



KCCC ANNUAL REPORT 2019

KCCC Values:

Individuality, Inclusion and Innovation

Play and Experience-Based learning

Health and Wellbeing

Indigenous Culture

Diversity

Connection to Nature

The purpose of the Annual Report is to:

- provide an overview of the Cooperative's operations for education and care
- communicate how the centre is performing
- highlight key achievements
- highlight performance and statistics
- provide a summary of KCCC's financial position as at 31 December 2019

If you would like further information on any aspect of this report please contact the centre – info@KCCC.org.au

Our motto:

Explore.

Learn.

Play.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2019

This report presents progress towards achieving the objectives of our strategic plan and the KCCC vision and aims for the future

Kensington Community Children's Co-Operative (KCCC)

Kensington Community Children's Co-operative is unique in its co-operative model. We are a not-for-profit community-based model governed by a committed group of parents with extremely dedicated and qualified staff.

KCCC mission

KCCC is a not-for-profit community organisation that values and supports children and their families. We provide quality early childhood education which helps children grow, develop and learn in a safe and stimulating environment. Our natural setting is an integral part of our program and we encourage and foster sustainable practices.



We offer education and care to children from six weeks old to school age as well as Sessional and Integrated Kindergarten programs. We are a 140-place centre, with over 50 dedicated staff.



We provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we stimulate enquiry, invite discussions, engage the senses and offer choices for children to learn, discover and grow. Our natural setting is an integral part of our program and we encourage and foster sustainable practices.



We are a parent-governed cooperative that has been proudly educating and caring for children from Kensington and surrounding areas since 1982.

Who we're for

We're for children and the families who trust us to nurture them. We foster the uniqueness of each child, their interests, learning styles and backgrounds.

What we are

We are a progressive, not-for-profit early learning organisation, with an emphasis on a development plan and experiences that put the individual needs of our children first.

Purpose and strategic objectives

Children's strategy: Maintain our excellent early learning standard and continue to innovate as a leading benchmark for the sector.

Community strategy: Foster a sense of community and deeper appreciation of the wider world around us.

Growth strategy: Continue to evolve to meet the current and future needs of contemporary families and/or the wider community.

Team strategy: Further embed a culture of continuous learning and professional development, where staff feel valued, heard and respected.

Overview

KCCC was established in 1982 in Henry Street, Kensington at a 35-place long day care centre. In 1996, when demand far exceeded the capacity of the Centre, the City of Melbourne (CoM) built the facilities in Altona Street, alongside the existing kindergarten. The service relocated to its current 140 place facility, which includes 80 places for 4-year-old funded Kindergarten.

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) was the result of an agreement between all Australian governments to work together to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children. The NQF introduced a new quality standard in 2012 to improve education and care across long day care, family day care, preschool/ kindergarten and outside school hours care services.

The NQF aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in children's education and care services through:

- the National Law and National Regulations;
- the National Quality Standards, an assessment and quality rating process;
- national approved learning frameworks;
- a regulatory authority in each state and territory responsible for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services; and
- a national body – Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) which guides the implementation of the NQF and works with regulatory authorities.

The delivery of the NQF is guided by set objectives and guidelines to ensure consistent and effective function. The objectives of the NQF are to:

- ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services;
- improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children attending education and care services;
- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care services;
- establish a system of national integration and shared responsibility between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth in administration of the National Quality Framework;
- improve public knowledge and access to information, about the quality of education and care services; and
- reduce the regulatory and administrative burden for education and care services by enabling information to be shared between participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth.

The Guiding Principles of the NQF



The rights and best interests of the child are paramount



Children are successful, competent and capable learners



Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework



Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued



The role of parents and families is respected and supported



Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services

From the Management Team

What an eventful year 2019 was at KCCC.

We commenced the year with our Welcome BBQ where many of our children, families and staff came together to start the new year. It was an important time to socialise and build on old and new relationships.

After five years, we were sad to see Sigi Hyett step down from her position as General Manager at KCCC. Sigi worked extensively to ensure the financial viability of the service. She also led conversations on how we could further extend the sense of community and feeling of belonging for the children and introduced the integrated play spaces and multi-age rooms.

In May, our FaCE (Fundraising and Community Engagement) Committee held our annual Trivia Night to raise funds in excess of \$10,000 for the Yarragum yard. The team worked tirelessly to prepare for the event and to ensure the evening ran smoothly. We would like to thank everyone that contributed to organising the event and to all the families and community members that participated on the night.

Our staff were very fortunate to have many opportunities for professional development and personal growth. A number of our staff participated in forums and conferences that

showcased how we embed the practices at KCCC. We participated at the ELAA conference and Melbourne University's Education Showcase. Through our professional development, we reflected on Benefit Mindset, how we could embed Aboriginal perspectives in to our program, continue to work towards anti-bias, develop a stronger sense of the power of personality and emotional intelligence.

In July, we welcomed Stacey Owen as the General Manager to KCCC. Although her time with us was short, she took the time to listen and reflect on the ideas and needs of the children and educators.

Towards the end of the year, we were successful in obtaining a \$10,000 sustainability grant. We have had many conversations and ideas to date around how we can use this in 2020.

A special thanks to all of our stakeholders, children, families, colleagues, the City of Melbourne, the Department of Education and Training, ACECQA, Community Child Care, Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA), Jobs Australia and our facilitators for the support that you have provided KCCC this year. Special thanks to the Board, subcommittees, the wonderful team of staff and of course our children who are so very capable, competent and precious. It has been a pleasure to work and learn together, with a willingness to continue to review, grow, reflect, inspire, be inspired, teach and continually strengthen the focus on outcomes for children.



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Megan Newton
Acting General Manager,
December 2019

KCCC BOARD

Felix Ohle – Message from the Chair

As I write this, we are living in unprecedented times with the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the impact of this in our community.

While 2020 has not been what we anticipated, our KCCC community has once again demonstrated its strength and community-spirit in responding to COVID-19. This includes providing an essential service for our families, along with emotional support for children through these uncertain times.

I acknowledge the hard work of the KCCC team in providing regular, timely communication updates around COVID-19 to families and

implementing appropriate operational steps in line with Government health and community safety recommendations. Also our Educators, for their continued professionalism and resilience, including implementing innovative new ways to keep the children connected and ensuring learning continues, such as through digital tools and approaches.

I also thank you, as a KCCC family, for your ongoing support and understanding at this challenging time. We remain focused on working together as a Board, Management Team and community, to ensure the viability of KCCC into the future.



FELIX OHLE - CHAIR
Lucien (Acacia) and Trixie (Alumni)

Felix has been on the KCCC Board since May 2015. Shortly after joining the Board, Felix took on the position of Treasurer which he held until late in 2017 when he took on the role as Chair.

Born in Hamburg, Germany, Felix studied economics and international business and has worked in the petrochemical industry for over 22 years in Europe, the USA and for the last nine years, in Australia where his wife Sarah grew up. Felix loves the community feel of Kensington which he calls home and sees KCCC as an integral part of it. Being able to participate and contribute to the Kensington community has been the main reason he joined the Board five years ago. He feels privileged to work with the Board and KCCC team and is proud to see all the progress that has been made over the recent years.



I'm delighted to be reporting on another year of achievement for the KCCC in all areas of our operations, thanks to the dedicated contributions of my fellow Board members, KCCC Management Team and our dynamic educators, and supportive families and community.

It is important to reflect on our achievements in 2019 and beyond, including new initiatives, enhanced facilities and continued learning excellence, in particular:

- Continuation of our unique excursion program. In 2019, it was especially pleasing to see strong local community-based partnerships such as yoga classes at the Kensington YMCA, engagement with local traders and shops, outdoor learning at The Venny and engaging with older members of our Kensington community through the intergenerational program.

- Our facility enhancement program continued with a special focus on our Yarragum Room and building a new playground for our babies and youngest children at KCCC. The international procurement of new, state-of-the-art transportation prams has ensured all children, no matter their age or ability, can experience our excursion program.

- Continued focus on our diversity and inclusion programs and learning outcomes, as representative of the community around us. In particular, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational programs and ensuring children have a foundational learning and awareness around Australia's First Peoples.

- Community events, like our information sessions, room breakfasts, kindergarten graduation and events like KCCC's Welcome BBQ, complete with the exciting reptile show. With a diverse events calendar, all activities inspire community engagement and involvement and usually, lots of fun for all.

- Changes in the KCCC Leadership Team, with Sigi Hyett's departure as

General Manager, the appointment of Stacey Owen and then our current General Manager Karen Mills. With her extensive early childhood development and management experience, Karen has made a significant impact as General Manager in a short period of time, including leading our COVID-19 response.

- Professional and self-development were priorities for our Educators in 2019, in advancing their knowledge and skills. This has been supported with the appointment of Hollie Martin, as KCCC's dedicated Human Resources professional, to further advance learning and development opportunities and team culture.

- Ongoing work on our Board-endorsed Strategic Plan, which was released at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May 2019. This sets a strong educational, operational and financial framework for KCCC that will ensure continued future success.

