‘Home is so old school as working parents seek new options’
Excerpts from an article written by Natasha Robinson - THE AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER - JANUARY 20, 2014

While flexible hours are more common, the reality of the middle of the day school finish presents an almost insurmountable challenge even to the most adaptable of timetables.

No longer in many areas is the suburban street taken over by afternoon cricket, bikes and skateboards; there’s no pikelet-making in the kitchen. Schoolyards are where it’s at for kids after three o’clock, with the numbers of children in out of school hours care growing every year.

For any parents quietly suffering mid-afternoon guilt as they raid the office cookie jar rather than bake cookies at home with their primary-schoolers, forget it. The kids are still at school and they’re loving it.

“Often I’ve arrived to pick up the girls and they’re about to have afternoon tea”, says mother of two Laura Rutherford. “My eldest will say, ‘Mum, we’re about to have afternoon tea, can you go away please’.”

“I see my work as something that enriches my life and enriches my children’s life. We don’t have any family at all (in Australia),” she says. “If it wasn’t for after-school care then one of us couldn’t work. I think in terms of the benefits for the kids, because they’ve been away from me, they’re more independent and more confident. They are very quick to make friends”

Despite the difficulties for double-income families of managing school pick-up times, there is little push in Australia to extend school hours. Access to outside school hours care is therefore critical. For parents without access to a well-run service, maintaining employment can be difficult. The Productivity Commission will examine out of school hours care as part of a wider review into childcare. Early Childhood Australia will call for greater access for parents to outside school hours care where there are gaps in provision. But those parents reluctant to use available services might find themselves disadvantaged their children, says Robyn Monro Miller, chief executive of the Network of Community Activities.

“Outside school hours services today really are the new streets and playgrounds of adults’ childhoods,” Monro Miller says. “You used to go home to your house, you’d climb your back fence or play with your neighbours out on the street. That doesn’t happen today to the extent that it used to. Children are going home to empty houses or to empty streets. The child that is potentially disadvantaged is the child that is going home to the empty street or the child that is sitting at home with their parents in front of a television set”

We trust that as Educators at Mercedes College OSHC, we are fulfilling our promise to provide a ‘home away from home’ atmosphere for all our children. We very much take to heart the fact that in years gone by, children would gather with neighbourhood friends to play cricket or football after school each day and of course mothers and grandmothers would quite often provide freshly cooked cakes or pikelets for afternoon tea. We know that life is quite different for many of our children in this day and age. We endeavour to replicate this scenario within our service and enjoy getting to know all the children that are in our care. We sincerely thank parents for entrusting their precious cargo into our care.

Staff Profile - Teresa Dametto

Hello, my name is Teresa Dametto. I have worked in OSHC for about twelve years and still thoroughly enjoy it. The OSHC staff are wonderful, I enjoy their company and I particularly enjoy chatting with parents as they pick up their children. During the school day I work at the Reception Desk in the McAuley Office attending to the needs of Middle and Senior students. My hobbies are netball, walking and knitting. I have been playing netball since my primary school days and I still love it. I try to walk every day and when the weather is cool I love to do some knitting in the evening. Many of the children at OSHC are keen to learn how to knit so I enjoy teaching anyone who shows interest.
Changes to the OSHC Room
Welcome back to the Fish Tank!

It was a lonely few weeks without our finned friends whilst the OSHC room was being refurbished, but now our tank is back and we have some brand new fish to get to know!

To celebrate, we had a competition to name the new fish in the tank - from left to right we have: Lolly, Spike and Sunset Shimmer. We would also like to acknowledge Superfish and Orange Shadow who have since gone to the Great Fish Bowl in the Sky.

A New Couch!

We are desperately looking for a new couch for the OSHC room to replace our tired, old one. If you have a couch that you think would be suitable, please let us know - we would love it! The children love to snuggle up together to watch a movie or to relax after a long day at school.

