

COBURG CHILDREN'S CENTRE INC CO-ORDINATORS ANNUAL REPORT

2015

Centre History & Management

Coburg Children's Centre was the first government subsidised childcare centre in Coburg. The Centre opened in 1977 and was owned and operated by (the then) Coburg City Council. In 1993 Council informed the parents and staff of its decision to cease to manage the Centre or employ any new staff – if the Centre was to continue to operate it would have to be managed by the parents. In July 1994 the management of the Centre was officially delegated to the Coburg Children's Centre Incorporated (CCCI) Board of Management. Since then, the Centre has operated as a stand-alone, financially independent service and continues to be efficiently managed by the parents via the Board of Management.

The CCCI Board of Management (the Board)

The 19 parents nominated and were elected to the Board of Management for 2015: *Sandy Vouch, Andrew Hudson, Belinda Johnson-Lee, Claire Schofield, Sheree Feaver, Rebecca Fredrickson, Andrea Montesano, Peta Ferrarini, Cameron Giles, Kate Cini, Kate Bundrock, Belinda Panagiotopoulos, Haley Evans, Gabrielle Marr, Finley Pitt, Warren Power, Kerin Bryant, Tom Walters, Swagata Bapat.* Three members resigned before the end of 2015. Several members were unable to come to meetings regularly and this has been raised as an area of concern for the Board. Our current Constitution states that a Board members position will be considered vacant if the member fails to attend more than three (3) consecutive meetings without apology. It has been a busy and exciting year for the Board who have had to manage some big issues requiring many a "hard chat" and at these times in particular we draw on all our resources within the Board membership to get the best outcomes for our Centre. Attendance at meetings is key to effective decision making and best outcomes. Being a regular presence is essential to this process as minutes do not always convey the full tone of the discussion and sentiment behind the outcome. Of course not all members are able to attend every meeting but the Board are looking to those who can make a commitment to attending a minimum of five out of the ten (max. 2 hour) meetings per year. If this is you – please join. The Board are strong, focused, decisive, and passionate with democratic management at its core. Many members are standing for re-election and I would like to acknowledge the following that are among those retiring or retired throughout the year: Kate Cini, Haley Evans, Swagata Bapat, Belinda Johnson-Lee, Rebecca Fredrickson, Cameron Giles, Kate Bundrock, Kerin Bryant and Tom Walters. In particular I acknowledge the input of Belinda Johnson Lee and Cameron Giles. Both joined the Board in 2013, Belinda held the position of Deputy Secretary in 2013 and 2015 and was called on many times to take precise and accurate minutes. Cameron assisted us with the maintenance of our website – a little more complicated than it sounds!! These are the tangible tasks but more importantly it has been their willingness to come to meetings, contribute their opinions and add to the discussion that we really value. I struggle to find words to give this message any further strength. Thank you seems insufficient but at this time every year I reflect on what you give to our Centre and to me personally and I know how fortunate we are. So again I say thank you.

Funding & Finances

The Board has full financial responsibility and makes all major decisions about the management of the Centre's resources. The Board approves the annual budget and fee structure ensuring the service remains financially viable while providing a quality service. The budget aims to create a small surplus which unfortunately on paper was not realised in 2015. The Treasurer Andrew Hudson will report on this seemingly poor but to my mind factually successful year in terms of the Centres finances. While on paper it is reported the Centre ran at a loss we did invest \$25,000 in our Term Deposit to go towards purchases for our New Centre - this amount was not part of the 2015 budget. CCCI were asked by Moreland City Council to contribute towards the New Centre and this is the amount the Board have committed. This is significant as previously we have invested a few thousand, at best \$10,000 in a year. As manager and moving into our new facility I am more than happy with this outcome.

The Moreland City Council (MCC)

MCC are the legal Operator (Commonwealth Gov.) and Approved Provider (State Gov.) of CCCI. Maintaining this legal status ensures Councils commitment to community based services. We have worked closely with MCC to move toward our relocation. There have been many times when we have been at odds with each other but have continued to strive to keep the project moving. Carrying on from my 2014 Annual Report at the time of writing the new Centre progress is:

- ⇒ “*who we are what we are*” – CCCI maintains their focus to stay true to this
- ⇒ MCC purchased the site in July 2013 and the first Project Manager was appointed in August 2013
- ⇒ onsite works commenced March 2016 and the project is due for completion in December 2016
- ⇒ it is now expected that CCCI will be in the new building in April 2017 (moved from January 2017)
- ⇒ MCC executive has been adamant in insisting CCCI take on the administration of the entire childcare section of the facility resulting in us having to manage the 5th room. How CCCI will operate this is yet to be decided by the Board.
- ⇒ I will now defer my retirement until April 2017 in line with the completion date of the project.