In conclusion, all these achievements would not be possible without the support of many people including:

- Our relentless, hardworking Fundraising and Community Engagement Subcommittee (FACE) for their efforts in getting our community together for the trivia night, cake stalls and the annual movie night, in securing funds to advance programs and facilities across the KCCC. We are extremely fortunate to have such a committed group of parent volunteers who strive

to provide the best environment possible for our children.

- To our Board Members, I thank you for your contribution, energy and dedication during the past year and for the insights and expertise you each bring to overseeing KCCC's activities. I look forward to our continued working partnership this year with the annual AGM scheduled for August 2020.

Once again, I warmly acknowledge and thank our wonderful KCCC Team and each staff member for their contribution towards delivering learning outcomes and great experiences for our children every day.

On a personal note, it has been an absolute privilege to continue to Chair the KCCC Board and work closely with the KCCC team, community partners and families as we continue to energetically and co-operatively achieve the early learning and community-advancement intentions of KCCC.



KCCC BOARD



MORELLE BULL - SECRETARY

Claudia (Wattle), Peter (Alumni) and William (Alumni)

Morelle Bull has been a member of KCCC since 2013. She lives in Kensington with her husband Ed and their three children – Will, 7, Pete, 5 and Claudia, 2. They moved to the area in 2008 and Morelle strongly values the community vibe that makes Kensington a great place to live.

Since graduating from uni in 2004, Morelle has worked in a number of professional roles. She commenced her career as an economist, but after seeing the “light”, she transitioned to being a lawyer. Currently, she is working at ANZ part-time as a senior lawyer.

Morelle has a passion for working with organisations that assist children. She is currently Chair of the Board at Kids’ Own Publishing (KOP). KOP is an organisation that aims to improve children’s literacy and love of reading, particularly children in indigenous and disadvantaged communities. She is also involved with the Committee of Management at St Kilda Mums and a member of the Finance and Risk Assessment Committee.

Morelle has also been involved with a number of KCCC committees, a member of the Fundraising and Community Engagement committee in 2014 and 2015. While on the committee, Morelle played a big part in re-establishing fundraising events, most notably the trivia night. In 2018 Morelle was a member of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) committee and joined the Board in 2018.

Outside of work and volunteering, you will find Morelle on a netball court or walking around the streets of Kensington pushing a pram while balancing a coffee in one hand, and a scooter in the other.



SCOTT TATULASCHWILI - TREASURER

Jay (Alumni), Tom (Alumni) and Max (Tea Tree Room)

Scott and his family have been a part of the KCCC community since 2011 when their eldest son Jay joined the Waratah room as a three-year old and their second son Tom joined the Yarragum room as a ten-month-old. Their third son, Max, has followed in his two brothers’ footsteps and is currently in the Tea Tree Room. Scott and his wife Carla have always been so appreciative of the wonderful care and learning opportunities that KCCC provide. They are confident that when at the centre their children will really be cared for and they will have fun.

Scott volunteers his services to the KCCC Board to ensure that his family and many others like his in the wider Kensington community can continue to enjoy all that KCCC offers. Scott has worked in large organisations in accounting & finance, auditing, banking and superannuation. As a qualified Chartered Accountant, he works to support Senior Leaders, Audit Committees and Boards in reaching their strategic objectives. His experiences have also included internal and external audit, risk, statutory and regulatory reporting, management accounting, board reporting, finance operations, asset and inventory management, business planning and forecasting, tax and business partnering.

Outside of work, Scott enjoys spending time with family and friends, playing golf and actively participating in the community. Scott’s older boys now attend Holy Rosary School and needless to say the Tatulaschwili family are also active members of the school community.



MEG TERRILL - DIRECTOR

Mabel (Banksia), Alby (Alumni) and Audrey (Alumni)

Meg Terrill was once called a corporate unicorn; equal parts creative marketer and boring finance geek. Her left and right brain strengths are constantly duking it out for dominance.

Meg has over 20 years' experience gained in a mashup of corporate roles across Brand Management, Finance, HR/ Capability and Chartered Accounting. Creative branding and corporate strategy are her jam, and she managed multimillion-dollar marketing programs for brands like Schweppes, Red Bull, Cottee's, SOLO and Pepsi for over ten years, and the training and capability of the national marketing team at Asahi Beverages. In a past life Meg was a chartered accountant, and whilst this fact is not something that tends to float people's boat at parties, she considers it her career secret weapon, as her creative advice is always infused with a strong dose of commercial reality.

Since having children, Meg ran her own personalised kids clothing business (Little Scooch) for 2 years and is now currently the Marketing Manager at Mr Chen's Dumplings because the lure of getting paid to taste test Australia's #1 dumplings every week was too hard to resist.

On a personal level, Meg is mama to three little womb gremlins and a big white dog and she is the master of the awkward greeting. She enjoys cruising on her bike, snowboarding, stand up paddle boarding, wearing too much leopard print, and navigating using bakeries and cafes as key landmarks.

Meg is passionate about causes she believes in, and in addition to her two years on the Board at KCCC, in recent years she has helped organise the Kensington Women's Dinner for 350 women, volunteered with strategy and steering for the Board of the Good Karma Effect (oversees 42 Good Karma Networks), supported local not-for-profit West Welcome Wagon with their incorporation process, and also championed the cause of Lifeblood (formerly Red Cross Blood Service) in order to help repay her blood debt after a wee death-defying incident in 2017. Her participation in the Board at KCCC is driven by a love of the centre, the fantastic team and innovative programs, and a belief in the importance of high-quality early years education for all children.



CAROLINE INNESS - DIRECTOR

Joe (Acacia), Maggie (Alumni) and Bea (Alumni)

Caroline and her family joined KCCC in January 2016. Joe (Acacia) loves the educators, environment and activities that KCCC provides. He particularly loves the opportunities that excursions at the centre provide, giving him a sense of connection with the community. Bea and Maggie, who are now both at school, love coming back to KCCC to pick up Joe and give their former educators a run-down of their days.

Between wrangling three young children, Caroline works as a lawyer for a small law firm in Essendon. Her work revolves around helping people with making their Wills and Estate planning and helping families with Probate after a loved one has passed away. Her favourite part of her job is liaising with her clients, visiting them at home and providing them with a sense of security through future planning. She loves chatting with administrative staff, café owners and anyone who will listen to her. It's a juggle, and the balls often drop, but thankfully she had the good sense to marry a Scotsman who is an excellent cook, so at least the kids are well fed and talented highland dancers.

Caroline joined the Board in 2018 and has been valued member of the KCCC Board.

KCCC BOARD



ANTHONY TRANTINO - DIRECTOR

John (Alumni) and Max (Banksia)

Anthony is dad to 6 ½ year old John and 3½ year old Max. He and his wife Ali moved to Kensington some years ago because they really love the community focus in a suburb so accessible to the city.

Anthony works in the energy industry as a Business Operations and Engineering Manager for a company that provides consulting services to many of Victoria's construction projects. He has strong skills in contractor management, cost control, and building team capabilities and is driven by delivering great outcomes for his customers.

Anthony grew up on a 300-acre cattle farm in Gippsland and moved to Melbourne after studying Mechatronic Engineering at university. He brings an abundance of practical skills, he and his boys love rolling their sleeves up, putting on their tool belts and getting stuck into a good working bee!

Anthony enjoys cycling, skiing, hiking and camping, and you may see him on his daily cycle commute to the centre with Max in tow. Anthony also enjoys his reignited passion for Lego!

Anthony's family will be part of the KCCC community for many years to come and he plays an active role as a Director on the Board.



JAMES WATSON - DIRECTOR

Evie (Tea Tree) and Jude (Wattle)

James is the proud father of Evie (Tea Tree) and Jude (Wattle). He and his wife Ally have lived in Kensington for 10 years and love the village feel of the suburb, the crippling house prices and being gently lulled to sleep by the late night tunnelling works at South Kensington station. With two children attending KCCC, James is passionate about ensuring the cooperative's continued success and sustainability and maintaining its friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

In working hours currently, James can be found at his kitchen bench wearing tracksuit pants, Explorer socks and a formal shirt during countless videoconferences in his role at the Department of Health (updated due to COVID-19). In this role, James oversees the performance, service development and quality and safety of mental health services throughout Victoria. The skills James has developed in his career will help in identifying any potential areas for improvement in KCCC and maintaining the high level of care that his own kids have already received from the excellent educators and staff at KCCC.

James spends his spare time being aggressively out-negotiated by his four year-old daughter, getting eye-gouged by his son and extracting pieces of Lego from that really sensitive spot in the arch of his foot.



VIRGINIA WILLS – DIRECTOR

Keith (Acacia)

Virginia Wills currently works full-time as an industrial officer at the United Firefighters Union. Prior to that, she was a paralegal at a mid-size law firm in Brisbane. Virginia and her partner have one child called Keith (3 years old) who is in the Acacia room full-time.

