

## ***Tribute to our colleague and friend Lyn Foote.***

Greetings everyone on this sad occasion. My name is Alex Gunn, with me is Kay Lloyd Jones. Kay and I work at the University of Otago, me at the College of Education, Kay at the Otago University Childcare Association. As representatives of the institution and members of the profession of ECE, Kay and I are with you today to share about and give recognition to the work that Lyn has contributed to the fields of tertiary and early childhood education over many years.

I am in part speaking on behalf of myself, I have known Lyn since the late 1980s in our shared professions of tertiary teaching and ECE, but I also speak on behalf of the many friends and colleagues of the University and the profession who are unable to be here today, but who nonetheless have been present and active on the email these last few days, sharing recollections and paying tribute to Lyn. Our deepest sympathies are with you, Lyn's family at this time of great loss. ..We are comforted in the knowledge that Lyn is no longer in pain, but grieving with you as we really start to say goodbye.

I want to begin by saying thank you Lyn: for sharing your life with us and for contributing much to how we work for and perceive of the lives of children and families in contemporary New Zealand. I want also to thank you, Barrie, Nellie, Jeffrey & Leanne, Nathan, Jon & Ethan, and Keith for sharing Lyn with us – I /we know how much she worked, how her ethic for work often kept her there and not at home, and I imagine how the demands of her professional life have, from your perspectives likely at times seemed enormous. They have been.

I would like to draw from several tributes received in the last few days to describe for you how much Lyn has meant to her extended network of friends and colleagues in ECE and at the University of Otago, and for what she has meant for the pursuit of high quality early childhood education and care in our region and nation. Thanks to Profs. Helen May, Anne Smith and Dr Sue Cherrington for their words. And to Kay, Prof. Lisa Smith, Dean of Education at the University of Otago, and to Fiona Ellis, Lyn's friend, close work colleague, and teaching/research companion for their assistance with this tribute.

Anne Smith recalls her association with Lyn from the late 1970s when Lyn was working as a family day-care coordinator in the then newly emergent Dunedin Community Daycare Scheme. Keen to ensure equity of provision to childcare and rights of families and children to quality services, the battles Lyn embarked on with others then over access to and provision of childcare here in in this city were to foreshadow the substantial advocacy work Lyn engaged in over the years. She went on to make national and international contributions. Lyn's part in the Ministry of Education publication, *The Quality Journey*, an evaluation tool designed to help early childhood personnel reflect upon, judge and improve the quality of services, was influential and made a difference to experiences for children in ECE across the nation. Her concern for ECE to be at the table, whichever table it was, be it funding, qualifications, due consideration in public policy or the law, was a marker of Lyn's deep investments in maintaining and improving the quality and status of ECE in NZ. Our most recent battle, over the maintenance of equivalency of access to qualifications for ECE teaching was of particular interest to Lyn over these last

couple of years. The Monday before Christmas I let Lyn and others know that the tender for Masters Level ECE programmes was imminent, when I saw her the next day, she quietly stated, in her typically understated and pragmatic way: “the masters qualification, that’s good”.

In the mid 1980s Lyn was working for the New Zealand Childcare Association on the one-year certificate of childcare programme. She was appointed to a Govt. working group about the future training and qualification needs of ECE teachers. Helen May recalls, these were heady times: the Government announced a structural change to the administration of childcare, it was to be moved from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education, the working group recommended and had accepted their recommendation that the qualification requirements for working in ECE should parallel that of primary teaching – a three-year diploma qualification. Other major ECE reforms concerning regulations, ratios, curriculum provision et cetera were quick to emerge – decades of advocacy was working and Lyn was there to help it along. It was at this time I met Lyn, she had a position on the staff of the former Dunedin Teachers College (later, College of Education) and I was an incoming student to ECE – one of the first to the newly won diploma.

Establishing this benchmark diploma qualification for teachers in early childhood education was a significant achievement and Lyn, with colleagues here and in Palmerston North, was first off the mark. Lyn didn’t however stop there. In collaboration with colleagues at the University of Otago, a bachelors degree for education was approved (B.Ed). Anne Smith describes that qualification as one that combined the best of what the Dunedin College and University Education department had to offer. I was a graduate of that B.Ed and owe a great debt to those, including Lyn, who proposed and developed it. More innovation was to follow: a revision of the diploma qualification to a bachelors degree in its own right, a 0-8 early years education teaching initiative, a revision of the B.Ed, and the introduction of the Graduate Diploma for university graduates who wanted to qualify as teachers in early childhood education. Lyn has been a teacher educator of the highest calibre.

In the early 1990s Lyn became Director of EC programmes at the Dunedin College of Education. Sue Cherrington recalls that she and Lyn held equivalent and reciprocal roles at each other’s institutions (Wellington and Dunedin Colleges of Education), over many years, as Directors and programme monitors. Sue notes that Lyn’s considerable leadership and expertise in the Otago and Southland regions was always mentioned to her by students, recent graduates, associate teachers and employers: all highlighting the influence that Lyn had on their professional practice and on the quality of provision of ECE.

Lyn’s reach did not begin and end in teacher education or in fact in Dunedin. She was involved in early childhood education groups across Dunedin and the world. Friends of Children in Hospital here in Dunedin benefitted from Lyn’s work, as did the University Childcare Association (which I’ll return to later). Lyn also worked in support of early childhood education in Niue and the Solomon Islands. She has been a fully committed member of the *World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, OMEP*. She and Fiona have been at the centre of the local branch together over many years, and have supported the research agenda of that organisation, most recently through an international project on education for sustainability. Lyn also had

research and practice concerns for infant and toddler care and education, assessment education, and curriculum. Children's rights, their abilities to be listened to and to be heard has also been a significant interest – possibly students and teachers' she's worked with over the years would remember this of her. She would often say, at a poignant moment of conversation: "But what about the children? What do you think they'd say?"

As I said before, Lyn has had a career long involvement with the University of Otago Childcare Association, (Nursery Association in it's early days). Including in the establishment of the University Centres. A career highlight for Lyn has been, I think, the realisation of the new facilities and services, opened just this year, in Castle St. Just a couple of weeks ago, Lyn and a small group of friends shared morning tea together at *Te Pa* and toured the premises. The absolute satisfaction of Lyn as she wandered through the centres, commenting on the aspect, light, atmosphere and spaces, was palpable. She believed children and families were due great respect, the centres, which Lyn had a great deal of interest and input into, are a testament to this. There is a meeting room there, named the Lyn Foote Room. It is fitting. I can imagine in the days, weeks, and years to come, that many a great debate and decision will be taken by teachers and others as they work together there, in the interests of children and families, within a space dedicated to our friend and colleague Lyn Foote.

Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to address Lyn and you, her family at this time. One of our great kauri has fallen, but the seedlings of hope she cultivated in her life, live on. E te rangatira, takoto, takoto.

*Dr. Alexandra C. Gunn  
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University of Otago College of Education, 5 January, 2015*