a private sector focused more on profit than quality of service. The tour proved to be pivotal in Canada avoiding the same costly mistakes made in Australia.

With an entrepreneurial spirit Lynne, frustrated with the lack of an accessible retail shop offering educational toys for her two young children, decided on a whim to start one; Hop, Step & Jump: educational toys.

In her typical adventurous manner she headed to New York, stayed in a friend's apartment and went to the world's biggest toy fair, only to be overwhelmed and return with nothing more than a new work of art.

HS&J remained a destination shop for young families from 1992 to 2002. In particular, the shop provided aids for children with a disability and provided advice to parents on early childhood development. Lynne's ability to connect her understanding of both the public and private sectors was unusual. Shortly after starting HS&J she became the founding chair of the Independent Toy Specialist of Australia and the Victorian Premier's Women's Consultative Council.

Lynne made a significant contribution to post-secondary education, serving as chair of the Adult Community and Further Education Board, a commissioner on the Victorian Skills Commission and the founding deputy chancellor of Victoria University of Technology

Her passion for education and the west led to her being the founding deputy chair of Western Chances, a scholarship organisation in the west. The more than 3000 young people who have been able to finish and extend their education and career opportunities are part of her legacy.

In 2008, Lynne was appointed director of the newly formed Office for the Community Sector within the Victorian government, explicitly to build capacity and achieve reform within the sector. She brought her community development experience, policy development expertise, knowledge of the community sector and well-practised influencing and negotiation skills to the role. Under Lynne's leadership the pace of much-needed regulatory reform increased, workforce and governance capability improved and relationships between government and the sector strengthened. This work became a model for community sector reform across Australia.

She was a devoted mother to Tom and Eliza and step-mother to Ben and Bec. Lynne was an efficient, effective worker meaning that when she arrived home she was always available and present for the family. She was never short of providing interesting experiences for her family, including a world tour in 1991 to study multi-

campus tertiary education bodies, which she undertook with her husband, Hayden, and two young children, Tom, aged three, and Eliza, one.

It was not uncommon for her to suggest that the family should "have a holiday in their own city" and create a fun weekend together staying in a city hotel.

Lynne had an adventurous, spontaneous side to her, from early travels as a young woman in South America to resigning from secure jobs, starting a leading women's consulting firm with her close women friends to waking her husband to tell him she was going to start an educational toy shop and fly to a New York toy fair.

Lynne was honoured for her contributions to public life, becoming a member of the Order of Australia in 2007 and inducted into the Victorian Honour Role of Women in 2009.

Diagnosed with lung cancer more than six years ago, Lynne and husband Hayden Raysmith set about making the best of the time they had left. Travelling overseas but also taking the challenge of travelling on every Melbourne rail line to the end. They were a tight and loving couple, dancing through life together.

Her policy work became personal through her work on palliative care policy and her contribution to the dying with dignity legislation, ensuring there are end-of-life choices that suit everyone.

If you knew Lynne in any capacity, you were truly blessed.

**Frances Snedden, ACCS/NACBCS
Queensland State Delegate 1996-2001,
2004-2013**

As the Queensland State Delegate to the Australian Community Children's Services (previously NACBCS) for many years, I have had the absolute privilege of knowing and working alongside Lynne and experiencing the first of her many passions - the right of children and families to have the choice to access quality community owned and controlled children's services.

Lynne's work in the sector has been an inspiration to many early childhood advocates both in Victoria and across Australia. A committed and skilled lobbyist, she has also left a marked impression in many other community service areas in Victoria. Lynne's many achievements are a testament to her unquestionable drive and commitment. I have no doubt her life's work will be continued by many colleagues inspired by her

passion to continue to improve opportunities for all those who were touched by the various aspects of her life's work in the community sector, in early childhood education and palliative care.

I am confident in speaking on behalf of the many community early years services across metropolitan, rural and remote Queensland to express sincere appreciation for Lynne's work in the sector. Some were fortunate to have met and known her, others who haven't had this opportunity are fortunate to experience the benefits of her great work.

**Barbara Romeril, Executive Director of
Community Child Care (Victoria) & National
Secretary of NACBCS/ACCS 2001-2012**

Lynne Wannan was a fierce and relentless advocate for community owned and operated children's services. She spoke to power fearlessly about why communities are better placed to run services than commercial businesses or publicly listed corporations generating profits for shareholders. And she came up with policy ideas that solved problems for governments while building the community owned services sector.