Virginia's board experience includes current membership on the management committee of the Melbourne Community Toy Library, a position she has held for the last year. Until going back to work in July last year, Virginia was a City of Melbourne Playgroup Leader.

She is enthusiastic about contributing what she can to her local community and our wonderful KCCC.



SIAN SUMMERS

Rafferty (Apple Tree) and Sylvie (Wattle)

Sian and her family joined the KCCC community back in 2016. She loves living in Kensington – particularly the community spirit, the history, the diversity, the parks and the abundance of good coffee.

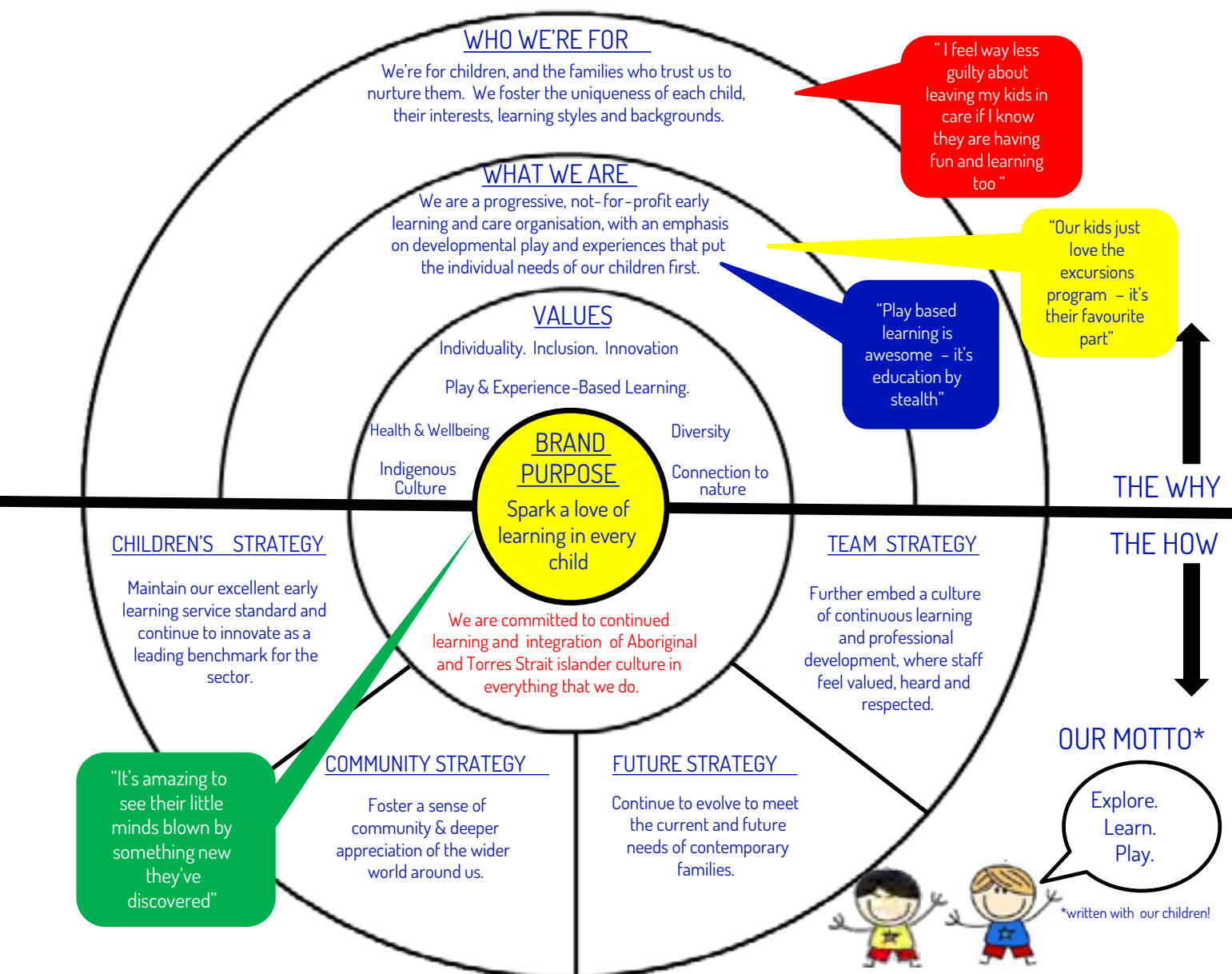
Sian and her partner John truly value the care and support their family receives from the team at KCCC and have formed some great friendships with the Educators and other families over the last few years. Being on the Board, since 2019, has provided her the opportunity to give back to the KCCC community and support the children, families and educators in a purposeful way.

Sian works as a management consultant in a professional services firm. Her days typically involve supporting clients across private, government and not-for-profit sectors with transformation planning and delivery and the design of strategic workforce solutions.

Growing up in the fine pastures of New Zealand, Sian has since spent time living and working in the UK, US, Brazil and Argentina – and now calls the wonderful city of Melbourne 'home'. The best city in the world, in her opinion.

KCCC STRATEGIC STEERING WHEEL

February 2019



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019

Over the next 21 pages we reflect on KCCC's programs, groups, connections and community.



River painting



Painting Kensington



Acacia





National Storytime, Gumnut



Dialogical reading



Dressing up, Gumnut



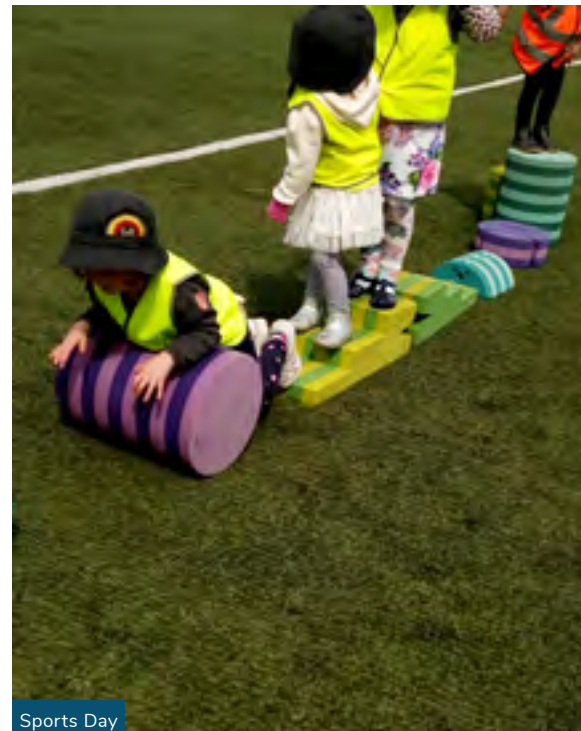
Mud pit



Williamstown Beach with Lumineer



Food Forrest



Sports Day



THE KCCC RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (RAP)

Our RAP working group carefully created a RAP that is both achievable and relevant to our context.

It was with great excitement that, in April 2019, our KCCC Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was published. Having a RAP means that we are officially committed to building a space where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are welcomed, and their knowledge, history and culture are respected. As Educators working with young children, we are in a unique position where we can embed this knowledge into our programs, and give young children the opportunity for a “greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being...and recognise the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to Australia” (*Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework [VEYLDF]*, 2009). For our wider community, we all gain from understanding the history of the land on which we live and in advocating for Reconciliation.

RAP VISION AND ACTIONS

Our vision was carefully constructed using different sentences and sentiments that had been expressed by educators, children and families over the past two years. These were literally written down, cut up, and then reconstructed, like a jigsaw, to form a vision that represents why a RAP is valuable and how it aligns to our philosophy.



I am climbing a tree and the tree is growing in the river from Bea and the end.

BEA



Please don't cut down the Aboriginal trees, as it might hurt them and it will make the Aboriginal people sad.

THOMAS

OUR VISION

Our vision is to increase our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. We shall embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within our program and everyday practice. The VEYLDF will help to guide us on our journey.

KCCC will reach out to our local Aboriginal community members in a manner that will foster lasting and meaningful two-way relationships. We commit to creating a culture where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel welcomed and included and through these connections, share knowledge by talking and listening to one another. We recognise that understanding is gained, and sustainable relationships are strengthened this way.

We shall address racism and bias in all its forms, to build a community that cares for one another. We commit to working in a way which reflects the rich and diverse culture and cultural knowledge of our First Peoples.

In our KCCC community, we shall engage in a spirit of co-learning and co-teaching, to make our reconciliation journey one of togetherness. We commit to learn and teach together with children and families, to gain a true understanding of the history of the land on which we work and play.

OUR ACTIONS

The RAP actions support us to be ever aware of the history and cultural richness brought by our first nation's people, and the sentiments of The VEYLDF, which “recognises and respects Aboriginal cultures and their unique place in the heritage and future of Victoria. Learning about and valuing the place of Aboriginal people will enhance all Victorian children's sense of place in our community” (VEYLDF, 2009).

BRINGING THE RAP TO LIFE IN 2019

Whilst working through our RAP, it was key for us to remain thoughtful, purposeful and meaningful. As the year unfolded we found that our RAP aligned quite naturally to our program.