Waiting List

In September 2015 all prospective parents on the waiting list were sent:

- ⇒ a letter inviting them to visit/tour the Centre
- ⇒ a questionnaire to complete if they still required care for 2016
- ⇒ a timetable for allocating places in 2016
- ⇒ By the end of October places were allocated and confirmed with a deposit paid.

199 families on the list were sent a questionnaire (8 less than 2014) - 109 questionnaires were returned (14 more than 2014). Of these, 18 families (4 more than 2014) with a total of 20 children (1 more than 2014) were enrolled in the Centre for 2016. From September to the end of December a further 58 families (19 more than 2014) were added to the waiting list.

Enrolments

145 children (134 in 2014) representing 107 families (102 in 2014) were enrolled throughout 2015. The Board continued the 10% reduction in fees for 2nd and subsequent children from the same family which applied to 38 families (32 in 2014).

Nationalities

Family origins from around the world brought many cultures to us. The following countries represent our Centre where one or both parents were born outside Australia:

Argentina	Greece	Israel	Philippines	Thailand
Bangladesh	Holland	Italy	Pakistan	Turkey
Brazil	Hong Kong	Japan	Poland	United Kingdom
Brunei	India	Lebanon	Ukraine	USA
China & PR	Indonesia	Malta	Scotland	Vietnam
England	Ireland	Nepal	South Korea	
Germany	Iraq	New Zealand	Sri Lanka	

34 nationalities (including Australia) were represented (one more than 2014) and 59 of the 107 families attending the Centre had at least 1 parent born outside Australia. 16 nationalities were represented within the staff team of 34 with 24 of these staff born outside Australia. How blessed we are to have all these cultures to add to our lives.

Students

Team Leaders supervised 10 Early Childhood students completing 12 placements and one Duke of Edinburgh student (a CCCI graduate!!). CCCI only accept students from reputable institutions with a proven record of high standard training who produce the best graduates.

Staff

Staff attended the following training sessions throughout the year:

February	First Aid/Asthma x 1 staff.
March	Outdoor Learning – Risk versus Resilience Reggio Emilia Documentation Centre – Project based documentation and reflection
April/May	First Aid x 3 staff Leadership training x2 staff
June	First Aid x 4 staff Guiding Childrens Behaviour session with Louise Dorrat – 5 staff Moreland Early Years Expo – 16 staff Leadership in Creating a Healthy Workplace – VEOHRC -9 staff Child Protection Training – 1 staff
July	Creating a Healthy Workplace – VEOHRC -all staff training session 1
August	Creating a Healthy Workplace – VEOHRC –team leaders session 2 Session with Dr Richard Eisenmajer - Asperger’s Syndrome - 3 staff Moreland Early Years Conference – 7 staff Evacuation Training Compulsory Training – all staff Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Network PD – 1 staff CERES Resource Smart Project – 1 staff First Aid Training – 2 staff
September	First Aid - 3 staff Australian Education Union (Vic. Branch) annual conference - 3 staff Auslan next level training – 2 staff Wurundjeri Tribe Tour – 4 staff
October	Emotional Intelligence x 3 staff
November	Leadership at the Edge x 6 staff CPR x 12 staff Project Work x 1 staff EEEC Conference x 5 staff
December	Leadership that makes a difference x 5 EEEC Sustainable Centre (Clauscen Street Community Co-op) tour x 1 staff

Other staff news included:

- ⇒ In recognition of the work done by Lorraine and the children in regards to a letter and subsequent meeting with Kelvin Thompson MP based on the children’s observations of rubbish in the Merri Creek CCCI has been awarded a “R.E.S.P.E.C.T” Award (Recognition of Excellent Sustainable Practice in Early Childhood Teaching) from Environmental Education in Early Childhood Victoria. The children wrote a letter, appointed a spokesperson and Lorraine made an appointment to meet with Kelvin Thompson where their spokesperson read the letter out to him and he held a round table discussion about this issue. Kelvin Thompson spoke to “Friends of the Merri Creek” who had a clean up the Merri Creek day on the 1st March. We were subsequently invited to speak about this at EEEEC’s Annual Conference.
- ⇒ Lenora commences studying to attain her Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood
- ⇒ Clara leaves the Centre to begin married life with her husband in Sydney
- ⇒ Elissa returns to CCCI after a 6 year break to re-join the team and resume the position of in-house accounts and book-keeping
- ⇒ Olga leaves CCCI after 11½ years
- ⇒ Nuzhat, Teresa, Xiaohua and Iris join our team of casual staff

One of the things I will miss the most when I retire is coming to work every day to join these hardworking, dedicated people and be part of their day. They value their work; they cherish children, family and life. They halve each other’s pain and sorrows and double each other’s pleasure, achievements and celebrations through their mutual sharing, respect, and genuine care for each other. We are all so lucky to have them to work with and care for our children. I feel blessed to have them in my life.

