

John Castrilli MLA



Stronger focus on early learning

The recent announcement of a stronger focus on the early childhood years within our education system is good news for local parents.

Education Minister Liz Constable's move to ensure that WA education policy targets the early years is recognition of the importance of children's experiences during this time.

Speaking with local teachers recently, I was shocked and saddened to hear that some children start kindergarten without having reached basic development milestones and are at a disadvantage even before they start school.

However, several local schools are already looking at innovative ideas or running programs to improve early learning through "play-based" activities.

As well as helping ease the transition into primary school, these programs foster development and importantly, allow any difficulties to be picked up early and addressed.

Having a policy framework which officially recognises the importance of early learning will further assist children and teachers.

A review into educational practice in early childhood conducted by Professor Collette Tayler will be the blueprint for new initiatives across WA.

The review found that early childhood educators wanted more guidance on curriculum and teaching practice in the early years.

The State Government will focus on enriching the 'craft' of guiding and teaching children from birth to eight years, recognising the key role played by early childhood educators, as well as parents, in learning and development.

Research shows that the early years – even before compulsory schooling starts – are the most important factor influencing later education and life outcomes.

One of the most important ways we can all help improve early childhood outcomes in Bunbury is to support teachers in their work with parents, childcare services and other early childhood professionals, and recognise them for the important work they undertake.

Awards recognise migrant contributions

Nominations are now open for the WA Multicultural Community Service Awards which recognise individuals and organisations dedicated to improving service delivery and removing cultural barriers.

There are many people working quietly behind the scenes in Bunbury and the South West to advance multiculturalism and the resulting social and economic benefits we gain from migration and settlement.

The awards also aim to acknowledge positive contributions made towards empowering people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to combat racism.

This year's awards feature three categories: Individual, Organisational and Business Migrant of the Year.

Nomination forms are available from the Office of Multicultural Interests website at www.omi.wa.gov.au or phone 9217 1600.

Nominations close at 5pm on February 7.