There are many examples of our achievements, such as the deep and sometimes troublesome readings, articles and discussions held in our working group meetings; Aboriginal history and current affairs can be challenging, and yet this work reminded us why our RAP is so important.



Because the Aboriginal flag is there, it means the trees are special, because it is the Indigenous people's flag and we respect them, because we respect our friends. I want to sing our Acknowledgement of Country to the government, because it will help them be calm down.

FREYJA



The children also became embroiled in current affairs, with Apple Tree and Tea Tree unpacking the different perspectives arising around the plans to remove the Djap Wurrung (birthing trees) trees in western Victoria to make way for a highway upgrade. The children wrote letters and delivered a petition to parliament house, which was a perfect demonstration of children taking a responsible role, as active citizens.

Another action, which has become embedded in the rooms, is the children's Acknowledgments to Country. These were carefully constructed by almost all of the rooms, and are regularly heard at group times and other occasions. The children played a central role in constructing Acknowledgements that were poignant to their rooms.

The RAP also called on us to acknowledge certain dates and events across the year. An example of this was in 2019's National Reconciliation Week (NRW), which challenged us to share our stories and histories. KCCC linked this to our work on 'place', specifically looking at our connections to waterways, where children and families shared their memories and connections to rivers.

A great deal of artwork and discussion came from this, and we drew closer through these stories. The project was also a perfect way to learn more about the residents at Lynch's Bridge care home. The children who visited the home on their excursions sat beside the residents and jointly painted rivers, sharing their thoughts and evoking old memories, as the residents recollected their younger days and time spent by the river. One resident recalled being beside the river with her boyfriend, "when I was 24".

We committed to "deepen our understanding and knowledge of the local area". We aimed to do this by drawing on historical and contemporary perspectives and

linking this in our environmental work. This action aligns perfectly with our room and excursion programs and across 2019, children explored the history of our space and took an interest in the creatures that we share our space with and contemplated how to care for the land. Initiatives like our work on the Kensington Community Food Forest and our Port Phillip Eco Centre incursion, supported the children to think about the space we inhabit. To complement this work we used the books, 'William' and 'Welcome to Country' to view the local area through the lens of the Wurundjeri people. These books not only supported us to see the history of the local area, but also introduced ideas of sustainability and 'only taking what you need' from the land, and also some Woi Wurrung words. Language learning is another RAP action, one which the children decided to add to the plan. Educators worked creatively to embed words into the program, adapting familiar songs and everyday actions, as well as going on Woi Wurrung treasure hunts.

Many of the other elements of the RAP built on and strengthened our room projects and, when planning, Educators considered how to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives for all aspects of their programs. Innovative examples of this were Acacia's Space work, which included Aboriginal astronomy and the emu in the sky and Apple Tree's work exploring the stories represented in the AFL indigenous footy shirts. Excursions to Melbourne Museum, Ian Potter and Koorie Heritage Trust also provided children with a wealth of opportunities to learn more about our First Peoples.

As a working document, the RAP enables us to move forward on an ongoing journey of knowledge building, recognising different perspectives and celebrating significant dates and events. The RAP has certainly offered us many pathways to learning and we are excited to be able to continue this work in 2020.



HEALTHY TOGETHER

Health and wellbeing are key priorities at KCCC. Throughout 2019 we practiced a variety of ways to strengthen our physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Our commitment to Aboriginal culture and heritage led us to explore Aboriginal seasons and enquire about the food and crops cultivated in each season. Each food trolley had the printout of the seasons and we investigated bush tucker and native herbs and plants. Resulting from this enquiry, the children from KCCC visited Melbourne Museum's 'Milarrri Garden Trail' and actively cultivated herbs and native plants both at KCCC and the Kensington Food Forest. Fresh food cooking and healthy eating was promoted in all the programs and this seed to plate program was run very successfully.

FOOD AND CELEBRATIONS

We joined our hands together to bring together healthy recipes from different cultures and make a KCCC Cookbook. Heather, from the KCCC kitchen, worked with families, educators and children to collect and compile the recipes. The book was then distributed to our local community to enjoy.

This project made our community think and reflect about the nutritional value of the food that we were consuming. Our discussions and meetings revealed that we were having too many birthday cakes per week in each of the programs and this was not aligning with our Healthy Together goals. We surveyed families to seek their input, and after deep and long discussions with children, parent representatives, and educators we shifted our birthday celebrations from baked cakes to healthy alternatives. This was an initiative symbolising KCCC's ongoing commitment towards our goals of healthy children, active children.

COHEALTH

Cohealth is a not-for-profit community health organisation that KCCC collaborates with each year. In 2019 this occurred on two occasions.

One was for a dental health check of children attending KCCC; the other was a workshop run by a Pediatric Dietitian to educate our Yarragum (babies room) team on nutritional diets for infants.

RELATIONSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

A focus of our Healthy Together discussion and reflection groups was to strengthen our relationships and engagement. We worked on multiple strategies to build connections in our KCCC community. This started with Educators taking a 'strengths survey', to build self-awareness and use strengths in everyday interactions. Once the Educators were aware of their own strengths, they started spotting strengths in their colleagues and in the children. This shifted the way we looked at each other and resulted in extensive use of strengths-based language. Working from strengths enhanced their engagement and strengthened their relationships with children, families and each other.

STAFF WELLBEING GOALS

Our discussions for staff wellbeing made us think deeper to create a process where staff could set up their wellbeing goals and are supported by KCCC to achieve them. This resulted in regular checking in rituals where we met with Educators to check on their workplace wellbeing and to set individualised goals to promote their mental health, wellbeing and engagement.

They were asked about their present wellbeing levels and what tools they use to maintain happiness, energy, purpose and motivation. This then led to the next stage where Educators set goals for themselves and identified the areas of wellbeing that they would like to improve. We worked on the time, processes and feasibility of the goals.



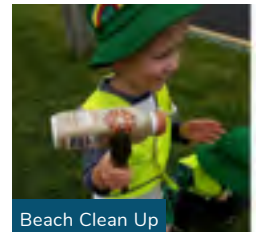
Metro Tunnel



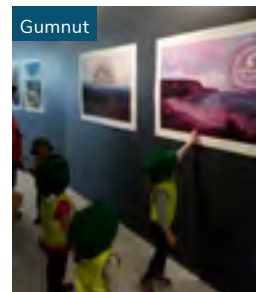
Millarri Garden Trail



Cultural clothing



Beach Clean Up



Gumnut



National Storytime, Gumnut

COMMUNICATION IN KCCC

In Early Childhood, we are aware of the importance of early literacy, which, in our guiding frameworks, comes under the umbrella of 'communication'. Communication encompasses the many ways in which children reach out to connect and interact with the world around them; from the infant focusing and mirroring their caregiver's face, to their attempts at mastering their name. Talking, listening, reading, drama, role play, singing and non-verbal communication are all a part of the many ways that we communicate at KCCC. Through our discussions and reading, we build our understanding of one another and the world, as language supports children to understand new concepts, and these early communication skills are the pathway to more complex literacy tasks, such as reading and writing.

DIALOGICAL READING

The KCCC dialogical reading program is one way in which we support children to build on their communication and literacy skills. The program provides a designated time to:

- explore the rich language found in text;
- play with rhyme, rhythm and alliteration;
- discuss interesting and complex words and ideas; and
- engage in rich conversations.

It is a planned opportunity to work with a small group of children and unpack the whole or parts of the book, or unpack a concept from the book, but also to for the children to participate in the conversations that come from this work. The program was introduced in 2017 and is now embedded in our Educator's practice.

2019 saw the introduction of a new reading space for the older rooms and new tools and books were added to the resources. The books have made their way out on excursions and help bridge the work in the rooms with being out and about. Our space has become rich in language, including valuing home language and drawing on the different languages of our community.



Through our discussions and reading,
we build our understanding of one
another and the world.

BOOK WEEK AND INDIGENOUS LITERACY DAY

KCCC has an ongoing tradition of supporting Children's Book Week and it is usually accompanied by children dressing as a book's character or in their pyjamas. The week is then filled with a range of literary experiences, both at a room and wider group level. In 2019, the focus on books and dress ups was continued and this year it was combined with some worthwhile fundraising for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

Children and families worked on their literary dress-ups and KCCC was filled with all kinds of characters. The rooms also worked on designing costumes, applying our philosophy of reusing and recycling, with our recycle stations proving to be a valuable resource.

Indigenous Literacy Day is a national celebration of Indigenous culture, stories, language and literacy.

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation works tirelessly to provide equal access to literacy resources for children in remote communities. Once again, our families showed their caring community spirit, and donations of adult and children's books came pouring in. Our book stall was set up over a fortnight and raised a considerable amount of money for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation. The remaining books have been added to our collection and we have now established an adult and children's library in the reception area. Families are welcome to borrow books and share the love of reading.