The National Quality Framework

In 2014 the DEECD assessed our performance compared to the National Quality Standards. In 6 out of the 7 Quality Areas we rated “Exceeding” resulting in an overall rating of “Exceeding NQS” (as per report on office door). This rating remains until the date of our next assessment process (TBA). We continue to review and implement our Quality Improvement Plan.

Children’s Program

The Early Years Learning Frameworks (National and Victorian) and CCCI philosophy statement are the tools we use to develop the children’s programs, reflective of our CCCI community. Each year Michelle Hocking, the Program Manager and Educational Leader reviews our planning and documentation systems in the light of current research, professional development and feedback from educators. 2015 was a year of consolidation. Reflections Folders’ (RF) outside each room serve as a visual diary documenting the intentional and emergent aspects of the children’s programs. Their value is reflected by the number of parents seen daily poring over the RF’s and “ticking the box” to request a copy of entries to create a “book” of their child’s year here. At the end of 2015 over 90% of families requested and received a book, giving the child and family a beautiful memory of their year. Julie McCarthy from Vic. University undertook many hours of voluntary work throughout the year to ease the end of year rush to compile the children’s books. Our planning and documentation methods and processes were rated “exceeding NQS” during the assessment and rating visit in 2014.

Food Audit

As a Class 1 Food provider, the State Government requires an external Food Safety Plan audit each year. Health Officers from MCC Health Department periodically inspect the kitchen and take food samples to be analysed for bacteria/microorganisms/contaminants etc. Our external audit was conducted in October 2015 and we were assessed as 100% compliant with all legislative and food safety policy requirements.

Centre Developments, Events & Highlights

Visitors and Training Provided by CCCI

Training provided by CCCI for the Early Childhood Community included:

February	Study Tour of Early Childhood Educators (both owners & educators) from Taiwan looking at general CCCI programs and practices
March	Risk versus Resilience – session run at CCCI and delivered by Michelle Hocking
May	3 x Early Childhood Educators from Adelaide to tour CCCI as part of a Natural Environments for Early Years professional development (also toured Royal Botanic Gardens with Andrew Laidlaw and Darebin Bush Kinder with Doug Fargher who pioneered bush kindergartens in Victoria)
June	Exhibitors information table and display at Moreland Early Years Expo – designed and presented by 4 CCCI staff
June	Presentation on Coburg Bush Kinder at Moreland early Years Expo - Michelle
June	Environmental Education in Early Childhood members – CCCI was asked to conduct a “sustainable service” tour and speak about how we were awarded the respect award
June	Batman Park Kindergarten – Program Planning
June	MCC Environmental Sustainability Dept. – tour
June	Kangan TAFE x 2 students – attended our Bush Kinder
June	Arthur Dickmann Centre Shepparton– toured with approx. 15 Early Childhood Educators
June	Early Childhood Centre (Fawkner) –staff advised to tour CCCI by DEECD
August	Michelle and Lorraine Merri Creek Waste Project display at Environmental Education in Early Childhood Expo
August	Assoc. Professor Vicki Carr – University of Cincinnati to observe and participate in CCCI Bush Kinder program
October	Presentation by Michelle at Sustainability Victoria ResourceSmart Education Awards

October	Presentation by Michelle at the EEEEC Annual Conference “Let’s Save the Merri Creek” Project and subsequent RESPECT award (as reported above).
November	CCCI facilitated a “weaving” activity at the Peppercorn Place Fiesta with several staff volunteering their time at this very busy and productive children’s play space

March to December 2015

⇒ Michelle conducted 33 tours for 80 prospective families throughout the year.

Other Highlights

⇒ March 2015 - MCC agreed to install a retractable shade sail earmarked for the new site to be transferred when we move. This was actioned in February 2016.

⇒ Michelle submits an application for CCCI to run a “Resource Smart Early Years Program” Pilot Program for MCC. This was successful. We have begun documenting the centres production of waste and use of water and energy in order to calculate costs and implement strategies for making savings in these areas in the future and to become registered as a Resource Smart centre.

