



A Tribute to Emerita Professor Anne Smith

Ground-breaking researcher and advocate for children

Kia kaha te ngakau o te rangatira,
kia maia ia, kua ngaro ia,
kei te ora te mana o tatau tamariki.

Emerita Professor Anne Smith was a tireless and courageous advocate for children's and young people's rights. She combined her prodigious scholarship in child development, childhood sociology and childhood studies with very grounded, rights-based values to promote and protect children's wellbeing.

Countless students and academics used her texts as the 'go-to' interpretation of theory and practice. She managed to explain very complex theory in such an accessible way. When arguing for the participation rights of very young children she talked about the role of adults working with children was to help the child form a point of view.

Anne led numerous campaigns, all underpinned by her belief in children's rights to the best possible quality of life. She was a staunch advocate for quality early childhood education, recognising early on that access to high quality ECE was not just important for children and their families, it was their right as well.

Anne spoke out courageously against the physical punishment of children. During the infamous and inaccurately named "anti-smacking debate" to repeal s59 of the 1961 Crimes Act, Anne received death threats for her consistent advocacy to protect children.

Sarah Te One, current Chair of ACYA remembers: "I heard Anne speaking at a Children's Issue Seminar in Wellington in the early 2000s. She was arguing that talking to children, even very young children, is better than hitting them. Up came a slide of the Smith family cat and Anne said "even my cat understands 'NO'". It was a great rebuttal to who claimed that the only way to make children understand was to hit them." Her most recent book, *Children's rights: Towards social justice* (Smith, 2015¹), is a reminder that corporal punishment is still a reality for many, many children.

The Children's Issues Centre at Otago University was where Anne's work found a home in an interdisciplinary environment. "Anne understood the benefits of working collaboratively across a range of disciplines and her leadership was much appreciated here"

Aotearoa New Zealand has lost an exceptional advocate for children. She contributed to ACYA's alternative reports and peer-reviewed working papers. Our thoughts and love go to her family and her close colleagues. We will miss her.

¹ Smith, A. B. (2016) *Children's rights: Towards social justice*. New York: Momentum Press