'Alpacas with Maracas' by Matt Cosgrove

NATIONAL SIMULTANEOUS STORYTIME

We joined in National Simultaneous Storytime run by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). The program involves children all over Australia reading the same book at the same time. This year's book was 'Alpacas with Maracas' by Matt Cosgrove.

At 11am, all the children and educators from across the service gathered in the yard in four different groups. Even those on excursion stopped what they were doing to sit down and read the book. The different groups helped to demonstrate the idea of reading simultaneously. Many of the children asked to hear the story again, and they voted with their thumbs up or down on the quality of the story.

PERFORMING AT KENSINGTON CHURCH HALL (SOCIAL INCLUSION WEEK)

Educators Tessie, Mai, Nicole and Karen, with a group of children from Boronia, Waratah and Wattle room went on an excursion to sing songs at Kensington Church Hall for 'Social Inclusion Week'.

What a fantastic trip this was - the children walked beautifully, commenting on many things along the way and practiced their road safety on the walk there and back. The children listened very carefully to our instructions and they all sang with gusto using their big voices. We sang "We Recycle" and "Barramundi". The people were clapping and dancing with our singing and the children were excited to see so many people, young and old.

METRO TUNNEL PROJECT

This year we continued our participation in and exploration of the construction of the Metro Tunnel Project. In February, children, staff and families independently participated in an art project on the hoarding along Childers Street, the boundary of JJ Holland Park. This added to the community's work from October 2018, where the collected ideas, stories, photos and drawings detailed what they love about Kensington. Melbourne-based artist, Mike Makatron used these contributions to develop a concept for artwork, to be painted on the timber hoarding for Kensington to enjoy. The children were invited to help paint this artwork, alongside Mike and his team.

In May, a group of children participated in a site tour of the project, they marveled at the machinery and the large impact it was having on the land. As children gain a participatory role within this initiative, they become active participants in their community and are valued as important stakeholders. Participation in this way also assists in understanding the ongoing impact it may have to their personal worlds in Kensington and at KCCC.



OUR LOCAL SCHOOLS

At the end of 2019, the Kinder children visited the local schools to find out what would be in store for them in 2020. The children familiarised themselves with where to go, and gained insight into the more structured and timetabled routines of school.

At Kensington Primary School we were pleased to see familiar faces: old KCCC friends and some siblings, which gave further comfort. Indeed, seeing the chickens, veggie patch and compost bins, helped our children recognise that there are things at school that they are already experts at, thus presenting them with opportunities for their skills to be used at school.

Whilst we visited the school, we took the time to interview some of the children about their memories of kinder to help inform our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) self-assessment. It was interesting to hear the school children's stories of their time at Kinder. Many of the children remembered the physical play at Kinder such as, tree climbing and "I remembered that I liked jumping down from the tyres". Others commented on how they liked Kinder and that, "school is very different,

you do lots of writing and it is tiring" and "at school you don't do excursions much".

In the spirit of reciprocity, Kensington Primary School came to visit our Kinder rooms, to help inform their project on play-based learning. The KCCC children explained the what, how and why of play. They were able to demonstrate the benefit play brings to relationships, as well as opportunities for problem solving, critical thinking, hands on learning, independence skills and practicing skills.

LUMINEER ACADEMY

In 2019, Lumineer Academy, a school in Williamstown, contacted us because they believed we had a similar philosophy and way of working. The school itself is heavily influenced by play-based learning and current research.

KCCC Educators, Ivan and Hayley, took a trip to the school to find out what they were all about. They returned to explain how the school explored Literacy and Numeracy and other curriculum subjects in the mornings and then spent the afternoons putting these skills into



YMCA

In 2018, the children at KCCC were involved in a project to help redesign JJ Holland park. In 2019, they were once again asked to share their creativity and imaginations, this time in the form of the upgrading of the YMCA. The bulk of the design was in place when the designers came to us, what they wanted from the children was ideas about what the changing rooms should be like and the décor and colours of the corridors and walkways.

THE CHILDREN'S IDEAS INCLUDED:

Rainbows, rainbows and more rainbows seemed to be popular with the children of KCCC, and some felt this would be a great design for the floor of the swimming pools. Mustafa designed a **"big tooth tunnel"** for the entrance and Edmund felt the YMCA should **"smell like perfume"**, but Eydon said he would prefer it to **"smell of pizza."** For the changing rooms the children thought of **heated flooring** (Flynn), **"supplies of nappies"** (Arthur) **"a bin with sticky tape in it"** and when asked why? **"to keep the nappies stuck in the bin"** (Ivy). We are curious as to how these projects progress and what influence the children have had on the designs.

community-based project work. Ivan and Hayley could see the synergies between the Lumineer philosophy and our own.

Lumineer requested a visit to KCCC for their Civic Duty Day. To start this project our children wrote letters to Lumineer Academy, telling them all about their rooms and the things they enjoy at KCCC. We then asked the Lumineer students to consider their own strengths and skills, and to think about how they could use them to help the children at KCCC.

On the day of their visit, many of the Lumineer children had decided their skills would be useful in the Yarragum room. Others joined cooking sessions in Wattle room; played with the children in the yard; joined group times and supported children with anything they needed, whether it be for company or tying a shoelace. The children of KCCC were certainly appreciative of the visit.

Inspired by their time at KCCC, the Lumineer children invited us to be part of their new project. The school were looking at traits and deciding which traits are most valuable and asked us if we would like to do the same. The project aligned perfectly with our benefit mindset work for our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), with the children identifying their superpowers. The children had already been listing their skills:

"I can jump like a frog" - Maximillian

"Jabba is my superhero he is very strong; I would like to be strong like him" - Henry

"I am funny" - Leo

"I help my mum make cakes" - Chinh

"I gave my brother his medicine" - Trixie

"I am best at working out. I am happy when mum gives me a kiss, because she loves me so much" - Terry



On the day of their visit, many of the Lumineer children had decided their skills would be useful in the Yarragum room. Others joined cooking sessions with Wattle; played with the children in the yard; joined group times and supported children with anything they needed, whether it be for company or tying a shoelace.

Lumineer decided to put their trait work into action by visiting the infants in Yarragum room. The children studied how traits, skills, needs and strengths differed from person to person and used close observation to identify these traits. The Lumineers also tried to work out how they could use their own strengths to connect with the Yarragum children.

Our final connection with Lumineer for 2019 was their second Civic Duty day, and this time our children got to do some civic duties too. A group of children from Yarragum, Wattle, Gumnut, Acacia and Waratah took the train to Williamstown beach. Together with the Lumineer children, they did a beach clean-up, picking any bits of litter they could find and sorting it into landfill or recycling. This was a truly magnificent way to connect with the schools and we look forward to how this relationship will develop in 2020.



The (Lumineer) children were excellent, and the children here were so pleased to see them. They were talking about the traits and knew what they were doing and looking for. It really helped the children (here) as they love being with that age group, they were at their best.

Donna, Educator

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NATURE PLAY PORT PHILLIP



We have come to learn that nature play can be hugely beneficial for children's development and can support happiness and wellbeing. Dirt contains healthy bacteria that can stimulate serotonin in the brain and cognitive functions, as well as build healthy immune systems. Nature play is therefore a vital component of the work that we do. Our guiding curriculums, The VEYLDF, NQF and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) all, in various ways, express the need for a large focus on wellbeing, further guiding us to the necessity of nature and dirt enriched play.

Our incursion with Port Phillip Eco Centre provided us with an array of ways to work with children in our backyards. These included stimulating the senses with indigenous edible plants, going on creature hunts and acting out being a scientist by documenting what we found.



Children need to be out in nature, exploring it for themselves and building an attachment and wonder for it in order to cultivate a lifelong interest and emotional connection to it.



The KCCC children showed great joy as they scurried off in search of creatures living in our garden. As Clare Warden, an outdoor educator and researcher explains *"Children need to be out in nature, exploring it for themselves and building an attachment and wonder for it in order to cultivate a lifelong interest and emotional connection to it."*

At KCCC we are regular witnesses of the learning that occurs in our natural spaces – we see children working together, expressing themselves creatively, and building on their social abilities through their needs of cooperation, negotiation and communication. They are sourcing their own materials and thriving in a sensory enriched experience. Children are using problem solving skills and inquiry as they test and hypothesise, they are developing early mathematical language and skills as they further compare and test their theories, measure and count. The endless opportunities as an art medium allow children to build and construct with wonder.

SUSTAINABILITY

At KCCC we are committed to working together, alongside community organisations, to build knowledge and curiosity for environmental practices. These community organisations include but are not limited to:

- **Kensington Community Food Forest**, which has afforded us the opportunity to consider permaculture values and delight in the slow process that is producing a harvest;
- Our local **Neighbourhood House**, which has encouraged a consideration of acting mindfully for the benefit of the whole community; and
- **The Venny**, our risk-taking communal play space.

Together, as a community, we look at how we can live interdependently and considerately with the land. Further, we have eagerly brought into focus the many facets of children's lives while maintaining and advocating for their voices and positions as local and global citizens.