⇒ CCCI’s sustainability practices were featured in the Moreland Courier

⇒ October – as MCC insists that CCCI increase the numbers at the New Centre beyond what was previously agreed to. The Board consider the following options:

- Option 1: Run a 88+ place centre
- Option 2: Run an 88 place centre and run a separate entrance for room 5 as kinder only, not long day care
- Option 3: Go to another centre as a “swap” for CCCI going to the Pentridge site as proposed by MCC
- Option 4: Mount a campaign for the Pentridge site to stay at 88 places.
- Option 5: Mount a campaign to remain where we are.
- Option 6: Close CCCI.
- Option 7: Increase in size to 88 over 18 months and offer additional places only to the proposed medical facility in 2020

Boards agreed position: Board agree to increase to 88+ places with a goal to control the next stage and negotiate with MCC what we require to achieve this increase.

Throughout this and all our negotiations CCCI have and will continue to maintain their integrity. Our stated priority to our families, the community and MCC has always been

“to remain who we are and what we are”

This continues to be our first and foremost consideration throughout all negotiations.

⇒ In September the Board of Management sent all parents a survey asking the following:
The CCCI Board are currently revising our business plan and would love to hear your reasons why you chose Coburg Children’s Centre for your child/children. This invaluable feedback will help us to understand what is important for our families and ensure our business strategy reflects the culture of our centre and expectations of our families. A sentence a paragraph whatever you can manage Many thanks CCCI Board of Management

1/3 of families responded. Overwhelmingly families said staff were their first reason for wanting to send their children to CCCI followed by our Centres sense of community and culture. Thus the importance of remaining “who we are and what we are”.

Centre Re-location – Again I thank Andrea Montesano a steadfast member of the Project Team for our new Centre since 2012 and a continued support to me. In 2015 Finley Pitt joined the team and her architectural skills have been invaluable. I also want to acknowledge Warren and Sandy who made themselves available during work hours to attend crucial high level meetings last year and Gabrielle who drafted clear concise correspondence on behalf of the Board. All Board members actively inputted their position and as always consensus was reached.

Strategy & Plan for CCCI – Last year I reported that we would move to the new premises late 2016 early 2017 – exactly one year later than the 2013 reported timeline. This has now been pushed out to April 2017. I reconfirm my position that I will not retire before we move out of this building. We continue to use the Strategy and Plan document as a basis for planning and decision making as it remains timely, attainable and relevant.

Evaluations and Outcomes of Directions for 2016

To work towards the achieving the four priority strategies as defined in the Strategy and Plan:

Priority initiative 1

To source the right new co-ordinator for the Centre - Undertake a review of our current CCCI management structure and redefine the CCCI co-ordinator position description

Evaluation & Outcomes: The Board budgeted to advertise for a new co-ordinator in June 2016 – this will now happen in September in line with the move date. A review of the Position Description is underway and a 6 month process of handover is planned and budgeted for. Throughout 2015 Bernadetta, Michelle and Elissa mastered all aspects of the operational tasks thus ensuring the new co-ordinator will be well resourced and supported.

Priority initiative 2

To improve stability and governance of the Board - Engaged, stable, informed, effective and strategic Board

Evaluation & Outcomes: Finding a Board member to take up the portfolio of governance has taken some time – however Gabrielle Marr has taken up this position. The stability of the Board is proven through its ongoing successful management and negotiation for the best outcomes for the new Centre. Andrew Hudson will step down from the Board in 2017 and I will retire. We need to recruit a “treasurer in waiting” to oversee the (possibly\$3m) budget going forward. This person needs to have a qualification in accounting. Depending on the success of filling this position the proposal of paid Board members will be addressed as a legitimate option for key positions that cannot be filled within the current parent community. This cost would be included as a future budget item. As mentioned earlier the number of members who have been unable to commit to attending meetings regularly needs to be addressed at tonight’s AGM.

Priority initiative 3

To appoint strong team leaders for the transition period - Improve the benefits, training and develop succession plans for Team Leaders ensuring they are supported, have development, collaboration and peer support opportunities.

Evaluation & Outcomes: Dedicated higher level leadership training was rolled out to all leadership positions in 2015. The Staff Development Scheme was not.

Priority initiative 4:

To develop a new site and relocate CCCI with the support of MCC - Develop a new site, building and gardens that represent our philosophy where CCCI will continue to flourish.

Evaluation & Outcomes:

Our “*who we are what we are*” principle has continuously guided all decisions and negotiations regarding the new Centre. We have had to compromise the number of places we will manage. We will continue to meet, advocate and negotiate the best outcomes for CCCI.

Directions for 2016

To continue to achieve and finalise the tasks associated with the above Priority Initiatives.

Conclusion

Looking back on 2015 it has been a hard year with lots of “Hard Chat” and yet again both the Board and the staff approached it with commitment, clear thinking and determination. All those who know me will have heard my mantra “Onwards and Upwards” made possible only by the support of those around me. I thank you. Roll on 2016 let it be the year of action.

Report prepared by:

Marlene Fraser

Co-ordinator CCCI

27th April 2016