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Dear ,

Despite the efforts of many organisations and ARACY members, it is disappointing there has been virtually no mention of the needs of children and young people in the Federal election campaign.

That is why we will be demonstrating to the incoming government the widespread community support for improving the wellbeing of children. We will soon be calling on all ARACY members to show support for an integrated strategy to address the needs of 0-24 year olds. Building on your contribution to the [2009 ARACY Conference Declaration](#), this strategy will include targets for child wellbeing, and support social conditions that optimise the emotional development and wellbeing of children and young people. We need long term commitment to collaborative, sustained action, because the evidence is clear that short-term or fragmented programs and single-issue policies fail to make a real impact to improve children's wellbeing.

We already have many organisations supporting this call to action – and a supporters' website will be launched very shortly so that every organisation and individual interested in collaborating with others and supporting positive change for children can get involved.

In this issue, we begin a new and regular feature with an update on the Advancing Collaboration Practice Program managed by Jennifer Pidgeon in our Perth office. This program has great potential to provide wider benefits across the community, government, private and academic sectors.

Also this month the In Focus contribution looks at social and emotional wellbeing indicators based on a much sought after report on the topic commissioned by ARACY and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare from the Social Policy Research Centre of NSW.

Finally, the Canberra office of ARACY will be moving to Canberra City Centre shortly and our new contact details are listed in this issue. We extend our thanks to FaHCSIA for providing office space for us for the past five years and are grateful to DEEWR for providing our future accommodation.

Dr Lance Emerson, CEO ARACY

In Focus: Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The aim of this [report](#)* is to examine what is meant by social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) for children and young people, how it might be measured, and implications for policy and practice that flow from monitoring it. Measurement of SEWB presents particular challenges for policymakers and researchers. While many people are comfortable with monitoring indicators of material wellbeing, health and educational achievement, there is no single indicator or set of indicators relating to SEWB, in adults or in children, that enjoys consensual approval.

We start off with a 'whole child' approach that involves mapping SEWB to other aspects of children's and young peoples' wellbeing. Recent Australian strategic policy documents emphasise the importance of the whole child, meaning, as the [2008 Melbourne Declaration](#) puts it, that children and young people should be successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens; and also that children's and young people's social, economic, ethnic or indigenous backgrounds should not be seen as determining their future place in society.

We take the view therefore that the primary purpose of monitoring SEWB has to be in terms of the overarching aim of tracking progress of the whole child. We discuss a number of philosophical theories which elaborate on the key components of what Aristotle calls 'the good life' – the search for human wellbeing. These theories tend to highlight the inter-relatedness of different dimensions of wellbeing, and the social essence in humanity, that wellbeing is not an individual statement, but is situated in a social context.

We contrast these theories with more applied approaches that attempt to directly measure SEWB. Applied approaches tend to focus on observation of specific problems facing individual children – difficulties in social interaction, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, and so on. There is no clear 'meeting of minds' between philosophical theories and applied approaches. The former is abstract and difficult to apply in practice. Yet it is from this perspective that we derive ideas about the kind of society in which we might wish to live, and the kinds of adults that we would like our children to become (and what sort of SEWB we would like them to have). The latter approaches are thoroughly empirical and lack a grander vision of 'the good life'. But it is undoubtedly from these perspectives that actual measurements of SEWB are likely to come.

In attempting to synthesise these two approaches, we argue that any indicators of SEWB have to aim first, towards positivity, towards 'the good life' – this is implicit in 'whole child' approaches. Second, they should also aim, as far as possible, towards universality – being equally relevant to all children. Third, they should be interpreted in the wider context of the child's or young person's physical, social and material environment, and respect the young person as a reflexive and critical agent. The conceptualisation of wellbeing, and SEWB, is a political process. Ideally it should be based on a truly consensual vision of the good life. Children and young people need to be involved in this debate - what 'the good life' in general, and what SEWB in particular, means for them, and how they would measure it.

Myra Hamilton and Gerry Redmond
Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales

* This research report was prepared for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The report was funded in part by the Fred P Archer Trust and in part by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Member profile: Social Policy Research Centre

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) is a specialist research centre of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales. The SPRC conducts research on all aspects of social policy, disseminates research findings, promotes research training through PhD study and contributes to policy. [Read more](#)

Get involved with ARACY!



Access Grid seminars

On **24 August**, Dr Margaret Brechman-Toussaint from The Benevolent Society will present 'A review of integrated service models for young people in the preadolescent and adolescent years: Benefits, barriers and enablers'. [Register here >>](#)

Seminar postponed

The seminar by Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn on health and wellbeing indicators for children and youth with disabilities has been postponed to November. A date will be advised soon.

Webinar on using technology for collaboration

Please join us for this free webinar from 1-2pm AEST on 16 September. [Register here>>](#)

Middle years summit

ARACY will be convening a summit to consider a Middle Years Strategy on 25 November in Canberra. Further information is available from Jaya Negi at jaya.negi@aracy.org.au

ARACY Program update - Advancing Collaboration Practice



The common thread throughout my career has been bringing people together to achieve a shared objective. A year and a half ago, I jumped at the chance to implement a new program at ARACY to develop expertise and tools that help people who want to collaborate. [Read more >>](#)

Advancing Collaboration Practice - call for case studies

The ACP program is building a collection of case studies that will ground management theory in real life collaboration experiences. We are interested in hearing from people who have had both challenging and successful experiences with collaboration. Please contact Jennifer Pidgeon for more information on 08 9476 7801 or 0402 678 246.

ARACY News



ARACY Canberra is moving!

On Friday 27 August, the Canberra office of ARACY will transfer from Woden to the city centre. Some Canberra staff will be available on Friday by email and the new office will open on Monday 30 August.

Our new address will be:
16 Mort Street
Canberra ACT 2600

Mental health inquiry: submissions invited

An inquiry into the mental health and wellbeing of young people is being conducted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA). Submissions are invited and will close on 1 November. [Read more >>](#)

Member benefits and news



Publicise upcoming events

Publicise your event through our online Events calendar. It's easy to do! [Submit events here>>](#)

National Child Protection Week 5-11 September

National screening of *Polly and Me* on ABC1. [Read more >>](#)

Mental health conference

On 10 September in Sydney. [Read more >>](#)

Toolkit to support homeless children

KidsCentral has been developed by the Institute of Child Protection Studies. [Read more >>](#)

National Youth Summit

From 29 September to 2 October in Sydney, the United Nations Youth Association will host their inaugural youth summit. [Read more >>](#)

FRSA Conference

From 3-5 November in Melbourne with the theme: 'DIVERSITY: Everyone Benefits'. [Read more >>](#)

Also this month...

- [Report: Inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians](#)
- [Fellowship for Indigenous health and welfare](#)
Closing 10 September
- [Kidsafe 2010 National Playspace Design Awards](#)
Closing 31 August
- [Early Childhood Development in Indigenous Communities Conference](#)
- [Early Childhood Australia Conference -Adelaide](#)
- [Seminar on change management in services for children - 16 September](#)

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ARACY thanks its major supporters

ARACY relies on the generosity and commitment of individuals and organisations who support our commitment to a future where Australia's children and young people thrive and their wellbeing is a national priority. ARACY's primary funding is received from the [Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs](#) (FaHCSIA). We are deeply grateful to FaHCSIA, the following major partners and all supporting our work:



Education partner



Australian Government
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Research partners



Governance partner

For more information on how you can support ARACY, contact Chantal Lewis [by email](#).

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