Excursions such as **Art Play's 'Beneath' exhibition** built upon learning about waterways and the human impacts of plastic, highlighting the integral role accessing local explorations of current issues can have on imagination and self-reflection.

Another notable experience was our submission for the **Moonee Ponds Creek 'have your say' community consultation** program. Children were invited to represent their ideas through art expression, natural materials and conversation. A whole service loose material/art experience in the garden was used as a platform to share ideas, alongside each room having small informal conversations with children in their classrooms.

Some of the ideas included:

"I would like to have rainbow water – maybe even green and blue, like this." – Kiara

"Dragons, breathing fire everywhere. And a creek bed for these dragons" – Kingston
Keith and Hannah say they'd like to **"play together"** by the creek.

"I made a dinosaur that goes ROAR. It is like a statue." – Hannah

Leah Mosel from City of Melbourne congratulated the children's ideas "A big thank you to all at the Kensington Community Children's Co-operative for your fantastic efforts with the Moonee Ponds Creek

submission. We are all very impressed with the work and the wonderful feedback from the children. Thank you so very much."

As Educators, we continue the work of learning about the benefits of nature and sustainability practices. In November, a group of us participated in some professional development on Nature Pedagogy. This work encouraged us to promote a gentleness towards the natural world as we champion a way of treading lightly on this earth through implementing place-based learning.

Alongside this commitment, we obtained a sustainability grant to assist in our continuing development of sustainable learning. Our primary aims are to reduce our waste going to landfill while working with our community, including the Wurundjeri tribe, to build knowledge about sustainability contextual to the Kensington area. Overall the project is hoped to build on community knowledge and skills that will enable increased community connection to their local environment and involvement in recovery actions. We are excited for this project to unravel over the year ahead.



Educators exploration with natural materials.



2019 COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WELCOME BBQ

Our annual Welcome BBQ provides children, Educators and parents a much-needed chance to catch up with one another in a relaxed and joyful setting. It is always lovely watching the children take their families around to all of their favourite spots at KCCC, and is especially beneficial for families who are new to the service to be able to engage with their children's Educators and friends, without the need to hurry off to work.

In 2019 we hosted over 250 families at our Welcome BBQ, which was full of fun, food and friendship. With a perfect mixture of good weather and fun activities such as face painting, an animal farm and even a treasure hunt, there was something to be enjoyed by everyone.



WELCOME BREAKFASTS

Sometimes in the rush of our busy lives we don't have time to stop and enjoy the small moments that are in front of us. In order to slow down and enjoy our time together, we hosted 5 breakfasts across all of the rooms in June 2019.

We invited all parents and siblings to stay for breakfast and enjoy some time in their child's room before the busy rush of work and school began. In doing so, Educators were able to strengthen their connections with the families of the children they know so well. Children made the most of the time, taking their family around to enjoy some of their favourite activities and play spaces within the service. A big thank you to Heather, Mona and Laila for making a delicious array of food each morning for us to share.

WORKING BEES

2019 saw a range of projects and repairs being undertaken. As a not-for-profit organisation, one of the ways that we can keep costs down is to conduct our own repairs, which we can only do via the support and effort of our dedicated Educators and families. Although one event was unfortunately cancelled due to weather, we held three working bees in 2019, and made a great effort with the little time we had.

At each working bee, families, Educators and children banded together to wash windows, lockers and other hard-to-reach nooks within the centre. Once the cleaning was out of the way, some bigger projects were tackled:

- **March** the focus was on our aeroplane, which received some much-needed TLC;
- **May**, our resident chicken, Liz was treated to a thorough repair of her coop.
- **August** the focus was on the integrated yard, with some fencing put up around the garden beds and seedlings planted. The garden has bloomed since our sprucing up, and is taken care of daily by the children within the service.

We really appreciate the time and effort that our wonderful families and Educators put into our working bees; it is wonderful to see our community working together to create the best environment possible for our children.

TRIVIA NIGHT

As always, our 2019 Trivia Night was a roaring success, with over 190 attendees and an amazing array of prizes and items for our live and silent auctions. The 'Hollywood' theme made for many fun and interesting costumes, ranging from the cast of Juno, many versions of the Star Wars cast, and of course the crowd-favourite in the form of a Minion.

Our annual Trivia Night is always the biggest fundraising event of the year, and 2019 was no exception, with over \$11,000 being raised. These impressive proceeds went directly into refurbishing our Yarragum room yard, which was officially opened in February 2020 at our Welcome BBQ. A massive thank you to all of the members of our wonderful Fundraising and Community Engagement (FaCE) group, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to organise the event, and our wonderful parent Mel Irons who hosted the evening.

HEALTHY MINDS AND HEALTHY BODIES

Children and staff have had continued access to the YMCA to promote healthy lifestyles and encourage core physical skills such as running, jumping, ball skills and stretching, just to name a few. Educators Gloria and Marcela championed both of the wellbeing programs we have had running in this space and worked closely with rooms to tailor the programs to individual interest and skill. We thank Gloria and Marcela, as well as Tessie, for running these programs as they have been invaluable to children's learning and acquisition of physical dispositions and learning.

In September, to connect with the buzz of football season and an ongoing interest in sports and movement, we held a sports week circuit at JJ Holland Park. Each room was



invited to create their own game with a large focus on Indigenous games. Many rooms got creative and used recycled materials or found sports equipment around the building to construct their own additions. This was a huge success with each room coming over in small groups to participate and have a go at the made games.



KENSINGTON FESTIVAL

The relationship between our space and schools are significant to our community connections and in supporting the children with one of life's big transitions, that of moving from Kindergarten to school. 2019 kicked off with a coming together of children from Holy Rosary School and KCCC, through the Kensington Community Festival. The festival enabled children of different ages to collaborate and perform two songs, to launch the 2019 Festival.

In preparation for the festival, most of the children across KCCC spent time in the rooms or out in the yard, engaging in the joy of singing together. Indeed, the songs were frequently heard echoing through the rooms, corridors and yard. The songs were sung on the children's trips to collect the food trolleys, when washing their hands, at group times and en masse in the Bali hut. Once again, Monica Weightman generously gave her time to lead the choir and the songs, "Innany" and "Yil lull lay", came from her Aboriginal culture. The children particularly enjoyed singing and performing the actions to "Innany", which tells the tale of shooing away a goanna that is waking up the baby.

Monica visited us for some of the rehearsals, which were beautiful, as children sang out loud

and even improvised. At other times small groups of children visited Holy Rosary to join their choir. Working with the school gave the children a chance to see what school looks, sounds and feels like, as well as building bonds and familiarising themselves with the differences between school and early years. We were proud of how our children stood in front of the Holy Rosary choir to teach them the songs.

The festival itself was a great success, and many thanks are due to our children and families. Our KCCC community contributed in a variety of ways, including parent, Mel, who was MC for the day, the families who got their children out of bed and ready to sing, families who attended and those who helped on our KCCC stall. In line with the festival's focus on sustainability and our own philosophy to teach and act sustainably, our stall featured paper making and clay work.

After the festival some of the children commented on how they had missed "all the singing" (Bea), which inspired us to make sure there was more music and song throughout the year.

INNOVATION: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development is something that KCCC prioritises, as we recognise it is crucial to our objective to be a progressive and innovative early childhood service. At KCCC we are committed to being ongoing learners and we challenge ourselves to try new ideas and initiatives.

For the team at KCCC, professional learning and development comes in many formats. It includes the multiple opportunities for professional discussions in the form of room and community of practice meetings and individual and whole team professional development training sessions.

and submitting our Sustainability Grant application. Children's voices were present in many of the meetings, not simply through the Educator's discussions, but also in that they were present at many of the meetings and even had their own special meetings. The children too, reflected on what it is like to be part of the KCCC community and their words and ideas helped to inform our Quality Improvement Plan and update our Children's Handbook. Alongside the everyday learning, 2019 was full of different professional development training sessions. The team were invited to work with the educational leaders and develop individualised professional development plans. Through this, they selected off site Professional Training sessions, relevant to their practice goals. Often educators teamed up to attend sessions, which supported them to bounce ideas off one another, making it easier for them to bring ideas and initiatives back to the service.

ASH BUCHANAN

Whole team professional development days were once again insightful and enjoyable. The first joint professional development day was held in the beautiful and awe-inspiring setting of Melbourne Museum. Ash Buchanan led the morning with his Benefit Mindset workshop and the afternoon saw Educators team up with colleagues from different rooms. The groups joined to explore specific galleries of the museum and completed a quiz; the exercise supported the teams to learn about one another and discuss ideas of how the museum galleries could be used to extend the children's programs.

JESSICA STAINES AND COLIN SLATTERY

Mid-year we were joined, at the Town Hall, by Jessica Staines from Koori Curriculum, and Colin Slattery from Semann and Slattery. Jessica helped us to reflect on our cultural competency, something we have committed to renewing annually through our RAP. Jessica dug deep into what it means to be a culturally competent and anti-bias service, whilst Colin supported us to reflect on the culture of our service and our professional relationships. These sessions gave us much to think and talk about, as both presenters offered challenging ideas.



