

Chapter Six commences Part Two of the text, providing some provocative commentary and drawing the link between Reconciliation and sustainability. Melinda Miller urges that Reconciliation needs to be a central concern together with social, political and economic dimensions of sustainability. She raises the question of how early childhood educators are, themselves, educated, suggesting that a deep understanding of contemporary Indigenous issues is imperative if the children they teach are to receive education for environmental sustainability. This is followed by Margaret Lloyd's discussion of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) with the focus being on the need to seamlessly incorporate the many benefits of ICT into early childhood education programs. Her argument is that children need to learn competencies that will assist in problem solving and the attainment of environmental goals, including sustainability, in a complex world. This necessarily encompasses skills in social relationships and the many modes of communication now available, together with the confidence to tackle ethical problems.

In Chapter Eight, Sue Cooke draws together ideas about health and wellbeing with children's connections to their natural world, urging closer partnerships between health professionals and early childhood educators. She suggests stronger partnerships as a vehicle for ensuring better understandings of how engagement in natural surroundings enhances development, recovery and resilience; all of which have been found in research to date. She also discusses the need to address the changing ecology of childhood. The idea of enhancing interdisciplinary partnerships and more integrated professional responses is not new to many who work in the human service industry. However, with the

continued trend to specialisation and division of disciplinary endeavours into silos, the points made are valid.

Finally, Chapter Nine argues for the development of a robust research community to address environmental and sustainability activities, programs and outcomes in the early childhood sector, together with the need for systemic change within early childhood education. Jo-Anne Ferreira and Julie Davis call for attention to complexity and diversity which allows small scale innovation and change to inform large scale reform. They propose this process is better suited to achieving reform than past, top-down, large scale reform agendas, but needs to be supported through the development of a research base and increased interdisciplinary engagement.

This text is very accessible and should be attractive to those who seek to explore complex ideas about environment and sustainability, as well as those looking for practice-based knowledge and ideas. It is necessarily a little limited in depth, given the span of issues addressed, but is a valuable contribution to the field of early childhood development and education. It is also a useful addition to the literature for those studying in such disciplines as social work, psychology, nursing and childcare because of the clarity with which it positions arguments for incorporating both thinking and action for sustainability.

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## BEREAVED MOTHER'S HEART

Carla van Laar

St Luke's Innovative Resources, Bendigo, 2008

This unusual publication was published in 2008, but came to my attention for review earlier this year. *Bereaved Mother's Heart* is, superficially, the simple story of Carla and Andrew's son, Vaughn, who was diagnosed with Complex 4 Deficiency and died a few months before his fourth birthday. It is unusual in that it combines Carla's journey through grief and loss with her expression of this through her art. It is a powerful demonstration of the nature of a mother's life when faced with her son's disability, the care he required and his inevitable death. The art work, though not to everyone's taste, reflects the retrospective joys and sorrow, and the poignant emotions carried throughout Carla's journey of motherhood; and her loss of her firstborn child.

There are layers of meaning throughout this book. One connects the reader to the spiritual aspects of the experience that contribute to life's meaning; while others lead to reflections on both the experience of infinite grieving and to finite grief and loss. A further layer relates to recovery, leading to the resumption of a meaningful life.

The book is likely to be of interest to mothers, in particular, who may benefit from the strong sense of sharing a difficult experience that this publication offers; especially more introverted women who find it more difficult to express their feelings, but want to reflect on their own and others' experiences of losing a child. However, timing is important in dealing with grief and loss and I think some of the images and reflections on the loss of Vaughn may be quite

confronting and challenging to some people. My impression was that this publication is unlikely to be of great interest or use to fathers as Andrew's grief, role and voice are minimal in this account. Though, having said that, there may be fathers who could gain an insight into aspects of women's grieving through discussing this book.

It is the sharing and exchange of responses to the book that becomes an important factor in using the publication as a tool in grief and loss counselling and support work. I can envisage using the book to encourage emotional release through artistic expression, enabling a process of 'speaking' through the medium of shape and colour when words are difficult to find, and to encourage bereaved mothers to engage with the complexity of emotions associated with losing a child. The latter is certainly conveyed through the artwork in this book. Professionals using art therapy as a medium will be interested in this publication and are likely to find women are interested to reflect on how others have used words and art for personal therapeutic purposes.

*Bereaved Mother's Heart* reflects the courage of Carla in coming to grips with the challenging aspects of Vaughn's life and loss. It is fitting tribute to the impact this child's life had for family and friends, and no doubt echoes the experiences of others who have faced the demands of childhood illness and loss.

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### **Physical Punishment in Childhood: The Rights of the Child**

by

**Bernadette Saunders and Chris Goddard**

Providing a wide spectrum of views, the authors explore the fine line between normalized physical punishment and illegal or unacceptable physical and emotional abuse of children. It builds on the emerging field of research that provides opportunities for children to speak for themselves about their views and experiences.

- Provides observations from children, professionals and several generations from within individual families
- Discusses the power of language used by parents, professionals and the media to describe physical punishment
- Reflects upon the status of children in societies that sanction their physical punishment, motivations and justifications for its use, perceptions of its effectiveness, and its impact
- Presents a combination of personal, social, legal, and language factors which provide significant new insights and suggest ways to move forward

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