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Australian Children's Television Foundation

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Curriculum Learning and Partnerships Branch | School Education Group
Department of Education & Early Childhood Development

Merge of Early Childhood and School Education Groups

After much consultation and deliberation, I have decided to merge the Early Childhood Development and School Education Groups as of 15 April, and am very pleased to announce that Dr Sonia Sharp will lead the new Early Childhood and School Education Group (ECSEG).

As you know, Sonia is currently Deputy Secretary for Early Childhood Development. Leading ECSEG will build on her 25 years of experience in education, which comprises an extensive and impressive catalogue of roles in teaching, research and educational psychology. This background, which is explained in some detail below, has given Sonia a rare breadth of direct experience in the business of ECSEG and the services it will oversee. It equips her well to lead the development of a more integrated, autonomous and accountable learning and development service covering the early and school years.

As those of us who have worked with her well know, Sonia's passion is to ensure that every child is welcomed, valued and successful. She is also an instinctive collaborator who has made wide and deep connections with services and stakeholders in her seven months with DEECD. And she is well versed and skilled in the practical challenges of public administration.

Although the catalyst for the formation of ECSEG is the imminent departure of Jim Watterston, twelve months of experience with the current macrostructure has persuaded me that the merger will create important and timely synergies for the design of policy and programs in sectors that have scope to provide a more seamless and effective service. Together with Sonia's appointment, it also provides for maximum continuity and stability of leadership and strategy in the still early stages of organisational renewal.

It is unavoidable that some further reorganisation will flow from this, which will be the subject of engagement with staff in due course.

Please join me in welcoming Sonia to her new role.

Dr Sonia Sharp has taught in schools in rural and urban settings, across the age range from early years to 18+, and in both mainstream and special schools. She has held senior leadership roles in three of the largest cities in the UK, including as one of the first Directors of Children's Services, which encompassed education, social care, health and youth services. In this role, Sonia was responsible for ensuring that children and young people were successful educationally and economically, safe and healthy, engaged as positive citizens, and living in strong and resilient families. Her remit spanned pre-birth to young adulthood and she worked across all phases – maternity and child health, early years providers, schools, secure units, colleges and other post-school providers.

Sonia has worked extensively in and with schools in some of the most challenging environments in the UK. She has championed high-calibre school leadership and quality teaching, leading to exceptional improvement in outcomes and standards. She is experienced in facilitating sector-led improvement and the development of collaborative practice in an autonomous education system.

Sonia holds a Master degree and Doctorate in Education Psychology and the UK National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers. She was Chair of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of the British Psychological Society, a Director of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, and national policy lead on workforce development. She has published a number of books and articles and is known internationally for her work on tackling bullying in schools.

Richard Bolt
Secretary