

# reflections

GOWRIE AUSTRALIA PUBLICATION ISSUE 5 2019



## BACK TO THE BEGINNING: LADY GOWRIE AND THE INTEGRATED SERVICE MODEL

**Ros Cornish, CEO, Lady Gowrie Tasmania**

Lady Gowrie Tasmania reached a significant milestone in mid 2019 – 80 years of continuous service to Tasmanian children, families and communities. Other Gowrie organisations will be celebrating the same milestone across Australia over the coming year.

To commemorate the rich and long history of the organisation and its contribution to Tasmania, a snapshot of achievements and growth, *Celebrating 80 Years 1939–2019*, has been published by Lady Gowrie Tasmania.

This publication was launched by Her Excellency, Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor of Tasmania, at a reception at Government House in Hobart on 25 June 2019. Those attending included many former employees, Board Directors and friends of Gowrie.

Lady Gowrie Tasmania's history isn't unlike that of many families. From an eventful birth in 1939, the organisation

has grown into a flourishing organisation that continues to serve Tasmanian children and their families through a range of services and programs. There have been many milestones and occasional challenges along the way and today Lady Gowrie Tasmania is a mature and confident organisation that knows its business; an organisation which continues to advocate for children and families across its services and throughout the broader Tasmanian community.

Researching for the history publication reminded us that the cross disciplinary approach to supporting children's optimal development was a revolutionary approach eight decades ago that epitomised the vision and commitment of many women. This integrated model of service delivery is now adopted across many jurisdictions, but the term is used in several different ways across government policy documents and within the sector.

## BACK TO THE BEGINNING: LADY GOWRIE AND THE INTEGRATED SERVICE MODEL (CONTINUED)

The Integrated early years provision research project commissioned by the former Professional Support Co-ordinators Alliance and undertaken by Drs Wong and Press and Professor Sumsion from Charles Sturt University, highlighted the use of integration in two distinct areas:

*“The first where care and education are integrated, and the second where a range of child and family programs are made readily accessible and available to families”*

(Press, F, Sumsion, J & Wong 2010, p. 4).

The same research project aimed to develop a clear definition of integration for the Australian context commensurate with Australian government policy. Following consultation with key stakeholders, the following definition was determined:

*Integrated services provide access to multiple services to children and families in a cohesive and holistic way. They recognise the impact of family and community contexts on children’s development and learning and focus on improving outcomes for children, families and communities. Through respectful collaborative relationships, they actively seek to maximise the impact of different disciplinary expertise in a shared intent to respond to family and community contexts*

(Press, F, Sumsion, J & Wong 2010, p. 53).

It is evident in this definition that the focus is not on care and education integration, but a more holistic multidisciplinary approach involving families, communities and allied professionals who work collaboratively in children’s best interests.

Pen Green Centre is well known internationally in providing a model of best practice for working with and supporting parents in an area of low income and high unemployment through the provision of integrated services for children and their families. It provides a model for staff from different professional heritages working together across traditionally highly differentiated domains. Children’s Centre leaders in the UK have been charged with the task of challenging existing systems and structures where services are not accessible or responsive to children and families. Children’s Centre teams comprise early childhood teachers, adult community educators, health and family support workers, home visitors and researchers. In *Children’s Issues: Journal of Children’s Issues Centre*, Volume 10, Issue 2, the importance of leadership in initiating and sustaining collaboration across these critical areas is identified as a key success factor towards integration (Whalley, M 2006).

The synergies between what occurred in the Gowrie services in the 1940’s and what is occurring in different ways across jurisdictions now is becoming increasingly evident. The child and family focus with onsite social workers, child health services and allied health specialists is reflective of why the Lady Gowrie Centres were established across Australia 80 years ago.

It seems as if the wheel has turned full circle and we are back at the beginning with the learnings from the past certainly influencing future direction. The Gowrie model has played an important part in shaping the future of true integration.

### Reference List

- Gowrie Training & Consultancy 2019, *Celebrating 80 Years 1939–2019*, Lady Gowrie Tasmania, Tasmania.
- Press, F, Sumsion, J & Wong, S 2010, *Integrated early years provision: A research project for the Professional Support Coordinators Alliance (PSCA)*. Children’s Services Central, NSW.
- Whalley, M 2006, *Leadership in Integrated Centres and services for Children and Families – a Community Development Approach: Engaging with the Struggle*, *Children’s Issues*, Volume 10, no. 2.

For your professional learning and support contact your state based Gowrie listed below:

NSW [www.gowriensw.com.au](http://www.gowriensw.com.au)

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