A room where everything needs a name

We also held a competition to name our three OSHC computers that are used occasionally before and after school and during the holidays. The winning names were Nerdicus, Bob and Jelly Bean Sparkles. If anyone can think of a clever or funny name for Debbie’s computer, we are open to suggestions as it currently remains unnamed.

OSHC Library

To tie in with Book Week this year, some of our enterprising and creative young students, led by Kiara and Imogen, decided that as we have such a wonderful selection of books (thanks to donations from parents and friends) we should establish our own OSHC library. The girls have even organised a borrowing system for anyone who is keen to finish books at home. Thanks so much girls for sharing your love of books and for making reading cool!
Tuesday afternoon during Term 3 saw the enthusiastic students from OSHC bouncing down the slope to the Junior School Hall.

Engaging the students was the energetic and quirky Andrea - the ringleader of our OSHC circus.

Over the course of the term, the children unleashed their inner acrobat through juggling, balancing and even trampolining.

After a few sessions, the students became independent and ran sessions under the guidance of the ringmaster.
Making roasted corn on the cob is really easy! The children can help prepare the corn and surprisingly they love to eat it too!
Pre-heat the oven to 180°C.
Take the husks and the silk off of the corn and give the corn cobs a rinse under the tap.
Pat the corn cobs dry and lay them on an oiled roasting pan.
Melt approximately 1 teaspoon of butter for every corn cob.
Baste the corn cobs with the melted butter and put them in the oven for approximately 25 minutes or until the corn is tender.
Sprinkle with salt and enjoy!
For something different you can try using garlic salt or a combination of chilli powder, coriander powder and paprika to make a Mexican corn cob.

Did you know...?
Corn contains the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin. These antioxidants promote healthy vision.
Corn contains Vitamins B and C and magnesium and potassium.
Corn is also a great source of fibre.

Goodbye Shane and Naomi!

We first met Shane and Naomi almost four years ago when they joined us in our summer Vacation Care programme. Looking back on photos when we first met them as five and six year olds we simply can’t believe how much they have grown! We have very much enjoyed their company and that of their Grandma Chris and Grandpa Bruce over the years. We will always remember Shane’s dogged determination with all his sporting activities, we feel sure that we will see his name up in lights in the future! Naomi loved spending time in the kitchen with the educators helping to make snacks, we will most definitely miss her help.
We hope that they enjoy their new life in sunny Queensland and look forward to hearing their news via email now and again.
OSHC
Activities
Term 3, 2014
OSHC
Activities
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Mitcham OSHC School Visit

‘The Friendly Games’

On the last Friday of the holidays, Mercedes Vacation Care went to visit our neighbours at Mitcham Primary School.

Mitcham OSHC welcomed us with their huge group hello and their older students explained how the day was going to work and how pleased they were to meet us all.

They had prepared an amazing lunch with lots of healthy salads. Then we were treated to jelly and ice-cream.

After lunch, we all went outside to play. Some of us enjoyed time on their play equipment and those of us who were keen for some friendly competition went into the hall for a Mitcham OSHC vs. Mercedes OSHC soccer game.

This event was very special to both services as it provided an opportunity to link with other services in our community. It was great to see so many children recognising each other from different sporting games such as soccer, football and netball.

Our service is already planning to invite Mitcham to visit us in the near future. We would like to organise a lunch and volleyball game on the oval.
Spring Vacation Care - A Success!

Once again, there was no time to be bored these holidays with many exciting activities planned! It was certainly one of our busiest holidays ever with lots of excursions. Here are some of the highlights!

Hahndorf Farm Barn

Following a short but noisy bus ride up the freeway, an energetic group of children and educators poured out of the bus ready for a happy day at the Farm Barn which is situated in beautiful Hahndorf.

I am not entirely sure who was more excited - the children or the educators as we were invited to get up close and personal with beautiful bunny rabbits, gorgeous guinea pigs, gregarious goats and cheeky chicks. For most of us living in the city, our experience of these cute and cuddly creatures is viewing them in enclosures at pet shops but here we were offered something quite different! We were able to bottle feed lambs and offered cut fruit to the (well fed) guinea pigs and rabbits.

