

## Tribute to Anne Smith

It is my privilege to acknowledge and pay tribute to our friend and colleague Anne Smith who passed away a few weeks ago on 22 May.

I first met Anne in the 1980s. It was a time when the view of ECE was either of care or education - and we marshalled our collective efforts as a sector to integrate the two.

Anne's experience and research supported a sound platform on which to advocate for ECE - for the rights of children, and their families and whānau to quality early childhood education. Her influence was persuasive and far-reaching, and would come to underpin significant policies over the years which strengthened ECE and lifted the quality of provision.

My particular link with Anne was around qualifications and training. We were both involved in the *Before Five* policy work and strong advocates for a trained and qualified ECE teaching workforce. Anne firmly believed - backed up by evidence - that qualified teachers in centre-based services are an essential component of quality.

Anne was an activist and an academic. I have a clear memory of the launch of Anne's video *Early Childhood Educare: the search for quality* in the early 1990s. ECE was not seen at that time, as a significant player in education within government circles or publicly.

The video was a first - bringing together Anne's research and a number of influential researchers in the field internationally to focus on quality. Anne set out clearly, the benefits of quality ECE and the key factors needed to optimise those benefits for every child. It was a new way to present evidence to decision-makers and to communities at a time when the merits of ECE were being critically challenged.

Anne's focus was always on the child - and the conditions needed to ensure every child could reach their potential. She was the first to head up the new *Children's Issues Centre* in 1995 and spent the following two decades pursuing a range of issues impacting children and families at a time when the rights and voices of children - and their parents - were invisible and unheard.

On 'retiring' from the centre in 2006, Anne's involvement in children's rights and social justice continued both here and overseas. Anne was a member of the *ECE Taskforce* in 2011 and in April this year, we celebrated with Anne - the launch of her latest publication - *Children's rights: towards social justice*.

Emeritus Professor, Anne's work is internationally acclaimed. She is and will always be recognised as an inspiring and influential leader in the fields of early childhood education, childhood, and children's rights. Courageous, tenacious, fearless and passionate, Anne's legacy will live on. We are the richer for knowing her and her work, recognising the enormous contribution she has made and will continue to make to lives of children and families and whānau in Aotearoa New Zealand.