

2021 Directors Report

The year started happy and healthy as we welcomed our new and returning families. We received positive feedback regarding our preparations for starting preschool and our orientation process for children to feel a sense of safety and belonging from their first day.

The goals we set to achieve for the year involved:

- researching and engaging in professional development about emotional well-being for children, gaining knowledge about how children's brains are wired for problem solving, recognising emotions and connecting and strategies for responding to individual children's needs
- complete the Rose room side garden deck renovation with QLE grant received from NSW government as well as contributions of preschool funds
- staff mental health and wellbeing- planning for opportunities to connect, show thanks, practice mindfulness and self-care
- opportunities for connections with parents- social gatherings, parent/teacher catch ups and feedback, host a school readiness talk with local school, planning and responding to parent and family needs
- sun safety to be promoted through kindy hats and t-shirts available to purchase
- research bathroom options for privacy
- develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

We would not have envisaged a repeat of last year; government and health guidelines requiring us to stay apart in order to stay safe. We approached this new phase of the COVID19 pandemic with innovation, creativity, strength and resilience. With an extended lockdown period and limited attendance at preschool we embraced an opportunity to share our knowledge and expertise with families via preschool learning at home. This involved planning learning experiences, hosting zoom sessions, recording videos and stories, drive through pick up of resource packs in the carpark and keeping in touch with families via phone. At each step we always ensured our decisions aligned with our preschool philosophy and values. It provided an opportunity to educate parents about the value of play for learning and the role they have in helping their child thrive in the early years. We also focused on mental health and wellbeing for families, offering resources and support due to a multitude of stressors experienced during such an uncertain time. We were grateful to sustain the connections with our children and families, through engaging and communicating in various ways, which resulted in a very smooth transition back to preschool in Term 4.

For our teachers and educators 'work from home' was a new concept and differed greatly from our regular job that sees us interacting, communicating and running a face to face program. We were constrained by some government and health restrictions and segregated into LGA's, limiting staff attendance at preschool. Some staff were at preschool to care for children of essential workers, whilst others completed jobs including re-categorising our classroom and library books, conducting an inventory and sorting storage of our resources and equipment. We continued to pivot, be flexible and utilised the time to work on goals of our Quality Improvement Plan, engage in professional development, complete policy reviews, zoom team meetings and importantly allocating time for our own health and wellbeing.

We completed training on the new Child Safe Standards and updated our Child Protection training certificates. We worked closely with the management committee to develop a Child Safe Code of Conduct which will be implemented in 2022. We reviewed our outdoor programming and researched innovative ways to organise resources for children to self-direct play and engage with the natural environment. This resulted in updating the storage of play equipment and resources to aid

children's agency in making choices for outdoor play. Professional development also included training on Circle of Security, emotion coaching and self-regulation.

We completed a number of policy reviews with the management committee including: Nutrition, food and beverages, Administration of Medication, Administration of First Aid, Emergency Response, Infectious Diseases and Exclusions, Work, Health and Safety, Cleaning and maintaining the environment, Staff Code of Conduct, Working from home policy and checklist, Feedback, Delivery and collection of children, Fees and developed our COVID19 policy. The evacuation plans were also updated by The Hills Shire Council. We moved the information about our strengths and areas of improvement over to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) NSW self-assessment tool template in preparation for our next Assessment and Rating visit.

Staff engaged with our Performance Pathway in developing goals for themselves, their team and the organisation. This is an annual process we engage with to ensure we are accountable and reflect on our role individually, as a team and organisation to continually improve the education and care we provide to our community. We have a positive and supportive culture at the Kindergarten and the process of continuous improvement keeps this culture strong. Staff completed a bi-annual staff survey at the end of the year, which also contributes to goals for improvement.

We developed a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group and a guest speaker joined us from regional NSW to talk through their preschool's action and strategies for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives into the program and community. We connected with a new Aboriginal run preschool located in Mt Druitt to donate some resources and equipment and hope this relationship will continue in the future.

Zoom offered us some new opportunities for sustaining connections with each other, to access online learning and we also hosted a parent session with a local Occupational Therapist. We held our enrolment sessions for parents online and subscribed to a new platform called Padlet which has become a great place to store information and provide easy access to orientation information and projects. Our management committee meetings continued on zoom, resulting in easier access when having young families, opportunities to contribute to discussions and keeping meetings to time.

We were grateful to the families who made cash donations to preschool to fulfil some wish list resource items including books and purchasing 20 sets of high quality rain wear so children can enjoy the great outdoors no matter the weather. In the current climate outdoor play continues to be prioritised.

Another year of COVID19 to navigate, but once again we did it with commitment, professionalism and always with the best interests of staff, children, families and the community being front of mind. Thank you to the 2021 management committee for your contributions, decision making and to the staff for their ongoing resilience, support and dedication to ensuring the best possible preschool experience for all our children and families. The Kindergarten really is *Our Place to Grow*.



Allison McCartney
Director/Nominated Supervisor