Having two Educational Leaders (Pedagogical Leader and Program Leader) supports rooms in their ongoing critical reflection and enables us to unpack early childhood research and theories.

Our meetings offer a scheduled time for the teams to come together and reflect on their work, and 2019 was no exception, as we unpacked what was happening across the service. In early childhood, critical reflection is a key component of what we do, as research about children is ever changing and the significance of the zero-five age group, becoming more and more recognised. We are indeed privileged to play a role in this part of the children's lives and therefore need to spend time reflecting and thinking about our work.

Our teams regularly discussed the children, the program, teamwork, current research and theory and the needs, opportunities and affordances in our community. 2019's meetings were not only productive in fostering reflective practice, but also in terms of actions; the teams worked on initiatives such as launching our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)



Mandy Cooke

TOWARDS A RE-CONCEPTUALISATION OF RISK IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Just as research and theory plays a key role in our thinking at KCCC, we also relish opportunities to play a role in new research. In 2019, KCCC was invited to be part of Mandy Cooke's research project. This was indeed an exciting project, as it enabled us to share our understandings with the broader Early Childhood profession.

Mandy interviewed our Educators for her work, entitled *Towards A Re-Conceptualisation Of Risk In Early Childhood Education*. Mandy chose to work with services who had achieved an exceeding rating, and Mandy had also heard all about our risky play work, making KCCC a good fit for the project. Risky play was indeed a significant element in the research, and Mandy asked a lot of questions about how we support children to engage in risky play. This provided us with the opportunity to share our understanding of how children use risky play to test and practice their skills. We also discussed how through risky play, children are able to self-assess where their skills lie. We shared many examples of how the children use the climbing tree, bit by bit, practicing and pushing themselves to make their way up and down the tree, at levels which they are comfortable with.

Through observing our work, Mandy could see the affordances offered to children in the KCCC experiences and environment. Mandy was also curious about how Educators take risks in their programming, conversations and the general openness to new ideas. This is where much of our professional development and reflective practice came in, as we were able to show Mandy that we regularly discussed new ideas and recognise our role as ongoing learners. As ongoing learners, we understand that we do not know everything and that we need to be open minded. Children regularly teach us the different ways in which they respond to the world and we must be flexible and open to this, in order to respond to them in an authentic and meaningful way.



We shared with Mandy how risky conversations and discussions occur frequently at KCCC. We unpacked how, in talking about a new idea, we make ourselves vulnerable and open to ridicule or criticism, particularly in a large team with many different perspectives. Our professional development and regular meetings and discussions support us to be braver in challenging one another's thinking. We look forward to 2020, when Mandy's research will be published.

WORKING WITH THE WIDER SECTOR

One important aspect of our strategic plan is to share our work and support the broader Early Years Sector. A big part of this is work is through our mentoring of many students.

Student placements give a unique opportunity for the students to see what it is really like to work with young children and to put their theoretical learnings into practice. Placements are a two-way teaching and learning relationship, as we also gain from the questions students bring to us and their ideas and understandings. We take our mentoring roles seriously, we realise that placement can make or break a student's love of teaching.

We encourage the students to meet to regularly discuss their placement and share their learning with one another and our mentoring team. Educators throughout the service support this

process and it is through community effort that we have supported many Early Years students to achieve their goals.

It was through our relationship with Melbourne University that we were invited to hold a stall at the Careers in Teaching Expo. Enrolments Officer Megan and Program Leader Karen represented the team for the event, taking with them as many children's quotes and work as they could. Much of the discussion revolved around children's rights and agency, and the students were pleased to hear about the programs that occur at KCCC. The Early Childhood students commented on how they had chosen Early Childhood over school teaching, because they understood the significance of this age group, and valued creating play-based programs that respond to individual and groups of children.

ELAA CONFERENCE

In 2019 the Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) conference was themed "Growing Tomorrow". KCCC presented a poster at the conference, which explored how relationships are the key factors in guiding how we establish connections with communities on multiple levels.

Our presentation addressed the important role of children as citizens, now and in the future. It highlighted the systems required to ensure that children have opportunities to be agents of change and engage in sustainable programs which support community engagement.

We discussed how our service adapted to better facilitate opportunities to connect with one another, the local community and internationally. Namely these were through:

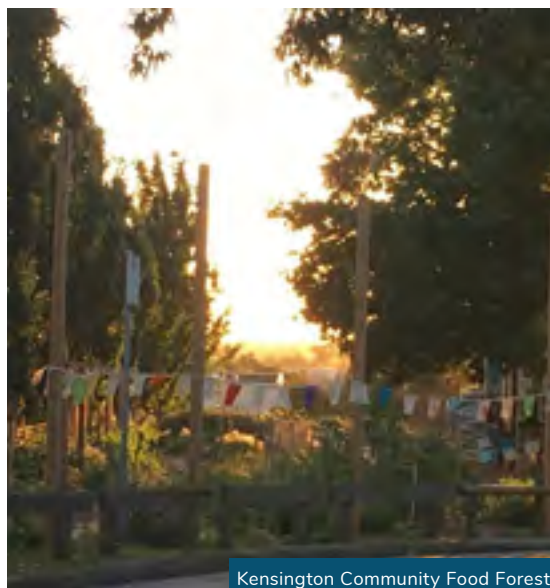
- Prioritising small learning groups where the children were allocated into small focused learning groups with the same educators.

The small learning groups were used as a tool to provide a close circle for children where they can develop and foster close relationships. These were inspired by our sister school in Denmark;

- Using our existing connections within our community as a platform for establishing excursion programs and strengthening our community initiatives. These relationships have grown and blossomed, and our community relationships are purposeful and provide opportunities to understand one another and the land we inhabit, our past we inherited and our future communities that we can create and imagine; and
- Using our Educational Leadership role to cultivate a flourishing and empowering community of educators where each person is a leader within their own right, creating a progressive and high-quality early learning service.



The Venny - photo Jane Jolly



Kensington Community Food Forest

COMMUNITY CHILD CARE BUS TOUR

In 2019, KCCC were again asked to host the Community Child Care (CCC) bus tour. The bus tour brought together Educators from a range of early years services, to all meet in our space. It provided an opportunity to share our learnings, inspire and be inspired; question, think and reflect on our practice. At KCCC we always feel humbled by being asked to share our innovations and practice with others in the sector. We were delighted to give a tour of KCCC and two of our excursion destinations: The Venny and Kensington Community Food Forest.

As we toured the KCCC building our visitors chatted to our staff and showed an interest in our programs and environments. Many commented on how relaxed and engaged the children were, in particular in how they could access the different learning spaces, indoors, outdoors and other rooms. The visitors could see the children's agency in so much of what we do at KCCC.

The Venny and Food Forest visits demonstrated the importance of excursions; the affordances our local area has to offer the children and the benefits of building relationships with the locals. We discussed how being at the Venny affords children to try new skills and offers a wealth of risky play, we shared how imaginations are unleashed by the experiences there. We could also share how important our Food Forest is, as

gardening is something that requires hard work and patience, which in a world full of instant gratification, is a worthwhile experience for all of us. Many of the discussions held revolved around thinking about what is relevant and poignant to the context of early childhood settings. We did not advocate for services to replicate what we do, rather, we encouraged our visitors to think about what is relevant to the children in their context and the possibilities available in their localities. Our visitors were also inspired by the trust that is shown to children when out and about in such places. They could see how much the children at KCCC are a part of, and a voice in, our community.



Plan of KCCC

OUR STAFF 2019

As always, our staff, together with our children and families, are integral to our service's success. Our staff group has invested ongoing time and thought leadership into meeting the goals set out in our strategic plan. Whether this be our commitment to the continued learning and integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in everything we do, or simply the embedding of continuous learning and professional development in our organisational culture, our staff group has been key in bringing our strategy and its goals to life throughout 2019.



As always, our staff, together with our children and families, are integral to our service's success.

WORKING GROUPS

Throughout the year we continued our commitment to our working groups, with participation from representatives across the centre and input from all of our Educators. These groups include:

- Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP);
- Healthy Together Group;
- Quality Improvement Plan; and
- Regular team meetings.

We are proud that these working groups and professional learning initiatives are something that KCCC has become renowned for in recent years.

INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

KCCC has continued its contribution to the early years sector through participation in the ELAA's annual conference and the continued support of student placements and mentorships. Our attendance and participation in many sector-wide professional learning sessions has also meant that again each staff member has had the opportunity to undertake an average of 30 hours of professional development over the course of the year. Sessions have included:

- our annual first aid, anaphylaxis and CPR training;
- training in diabetes management; and
- professional development in leadership and motivation, curriculum development and pedagogy, and the creation of effective learning environments.

MENTORING AND COACHING

We are privileged at KCCC to have on the floor mentoring and coaching led by our Program Leader and Pedagogical Leader on a daily basis. Combined with our distributed leadership model, staff are empowered and enthusiastic about applying their knowledge and implementing new methods and improvements in everyday practice. Our progressive and innovative programs are fuelled by creativity and passion for children and we are proud to have a staff group who are a confident body of learners who continue to inspire and ignite a love of learning for themselves and our children every day.