The staff members were knowledgeable and helpful, highlights included the reptile talk, feeding camels and milking the cow. We will look forward to visiting again next year.
**Birdwood National Motor Museum**

A day trip to Birdwood provided educators, Stephen, Nadia and Debbie with the promise of another escape route from the city. Accompanied by a busload of enthusiastic young charges, the educators enjoyed the country views from our windows while the children viewed one of their favourite movies! The children were divided into groups on our arrival, one group enjoyed the challenge of making a lego car while the remainder raced cars on the scalextric track. Even educators had a turn and were cheered on by all the children.

Chefs for the day, Stephen and Debbie, then fired up the BBQ and cooked up a storm. By this time everyone had worked up quite an appetite. We enjoyed our sausage sizzle sitting under a shady pergola and then we played games on the sprawling lawns outside the museum.

Following lunch, we ventured inside the museum which is spacious, clean and shiny with good photos and historical information. Each exhibit has just enough information to be informative, we really needed much longer to take it all in. The children enjoyed a glimpse of vintage cars and motorbikes and particularly enjoyed the interactive displays.

### Clay Workshop

We were very happy to welcome back one of our favourite former OSHC educators, Matt Goodluck to lead us all in a clay workshop. Matt started off by showing us some past creations and examples from his folio and then the children were able to first design their own creature whether it be a minion, a dinosaur, a monster, a cactus or even a ‘rhinocorn’. Children carefully crafted their designs using Matt’s top quality clay and tools and they let their creativity take over! Thank you to Luisa Stocco for letting us use the senior art room and for firing the sculptures for us - they look absolutely fabulous!!

### Challenge Hill

Challenge Hill was definitely a challenge for everyone! We were lucky to have beautiful sunshine all day long, but not hot enough to keep us away from the many obstacles! We started playing a game of ‘Eye Spy’ with some of the children showing just how observant they were. Many showed their courage and enthusiasm as they progressed through the tricky challenges. ‘Mouse Trap’ was a favourite - this involved the children making their way through a small, dark space - a very brave feat indeed! We finished our very successful outing with a few trips down the infamously long slide, no unhappy faces were spotted there! We look forward to revisiting Challenge Hill in the future!
Spring Vacation Care

Movie Review - ‘The Boxtrolls’

My favourite character was the boy who saved everyone because he was half human and half boxtroll. I liked the ending of the movie because the town people liked boxtrolls and weren’t scared of them anymore.
Rating: 4 Stars
Zara Tichy

Winnie was my favourite character because she was funny and very demanding. My favourite part of the movie was when Madame Fufu was performing - it was so funny!
Rating: 3 Stars
Zoe Searle

Because there were lots of the boxtrolls, I can’t decide why one of them was my favourite. My favourite part of the movie was when the bad guy exploded because he exploded into gas.
Rating: 4 Stars
Arion Berri

Movie Review

‘Planes - Fire and Rescue’

The crop duster was my favourite character because he turned into a fire-fighter. My favourite part of the movie was when they had to fight the big fire because everyone had to get out and all the planes came.
Rating: 4 Stars
Kate Doyle

Pyjama Day at Vacation

I vote that we have a PYJAMA DAY every Vacation Care! It was an absolute delight to see educators and children arriving in their night attire, many in their colourful ‘onesies’. Just for one day we gave ourselves permission to ‘come as you are’, to simply be, with no compulsion to do anything in particular. Many of the children set up a little shop and had tea parties on rugs. Others played games inside and still others were drawn to the great outdoors to play on the swing or to join a game of soccer or hide and seek. Simple pleasures seemed to be the order of the day. As we had promised to make a special brunch for the children I could see that mouths were beginning to water as the smell of savoury croissants filled the air. There most definitely should be more days like this!