I will be forever grateful for the 11 years I worked closely with her at Community Child Care and its national peak body NACBCS (now ACCS) and the opportunity it gave me to learn from her about how to influence government policy for the benefit of communities.

I was in the room in the early 2000s when Lynne pitched the idea to the Victorian Government of a program of capital grants to support the building of new facilities in which communities can operate children's services. And so the Children's Facilities Capital Program began and continues to this day, promoting integrated service delivery where families can access early childhood education and care, health and development and family services at one place.

Many times I saw Lynne stare down the advocates and apologists for the commercial child care sector. She never bowed to the prevailing view that commercial child care is with us forever and so we must just make the best of it. She was eloquent and persuasive in articulating what is unique and crucially important to preserve in not-for-profit community child care – deep engagement with

families as partners, not customers; inclusion of all parts of a community, not just the good payers; and crucially, an undivided focus on best practice, not best profits.

A memorable instance was at the end of a formal dinner with the first ever Minister for Children in Australia, Larry Anthony. Some mischievous bureaucrat had placed Lynne and I right next to the representatives of the commercial sector. After an evening of banter, fuelled by a few glasses of wine, the chap next to Lynne suggested he had convinced her to change her views on his members. She replied with a firm 'No!' and a sharp slap on his arm leaving him in no doubt that her convictions were unchanged.

I was in the room when Lynne met with Education Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard to discuss the failure of ABC Learning and the first words out of Lynne's mouth were 'I told you so.' Because she had – she never stopped forcefully stating her conviction of the falsehood of claims by ABC Learning CEO Eddy Groves that child care can turn a profit for private investors while delivering quality services for young children and their families.

Lynne worked tirelessly to warn the major sponsors of community child care – churches, welfare organisations, local governments and some state/territory governments – who were being lured into commercial arrangements with ABC with the promise of shared profits.

And she was ultimately shown to be correct – ABC Learning failed spectacularly and she was there to assist the Australian Government to find ways to build up the capacity of the community sector to step in and keep the services going for all the families who relied on them.

It is fitting that Lynne took a seat on the Board of Goodstart, the not-for-profit organisation that took over most of the ABC centres. She continued to work actively to improve the quality and community connectedness of the Goodstart services, travelling throughout Australia to visit their centres, while enduring painful and debilitating treatments for lung cancer.

I treasure memories of the many trips we made to Canberra for meetings of the National Children's Services Forum that brought together national peak bodies representing every aspect of child care in an attempt to find consensus to take to government policy development. Given its wide

diversity, the Forum often ground to a halt when divergent perspectives appeared irreconcilable. The group inevitably turned to Lynne to come up with a fresh take on the issue that enabled the group to move forward.

On a lighter note, I was impressed with Lynne's ability to pack several days' worth of clothing into a small shoulder bag of cabin luggage – she was physically a small person and so her clothes didn't take up much room. But she was a tower of strength when it came to finding solutions to social conundrums.

Despite her many achievements Lynne didn't rest on her laurels. She stayed focussed on the future and moved with the times. It was her initiative that resulted in the change of name from NACBCS to Australian Community Children's Services – putting 'Australia' up front to position us in the international context and streamlining our acronym to show policy makers that we are not stuck in the past.

Lynne was a talented mentor. She showed me how to craft a message to cut through the noise and make a positive contribution through the media and through direct dialogue with policy makers. She believed in my ability to stand up for our shared values and to speak out with vigour and passion. I know many others who have learnt the craft of effective advocacy from her example. So her legacy will live on in the policies she championed and the many women she mentored.

Celia Haddock, CEO Community Child Care (Victoria) and Secretary NACBCS 1991-2001

I had the great privilege of working closely with Lynne Wannan from 1991-2001 and she continued as a lifelong friend and mentor up until we sadly lost her on 13 June 2019. Lynne was a brilliant advocate and strategist who championed social justice and the rights of all families and their children to good quality affordable child care. She never took no for an answer from any level of government or opponent and would always come up with solutions and ideas to make the sector's aspirations a reality wherever possible.