CAPITAL WORKS

Each year KCCC is fortunate to have the opportunity to invest in and develop our spaces through capital works projects. As always, KCCC has had the ongoing support of the City of Melbourne in assisting us to complete these works and ensure our facilities support our progressive and innovative programs.

2019 commenced with a full-service re-paint completed over the service's closure period. To start the year with freshly painted walls throughout made for a renewed, bright start to our year.

A refurbishment of our staff room amenities, including the installation of a new kitchenette and locker facilities, was also completed during 2019. As a service we are privileged to have this space for providing a safe and restful place for our hard-working staff every day. These

facilities ensure we meet the health and safety needs of our employees and that they have an opportunity to physically and emotionally regroup during their working days.

Finally, thanks to the contribution of our whole community through funds raised at the 2019 Trivia Night, we saw the redevelopment of our babies' yard in December 2019. With the support of Jeavons Architects and Arcadia Landscaping, we have introduced new sensory environments for our children in the 0-12-month age group. A new sandpit, soft turf areas, various textured ground coverings and the creation of natural tunnel-like spaces, have all been built into the yard and provide exciting opportunities for our babies to grow and explore. As our plantings in this yard continue to develop, we will benefit from the changing environment and new experiences presented.



Map of KCCC designed by our children

2019 FINANCIAL COMMENTARY

The financial result for KCCC in 2019 was a \$67K surplus (2018 \$146k) and illustrates the careful and considered financial management processes undertaken by the service.

Operating revenue for the 12-month period January-December 2019 grew \$225k to \$4.22 million and the Co-operative's asset base continued to grow as prior year earnings were retained for future risk management and development opportunities.

The achievement of a small surplus for the Co-operative is driven by three key factors:

- 1** High levels of occupancy, maximising the income received by the service;
- 2** Close management of staffing models to balance the provision of innovative quality early years education and affordability for our families; and
- 3** Prudent and considered purchasing practices for other operating and discretionary expenditure items that support the day to day running of KCCC.

OCCUPANCY

High levels of occupancy maintained throughout the year are a key driver for the service's financial result, through the maximisation of revenue that the service can receive.

High occupancy occurs thanks to a thorough and informed waitlist management procedure and timely enrolment processes that both ensure all spaces that become available at KCCC are filled as quickly as possible. This not only results in a positive financial outcome for the service, but also ensures KCCC is making available to our families as many places as possible and serving our community's needs for early childhood care and education to our

maximum capacity. Overall KCCC is a 140-place per day centre offering programs for children aged between six weeks and six years old. There are nine children's rooms at the service with varying size capacities and age groups as outlined in **Chart 01**.

During 2019, an average occupancy of 98% was achieved over the year in the long day care rooms at KCCC. Since 2015, this average level of occupancy has remained over 96%, as illustrated in **Chart 02**. Again, it is thanks to the maintenance of occupancy at this high level that KCCC's financial result has also been stable and encouraging in the last five years. In total 299 children, from 236 different families, attended KCCC at some time during 2019.

LABOUR COSTS

Labour costs represent the most significant financial investment each year at KCCC. It is our quality staffing group that enable us to provide innovative and high-class programs for our children and we value their contribution and commitment to the service each day.

KCCC proudly employs Long Day Care staff under the Professional Childcare Standard (PCS) and goes further to offer conditions above this enterprise agreement which already surpasses Award conditions for the sector. Kindergarten Educators are employed under the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement (VECTEA) and again recognised above Award for their contribution and service to our organisation.

In 2019, labour costs represented 87.9% of revenue, a figure illustrative of the significant resource employees are in the success of our service. By rewarding our highly qualified and engaged employees, we demonstrate the importance we believe they each have in achieving our service goals and objectives, strategies and mission.

OPERATING EXPENSES

Total operating expenses at KCCC are effected by the support and contributions received from the City of Melbourne in running our service. From rental assistance through to maintenance services, this support enables us to maintain our facilities and environment to a high quality standard and focus our resources on the educational programs offered each day to our children.

All other areas of expenditure, whether this be art and play supplies or other utility costs,

CHART 01 KCCC capacity

2019 Long Day Care Room Capacity		
Yarragum	Babies	12
Gumnut	Toddlers	12
Wattle	Under 3 year olds	12
Banksia	Under 3 year olds	10
Waratah	Under 3 year olds	16
Boronia	3-5 year olds	16
Acacia	3-5 year olds	16
2019 Kindergarten Capacity		
Tea Tree	4-5 year olds (Sessional)	18 per session
Apple Tree	4-5 year olds (Integrated)	28 per session

are closely managed and reviewed on an ongoing basis. Wherever possible, more cost-effective purchasing arrangements are implemented to ensure we receive the best value for money we can as a not-for-profit service.

Chart 03 shows total labour and total operating expenditure as a percentage of revenue has increased over the last three (3) years. This is illustrative of tighter budget-setting procedures with the aim of minimising fee increases to families.

LONG TERM FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The Current Ratio calculation represents KCCC's ability to repay its financial obligations by calculating the percentage of current assets compared to current liabilities. Management of our future benefits and future obligations ensures we continue to be in a position where we have financial capacity to meet our business requirements and informs our decision making around investment in other areas of the service, as well as placing us in a strong position to manage operational risks that may occur in the future.

Chart 04 shows KCCC's current ratio has continued to grow over the last seven years and sits at a very strong 2.33 at the end of the 2019 financial year. As the service works through the challenges currently being experienced in Australia due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this strong position will enable us to withstand potential losses that may occur in 2020.

THE FUTURE AT KCCC

Capital improvements to KCCC during 2019 included a full service re-paint at the commencement of the year and the refurbishment of our staff room facilities which have provided us with an enhanced and improved space to seek the daily rest and recuperation necessary for our staff. Both of these improvements were supported by the City of Melbourne and we are grateful for their continued support and investment in our service. KCCC also continued to invest in the resources and spaces required to support the innovative and high-quality programs offered to our children each day. With the support of funds raised by all families at the 2019 Trivia Night, the redevelopment of our babies' yard was completed in December 2019.

The 2020 budget has been set for a net

CHART 02 Average Annual Occupancy (LDC) 2015 - 2019 Comparison

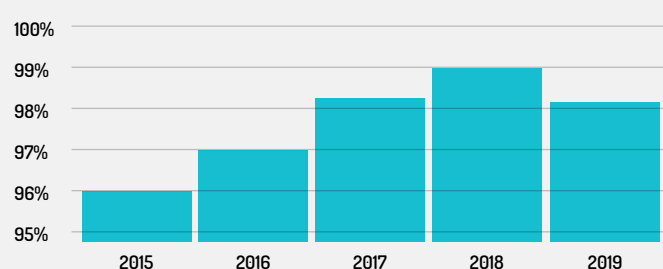


CHART 03 Percentage of Expenses to Revenue 2013 - 2019 Comparison

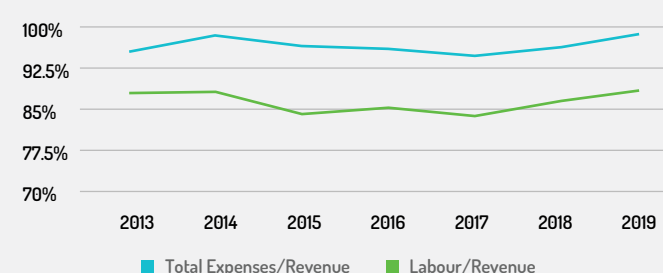
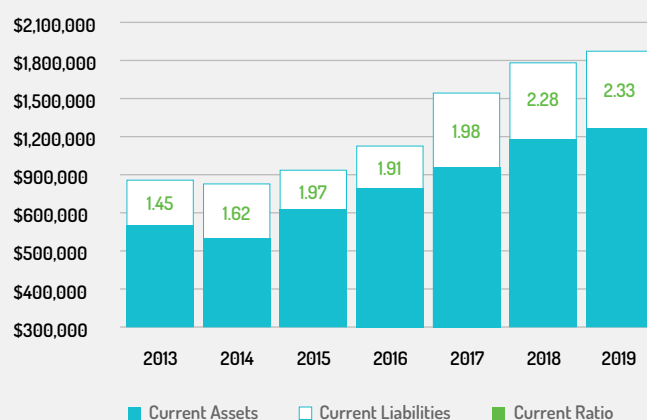


CHART 04 Current Assets/Current Liabilities Ratio 2013 - 2019 Comparison



surplus marginally above breakeven level. With the current COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changing the way we need to operate for the whole community's safety, investment in new styles of work and technology will be a key focus for the year. Identification of a future capital improvement plan will also be prepared as the year goes on. Support from the City of Melbourne will continue to enable us to enhance and improve our facilities, with the children's locker upgrade and full replacement of all kitchenettes in the children's rooms identified as projects for the near future.