Lynne led the community child care movement in Australia through a period of tumultuous change

including the removal of operational subsidies, the introduction of child care assistance, the introduction of a national child care accreditation system, the Government funding of the review of over 2,000 child care services nationally, and the expansion of private child care provision. She ensured that NACBCS always had a seat at the table advising Government, in national forums and stakeholder meetings.

Lynne was persistent, extremely resilient, brave and courageous with high levels of integrity and personal responsibility. This ensured she was well respected by Government Ministers, peak bodies, the private child care associations as well as many early childhood and out of school hours providers across Australia. She was also well known to them all as a passionate lobbyist and strategist who would always speak her mind and uphold the principles of the sector she represented.

This was all undertaken whilst Lynne and her husband Hayden were bringing up 2 wonderful children Tom and Eliza who were pre-schoolers at the time and using the very services Lynne was advocating for, running a successful educational toy retail business and heading up a national educational toy retailer and importer Association (in her spare time). She was a great role model for the women, families and services she represented and she built a bridge between the private and community sectors because she understood business and the balancing act between quality service provision and making a living.

I joined Community Child Care Victoria in 1991 as CEO and convinced Lynne to come on the Board as Chair not long after she had stepped down from the board to pursue her other opportunities. Lynne was then promptly elected as the National Chair of the then National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS) alongside Prue Warrilow as Deputy Chair and myself as Secretary. Those were heady days as we spent considerable time lobbying the Federal government to expand child care places and in particular Community Based Services. The National Child Care Ministerial Advisory Committee was established to advise the Federal Government on child care needs and Lynne worked tirelessly as a NACBCS delegate to represent the sector she was passionate about.

In 2008 Lynne was appointed Director of the Victorian Government's newly formed Office for the Community Sector and more recently, Lynne was an Inaugural Director of Goodstart Early Learning a highly successful national for-profit

organisation operating over 600 early childhood services.

In 2007, Lynne was honoured for her contributions to public life being awarded a member of the Order of Australia and in 2009 she was inducted into the Victorian Women's Honour Role.

An amazing woman, advocate, mother, businesswoman and leader who brought so much positivity, hope and energy into many people's lives and made a real difference to the provision of quality affordable community children's services across Australia.

Ros Cornish, Chief Executive Officer - Lady Gowrie Tasmania; Immediate Past National President – Early Childhood Australia

Lynne Wannan was a woman of slight stature but with a large heart in respect to her commitment to community.

I recall meeting Lynne for the first time when she was the Chair of the former National Association Community Based Children's Service (NACBCS), now known as Australian Community Children's Services. Representing NACBCS, Lynne and her colleagues Celia Haddock, Barbara Romeril and Prue Warrilow attended the now defunct National Children's Services Forum (NCSF), a group of representatives from children's services peak bodies auspiced by Early Childhood Australia.

In the early days the NCSF was certainly a controversial and challenging group, bringing together then disparate groups to discuss and debate the key issues for the sector and be a conduit for input into government policy and practice. It was a time of the emergence of the private for-profit sector and Lynne being a passionate community-based advocate, her views were loud and clear. This made for rigorous and robust debate.

Despite often being at odds with some members, particularly the for-profit representatives, Lynne gained a great deal of respect by the way she went about advocacy. Her approach was always professional ensuring NACBCS position was reflective of evidence-based research. It would be fair to state that over time, Lynne became an integral member of the NCSF, always ensuring children and community were at the forefront and central to debate.

From that first engagement with Lynne, I became a Lynne Wannan “groupie”, such was the impact she had on me as an emerging advocate. Her passion, dedication and deep commitment to community-based children’s services and those most vulnerable within the community had a powerful and lasting impact on myself and many others around the NCSF table and beyond.

Her leadership in the areas of social policy and community development is well documented and included prominent positions on many government and non-government groups. Her long-term commitment was recognised with an Australia Day

Award in 2007 for leadership in community services and education. This commitment continued throughout her personal health battle. This was evident in my last meeting with Lynne when she quickly shifted the focus of the conversation to those in the community she considered much less fortunate than herself.

Lynne was a positive role model to many, her strength and integrity inspirational and her credibility unquestionable. There will never be another Lynne Wannan. A true champion for so many within our community.



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